

PERSONNEL AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel and General Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, on 17 September 2008 at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Miss Lynda Thirzie Smart (Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch
Councillor Russell Hurle
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Chris Smithson
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Mrs Rose Stratford

Mary Harpley (Chief Executive)
Anne-Marie Scott (Head of Human Resources)
Stephanie Rew (Human Resources Manager)
James Doble (Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager)
David Best (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Tony Brummell (Head of Building Control and Engineering Services) (for Minute No. PG.22)
Phillip Rolls (Recreation and Health Improvement Manager) (for Minute No. PG.23)
Gillian Greaves (Head of Housing Services) (for Minute No. PG.30).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hughes and Pack.

RESOLUTIONS

PART I: MATTERS NOT OF AN EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL NATURE

PG.20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 14 May, 10 and 11 June and 21 July 2008 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2008 were approved as submitted subject to the name of Councillor Lawrie Stratford being added to the list of Member apologies presented to that meeting.

PG.21 EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS QUARTER 1 – 2008/2009

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources setting out details of staff employment numbers for information and monitoring purposes for the period April to June 2008. The information set out details of staff turnover according to Directorate.

The Head of Human Resources indicated that she would provide information as part of the next employment statistics report showing a comparison of staff numbers prior to and following the TUPE transfer of housing and sports centre staff.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted.

PG.22 REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT POST – CLERK OF WORKS

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Building Control and Engineering Services seeking approval for the creation of a Clerk of Works post in the Engineering Services Section.

The Committee noted that since 1999, following the retirement of the previous post holder, the Council had operated without a directly employed civil engineering Clerk of Works. Since that time Consulting Engineers had been engaged on a term basis to provide top up and specialist resources to the former Building Control and current Engineering Services Sections. The Clerk of Works resource had been required continuously since that time and would be needed for the foreseeable future to oversee the Council's capital programme and quasi-capital construction programme and also to service the highway adoption agency operated on behalf of the Oxfordshire County Council. The proposal was to add the Clerk of Works post to the establishment at Local Grade 14; the job description was circulated with the report. The cost of the post could be accommodated within the 2008/2009 budget and would result in on-going full-year efficiency savings of £5,000 net.

RESOLVED that the establishment post for a Clerk of Works in Building Control and Engineering Services be approved.

PG.23 GO ACTIVE IN CHERWELL PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Health and Recreation seeking approval for the recruitment of a Go Active Project Co-ordinator on a three year fixed term contract; the job description for the post was tabled at the meeting.

The Committee noted that the Go Active Project was a joint initiative between the Council, the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership, the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and in the case of Cherwell, Parkwood Community Leisure. The aim of the project was to enable and support inactive people in becoming physically active through sports and recreation activities and this in turn contributed to achieving levels of participation by residents in physical activity (new National Indicator NI 8).

The Committee also noted that a successful application had been made to the National Lottery through the Sport England Community Investment Fund. That funding when combined with PCT funding would bring £38,750 per year to the Council for three years. This enabled a Go Active Project Co-ordinator to be appointed on a fixed term contract to work with GP Surgeries, sports and leisure clubs and leisure providers across the District. In this respect Parkwood Community Leisure had agreed to appoint three full-time Go Active Activators based in the Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington Sports Centres. The Co-ordinator post would manage the work of the three Activators. The post had been evaluated at Local Grade 13.

RESOLVED that the establishment of a Go Active in Cherwell Co-ordinator be approved on a three year fixed contract.

PG.24 **HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY**

Further to Minute No. PG.12 the Head of Human Resources submitted a report which (i) invited the Committee to comment on, and endorse, the Human Resources Strategy prepared following the recent consultation exercise; the Executive had considered the Strategy at its meeting on 15 September 2008 and agreed, subject to the comments of this Committee, to recommend its approval to full Council on 20 October 2008; and (ii) sought endorsement of The Learning and Development Strategy Statement 2007 – 2012 .

The Committee noted that the Human Resources Strategy underpinned the Council's Corporate Plan and had been developed in the context of delivering the identified Corporate Priorities. The Strategy had also been informed by the recent Investors in People Assessment (see Minute No. PG.25 below) and the Staff Satisfaction Survey carried out earlier in the year.

RESOLVED that the Human Resources Strategy and the Learning and Development Policy and Strategy circulated with the report be endorsed without comment.

