

# EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 September 2007 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Guest (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Bunker, Coker, Crowther, Gifford, Mrs Goode, Grainger, Hammon, Heath and Mrs Knight.

(Councillor Grainger substituted for Councillor White).

## 415. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 416. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 June 2007, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 417. **HOUSING STANDARDS AND DECENT HOMES OFFICER – FULL TIME TEMPORARY POST**

The Committee considered a report from the Divisional Environmental Health Officer for Private Sector Housing regarding the employment of a full time Technical Officer for a period of twelve months.

The post would be funded from the Supported Capital Expenditure allocation of the grant allocation from the Regional Housing Pot for 2007-08 and would be restricted to work in respect of Decent Homes in the Private Sector Stock occupied by vulnerable people. The aim was to bring 70% of non decent homes occupied by vulnerable people up to the decent standard by 2011. The officer would work to improve approximately 350 homes during the twelve month contract.

**RESOLVED** that the grant allocation from the Regional Housing Pot for 2007-2008 be used, in part, to fund the employment of a Technical Officer for a period of twelve months to ensure that vulnerable people are helped to bring their homes up to the decent homes standard.

## 418. **FLEIXIBLE WORKING HOURS SCHEME**

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services requesting approval and adoption of the revised flexible Working Hours Scheme.

The Council operated a range of flexible working options to support employees in achieving a sustainable work-life balance. These included flexible hours scheme, voluntary reduced time, part time working, job share, homeworking, parental and dependants leave.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

Following the Chief Executive's earlier address, staff and stress surveys identified the rules regarding flexitime as a particular concern to staff and employees were asked to submit ideas and raise concerns in relation to the review.

The revised draft scheme was attached as an appendix to the report but the main areas of change were:

1. No core time;
2. Subject to the needs of the service and the opening hours of the place of work employees subject to flexi time may start earlier (7.45 am) and finish later (8.15pm); and
3. Increased emphasis on service delivery.

The Acting Human Resources Manager addressed the Committee and outlined the draft policy. She explained that one of the reasons that core time was a disadvantage to some employees was that front line services often found that the lunch period (12.00 to 2.00pm) was one of their busiest times, making it difficult to take their breaks. Some members were concerned that the new scheme would make it difficult to monitor staff and to ensure that services were manned at all times. The Acting HR Manager assured members of the Committee that managers would be responsible for managing their staff and would be held to account if levels of service were seen to be slipping.

The Committee agreed that initiatives in relation to flexible working/work-life balance supported the Council in its objective to promote wellbeing and attract and retain a diverse workforce.

**RESOLVED** that the revised Flexible Working Hours Scheme be approved, and adopted for implementation.

### **419. EMPLOYMENT DATA MONITORING**

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services informing them of the most recent employment data.

The report and its appendices gave a detailed breakdown of the workforce employed by the Council including data on grade band, gender, ethnic groups, disability, working patterns and the percentage of people in each group living in Warwick District. Information was also provided on the number of established, filled and vacant posts for each Service Area during 2006/07.

In line with the Local Government's Pay and Reward Agenda, Warwick District Council had to write and implement a Workforce Plan to support the overall approach to workforce planning and organisational development. The employment data supplied and the trends identified from this report needed to be incorporated within the Plan and used to inform the priority activities for the Workforce Plan. The plan would outline the approach the Council would take to ensuring its employee profile was more representative of the local community it served.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

The data showed that there was an imbalance in the proportion of females, ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities in the more senior posts within Warwick District Council. Members of the Committee agreed that action needed to be taken to redress this imbalance.

Corporate Personnel Services were aware that in order to attract applications from all sectors of the community they needed to target people in different ways from those currently used. It was also suggested that some members of the community may need assistance with current interview processes and would benefit from attending workshops dealing with the completing of application forms.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the contents of the report be noted and the proposed action be approved; and
- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements.

#### **420. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RECRUITMENT MONITORING**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services informing them of the number and percentage of job applicants, with a breakdown of the data into various different categories.

The information provided was on gender, ethnic groups, disability, working patterns and the percentage of people in each group living in Warwick District. Information was also provided on the breakdown of shortlisted applicants and the people appointed. Appendix E, to the report, provided a picture of Equal Opportunities recruitment performance over five years.

Members of the Committee agreed that a full review of the Council's approach to resourcing be undertaken and that a Resourcing Strategy be implemented as part of a three year HR strategy. The data showed that the shortlisting and appointed applicants stages were both key areas of concern for the under-represented groups and action was required to review the reasoning behind this.

Members of the Committee were concerned about the high cost of advertising since attraction was undertaken by TMP and agreed that a review of the advertising process was a necessity and efficiencies must be sought and achieved in this area. Members felt that an additional resolution should be added to bring this issue to the Corporate Management Team's attention.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the contents of the report be noted and the proposed actions be approved;
- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements; and
- (3) the Corporate Management Team should look closely at a better way to advertise in order to save time and money, as well as investigation into where the adverts are placed.

