

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES -11 DECEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair);
Councillors Gavin, Page, Skeats and Terry.

Also Present: K Magee (for items 21- 24), J Hoggart (for items 21-26(4)),
I Wardle, C Brooks and S Poole.

Apologies: J Boyd.

RESOLVED ITEMS

(The committee noted that this was the last meeting to be held in this Civic Centre prior to the move to the new Civic Offices.)

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. REVISIONS TO RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS GUIDANCE

The HR/Payroll Services Manager submitted a report updating the Committee on the amendments to the Recruitment & Selection Policy and the Pre-Employment Check Guidance that brought these up to date with various safeguarding and other policy changes. The revised Recruitment and Selection Policy (with tracked changes) was attached to the report at Appendix A and the revised Guidance on Recruitment and Pre-Employment Checks was attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report stated that the Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure contained the key policy structure that determined the Council's resourcing activities and processes and so required updating to keep abreast of relevant key changes.

The Policy had been the subject of a major review, following consultation with the joint trades unions, by the Committee on 7 October 2008 (Minute 11 refers) and had subsequently been amended by the Committee on 2 November 2010 (Minute 23 refers). The Policy had been revised to take account of updates in relevant legislation, including:

- Changes to the national Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Right to Work framework;
- The 'two tick' accreditation requirement to consider disabled job applicants that met the minimum requirements for a post;
- The policy on appointing redeployees;
- Streamlining the reference request process;
- Including appeals under the Policy and Procedure within the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

The associated guide to pre-employment checks related specifically to the safeguarding of vulnerable groups and was intended to provide further, detailed advice to managers when recruiting to roles that required checks with the DBS.

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Resolved -

- (1) That the amendments set out and attached to the report at Appendices A and B be agreed;
- (2) That the revised Recruitment and Selection Policy and the Pre-Employment Checks Guidance be approved.

23. REVIEW OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The HR/Payroll Services Manager submitted a report updating the Committee on the amendments to the Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure. The revised procedure (with tracked changes) was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report stated that the current Harassment Policy and Procedure had been adopted by the Committee on 27 March 2002 (Minute 20 refers) and provided a framework within which complaints or concerns about harassment could be investigated and resolved. The Policy had been modelled on the Grievance Procedure and was designed to deal with harassment concerns in a structured, systematic and sympathetic manner. Guidance was provided on the forms that harassment could take as well as the various ways in which concerns could be channeled.

The report explained that the Policy was a high level statement of the Council's rejection of harassment in all its forms and that the procedure formed an important element of the practical support that was offered to staff to resolve such disputes.

The report also stated that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Joint Trade Unions Committee (JTUC) had been consulted on all changes to the Policy and Procedure.

Resolved - That the revised Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure be agreed.

24. CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE REVIEW

The Managing Director submitted a report updating the Committee on the proposals to move to a new operating model that would restructure the Council to ensure that there was additional capacity and resilience to meet service needs and opportunities. A current senior management family tree was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a proposed senior management family tree was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report stated that the Council currently delivered approximately 700 services, some of which were statutory, such as adult social care and waste services, and some of which were discretionary services, such as leisure facilities. The government was reducing its funding to local authorities by 37% in real terms between 2010-11 and 2015-16, but the Council had to continue to remain financially stable and to meet its statutory obligations. This would be particularly challenging due to factors such as the increasing population of Reading and the changes in inspection regimes.

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The report explained that the number of residents in Reading had increased by 9% to 159,200 people since 2001 and was forecast to increase by a further 24% by 2050. This growth had resulted on pressures on services, particularly primary school places as 20% of the total population were aged between 0 and 18 years.

There had also been significant funding cuts since 2010 and the Council had responded by making savings, but it would be difficult to find further efficiencies of sufficient scale to meet the forecast loss in income from the Government, considering the savings that had already been achieved and the number of staff lost.

The report also stated that there had been changes to the inspection regimes for a number of regulators, including the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement and reviews of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards. In addition, the Care Quality Commission had announced a new approach for inspections in the health and social care sector. Whilst the intent of the new approaches was accepted, they did create additional pressures on local authorities as the remit and approaches of these inspections had wider implications and now included a responsibility for partners, which necessitated ensuring that improvement plans were sufficiently and adequately resourced.

