

Employment Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 September 2022 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors Day, K Dickson, B Gifford, Hales, Kennedy, Kohler, Mangat, Noone, Redford, Tangri and Tracey.

1. **Appointment of Chairman**

It was proposed by Councillor Tracey, duly seconded and

Resolved that Councillor Redford be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

It was proposed by Councillor Tracey, duly seconded and

Resolved that Councillor Noone be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

3. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) No apologies were received; and
- (b) Councillor Falp substituted for Councillor Margrave.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. **Revisions to Senior Leadership Team**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which set out proposals to revise the Senior Leadership Team of Warwick District Council. The Council faced significant challenges in the context of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy, service demands and the need to evolve and adapt following the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the decision not to progress the merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, as well as an impending retirement. An interim structure was quickly implemented in May 2022, and it was now proposed to further revise this structure and formally realign functions within the reporting structure of the Senior Leadership Team.

Following the cessation of the merger process with SDC in arriving at the proposed structure attached at Appendix 2 to the report, it was important to achieve the following outcomes:

- To provide stability for the organisation following the impact of the pandemic and the abandoned political aspiration to merge.
- To recognise that, in line with the current budgetary forecast, the Council needed to achieve recurring general fund savings of at least £2.4m over the next four to five years but with that figure likely to increase significantly.
- Whilst proposing to reduce the Service Areas by two, aiming to ensure that there was an equitable balance in the overall quantum of work across all Service Heads positions.
- To recognise that the Senior Leadership Team were experiencing exceptional demands on their time, with both statutory responsibilities and political aspirations needing to be delivered.
- To recognise that there would need to be Service prioritisation of work and that it was not feasible for the full extent of all the Council's programme of work to be delivered at the same time. It had to be carefully programmed over a longer period.

It was important to note that the approach to ways of working was not about working in 'silo' and that there would be areas where cross – functional working would be imperative and would be expected.

The existing organisational structure was illustrated at Appendix 1 to the report and the proposed structure in Appendix 2 to the report. The proposed structure reflected that following the cessation of the merger with SDC, there was a vacancy as Head of Environment and Operations and that the Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure had served notice that she would retire as from 30 September 2022. The opportunity had been taken therefore not to re-appoint to these two positions, but to redistribute the services and activities of the Service Areas across the Council so reducing the number of Heads of Service by two. The redistribution of the services affected some areas rather more than others. Other more modest changes were also proposed. Overall, the changes reflected the Council's emerging Digital Strategy, for example, in aligning Benefits and Customer Service with ICT and the role that Arts could play with economic development and regeneration. Also, in that leisure management and green spaces services were related to the promotion of health and well-being and so had been aligned with other services that also contributed to these core policy objectives of the Council.

There were two other Head of Service posts that were currently vacant and were both currently filled on an interim basis by existing employees. As part of the proposed structure, the current post of Head of Development Services was proposed in the new structure as Head of Place, Arts and Economy and would be subject to the process as set out in the WDC Redeployment Policy and Procedure and Section 3 of the Process for the Recruitment of a Chief Officer as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

As part of the new proposed structure, there was a proposal to delete the post of Policy and Projects Manager under the Chief Executive's scheme of delegation and subject to the decision of Employment Committee recommendation (1) the process as set out in the WDC Redeployment

Policy and Procedure would apply with a view to avoiding/minimising any redundancies.

The other vacant post was the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer), and it was proposed that the process of making a permanent appointment should be started and that a Sub-Committee of five Members should be created.

Where a post had been deleted, the individual was put "At Risk", and employees were matched to posts where skills and experience were assessed.

In general, suitable alternative employment meant work that:

- the employee could reasonably be expected to do considering his or her level of seniority and skills;
- was on terms and conditions that were not substantially less favourable to the employee; and
- was suitable to the employee in the circumstances.

If approved by the Committee, the new structure would come into place from 1 October 2022, with recruitment to the roles of Head of Place, Arts and Economy and Head of Finance (s151) being progressed following agreement from this Committee to ensure permanent appointments as soon as possible.

