

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT PANEL held in the CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE293TN on Wednesday, 28 November 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor R B Howe – Vice Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, S Akthar, R S Farrer, J A Gray, and R G Tuplin.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S Cawley.

### **24. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **25. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor R S Farrer declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 27 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council's Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee who were undertaking a review of Local Government Shared Services (LGSS).

### **26. EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

*(See Item No.25 for Members' Interests).*

The Panel received a report by the HR Business Partner (LGSS) which provided details of a number of human resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation during the period July to September 2012. Attention was drawn to a number of key areas including employee numbers, salary costs, sickness absence and organisational workforce development activity.

In considering the contents of the report, the Panel discussed the efforts which were being undertaken to tackle sickness absence. In this respect, Members noted that a consistent use of return to work interviews and self certification for all periods of absence will be introduced with effect from 1st January 2013 and that the HR Business Manager had attended all Management Teams during November to explain these new arrangements and issue guidance. The Executive Leader commended the work which has been started in this area and the further work which would be undertaken to develop the Council's policies.

Members commented on the increase in stress related absences and the reasons for this. Specific reference was made to those absences which resulted from personal issues and which the District Council had to manage. It was explained that these were addressed in a manner which was compliant with employment law and that it was hoped that the introduction of return to work interviews might have an impact in this area. The District Council also had a stress management assessment kit which would help employees and their managers to develop an action plan to address stress related issues.

In concluding the discussion, the Managing Director (Resources) reminded the Panel that the report was not solely about sickness absence and he urged Members to consider if there were any other areas of employment practice which they might want to consider. Having noted that the outcome of a review of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures would be presented to the next meeting in February 2013, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

**27. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HR & OWD SERVICES - QUARTERS 1 & 2**

*(See Minute No. 25 for Members Interests).*

A report by LGSS was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services across the key service measures put in place at the start of the contract. These can be measured into three areas – HR Strategic and Advisory, Recruitment and Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development.

Having noted that performance standards had been achieved to-date and priorities identified for the next quarter, the Panel was pleased to note that overall the transition to LGSS had largely been a success and had provided benefits that had not been foreseen in terms of access to wider projects and expertise within the organisation. Whereupon, and having noted that further reports would be submitted on a quarterly basis, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted by noted.

**28. REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION INFORMATION ARRANGEMENTS**

*(During discussion on this item (18.35pm) Councillor J A Gray took his seat at the meeting).*

With the assistance of a report by LGSS (a copy of which is

appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the outcome of a review of the arrangements for consulting and informing staff on employment and service matters; and for making employment related decisions.

By way of introduction, the Managing Director (Resources) explained that the paper had been brought forward at his request, to reflect best practice in governance arrangements to set senior management salaries, to clarify the responsibilities of Managers and how they should be held accountable, to avoid unnecessary duplication of business between Forums and enhance the role of the Staff Council.

In considering the contents of the report, the Panel was advised that the recommendation to establish an Employment Scrutiny Panel would not diminish the role of Members and would provide for greater clarification. The proposed new Panel also would offer a more general overview of employment practices within the organisation and provide an opportunity to consider the way in which decisions were reached and policy matters in greater detail. The terms and conditions of Senior Officers would continue to be the responsibility of the Senior Officers Panel whose remit would be widened to consider the salaries for posts at Head of Service level and above.

The Executive Leader has reiterated that the proposals were a positive step, given that the practicalities of discharging the current functions of the Employment Panel had become a burden to both Members and Officers.

Whereupon, and having noted that the proposals would need to be considered by the Corporate Governance Panel because they involve a change to the Council's constitutional arrangements, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be endorsed.

## **29. SAFEGUARDING**

With the assistance of a report by the Lead Safeguarding Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel considered the content of a new Policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people, including children from abuse. The Policy would apply to all District Council employees and was intended to promote the safety of those using Council services whilst at the same time protecting employees and Councillors from false allegations.

Having received an explanation of the proposed arrangements for implementing and monitoring compliance with the new policy and procedures, the Panel emphasised the need to ensure that the Policy was being followed by District Council Managers and that checks were being undertaken where necessary across the Council. With this in mind and having noted that a Section 11 Audit would be undertaken shortly, it was suggested that an implementation timetable and monitoring system should be developed to indicate the progress which had been made.

Whereupon, and having noted that further changes would be required shortly and on a regular basis, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the new Safeguarding Policy appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- b) that the Chief Officers Management Team and the Lead Safeguarding Officer be authorised to make necessary adjustments to the Policy in the period until it is next reviewed in June 2014; and
- c) that an implementation timetable and monitoring system be developed to indicate the progress made.

### 30. RETIREMENT OF PERSONNEL - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel received a report by LGSS (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in relation to the retirement of the following employees from the Local Government Service:-

<b>Name</b>	<b>Division</b>	<b>Local Government Service</b>
Mr D Bacon	Environmental Management	15 years
Mr D Hartley	One Leisure, St Ives	17 years
Mr R Philcox	Operations Division	6 years
Mr G Shipley	Environmental Management	24 years
Mr M Smith	Operations Division	7 years

RESOLVED

that the Council places on record its recognition of and gratitude for the excellent contributions made by the above named employees during their employment in the Local Government Service and conveys its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement.

**31. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relation matters between the Council and its employees.

**32. HDC PAY REVIEW PROJECT 2012 BRIEFING NOTE**

With the assistance of a briefing note (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book), the Panel received an update on progress being made with the Council's Pay Review project. Members were informed that Phase 2 of the Job Evaluation work stream had now begun and 57 posts (which equated to 208 staff) within the organisation had been evaluated. Phase 3 was expected to commence in December and to be completed by the end of March 2013 to meet the timescales for employee consultation. An Equality Impact Assessment had also been undertaken on amendments to the Job Evaluation Framework Guidance and a number of recommendations had been endorsed by the Pay Review Project Board.

As part of the Job Evaluation process, work also was being undertaken to establish 'Job Families' for business support staff. A number of staff focus groups had been arranged for this purpose. It was anticipated that the criteria for the job families would be considered by the Project Board and the Employment Panel in February.

Members noted that the outcome of phase 2 of the Job Evaluation work stream would enable work to start on the modelling of a new District Council pay structure early in the New Year, for implementation in October 2013. LGSS also were undertaking a review of market salaries for the purposes of the project.

RESOLVED

that progress made to-date on the Pay Review be noted.

Chairman