At the meeting on 22 September 2011 (Minute 14 refers) the Committee had approved the merger of the Directorates of Education and Children's Services and Housing and Community Care to enable more joined up work to be done across the services. During 2013 and 2014 the senior management structure had been reviewed further to ensure that the Council could meet future needs and opportunities. Subsequent service reviews as part of the Reshaping Programme had introduced new staffing structures and a decentralised and flatter structure but, whilst savings had been achieved, the loss of staff had resulted in issues with capacity and resilience in some parts of the Council.

Following the resignation of the current Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, there presented the opportunity to create two new roles to ensure that there were additional resources and focus to cover these areas. The two new roles would be:

- Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services; and
- Director of Adult Care & Health Services.

The report explained that there would be a two week consultation period in December 2014 and then the posts would be advertised in January 2015. It was anticipated that recruitment to these posts would be challenging and so interim cover would be sought to ensure continuity and statutory compliance.

Resolved - That the proposed changes in senior management outlined in the report be approved and the following posts created:

- i. **Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services;**
and

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ii. Director of Adult Care and Health Services.

25. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item, as it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

26. EARLY RETIREMENTS AND REDUNDANCIES (INCLUDING VOLUNTARY RELEASE SCHEME APPLICATIONS)

The HR and Payroll Services Manager, the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance submitted a joint report, which set out one request for flexible retirement, six requests for termination of employment on the grounds of redundancy, two requests for early retirement on the grounds of efficiency and two requests for early retirement on the grounds of redundancy.

Proposals, together with the financial implications were set out in a schedule appended to the report on the following basis:

- Financial cases were given which represented the highest cost to the Council. In most cases this included discretionary added years on pension (where payable), as this represented a direct and ongoing cost to the Council. This was in accordance with the Council's current practice of considering redundancy and retirement terms up to the maximum limit of discretion, where applicable. The Committee was asked to approve individual proposals subject to a maximum ceiling on the exercise of discretion;
- Financial implications were costed on the basis of the estimated figures, which were subject to final confirmation. The figures might be affected by changes to final salary, pensionable service, age or date of leaving. The Committee was asked to approve the proposals on the basis of the estimated figures, subject to any individual proposal being brought back to Committee if the confirmed costs were more than 10% in excess of those reported;
- The costs of early retirement on the grounds of ill health were met by the Local Government Pension Scheme or the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

The report sought approval for the payment of a compensation package in the case of proposed termination of employment or early retirement on grounds of redundancy, efficiency of the service or ill health subject to the conclusion of all outstanding matters in each case, including ongoing consultation with employees and their representatives, and efforts to secure alternative employment, where appropriate.

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A case of flexible retirement was set out in a schedule appended to the report and included information relating to compensation or capital (early release of pension) costs and full year salary savings (including with on-costs). The payback period for the employee was also shown in the spreadsheet.

Resolved -

- (1) That the early retirement on the grounds of efficiency of employee A, the early retirement on the grounds of redundancy of employees E and F, and the termination of employment on the grounds of redundancy of employees B, C, D, G, H and I, be approved on the terms set out in the schedules appended to the report subject to the conclusion of all outstanding matters in each case, including ongoing consultation with the employees and their representatives and efforts to secure alternative employment, where appropriate;
- (2) That the proposals set out in (1) above be approved on the basis of the financial implications set out in the report, and that authority to conclude the proposal be delegated to the Head of Finance, Monitoring Officer and HR and Payroll Services Manager (acting jointly) within that framework, and subject to the maximum ceiling identified for the proposal.
- (3) That the current terms for agreeing compensation packages in specific cases of early retirement or termination of employment on the grounds of redundancy or efficiency be confirmed;
- (4) That the proposal for flexible retirement, as set out in the schedule attached to the report, be approved;
- (5) That the early retirement on the grounds of efficiency of employee J be approved on the terms set out in the schedule appended to the report subject to the conclusion of all outstanding matters in the case.

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.50 pm).