

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held on 18 September 2008 at the Town Hall, Peterborough

Members Present: Councillors Peach (Chairman), C Burton, Croft, M Dalton, Holdich and Swift

Officers present: Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive
Jacquie McGeachie, Acting Head of Human Resources
Karen Craig, Senior HR Consultant (Policy Development)
Shahin Ismail, Head of Legal
Lindsay Tomlinson, Governance Support Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fitzgerald and Lamb. Councillor C Burton attended as substitute for Councillor Fitzgerald and Councillor M Dalton attended as substitute for Councillor Lamb.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2008 were approved as an accurate record.

4. HR Policies

As a consequence of changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme an audit of the council's employment policies had been carried out and this had necessitated changes to three policies:

- The Retirement policy had been amended to state that the age at which flexible retirement benefits were payable changed to age 55 years from age 50 years.
- The Grievance procedure had been amended to state that it was not the relevant procedure to use for appeals against pension decisions.
- The Attendance policy had been amended to take account of the revised ill health retirement rules for those employees who were members of the local government pension scheme.

The Adoption policy and the Maternity policy had been amended as a result of changes to the Sex Discrimination Act. The employee was now entitled to receive all

the contractual benefits (excluding salary) throughout the entire Adoption leave and Maternity leave periods respectively.

An amendment to the employee code of conduct reinforced the legal position whereby employees who were Qualified Social Workers must be registered with the General Social Care Council (Care Standards Act 2000) and that teachers / those with Qualified Teacher Status must be registered with the General Teaching Council for England (Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998).

Some areas had been identified where the process and practice when managing Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure checks could be improved even further. The main changes were:-

- Introduction of a formal risk assessment process to be followed in the event that a person commenced work pending return of their CRB disclosure results.
- Further explanation regarding offences which were declared as high risk for employment with children and vulnerable adults.
- Further confirmation of the role of the manager in ensuring the correct level of check was undertaken and the forms completed correctly.
- Definition of volunteer stated to ensure compliance with the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Fees) Order 2004.

Members stressed the need to ensure timescales for CRB checks were improved. Officers advised that the issues were improving as on-line checking was now available and recruitment processes were being revamped and streamlined. The prime concern however was to ensure that safeguarding remained top of the agenda. In the case of agency workers working with children or vulnerable people the council would ask for a CRB checked person and could ask for evidence that the check had been done. Members asked how often proof of CRB checks were requested of agency staff and officers agreed to investigate and send a response.

The Managing Change Policy had been amended to state that the age at which redundancy benefits were payable had changed to age 55 years from age 50 years. A review of the current discretionary compensation payments in place had resulted in the proposal that there should be no change to our existing position. However, an additional statement had been included to explain the statutory position explicitly. It had also been amended to make clear the discretionary powers allowing an employee to submit a request for additional enhancements, up to a maximum of 104 weeks pay. Any statutory redundancy pay would be off set against the 104 weeks' pay and each case had to be decided on its own merits.

The change would allow clarity and consistency in the application of the policy and included a robust process where approval of these discretions was either at director level for levels below heads of service and Employment Committee for Directors, Assistant Directors, and Heads of Service.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the following policy changes as a result of recent legislative amendments to:

1. the Local Government Pension Scheme
 - 1.1. the Retirement policy
 - 1.2. the Grievance procedure
 - 1.3. the Attendance policy

2. Changes to the Adoption and Maternity policies as a result of changes to the Sex Discrimination Act.
3. Changes to the Code of Conduct to ensure it is clear regarding the registered status of Qualified Social Workers and Qualified Teachers.

The Committee agreed:

1. Changes to the Criminal Records & Employment of Ex-Offenders Policy.
2. Changes to the Managing Change policy to include additional statutory information as a result of the changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme and clarification on discretionary compensations.
3. To establish a sub committee of Employment Committee, comprising Councillors Holdich, Lamb and Swift, to be known as the Discretions sub committee, to hear applications in relation to the discretions that can be exercised in relation to enhancements to redundancy pay and other cases where the Council was required to exercise its discretion based on the merits of the individual case.

5. Delivering the City's Ambitions – Proposed Senior Management Structure

The Committee received a consultation document which had been published on 6 August 2008 and explained the background to the proposal for changes in the Council's senior management structure. In the light of the challenges the council faced, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council had asked the Chief Executive to review the fitness for purpose of the current management arrangements, giving due consideration to the Council's ambitions for the city and the areas where the Council needs to focus its improvement efforts in service provision.

The Committee considered the consultation responses received from directors and heads of service. The level and detail of the consultation responses reflected the strong engagement and commitment of the directors and heads of service to the review. Most senior managers recognised the need to focus on customer management, service and care and the need to further break down silos within departments to ensure good customer service. There was also strong support for the case made to move away from an operational focus at the corporate management team, allowing heads of service to focus not only on their own service area but also to work across functions using their capabilities more effectively within the organisation. Finally, there was strong support for the case made that members should be better supported.

The consultation document identified a number of changes to the management structure as well as ways of working which the consultees were asked to comment on. There was good support and general welcoming of the proposals, with massive support for the Leadership Programme and Workforce Development initiative. There was strong support for the proposals on senior management arrangements and the redefinition of the roles between the corporate management team and the broader senior management teams of heads of service and assistant directors.

Having considered all of the consultation, the Chief Executive planned to make a number of changes to the proposals set out in Annex 1 to the report.

In response to a query from members it was stressed that there were no proposals at this stage to amend the Cabinet portfolio structures.

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the changes to the senior management structure proposed by the Chief Executive.

Chairman
15.00 to 15.25