

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS COMMITTEE

15 JANUARY 2007

Present: County Councillor Stephens (Chairperson)
County Councillors Berman, Derbyshire, Jones,
Sheppard, Walker and Walsh

Apology: Councillor Salway

19 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 October and 12 December 2006 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairperson.

20 : PANDEMIC INFLUENZA – HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

The Committee was advised that current advice from the World Health Organisation was that countries, including the United Kingdom, should be planning for a possible influenza pandemic although its timing was highly unpredictable.

The Council had established an internal Pandemic Planning Group and was currently planning and developing the Council's response to such an event. If an influenza pandemic occurred, the Council would need to maintain essential services and play a role in managing the pandemic.

Essential services would have to be maintained bearing in mind that at least 25% of employees would be absent through sickness directly attributable to pandemic or as a result of caring responsibilities.

The following proposals were identified in the report:

- Service Areas should identify essential services which will need to continue in the event of pandemic influenza.
- The Emergency Management Unit and Service Areas should identify additional services which the Council will have to provide in the event of pandemic influenza.

- The minimum number of employees required to provide the essential and additional services needs to be calculated
- Service Areas need to identify the skills needed and the checks/training required by employees who will provide the essential and additional services
- Once delivery needs have been assessed, further consideration needs to be given to organisational arrangements required to ensure delivery of essential and additional services.
- Service Areas need to plan how to accommodate employees whose normal workplaces are closed in the event of pandemic influenza.
- Service Areas need to identify employees who could effectively work at home in the event of pandemic influenza.
- Service Areas need to identify employees who as a result of caring responsibilities may be unable to attend work.
- A future meeting of Employment Conditions Committee decides on whether the Special Leave Policy should be amended in the event of pandemic influenza.
- Communications, Emergency Management and Human Resources need to jointly develop an Employee Communication Plan to be implemented if the likelihood of a pandemic increases or the pandemic materialises.
- Emergency Management Unit, Human Resources and Financial Services should, investigate the purchase of appropriate respiratory masks. Service Areas will need to provide information on the number of employees who will be directly dealing with the public in order to calculate the number of masks required.
- Trade Unions should be kept fully briefed and consulted in the development of organisational arrangements in the preparation for pandemic influenza through the Health and Safety Advisory Forum, Works Council, Health and Safety Committees, Service Area Joint Consultative Committees and other mechanisms, as appropriate.
- Service Areas identify employees who will need fuel for private vehicles in order to deliver essential and additional services.
- The Council should identify financial resources to address the issues raised in this initial report on the implications of pandemic influenza.

Members raised a number of issues including the potential closure of schools and major event venues; the identification of essential staff; and the need for a detailed risk assessment to be undertaken. The Chairperson requested a progress report be submitted to the April meeting of this

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Committee.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the work that has been undertaken to date in reviewing the implications of an influenza pandemic be noted;
- (ii) a report be submitted to the April meeting of this Committee on further developments and proposals;
- (iii) any amendments required to the Council's Special Leave Policy be submitted here for consideration.

21 : GENDER EQUALITY DUTY

The Equality Act 2006 introduced the equivalent of a lawful overarching obligation on public Authorities in relation to the Gender Equality Duty which was to come into effect in April 2007.

The purpose of the Duty was to create balances and equitability for women and men in employment and services.

The Council was required to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between women and men. It was specifically required to develop and publish a Gender Equality Scheme; develop and publish a Policy on equal pay arrangements and to ensure that new legislation, policies, employment and service delivery changes were assessed for gender impact.

The Gender Equality Scheme was to include an action plan indicating how the Council would meet its obligations within a three-year period.

Within the Gender Equality Scheme the Council would be required to:

- draw up a scheme identifying gender equality goals and show the action to be taken to implement them (the action plan);
- consult employees and stakeholders as appropriate in setting gender equality goals and scheme;
- publish the gender equality goals and scheme;

- monitor progress and publish annual report on progress;
- review the goals and schemes every three years.

It was proposed by a Member that the Committee should monitor key indicators on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the Council supports this report and the Work Programme associated with the development of a Gender Equality Duty Scheme;
- (ii) the draft scheme and action plan be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee;
- (iii) a further update report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of the Scheme;
- (iv) a progress report be submitted to the March meeting of this Committee on the outcomes and findings of the pilot job evaluation exercise.

22 : SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS: UPDATE

The Committee considered a report outlining the transitional arrangements following the departure of the Assistant Chief Executive. The transitional arrangements involved transferring Schools & Lifelong Learning to Neelam Bhardwaja in January 2007 and creating three teams in the centre, with links to the Corporate Directors Team through the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.

The transitional arrangements would remain in place pending the review by the Chief Executive of Senior Management arrangements in relation to Corporate Directors, Chief Officers and Heads of Function between January and March 2007, within a framework of identifying a further saving of approximately £170,000 in Senior Management costs for future years.

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Whilst these temporary transitional arrangements had been put in place a further report, based on the above review, would be put to the March meeting of this Committee, detailing the proposed Senior Management Structure and taking into account the budget provision in 2007/08 and beyond.

