

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2005

Present: Councillor Berman (Chairperson);
Councillors Neale, Sheppard, Stephens and Walsh

Apologies: Councillors English, Jones and Percy

9 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July, 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Walsh's name in the list of apologies.

10 : SINGLE STATUS AND JOB EVALUATION – PAY PROTECTION PROPOSALS

This Committee agreed, at its last meeting, the principle of pay protection and to receive a further report to include proposals for the duration of the pay protection period once the potential costs had been estimated. Following that meeting, the Trade Unions (Unison, GMB and TGWU) had formally registered their disappointment at the decision not to agree a specific period of protection for those staff whose jobs could subsequently be down-graded as a result of job evaluation. In view of the Committee's decision to agree the principle of pay protection only and to use the pilot study as a basis for estimating the costs of the full job evaluation exercise, all three Trade Unions had declared a dispute and refused to co-operate on any aspect of job evaluation until the issue had been resolved.

The Trade Unions subsequently met with the Leader of the Council and Councillor Stephens (in his capacity as Chair of the Works Council) to discuss the issues.

The Leader had indicated to the Trade Unions that he was prepared to recommend to this meeting that a minimum period of three years pay protection should be agreed although the precise details of those protection arrangements would still need to be informed by the results of the pilot job evaluation exercise.

Whilst the original request for five years pay protection was initially refused, the Leader had since clarified to the Trade Unions that the possibility for a longer period of pay protection, such as the five years requested by the Trade Unions, would not necessarily be ruled out and would depend largely on the outcome of the pilot study. However, the Council should be mindful that any pay protection arrangements must be time limited with the aim of achieving pay equality as soon as possible. Pay protection arrangements must not perpetuate long term unequal pay for jobs that have been assessed as equal under job evaluation. On the basis of this proposed commitment by the Leader, all three Trade Unions had agreed to return to the negotiating table so that job evaluation and single status issues could continue to be progressed.

The Trade Unions had welcomed the recommendations within the report and had thanked the Members for being prepared to reconsider their position.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) a minimum of 3 years pay protection be agreed for those staff whose jobs may subsequently be downgraded as a result of job evaluation, although the possibility for a longer period of pay protection, such as the 5 years requested by the Trade Unions, would not be ruled out and will depend on the outcome of the pilot exercise;
- (2) the precise details of the pay protection be informed by the results of the pilot job evaluation exercise;
- (3) a report on the outcomes and results of the pilot job evaluation exercise be received at the earliest opportunity.

11 : REIMBURSEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL FEES

The Committee was advised that whilst the harmonisation of many terms and conditions of employment had been secured since Local Government reorganisation in 1996, a small number of contractual differences remained between former South Glamorgan County and Cardiff City employees.

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One difference concerned the reimbursement of professional fees. The former South Glamorgan County Council did not reimburse such fees whilst the former City Council did and this entitlement transferred with those staff at Local Government Reorganisation.

In view of the Council's commitment to the development of staff, it was proposed that this inequitable position needed to be regularised. The potential cost of extending the former "City Council provision" to all staff had been estimated, based on information provided by Chief Officers, as an additional minimum cost of £110,000 per annum.

This approach would be clearly more equitable and groups of staff not previously covered would have the opportunity to have professional fees reimbursed, as appropriate.

It was important that there was a consistency of approach and application if a decision was taken that the Council should reimburse professional fees for relevant staff. Consequently, the following principles needed to be agreed and incorporated into a new procedure:

- membership of the professional body must have been acquired by examination;
- the professional organisation for which the fees are claimed or the mandatory registration fee must be relevant to the employees current job;
- the categories of staff for which subscriptions will be paid by the Council is matter for each Chief Officer to determine;
- staff should in the first instance pay their subscriptions direct to their relevant institute/professional organisation and reclaim them from the Council in a similar manner to other reimbursable expenses e.g., travelling expenses, PET etc., with appropriate supporting evidence such as a receipt;
- expenses will be reimbursed via the Payroll;
- only one professional subscription per employee per financial year will be reimbursed.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the principle of reimbursing professional fees be agreed as outlined in the report and that Chief Officers be authorised to pay a professional subscription where it is considered relevant to the employee's current job;
- (2) the principle of reimbursing mandatory registration fees paid by an employee without which he/she would be unable to carry out their duties be agreed;
- (3) based on the principles outlined in paragraph 12, the Chief Human Resources Officer develop and issue to CIS a procedure, clear criteria and relevant documentation to be used;
- (4) the scheme is to be effective for professional fees due from 1 April 2006.