PG.25 **STAFF SURVEY AND INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ACTION PLANS**

The Head of Human Resources invited the Committee to comment on and endorse two Action Plans prepared following the Staff Satisfaction Survey undertaken during January 2008 and the Investors in People inspection carried out in June this year.

The Committee was reminded that earlier in the year the Council had undertaken its first comprehensive staff survey and had also been assessed against the Investors in People Standard. The many actions identified by each process were consistent and were either already in progress and/or had been included in the Human Resources Strategy (Minute No.PG.24 above refers). The next step was to launch further action in relation to the Action Plans which included a Corporate Management Team "Back to the Floor Day" on 8 October 2008 and a Management Conference on 17 October.

The Committee asked that progress reports be submitted at least twice a year on the Staff Survey Action Plan and on relevant areas of the Human Resources Strategy.

RESOLVED that the two Action Plans be endorsed without comment.

PG.26 **COUNCIL OFFICES OPENING HOURS AND FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Strategic Director, Customer Service and Resources and the Head of Human Resources setting out proposals to standardise office opening times across the District linked to an updated flexible working hours policy; the revised Flexible Working Hours Policy Statement was circulated with the report.

The Committee noted that the proposal to standardise office hours involved the offices opening from 8 45 am to 5 15 pm Monday to Friday. The offices currently

closed at 4 20 pm on a Friday. In addition, there was the possibility of delaying public opening hours until 9 30 am on Thursday mornings to facilitate staff training and to enhance internal communication. The revised opening hours were to take effect from 1 October 2008. The new Flexible Working Hours Policy provided a flexible system of attendance which allowed employees to vary their time of arrival, departure and length and timing of lunch breaks and to take time off if additional hours were worked. This meant that there would be a move away from the current set core time as the daily working bandwidth covered the period 7 00 am to 10 00 pm. The line managers would have responsibility for the day to day operation of the scheme to ensure service delivery and office cover during the revised opening times.

The Committee noted that the later 9 30 am opening time would not be implemented straight away as further work on feasibility and customer impact was to be undertaken in conjunction with Service Heads. Members agreed that this part of the proposals should be re-considered at the next meeting when the aforementioned work had been completed and information on the assessment of the outcome would be available.

RESOLVED

- (1) that subject to (2) below the revised opening hours as set out above and the Flexible Working Hours Policy be approved;
- (2) that a further report be submitted to the next meeting on the proposal to open the offices at 9 30 am on Thursday mornings.

PG.27

STAFF COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources submitting a new Staff Complaints Policy and Procedure for approval. The new Policy replaced the current grievance and harassment and bullying procedures.

The Committee noted that current policies dealing with staff grievances and allegations of bullying and harassment were developed some years ago and no longer reflected employment legislation, the structure of the Council or good practice. The policies had been combined into a new Staff Complaints Policy. The main focus of the Policy had been changed to encourage and facilitate the early and informal resolution of issues.

The revised Policy had been endorsed by the Employee Side and the Staff Consultation Group.

RESOLVED that the new Staff Complaints Policy and Procedure be approved as submitted.

PG.28

SERVICE HEAD RECRUITMENT - FINANCE

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Customer Service and Resources seeking approval for changes to the job description for the Head of Finance post and for the payment of a separate allowance for the Section 151 Officer role.

The Committee noted that the Corporate Finance function would be managed by the Head of Finance and would focus on statutory and technical accounting functions. This included the production of the Annual Accounts and incorporated the recently approved technical accountant function and operational areas such as debtors and creditors. The area of responsibility had a contemporary public sector focus and required expertise in statutory and technical financial practices. The interview process would be tailored to identify candidates possessing the relevant skills and would include a technical interview.

The Committee also noted that the procurement function had transferred on an interim basis to the Business Finance team from Business Services. The intention was to make this transfer permanent. The Payroll function was also to transfer to this Team. The addition of the two functions would help to ensure that the Head of Finance post attracted candidates of the calibre and technical background required.

RESOLVED that the revised job description, grade and proposed recruitment process for the Head of Finance post be approved.

PG.29

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that, having determined that in all the circumstances of each case the public interest in maintaining exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, and pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting whilst the items in Part II of the agenda are considered on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as identified by the numbered paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, set out under the under mentioned minutes.