In addition, the Chief Officer for Transport, Infrastructure & Waste had secured a position elsewhere and would be leaving the Council's employment on 25 March 2007. In view of the importance of this role, it was proposed to advertise the post in January with a closing date of early February. Members' long listing would take place mid February to be followed by an assessment centre later that month and an appointment potentially made in March 2007.

Members expressed some concerns related to the combination of responsibility for both Transportation and Waste Management within the same Chief Officer role and felt that the position may need to be reviewed in the light of the experience of attracting suitable candidates through the agreed advertising process. The breadth of the portfolio of the Corporate Director (Opportunities) was also discussed..

In view of the concerns of Members on the availability of suitable candidates for the Chief Officer post, it was proposed that this Committee be updated on the receipt of applications for this post to the March meeting.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the transition arrangements outlined in this report between January and March be noted;
- (ii) the post of Chief Transport, Infrastructure and Waste be advertised as soon as possible in relevant publications and this Committee be updated on the progress of this post at its March meeting;
- (iii) a further report on Senior Management arrangements be considered at the March meeting of this Committee.

23 : REVISED DECISION MAKING ARRANGEMENTS – IMPACT ON DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Committee received a report which outlined a proposal to amend the current Decision Making levels with the Council's existing Disciplinary Policy.

A consultation process on revised Disciplinary and Grievance Policies and Procedures was underway and was to be considered by this Committee in April. The Committee was advised that an element of the current Disciplinary procedure needed to be amended as a matter of urgency to align it to the revised delegations. This concerned the current arrangements for those chairing and making decisions in Disciplinary Hearings. As part of the consultation, feedback from Trade Unions and Managers on experiences in implementing the current policy suggested that the current Disciplinary Decision Making Framework should be amended to empower the Manager hearing a disciplinary case to make and implement whatever the appropriate decision was considered to be without reference to another senior manager.

It was proposed that the existing Policy be amended to make the person hearing the case the decision maker. This would align with broader delegation changes which enhanced the accountability and responsibility of Operational Managers. The current arrangements were outlined in Appendix A to the report and the proposed revised decision making authority levels were submitted as Appendix B to the report.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the decision making element of existing Disciplinary Policy and Procedure be formally amended as outlined in Appendix B to give the authority for managers hearing disciplinary cases to make and implement the appropriate decisions;
- (ii) Appendix B be therefore incorporated into the existing Disciplinary Policy;
- (iii) the full review of the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures be reported to the April meeting of this Committee for consideration.

24 : 'PROUD – OUR PEOPLE AWARDS 2007' – PROPOSED
CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

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The Committee had previously agreed that the Employee Recognition Awards: "Proud – Our People Awards" would become an established annual event. The 16 May 2007 had been agreed as the date for the 2007 Awards and a small Project Team had been established to oversee the event including Service Area and Trade Union representatives. Mitel had agreed to be the major sponsor for the 2007 event and other sponsorship was being sought to supplement the budget.

The awards were open to individual and team nominations and the award structure was to be developed to expand the number of categories. It had been proposed that for the 2007 event there would be four award categories which would apply to all Service Areas. Details of the proposed categories were submitted with links to external awards namely:

- (a) excellence in Service delivery;
- (b) outstanding contribution to the community;
- (c) change and innovation;
- (d) outstanding achiever of the year 2007.

The Committee received further details relating to future categories, the criteria for award admissions, short-listing criteria and membership of the judging panel. External sponsorship would be sought for each award.

Members stressed that awards should be given for exceptional performances by staff and that all jobs should be considered, whether they be high profile or low profile jobs. It was also proposed that those working in the community should be recognised.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the four Award Categories and criteria proposed for the Proud – Our People Awards 2007 as outlined in Appendix A, be approved;
- (ii) the Order of Events (Appendix B) and Marketing/Promotion Strategy, be noted (Appendix C);
- (iii) a report back on the May 2007 event be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

25 : SOULBURY PAY SCALES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A THIRD STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT POINT

In March 2001, a system was introduced nationally to allow employees paid on the Soulbury Pay Scale to apply for two additional points on the pay scale through a system called "Structured Professional Assessment" (SPA). This had now been extended through national agreement to allow for a third point on the pay scale.

It was proposed that a revised procedure and application forms for applying for SPA points be agreed and that all employees on the Soulbury Pay Scale be advised that the documents had been updated and were to be made available on CIS. It was further proposed that, in line with the national agreement, any employees who had been on SPA2 for two years on 1 September 2006 be allowed to apply for SPA3 and, if successful in their application, the award be backdated to 1 September 2006.

The previous guidance note did not make a reference to an appeal process and this had now been developed in the revised procedure.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the Council acknowledges the introduction of a third SPA point for employees on the Soulbury pay scale as part of a national agreement;
- (ii) the documents be approved and employees on Soulbury pay scales be advised of the availability of the documents on CIS;
- (ii) any applications from employees eligible for a third SPA point on 1 September 2006 to be backdated to 1 September 2006 where their initial application is successful.