12 : REVIEW OF CHIEF OFFICER ARRANGEMENTS

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the number of Corporate Directors had recently been reduced following a restructuring of the Corporate Directors Team. Work had been streamlined and major projects had been taken off-line, allowing other Directors to focus on service delivery.

An opportunity had now arisen to undertake a similar exercise at Chief Officer level and to reduce the number of Chief Officers. The objective would be for Chief Officers to have responsibility for delivering one of the key priorities of the Council, working across traditional Chief Officer boundaries. This would not only improve corporate working, but would contribute efficiency savings to channel into frontline services. In addition, it was necessary to reorganise Chief Officer portfolios to restore balance, as large projects such as St David's 2, Sports Village, Transportation Partnership and Waste Management Strategy were moved from portfolio areas into the new Programme Management Functions.

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the proposals would be to:

- keep some of the existing statutory and core central Services including HR, Finance, Legal and ICT;

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- expand the role of the Chief Scrutiny Officer so that it provides a challenge, change and efficiency function across the Council;
- create a Projects Design and Development Chief Officer post to assist in the delivery of major infrastructure projects and embed a project management culture across the Council;
- have seven Chief Officer posts responsible for service delivery with responsibility for a key outcome for Cardiff, for example creating a bright, safe City. The benefits will be to give the Council more demonstrable results and encourage cross-boundary working.

The proposed structure was submitted as Appendix 1 to the report and an outline of the services included within each area was submitted as Appendix 2 to the Report. The proposals would reduce the number of Chief Officers from 16 to 13.

The Council's Voluntary Severance scheme would be used to effect a smooth transition to the new structure. The Assistant Chief Executive pointed out that at present one Chief Officer had expressed an interest in leaving and one post was currently vacant and that other individuals may express an interest once proposals became clearer.

It would be possible to start the process quickly, by reorganising functions to create the new Projects Design and Development post, reconfiguring Services to create a Chief Safety Officer post – which would encompass housing, neighbourhood renewal and community safety – and by assigning regulatory functions to combine them with partner Service areas. Other changes would take place over the medium term, but hopefully could be achieved by April 2006, depending on expressions of interest for voluntary severance. A Transition Plan was submitted as Appendix 3 to the Report.

The Chair invited Mark Turner, Branch Secretary of Unison to comment on the proposals. Mr Turner explained that he had discussed the proposals with the Assistant Chief Executive. Although Unison did not have difficulties with much of what was proposed, the Union did have concerns about the funding of the Project Management post and the impact on Service Areas. He questioned the merits of creating large Service areas, particularly in

areas such as Highways and Traffic and Transportation where Officers had great expertise and Chief Officers were hands-on. He also referred to a lukewarm response from Chief Officers and Operational Managers to the proposals, who felt that there had been insufficient consultation. There was also some confusion about timescales.

The Assistant Chief Executive responded to the Trade Union comments. The change process was designed to last the test of time and create stability. The Assistant Chief Executive had discussed the proposals with all Chief Officers and most had been positive. Both the Corporate Directors' and Chief Officers' Teams were working together on the proposals.

Members debated the merits or otherwise of combining Transport and Waste Management. The Chair pointed out that Transportation and Waste impacted upon the environment. Members also questioned the role and independence of the Chief Scrutiny Officer. The Assistant Chief Executive pointed out that the Chief Scrutiny Officer was already instrumental in progressing the Change Programme and the Efficiency Programme.