#### **421. MONITORING OF STAFF LEAVING WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL**

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services informing members of the data surrounding staff turnover rates during 2006/07.

During 2006/2007 a total of 104 people left Warwick District Council. The total workforce as at 1 April 2007 was 548 indicating a staff turnover rate of 19%. However, this figure reduced to 13% when non-voluntary leavers were removed from the calculation.

There was a significant decrease in the number of both voluntary and non-voluntary leavers over the previous year (down a total of 45.8%) and over 41% of all leavers were from Leisure and Amenities.

Information was also provided giving a breakdown of leavers by gender, ethnicity and whether they had a disability or not.

Members agreed that a review of exit interviews should be undertaken to ensure that exit data was captured for all leavers from Warwick District Council. This would enable Personnel to analyse more detailed exit data and provide more robust and useful data analysis.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the contents of this report be noted and the proposed actions, be approved;
- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements; and
- (3) a staff turnover information be submitted to Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

### **422. SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services summarising the key findings from an analysis of sickness absence during the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007.

The appendices to the report showed a breakdown of the data in various different formats including service area, details of long term sickness and the reasons for sickness absence.

With the centralisation of Corporate Personnel Services, one priority was to introduce a consistent approach to the management, monitoring and reporting of sickness absence cases. The Corporate Personnel team were working on a number of actions including a review and update of the existing policy, procedures and guidelines for managers and staff, a review of trigger points for absence and ongoing monitoring of long-term sickness absence with a tighter capability procedure and clearer action planning.

#### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements; and
- (3) a sickness absence report be submitted to Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

### **423. MONITORING OF GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY CASES**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services summarising the key findings from an analysis of grievance and disciplinary cases during the year April 2006 to 31 March 2007.

The report was compiled to comply with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and detailed the number of people from each Service Area/Directorate who took out a grievance/internal complaint/claim of harassment, the number of appeals against job evaluations and the number of disciplinary cases arising during the year. It also showed the outcomes of these cases.

Additional appendices broke this data down into the categories of gender, ethnic group, disability, grade banding and working pattern as well as providing a comparison with the number of cases recorded over the previous three years.

As part of the review of HR practices, the grievance and disciplinary policies were to be reviewed. Supporting procedures would be provided to ensure a clear, consistent and structured approach to all Employee Relations issued

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

across the Council. Training for line managers would be included in the Council's Corporate Training Programme and introduced during the following twelve months for Investigating Officers.

Members of the Committee agreed that a mechanism for the central recording of all disciplinary and grievance cases had to be implemented.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the contents of the report be noted the proposed actions be approved; and
- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements.

## **424. APPRAISAL MONITORING**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services detailing the findings following monitoring of performance appraisals completed for 2007.

The appraisal scheme covered all people employed by the Council apart from casual and agency staff. The appraisals had to be completed over a three month period from April to June but 49 appraisals were still outstanding and Members were keen to ensure that those outstanding appraisals were not missed again.

It was reported that in total 452 appraisals were completed, an increase from the number recorded last year (82.2%) however as the target was 100% this figure remained unacceptable. The report stated that there must be an acknowledgement across Warwick District Council that the appraisal process was a key element of Performance Management and integral to performance delivery. This activity was a key requirement of all officers with line management responsibilities and action should be taken to manage non-compliance.

Members agreed that the Corporate Management Team should ensure that all appraisals had taken place within their Directorate and a further report would be submitted to the December Employment Committee with an updated percentage for completed appraisals.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the contents of the report be noted and the proposed actions be approved; and

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

- (2) the Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reports.

### **425. QUARTERLY SICKNESS ABSENCE AND TURNOVER MONITORING 07/08**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services outlining the sickness absence and turnover figures for the first quarter of 2007/2008.

The information provided included the total number of full time equivalent days per Service Area lost due to sickness absence during the period 1 April 2007 and 30 June 2007 as well as the total number of leavers and turnover percentage per Service Area for the same period.

The total number of Full Time Employees working days lost due to sickness absence from 1 April 2007 until 30 June 2007 was 953.2 which was an average of 1.97 days per employee. This included nine cases of long-term sickness absence (20 days or more). The total number of leavers for the period was 22 (not including casuals). This equated to a turnover of 4.55% for the quarter. 68.2% of leavers were voluntary resignations (including 2 early retirements) and 31.8% were non-voluntary leavers, which included three dismissals.

