

# EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15 September 2009 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Crowther, Michael Doody, Gifford, Mrs Goode, Hammon, Kirton and Mrs Knight

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Coker.

## 5. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Caborn be appointed to chair the meeting in the absence of Councillor Coker.

## 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 December 2008, and 4 February, 10 March, 24 March and 20 May 2009, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 8. WORKFORCE PLAN INCORPORATING ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources regarding the Workforce Plan incorporating the annual workforce monitoring reports.

The monitoring reports had been collated annually since 2003 and showed year on year comparisons regarding the Council's workforce. The Workforce Plan had been developed as part of work for the Comprehensive Area Assessment and was a key target under the People Strategy 2008/11.

The Committee discussed the details contained in the report at some length and it was requested that details should be circulated regarding the costs incurred in employing agency staff. It was also suggested that the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee could consider examining consultancy costs.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and that it be agreed that the actions contained in the 2008 annual monitoring reports had been addressed either in accordance with the Workforce Plan or as described in the report.

## 9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY UPGRADE

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources regarding the new Equality and Diversity Framework and the current position that the Council had reached against the new framework. The report also contained a proposed action plan for future work and commitment to fulfil the requirements.

The Equality Bill was progressing through Parliament at present and was expected to receive Royal Assent in the autumn after a period of consultation. It aimed to strengthen protection, advance equality and simplify the law, as the new Act would replace over a hundred existing Acts and regulations.

The report outlined the key proposals of the Bill and the new duties which it would be impose on public services. An action plan was also set out which would enable the Council to achieve at least Level 2 of the new Equalities Framework for Local Government.

In May 2008 a peer review had been carried out of the work undertaken towards achieving Level 3 of the previous equalities standard. This had identified a number of areas that required attention if progress was to be made on embedding equalities and diversity into the organisation. A series of actions had then been produced to meet these requirements.

The HR Manager suggested that it would be advantageous if a Councillor became involved in implementing the action plan and the Committee agreed that Councillor Coker should be approached to undertake this role. It was also agreed that an update of progress should made to the Employment Committee in six months time.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the new legislation and duties placed on public services and the summary of the peer review against the 2002 version of the equality standard be noted; and
- (2) the Equalities Strategic direction should be set at a higher level than the current equalities group and that the current strategy be reviewed in the context of the new framework.

## 10. TAX FREE BIKES FOR WORK – CYCLE SCHEME

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources regarding a tax exemption which was contained within the Government's Green Transport Plan to allow employers to provide cycles and safety equipment to employees as a tax free benefit. Payments would be deducted at source from salaries and tax savings would be achieved for employees and national insurance savings for employers.

The proposals also supported the Council's corporate values and objectives on environmental matters. There had been a considerable number of requests made by staff in support of the proposed scheme.

**RESOLVED** that the Tax Free Bikes for Work scheme be adopted, subject to the approval by the Executive regarding the budgetary aspects and to the Council's costs in administering the scheme being covered by those participating in it.

## 11. **HOMEWORKING POLICY**

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources regarding a revised home working policy designed to encourage a greater number of staff to commit to working regularly from home in order to release office accommodation with a view to maximising potential income.

The report related to a regular home worker defined as an employee where there was a contractual arrangement where the home was either the main place of work or where a regular pattern of home working was established through a formal agreement.

The Council was constantly seeking to demonstrate value for money in the delivery of services and this could be by either reducing costs or increasing income resulting from investigating how property could be better used. The promotion of home working would also further support the Council's policy of providing equality of opportunity in access to work, promoting the work life balance that supports the health and well being of its employees, and reducing the environmental impacts and costs of travel.

The policy provided greater clarity as to how requests for home working would be agreed, processed, managed and funded.

In discussing the proposed policy, reference was made to the need to provide training and support for managers to ensure that staff working remotely were managed competently.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the revised policy be endorsed; and
- (2) a progress report be made to the Committee in due course, together with information as to how the scheme was being managed to ensure output.

## 12. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY – ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report from Environmental Services regarding a review of the Council's Health and Safety procedures which had been summarised as an Annual Report.

In effectively managing health and safety within an organisation, it was important to involve all staff and to be open and honest about how matters were dealt with and about successes and failures. The Annual Report drew together all relevant information regarding these matters.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report be noted; and
- (2) the report be published on the Council's web site and intranet.

(The meeting ended at 5.50 pm)