

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 30 September 2010 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bunker (Chairman), Councillors; Caborn, Coker, Michael Doody, Gifford, Mrs Knight and Wilkinson.

(Councillor Wilkinson substituted for Councillor Barrott)

11. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

12. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 June and 31 August 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. **MEMBERS/TRADES UNION MINUTES**

The minutes of the Members/Trades Unions & Joint Consultation Safety Panel held on 3 June 2010 were noted.

14. **COMMITTEE & CIVIC SERVICES ESTABLISHMENT**

The Committee considered a report from Members Services which highlighted amendments to the current Committee & Civic Services Team.

Due to the retirement of Robert Inman, the Senior Committee Services Officer, as team leader for the Committee Team, had taken on additional responsibilities and the team had seen an increase in legislative requirements placed upon it. Following the departure of the part time Committee Services Officer, on 31 October 2010, the report requested approval that this post be amended from 22.5 hours to a full time post of 37 hours per week, to assist in the additional workload being placed on the team and to correct the establishment so that it reflected the agreed Salaries Budget.

In addition, both the Elections and Committee Teams had a significant number of challenges to deal with in the next 12 months in preparation for the district/parish elections. The Committee Team was in the process of rolling out a new computer system and this was based upon the continuing level of staff members. The Elections Team was also introducing a new electoral management system and was already preparing for the local elections and a possible referendum in May 2011. Therefore, the report also requested that an additional temporary secondment post be created from 1 November 2010 to 31 May 2011, to the Committee Services Team of a Democratic Services Assistant, funded from the Spend to Save resources allocated to Committee Services. This post would be shared between the Committee and Elections team.

The Senior Committee Services officer presented the report and highlighted the recent changes that had taken place within the department and the impact that had had on the team. He assured members that the temporary secondment post would be advertised, and hopefully recruited to, internally.

He also advised that it had been agreed that the current secondment post, of Committee Services Officer, would remain a temporary post until the outcome of the Support Services Review was clear. This review was due to conclude at the end of March 2011 and this would give the team two months to act on the findings of that review.

An alternative option would be for the Committee not to agree the secondment or increase of hours, however, it was felt that the current level of service would not be delivered. In addition, the extra responsibilities recently taken on would need to be transferred to other officers as it would not be possible to accommodate them within current resources.

Members raised concerns over the 'Spend to Save' budget especially during the current financial climate. The Senior Committee Services Officer assured members that this money had already been specifically allocated for use for scrutiny support work and stated that if this money was not used, the support work would have to cease.

RESOLVED that

- (1) following the departure of the part time Committee Services Officer, on 31 October 2010, the post be amended from 22.5 hours to a full time post of 37 hours per week;
- (2) the PA to the Chairman and Chairman's Chauffeur roles be integrated into the Committee Services Team to provide additional support for Civic Services;
- (3) an eight month secondment be created, from 1 November 2010 to 31 May 2011, to the Committee Services Team of a Democratic Services Assistant; and
- (4) the Team structure as set out in appendix 1 be noted along with the renaming of the team to the Civic and Committee Services Team.

15. LAND CHARGES

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which proposed the permanent transfer of the Land Charges service from Members' Services to Development Services.

Following the retirement of the Head of Member's Services and Monitoring Officer, responsibility for the various services had been transferred elsewhere on an interim basis pending the outcome of the lean systems review of support services.

However, it was proposed that the Land Charges service should be moved to within Development Services on a permanent basis due to their close working relationship.

An alternative option was for the Land Charges service to be managed within another service area by the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) but this would be of little or no benefit.

Members agreed the recommendation in the report was the most logical and reasonable course of action.

RESOLVED that the transfer of Land Charges from Members' Services to Development Services as from 1 October 2010, be approved.

16. **GUIDE TO SENIOR MANAGERS RECRUITMENT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

The Committee received a report from Human Resources detailing the revised Guide to Senior Manager Recruitment for Elected Members, which included the changes requested at the previous Employment Committee in June 2010.

The Council had an objective in the current Corporate Strategy to manage its resources openly, effectively and efficiently. The revised guide supported elected Members in recruiting to senior posts using transparent and fair processes.

Members were pleased that the guide had been slimmed down with a good deal of the lengthy wording being removed to leave a more concise document. The main issue for members was to try and ensure consistency through the membership of the interviewing panels but not to the extent whereby panels were unable to accept substituted members, leaving them short of panel members on occasions. They also agreed that it was imperative that any substitutes were trained in the relevant techniques, prior to seconding for another member.

Following discussions a number of amendments were suggested to cover the concerns raised and, in addition, some typographical mistakes were corrected.

Members agreed that there was no need for the guide to return to the Committee following the relevant amendments but requested that it be emailed out to Councillors once completed.

RESOLVED that the revised Guide To Senior Management Recruitment for Elected Members be approved, subject to amendments.

17. DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE POLICY AMENDMENTS

The Committee received a report from Human Resources outlining the amendments that had been made to the Council's Disciplinary and Grievance policies, in consultation with the Unions, to make the policies easier to use and understand.

It was felt that the previous policies were confusing and lengthy whereas the amended policies contained step by step guidelines and had a similar, three stage format for both. In addition the appeal process had been changed to reduce the number of cases that could reach appeal stage and the responsibility for the management of issues had been altered. The old policy had prevented immediate line managers from dealing with initial complaints and resulted in the situation being escalated to senior managers when it could have been dealt with at a more appropriate level.

An alternative would be not to change the policies but this could result in further time being spent by staff, Unions and HR in ensuring that the policy was adhered to rather than spending time working on the solutions.

Members pointed out a couple of formatting issues on pages 35 and 38 of the agenda and agreed that under the section regarding Disciplinary Sanctions on page 39, a verbal warning should be 'confirmed in writing'. It was also felt that a paragraph detailing that the individual had the right of appeal to members should be inserted at the end of the document.

It was agreed that the flow chart detailed on page 55 should be included in both the Disciplinary and the Grievance Policies and re-titled accordingly.

RESOLVED that the amendments be noted and the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies be approved as attached at appendices A and B to the report.

18. ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT MONITORING DATA

The Committee received a verbal update from Human Resources regarding the annual employment monitoring data and the relevant papers were distributed at the meeting.

Karen Warren, Human Resources Manager, addressed members and advised that the figures had been compiled from two separate systems – the HR system, Snowdrop and the Payroll system, Oracle.

Members were concerned that the establishment figures appeared to have increased year on year since 2006-2007 and requested an explanation as to why this would be, especially when members had authorised a recruitment freeze. In addition, there was a concern that recruitment was

taking place if a department was below its 'establishment'. Members were clear that all posts must have the permission of the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council.

Karen Warren explained that the establishment levels would not match up with the number of people employed because some posts had remained on the establishment numbers even though they were vacant. This scenario often occurs with interim positions and secondments.

It was agreed to request further data from Payroll as to monthly salary bills for the past two years against the number of people paid. In addition, the Committee felt it necessary to continue with this discussion at the next meeting, scheduled to be 25th October 2010 and to extend an invitation to the Chief Executive, Chris Elliot.

Members felt very strongly that accurate figures were needed to determine if the recruitment freeze had been taking effect or not.

RESOLVED that this item be deferred to allow further investigations to be carried out into monthly salary bills and the number of people employed.

(The meeting ended at 5:50 pm)