

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 January 2007 at Riverside House, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Crowther (Chair); Councillors Boad, Mrs Begg, Mrs Bunker, Gill, Hammon, Hatfield and Kundi.

(Councillor Mrs Begg substituted for Councillor Gifford).

894. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

895. **SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR POST**

The Committee considered a report from Environmental Health, Members' Services, Private Sector Housing and Waste Management which requested the support of Members for the creation of a Systems Administrator Post. The post was to be a shared resource between Environmental Health, Members' Services, Private Sector Housing and Waste Management.

The case for the post was supported by each of the Service Areas using the APP/Civica system. There was not such a post at present because of the corporate need to restrict costs. It was recognised that failure to effectively implement and manage the system would have serious implications for service delivery in key service areas. The need for the post was originally identified in the Project Initiation Document for the system.

The consequences of not providing the post were that the APP/Civica system would either not be implemented in some areas or would only be partly used. As key front line services were planned to utilise the system, it could have a significant effect on key performance results in Licensing, Waste Management (at a time when the new contracts would be starting), Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing.

RESOLVED that the Systems Administrator post be agreed as set out in the report, subject to

- (1) the agreement of financial arrangement by Executive; and
- (2) a report back to the Committee updating them on the approach to management from Environmental Health.

896. **CUSTOMER BEHAVIOURS WORKING GROUP**

The Committee considered a report from Revenues and Customer Services for Members to support the recommendations contained within the report from the Customer Behaviours Working Group.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

As the Council moved to a more customer focused approach to service delivery, the number of staff working on the “frontline” had increased. The Council’s strategy was to try and deal with customers at the first point of contact so they did not feel as though they were being handed from one person to another with no resolution to their enquiry.

The strategy worked well with 83% of phone enquiries answered at the first point of contact and over 90%’s for the face-to-face services.

Staff undertaking this frontline work felt as though they were making a real contribution to service delivery and felt motivated when a customer paid a compliment about the way their enquiry was handled.

It became clear from staff meetings and feedback to managers that many frontline staff were finding it extremely difficult and de-motivating especially as there were no corporate guidelines in place for advisors to use. The situation was also recognised in feedback from the staff survey on stress.

To resolve this problem, Revenues and Customer Services had established a Working Group to consider the issue and brought forward recommendations that could be rolled out across the organisation. The recommendations of the Working Party were set out in the appendix to the report.

The Committee suggested that Councillor Mrs McFarland, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services would be the person to contact in future about issues with the Customer Behaviours Working Group. This suggestion was noted by the Head of Revenues and Customer Services.

RESOLVED that the recommendations from the Customer Behaviours Working Group be supported.

897. SUNDAY TIMES 100 BEST EMPLOYERS

The Committee considered a report from the Acting Director for Customer Information and Advice informing them of the intention to apply for inclusion in the Sunday Times Best 100 Employers List.

The Sunday Times Best 100 Employers was an annual awards list that was available to all employers. It used a staff questionnaire to assess against a set of criteria related to how staff felt about their organisation.

At present there was only one local authority within the top 100 and that was a Metropolitan Council. Entering the Award would enable Warwick District Council to benchmark itself against the business world and success would reinforce our reputation as a good employer.

The criteria fitted well with the current staff survey which was currently undertaken on a two yearly basis and the criteria that were considered as part of the European Foundation for Quality Management assessment. Results

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

from both of these indicated that Warwick District Council would score well in the Sunday Times assessment.

The proposal was to enter the awards in 2008 which required a submission in September 2007 to gain an indication of where on the list Warwick District Council would feature. A new feature being introduced next year was a star rating for those entrants not included in the top 100 giving recognition of their placing against the criteria. This would allow an opportunity to include any necessary improvements into the Corporate Improvement Plan in order to submit another entry for 2009, should Warwick District Council be unsuccessful in making the top 100 the first time.

RESOLVED that the Council applies to enter the Sunday Times 100 Best Employers list in 2008.

898. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

The Committee considered a report from the Member Development Working Group which suggested an approach to development reviews for Councillors.

As part of its work towards achieving the Members Development Charter and considering improvements to development for Councillors, the Member Development Working Group had considered an approach that could be used to enable all Councillors to have the opportunity for an annual development review.

The group felt that the start of a new Council in May would be the most appropriate point at which to introduce such a scheme and had considered a number of approaches which could be used.

The Working Group recommended a set of principles to underpin the development review scheme as set out below.

1. The review would be based around development needs and how to meet them. It was not about performance management of Councillors.
2. The review would not be compulsory but would be made clear that the Council strongly encourages members to take advantage of the process.
3. Training would be provided for members undertaking the reviews and those receiving them
4. The review would be undertaken by a member of the Group, preferably the Group Leader, but in large groups other members may be involved as reviewers.
5. The review would be based on a development needs analysis and would concentrate on ways that identified how needs could be met. May be through a combination of formal training courses; seminars; visits to other Councils; one to one discussions with members and officers and working parties.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

It was proposed that reviews would normally take place between February and April because it allowed changes to be made to Committee nominations. In a local Election year the reviews would be between June and August. The first reviews would therefore be due to be offered between June and August 2007 which would allow the production of a Member Development Programme to follow on from the induction programme already planned for May to July.

RESOLVED that the proposals for introducing member development reviews be approved.

899. INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR NEW COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered a report from the Member Development Working Group on the programme for the induction of new members of the Council following the Elections in May 2007.

The Member Development Working Group had considered the feedback and evaluation from the previous induction programme and had also drawn on its own experiences as three members of the group were newly elected in May 2003.

The proposal of the Working Group was a result of their work and looked to provide a varied induction programme that covered the essentials for new Councillors without providing an overwhelming amount of information in the first few months.

The approach would be a mixture of some formal presentation sessions and some informal opportunities to meet people and hold discussions. During the period May to June there would be the opportunity for Councillors to identify their development needs and complete a personal development plan. A timetable for this was attached as an appendix to the report.

Councillors who were elected would be provided with a more detailed programme explaining the content of the sessions and give full details of the times and venues after the elections.

The Committee raised concerns that the Induction requires a lot of daytime activities and thought this should be revised to include more evening or weekend events. In particular, How the Council Works and the Planning Committee parts of the induction.

RESOLVED that the proposals for the Induction Programme subject to consideration being given by officers to moving more sessions to the evening be approved.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

900. ALTHORPE INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE CENTRE ESTABLISHMENT OF STAFF POSITIONS

The Committee considered a report from Acting Strategic Director for Customer Information and Advice to establish the posts of Business Manager and Administration Assistant for the Althorpe Innovation and Enterprise Centre.

In July 2004 the Executive recommended that the Employment Committee established the post of Business Manager and Administration Assistant for the scheme at Althorpe Street pending the award of a grant from Advantage West Midlands to support the scheme.

At its meeting of 11 December 2006 the Executive accepted the grant offer that had been made by Advantage West Midlands which included funds for a Manager and one full time equivalent post covering reception and administration functions. The funding was available from April 2007 until March 2012 and therefore any staff appointed would have full employment rights and the costs of ending the contracts of employment would need to be built into the project.

The establishment of the posts would allow a redeployment opportunity for an existing member of staff who had been instrumental in securing the funding for the Enterprise Centre.

RESOLVED that the posts of Business Manager and Administration Assistants (2 x 0.5 full time equivalents) be established in the Directorate of Customer Information and Advice for the period 2007/08 to 20011/12 or until such time as there is funding available.

(The meeting ended at 5.20 pm)