

Employment Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2015 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Bunker, D'Arcy, Mrs Evetts, Heath, Mobbs, Naimo, and Rhead.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butler, Day and Murphy.

13. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes.

14. **Declarations of Interest**

Minute Number 17 – Regulatory Services within Health & Community Protection Redesign

Councillor Heath declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the room whilst the item was discussed.

15. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 were unavailable and would be submitted to a future meeting.

16. **Extension of Sustainability Officer's contract period**

The Committee considered a report from Health and Community Protection which requested authority to extend the contract period of the Sustainability Officer post for a further twelve months beyond March 2016.

The post currently had funding until March 2016 and the request for future funding was due to be considered by the Executive on 30 September 2015.

Approval was previously given for a two year contract period however the work to deliver against the aims and objectives of the Sustainable Communities Strategy was ongoing and could not be resourced from existing staff or budgets.

The report advised that extending the contract by one year would allow time for the impact of any decisions to be assessed, particularly in terms of how the sustainability agenda could be dealt with in the future.

Members could choose not to extend the contract however this would result in little progress in coordinating the sustainability theme across the Council. In addition, it would reduce the opportunity to identify funding of carbon reduction and renewable energy schemes to the benefit of the Council and the wider community.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The Committee asked for clarity on the work already undertaken by the post holder and how the renewable energy targets were being met.

The Head of Health and Community Protection, gave examples of future projects and advised the Committee that this work would not move forward unless the officer was in post.

The Committee noted the concerns raised regarding the implementation of the sustainability policies within the Local Plan and hoped the post holder would be able to look at the objectives of renewable energies.

Resolved that approval be given for the Sustainability Officer contract to be extended for a period of one year from 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017, subject to Executive approving the funding for the post.

17. Temporary Building Surveyor – Housing Stock Condition Survey & Strategic Asset Management

The Committee considered a report from Housing and Property Services which set out the proposal to recruit an additional Building Surveyor on a temporary basis for a period of two years.

On 3 September 2015, the Executive approved the recommendations in the Housing Stock Condition & Strategic Asset Management Report which set out the need to undertake a condition survey of 100% of Housing Revenue Account Residential Assets.

The post would support the effective completion of a survey of the condition of HRA assets and would be temporary post for a period of up to two years.

The report highlighted that the survey work was fundamental to the development of robust asset management data and, once completed, would form the foundation for the analysis, planning and implementation of future programmes of planned maintenance and investment works.

In response to a question from Councillor Rhead, the Deputy Chief Executive, (BH), advised that the post was for a period of up to two years as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report. He assured Members that this was a maximum time frame and the post would be reviewed after 18 months if necessary.

Resolved that the recruitment of a temporary Building Surveyor is approved.

18. Additional Temporary Staffing Resource

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) and Housing and Property Services which set out proposals to address capacity issues within the Assets Team of Housing & Property Services that were currently impacting on service delivery and workforce development.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

On 27 January 2015 the previous Employment Committee approved a significant redesign of the Asset Management Team within Housing & Property Services. A copy of the report was attached as an appendix to the report.

Overall, the recruitment process, both internal and external had proved to be more protracted than anticipated, with the final vacant post due to be filled shortly, subject to satisfactory interviews. Whilst the process was underway, there had been significant internal staff movement which had proved disruptive, particularly in respect of the Energy and Plant Management Team, where the two staff previously undertaking the Contract Administrator roles secured new positions within the Housing and Void Repairs Team.

The protracted and disruptive recruitment process and the relatively high proportion of new starters within the teams had several consequences: planned work needed to be rescheduled; managers had been unable to delegate work until staff had been appointed and settled into their (new) role; and managers had been unable to progress staff training and development as quickly as desirable because they lacked the resources to do so.

In addition, these issues had been compounded by long term sickness issues within the Building Surveying Team. The net result was a backlog of work, delays to the commencement of projects and an inability for the teams to effectively support colleagues working on key corporate and strategic initiatives.

The report therefore proposed to recruit a Project Manager for 24 months, reporting directly to the Asset Manager, to concentrate on the Open Book contracts review, process changes to the existing contract in advance of the review's completion and to assist with the co-ordination of a new approach to corporate asset management.

An additional Property Maintenance Officer (PMO) was also proposed for the period ending 31 March 2017. The funding for these posts would be considered by Executive on 30 September 2015.

The Deputy Chief Executive (BH), presented the report and explained the difficulties the service area had been experiencing. He advised that this was not a change to the structure but stated that the short term capacity issue needed addressing.

Resolved that

(1) the recruitment of the following posts is approved:

- one temporary Project Manager post at salary grade E1 for 24 months; and
- one temporary Property Maintenance Officer at salary grade F for the period ending March 31st 2017; and

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

- (2) the funding for these temporary posts will be considered by Executive on September 30 2015.

19. Public and Press

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below.

Minute Nos.	Para Nos.	Reason
17 to 19	1	Information relating to an individual
17 to 19	2	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

The full text of Minutes 17 and 18 were recorded in a confidential minute which would be considered for publication following implementation of the relevant decisions. A summary is as follows:

20. Regulatory Services within Health & Community Protection Redesign

The Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

21. Neighbourhood and Estates Team

The Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

22. Minutes

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 were not available and would be submitted to a future meeting.

The Committee returned to public session.

23. Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources which presented the Council's Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure, attached as an appendix to the report. It also set out the Authority's policy to support procedures that highlighted both informal and formal approaches to maintain all employees' dignity at work.

The report summarised the need for the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure to be more explicit in the area of employee dignity in and outside of work, whilst representing the Council.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

As part of an ongoing review of Council policies and their application, the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure was supplementary to the existing Disciplinary Procedure. This would allow for a more robust approach as to how the Council supported staff and managers in relation to bullying and harassment.

Section 7 of the report summarised the main points from the policy and procedure including addressing bullying and harassment and issues directly related to the Equality Act 2010. The document also focused on early intervention actions, mediation and the benefits this could achieve and how HR would continue to provide support, advice and guidance throughout.

The Chairman, addressed the Committee and advised that this document had been looked at in detail by the People Strategy Steering Group. It was hoped that this policy would help to support staff before issues escalated to a formal stage.

Officers confirmed that the Unions had been involved at the consultation stage and their input had been welcomed. It was also confirmed that this policy would now form part of employees' Terms and Conditions and HR would be holding workshops to brief managers on the new policy and procedures.

Resolved that the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, is approved.

24. Shared Parental Leave

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources which presented the Council's guide to Shared Parental Leave and the legislative requirements of the Council to support parents following the birth or adoption of children born on or after 5th April 2015.

Following the introduction of employment regulations from Central Government, the Council needed to formally adopt the Shared Parental Leave Policy (SPL), which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and publishing the Shared Parental Leave Statement was a legal requirement.

Section 8 of the report summarised the main points from the policy which explained that eligible parents would be able to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year after birth or following adoption.

The total amount of SPL that could be taken was 50 weeks and could only be taken during the 12 months following the birth or placement of the child.

Officers assured Members that, although it could often prove complicated, the HR team would continue to work with employees to ensure SPL was utilised wherever possible.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

In response to a query from Members, Officers advised that this policy had been adopted from Warwickshire County Council's legal policy.

Resolved that the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, is approved in line with legislation.

(The meeting ended at 5.15 pm)