On reviewing the procedure adopted by the Council, following the decision not to progress with the merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, officers noted a small number of references to working with SDC within the procedure that had been removed. In addition, officers noted that the proposed Sub-Committee of three Councillors would comprise of a Councillor from each of the Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and Green groups. Reflecting on this it was considered a sub-committee of five Councillors would have greater reflection of the political proportionality of the Council. This would be made up of two Conservative, and a councillor from each of the Liberal Democrat, Green and Labour Groups. While this was not in line with the procedure it was the Committees' decision on the size of Sub-Committee it wished to appoint.

This Council usually as part of its recruitment processes, advertised vacant posts internally first, as part of the process of encouraging staff development but had in some circumstances also advertised externally at the same time. The choice of process had significant implications time wise – 3 to 4 weeks for internal first compared to 3 to 4 months if external. In this case choosing the latter would not help the Council's budget setting process which needed to be completed by end of February 2023. The Chief Executive would discuss these approaches with Group Leaders and the Chair of the Employment Committee.

In terms of alternative options, should the Employment Committee choose not to make these amendments to the Senior Leadership Team structure then work on the implementation of the Business Strategy and ongoing projects would be impeded because of the continuing uncertainty. There were a variety of options that could have been considered but given the political direction to achieve and maintain stability quickly. those options were not appropriate.

An addendum circulated prior to the meeting advised of the following amendments to the structure detailed in Appendix 2 to the report:

- that Community Health & Wellbeing would remain under the Service Area of Housing, and would report to the Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection; and
- that the name of Communities, Environment and Leisure Services would change to Safer Communities, Leisure, and Environment.

The Chief Executive briefly outlined these changes and informed Members of the political proportionality in the sub-committee that, subject to the agreement of the recommendations in the report, would be formed for the recruitment of a Head of Finance.

The Leader of the Council stated that in the interests of strong cross-party working, he would be gifting one of the Conservative's seats on the proposed sub-committee to the Whitnash Resident's Association to ensure that all parties were included in the recruitment process.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Executive stated that:

- it was his understanding that the sub-committee had to be formed from existing members of the overall Employment Committee and Members not on Employment Committee could not be co-opted on to the sub-committee. He understood Members' concerns about not utilising potential expertise outside of the Employment Committee so would check the procedure and get back to them; and
- the new structure had been carefully worked out by himself and the Leader of the Council. He noted that it may not be perfect, but they had tried to match the Service Area and Portfolio Holder remits as closely as possible.

The Leader of the Council added that, subject to the Committee's decision, a diagrammatic explanation of the new structures in relation to the Portfolio Holders, which would then align to the Programme Advisory Boards, would be circulated.

In response to further questions from Members, the Chief Executive advised that:

- after the cessation of the merger with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, he did not think it was appropriate to change the existing structure too drastically, as giving staff as much certainty as possible was a priority;
- after the pandemic, it had been a struggle to recruit for vacancies within the Council and workloads had not reduced, so going forward, new strategies would have to be devised and the need for additional resources may have to be considered on a case-by-case basis; and
- he would not be considering outsourcing recruitment to the private sector at this time, although going forward there might be opportunities to share services with other authorities.

It was proposed by Councillor Hales and seconded by Councillor Day, and

Resolved that

- (1) the new Senior Leadership Team Structure, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, to start from 1 October 2022, and that the line reports (note existing Structure at Appendix 1 to the report) be noted;
- (2) officers be asked to include the overall salary budget reduction within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and that it be reported to Cabinet as part of the next Budget Monitoring report; and
- (3) the minor amendments to the Recruitment Guidelines set out at Appendix 3 to the report be noted.

Recommended to Council that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution (including the scheme of delegation) to reflect the new structure, roles, and responsibilities.

(The meeting ended at 6.42pm)

CHAIRMAN
29 November 2022