It was suggested that the data be collected and presented to Heads of Service on a quarterly basis together with detailed information on which individuals were taking excessive sickness absence so that managers were aware and could take necessary action. Members of the Committee were asked to decide if they would like to receive this information on a quarterly basis and report their decision to the Audit and Resources Scrutiny Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED** that in future reports regarding Sickness Absence and Turnover Monitoring be submitted on a six monthly basis to the Committee and they would report their decision to the Audit and Resources Scrutiny Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **426. AMENDMENT TO ADOPTION POLICY**

The Committee received a report from Corporate Personnel Services recommending an update to the adoption policy with an alteration to the payments for adoption leave, bringing it in line with the maternity policy and existing legislation.

The adoption policy was introduced ahead of legislation – at that time the provision for pay and leave was generous. In comparison to maternity pay and leave, adoption pay was out of line. Legislation recommended that adoption leave mirrored maternity leave in duration and that provision be made for payments at the Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) level for the duration. Pay,

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

whilst being generous initially did not include SAP and leave was far below the statutory level required.

Three options were considered as listed below, and were described in full in the report:

1. Do nothing and leave the policy unchanged;
2. Implement a change that reflected exactly the legal requirements; or
3. Implement a change that reflected the legal framework but that also retained the generous nature of the Councils original stance.

The Head of HR (Acting) reported that in appendix A to the report the third proposal should read '21 weeks at SAP only' and pointed out that adoptive mothers and fathers were also entitled to take parental leave if desired.

**RESOLVED** that the adoption pay and adoption leave entitlement be increased and reconfigured in line with legislation and best practice.

### **427. PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items, by reason of a likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraphs of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below.

Item Nos.	Para Nos.	Reason
428 & 429	1 & 2	Information relating to an individual Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

### **428. BUILDING ON EXCELLENCE**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the Building on Excellence paper which set out the changing nature of the world in which the Council operated and the need to have a framework within which the Council could respond to the demands of these changes.

It set out proposals on how Warwick District Council would have to adapt in order to respond to the many changes occurring or planned in its external environment and to some internal matters if it was to maintain and build upon the "Excellent" status it achieved in 2004 under the CPA regime. This was important if the Council was to continue to deliver quality public services at the lowest possible cost and be in the best position to shape the area for the benefit of the local community.



## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

Members of the Committee agreed that the Council had an objective in its current Corporate Strategy to manage its resources openly, effectively and efficiently. The proposals in the report demonstrated the need to consider changes to the organisational structure in order to achieve that objective.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) highlighted one amendment on page 84 of the report in paragraph 2.6.12 which should have read 'with the exception of the Estates Manager'. Members of the Committee agreed that the job titles were an improvement as they were more descriptive and if any further modifications were necessary they could be made even simpler.

**RESOLVED** that subject to approval by the Executive on the proposals presented to them in their report on Building on Excellence;

- (1) the Councils establishment be amended by deleting certain posts and creating others as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and in line with the proposals contained within the Building on Excellence report being presented to the Executive on 18 September 2007;
- (2) the Councils redeployment agreement be applied to those staff affected by the changes to the Establishment and receive a further report in December 2007 detailing the outcomes of the redeployment process;
- (3) the early retirement of the Head of Leisure and Amenities be agreed on the grounds of redundancy with effect from 31 December 2007; and
- (4) the proposed changes to the structure of the Council (Proposals 1, 2 and 3) as set out in appendix 2 to the report, be agreed.

### **429. DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) requesting agreement to the Trades Unions request to increase the multiplier for redundancy payments to 2.3.

At its meeting in March 2007 the Employment Committee approved a recommendation to adopt a multiplier of two to be applied to discretionary compensation payments in the case of redundancy. The recognised trade unions subsequently proposed that a multiplier of 2.3 be applied to the Council's Discretionary Compensation Payments.

The Council's Corporate Management Team considered the trade union proposal and supported it on the basis that it would place Warwick District

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

Council Scheme for Discretionary Payments on a more consistent basis with neighbouring authorities. The recommendation to apply the revised scheme to the Car Park Inspectors was because they were still employees of the Council and could be covered by any changes to terms and conditions. They were the only group of staff to have been made redundant since the revised scheme was introduced in April 2007.

The alternative option was to not accept the representation made by the Trade Unions and leave the discretionary compensation payments scheme unchanged from the decision made in March. Some members of the Committee were concerned that this would have a negative impact on trade union relations and could result in a local dispute. It was proposed and duly seconded that the recommendations be agreed as written and on a vote it was lost.

Some members of the Committee agreed with the comments made at the joint Audit and Resources and Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 17 September. It was felt that the redundancy multiplier should not be revised and remain at a factor of 2 as there was not enough evidence to support a revision to 2.3.

It was proposed and duly seconded that the redundancy multiplier remain at a factor of 2 and on the vote it was

**RESOLVED** that the Council's Discretionary Payments scheme remain as written, with a multiplier of 2 for redundancy payments.

(The meeting ended at 6.05pm)