

MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 18 July 2008, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.00pm.

PRESENT:

Employers representatives: Councillors Copping and Kirton.

Trades Unions representatives: Mr A Crump, Mr Foster and Mrs J Webb.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barrott and Mr J Lynch

It was agreed that the Employers' should Chair the meeting as a continuation of the previous meeting so Councillor Kirton took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

259. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

260. REVIEW OF BUILDING ON EXCELLENCE REDEPLOYMENT PROCESS

The Panel considered a report from the Head of Organisation Development and Performance Improvement regarding the redeployment process followed for the Building on Excellence programme.

The Panel recognised that because it was a resumed meeting it had been difficult for people to attend. However they felt it would have been helpful if the Chief Executive could have attended the meeting.

The report detailed the process that was undertaken in order to implement the proposals of the restructure of the Council under the Building on Excellence programme.

The consultation on the proposals commenced in February 2007 and were mainly implemented in April 2008 although there were still some outstanding issues which require closure.

The changes mainly affected senior staff within the Council although a number of teams changed in terms of policy and a number of lessons were learnt through applying this policy to senior level redeployments.

The recommendations for improvements to the future change programme were to ensure that sufficient resources were available to manage the change and adequate planning took place to ensure that processes could be followed within the agreed timescales. It was also recognised that the Redeployment Policy should be reviewed in light of this change programme.

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The Head of Organisation Development and Performance Improvement responded to a series of questions from the Panel, summarised below:

- The Council has an adopted Policy that all Heads of Service Posts were evaluated by an external Hay Panel;
- At the time of undertaking this restructure Personnel were short staffed. However all the posts had been filled or were in the process of being filled, these were a Head of Service, a HR Manager, two Personnel Officers and four full time equivalent Administration Officers;
- If a similar redeployment process was undertaken again there would be a need to evaluate it from the start to ensure that there was sufficient resources in Personnel to undertake the work;
- There should be a learning point with regard to communicating the proposals and it was accepted that Senior Management should have recognised this problem before the redeployment process commenced;
- There should have been a mid point review or review at each stage of the process to ensure it was running correctly or identify problems and resolve them, without progressing regardless as had been the case;
- Those employees at risk of redundancy were aware of this and of the support available to them if required; and
- On reflection there was a more significant role for Councillors in the redeployment process which would need to be considered if a similar process was to take place and processes would need to be amended to allow for this.

Unison accepted the report and that the change was managed better than the Admin Review but still wasn't ideal and it all related to a lack of resources such as the vacancies and absences in the directors post.

It was suggested and supported by Councillors that Unions should be consulted and involved as a core part of any change process and they should play a greater part to help take pressure off the Personnel Service.

Members expressed concern that the original reports to Executive and Employment Committee were accepted because they were assured that there was sufficient resources in place. In response the Head of Organisation Development and Performance Improvement explained that when it was first submitted for approval it was considered that sufficient resources were in place to support the process. For this reason the Panel felt the need to recommend that in future change programmes this panel should be more actively involved in any process from the start to monitor progress to allow detailed discussion between the unions and councillors (who were the employers) to ensure all parties were satisfied with the process.

An open door policy was employed by the Chief Executive however this made it very hard for senior managers as this would be the person interviewing for the post and therefore most officers did not approach as they felt it was a done deal or could directly affect the outcome of interviews if they expressed their feelings about the process.

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Concern was expressed about how individuals were informed of and kept up to date with the process as was the apparent lack of a fall back position if it went wrong.

A key problem for this change was that the managers affected by this proposal would normally be involved in supporting the staff during change and no clear independent way had been identified to support affected managers through the process.

RESOLVED that

- (1) in future redeployment programmes more time is put into planning the process for managing the outcomes of change during the consultation phase so that an agreed timetable and process is available once a decision to change is reached;
- (2) before a change programme is undertaken sufficient resources be identified to manage the programme and ensure that processes are followed and communicated effectively to all relevant parties;
- (3) the proposed approach for using programme management within the Council would take account of both these factors and ensure that any new changes are managed in a more robust way;
- (4) the Employment Committee recommends to Council the amendment to Officer Employment Procedure Rule 4(b) to read "In accordance with the delegated powers the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Joint Chairs of the Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation and Safety Panel, decide which senior posts will be appointed by the Employment Committee or have member involvement"; and
- (5) in future change programmes the Members/Trades Unions Joint Consultation and Safety Panel be involved at all stages to enable them to monitor the progress of the proposals and ensure that they are being progressed in accordance with the agreed process.

(The meeting ended at 4.45 pm)