PART II: MATTERS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION

EXEMPT

PG.30

AMALGAMATION OF BANBURY DISTRICT HOUSING COALITION RENT DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME WITH THE COUNCIL'S SPEND TO SAVE SCHEME

(Paragraphs 1 and 4)

The Committee considered a joint report (containing exempt information) of the Head of Housing Services and the Head of Human Resources which set out proposals to amalgamate the above two Schemes and to add one permanent post to the establishment to manage the combined scheme. The proposal met Objective 3.1 of the Cherwell Homelessness Strategy 2007 – 2011.

The Committee noted that the post would be offered under TUPE to the Landlord Support and Administration Manager, who currently managed the Banbury and District Housing Coalition Scheme. The costs associated with the new post would be offset against an existing vacancy of Housing Options Officer (Post No. HS0041) in the Local Needs Team.

RESOLVED that the addition of one permanent post to the establishment, which is to be offered under TUPE to the Landlord Support and Administration Manager who currently manages the Banbury District Housing Coalition Scheme, be approved.

PG.31

COMPULSORY REDUNDANCY RECOMMENDATION

(Paragraphs 1 and 4)

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources which recommended the compulsory redundancy of one member of staff who had been displaced as part of the organisational re-structure and had not been placed in an alternative post under the Council's Redeployment Policy. Further details are set out in the Schedule of Individual Matters (containing exempt information) filed in the Minute Book.

The Committee noted that the member of staff had appealed against the previous decision (Minute No. PG.16 refers) not to enhance their pension benefits. The appeal was to be heard by the Performance Related Pay and Appeals Panel on 23 September 2008.

RESOLVED that the compulsory redundancy, to be effected at the end of the statutory notice period if no permanent alternative is found before that date, be approved.

EXEMPT

(**Note:** James Doble (Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager) declared a personal and a prejudicial interest in this matter as he was to advise the Performance Related Pay and Appeals Panel on the appeal referred to above and he left the meeting during the discussion and voting thereon).

PG.32

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – DEMOCRATIC, SCRUTINY AND ELECTIONS SECTION STAFFING

(Paragraphs 1 and 4)

Further to Minute No. PG.14 the Committee considered a report (containing exempt information) of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services seeking approval for various staffing changes in the elections, democratic and scrutiny sections of the Legal and Democratic Service.

The Committee noted that in summary the proposals were (i) the introduction of a career grade for the Elections Assistant with the re-designation of that post to Assistant Elections Officer and the payment of an honorarium to the current post holder to recognise his work on the annual register of electors canvass; (ii) the deletion of the Elections Manager post and the Local Grade 11 post which reported to that post from the staff establishment following the recruitment of an experienced elections officer; (iii) the addition of a Trainee Administrative Assistant (Elections) post to the establishment at Local Grade 4 (4 days a week) with this post being offered to the member of the staff bank who currently carried out this role on a temporary basis; (iv) the re-designation of the Scrutiny Officer post (LD115) and the Democratic Services Officer post (LD114) as Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officers to allow greater flexibility and to enable both Officers to cover respective work areas; and (v) to utilise the remaining budget to recruit a further Democratic and Scrutiny Trainee as a permanent addition to the establishment to meet the demands of the increasing democratic and scrutiny workloads.

The cost of the proposals could be met from the current budget from 2008/2009 and from efficiency savings in the 2009/2010 financial year.

RESOLVED that with immediate effect:-

- (1) the proposed career grade for the Elections Assistant (post LD118) (Local Grade 6 to 7) and the re-designation of that post as Assistant Elections Officer be approved and the honorarium be paid as set out in the report;
- (2) the Elections Manager post and the Local Grade 11 post that reported to it be formally deleted from the establishment;

EXEMPT

- (3) the post of Trainee Administrative Assistant (Elections) be added to the Establishment at Local Grade 4 (4 days per week) and the post be offered to the member of the staff bank carrying out this role;
- (4) the Scrutiny Officer (Post LD115) and the Democratic Services Officer (Post LD114) be re-designated as Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officers to allow both to provide cover to each others work area;
- (5) the budget remaining within the Legal and Democratic service area be used to recruit a further Democratic and Scrutiny trainee and that new post be added to the establishment.

(Note: Councillor George Reynolds requested, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14.2, that it be recorded he had voted against the decision in resolution (4) above to re-designate the Scrutiny Officer post as Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer).

The meeting ended at 8 20 pm.