In response to a query regarding structures, it was pointed out that the report addressed issues at Chief Officer level and above. The Policy & Economic Development unit, managed by a Head of Function, would continue to report to the Chief Executive. The question of grass cutting would be the subject of a report back to this Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Walsh and seconded by Councillor Sheppard that the report be referred back for further consideration.

The reference back was lost.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the proposals outlined in the report to reshape the Chief Officers Team be approved;
- (2) the question of grass cutting be the subject of a report back to this Committee.

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(Councillors Sheppard and Walsh requested that their dissent to the report be recorded).

13 : OPERATIONAL MANAGERS – REMUNERATION ARRANGEMENTS

This Committee in March 2005 had considered a report on Senior Management Remuneration within the Council. That report had put forward specific recommendations in relation to the implementation of revised salary points for Chief Officer roles based on the Hay Group assessments of relative job sizes and benchmarked against market comparisons for posts of similar size and complexity.

The Hay Group was also asked to consider various issues concerning the pay structure and other arrangements relating to the Council's Operational Management Group. In particular, the Hay Group was asked to report on:

- Pay Market Data relevant to Operational Managers;
- total remuneration comparisons (taking account of the value of benefits);
- the boundary between Principal Officer pay arrangements and the OM Structure;
- flexible working practices, such as flexitime/leave;
- linkages between pay and performance.

A copy of the report prepared by the Hay Group was submitted as Appendix 1 to the report. Members were advised by the Assistant Chief Executive on the contents of the report and of the main conclusions reached by Hay in relation to remuneration arrangements for Operational Managers.

RESOLVED – That on the basis of the independent Hay evaluation of remuneration arrangements for the Operational Manager group, this Committee:

- (1) confirms the median salaries set out in Appendix 2 to this report for Operational Managers;

- (2) adjusts the annual leave entitlement for OMs in line with market practice and to the same levels as for other senior PO graded Council staff with effect from 1 April 2006;
- (3) formally dis-establishes the OM3 grade with immediate effect and Corporate Directors, with the assistance of Hay, be authorised to review all existing OM3 posts to determine whether they should be graded at OM2 or PO5 with effect from 1 April 2006;
- (4) implements salary protection arrangements as outlined in paragraph 14 of this report for all OM3 staff, who are subsequently graded at PO5;
- (5) confirms that any request for flexible working arrangements (excluding the Flexible Working Hours Scheme) from Operational Managers should be considered by Chief Officers, in accordance with the Council's flexible working practices.

14 : EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT ON SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee had identified the need to investigate sickness absence and as a result, a Task & Finish Group was established to investigate levels of absence in the Council. The Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee endorsed the findings of the Task & Finish Group at its meeting on 9 June which were then presented to the Executive Business Meeting on 28 June 2005.

The Executive Business meeting initially noted the recommendations and further considered them at its meeting on 13 October.

A copy of the report and draft response was submitted as Appendices A and B to this report. The draft response provided details against each of the 15 recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee relating to various aspects of the management of absence within the Council including:

- levels and cost of absence;
- policy and procedures;
- practical application of policy and procedures;
- communication and training;
- the role of leadership in tackling sickness absence.

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The response made it clear that whilst changes could be made to the policy, the effectiveness of its application was key to any improvements. This would have resource implications for Human Resources and appropriate budget bids were being made via medium term financial planning process. There were also resource implications for Service areas in managing sickness absence more effectively. The Members encouraged the Chief Human Resources Officer to follow up with Southampton and York to learn from their best practice experience.

RESOLVED That –

- (1) the response of the Executive to the Scrutiny Committee's investigation into the management of sickness absence within the Council be noted;
- (2) a further report be received by this Committee in due course on progress actioned.

15 : EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MATTERS

The proceedings of the Works Council held on 15 September 2005 were submitted for information.

The following issues were discussed at that meeting:

- Trade Union access to exempt reports;
- review of time off/facilities agreement;
- single status and job evaluation;
- making the connections – delivering better services for Wales;
- disturbance allowance.

A Member received information in relation to a query raised at the meeting of the Works Council.

RESOLVED That the issues discussed at the Works Council be noted.

(The meeting was concluded at 3.55pm).