
Employment Panel

**Report of the meetings held on 2nd October and
20th November 2007**

Matter for Decision

6. TECHNICAL SERVICES – MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Panel has undertaken a comprehensive review of a series of management issues in the Technical Services Division which has been prompted by the significant demands placed on the Division by the Headquarters and Other Accommodation Project, the Council's environment programme and other corporate priorities.

Having considered in detail the management and financial implications of a range of options, the Panel has, in the first instance, approved the transfer of the existing Head of Technical Services to a temporary post of New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator on a fixed term contract terminating on 4th April 2011. Recruitment to the vacated Head of Service post and other consequential vacancies also has been authorised.

Given the priority accorded to the Council's Environment Strategy and programmes and to emphasise the importance of the Council's response to environmental issues, the Panel also

RECOMMEND

that the post of Director of Operational Services be re-designated Director of Environmental and Community Services.

Matters for Information

7. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

In Item No. 4 of the Report to the Council held on 27th June 2007, the Panel indicated that they had requested information on the Council's procedures for filling vacant posts, given their involvement in overseeing the recruitment process. A paper on the Council's recruitment process has now been submitted and a copy sent to all Members of the Council for information. The document also has

been posted on the intranet for the benefit of both employees and Members.

The process reflects good HR practice and the principles which have been developed by the District Council as an employer over the years. Members also have taken the opportunity to reaffirm their existing practice which requires recruitment to new and existing posts graded 1-9 to be authorised by the Panel and the retention of arrangements for these to be considered via the submission of a schedule to Panel meetings.

8. EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2007

The response by employees to an opinion survey undertaken during summer 2007 has been presented to the Panel. The survey highlighted two specific areas which required further attention which related to salary/grading and communication arrangements. The Panel are of the view that both the current review of the salary/grading scheme and the completion of the new headquarters project should go some way to resolving the issues identified.

9. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME: EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The Panel has noted the results of an employee survey undertaken in accordance with the Gender Equality Scheme and has endorsed an action plan proposed in response to the issues raised.

Whilst disappointed at the overall response rate of 19%, the Panel has acknowledged that, as an employer, the Council should use the information received to promote gender equality positively.

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING

The Panel has received and noted the outcomes of equal opportunities monitoring of employees over the period 1st July 2006 to 30th June 2007. Further details are available on request from the Head of HR and Payroll Services.

Although noting that there was little change in comparison with the previous twelve months period, the Panel has acknowledged that there has been an increase in the number of employees taking maternity leave and choosing to return to work which reflects well on the organisation as an employer.

11. REQUESTS TO FILL VACANT POSTS

Having been satisfied that it was essential to recruit to vacancies in the Environmental and Community Health, Planning, Policy and Strategic Services and Information Management Divisions, the Panel has authorised the Head of HR and Payroll Services to commence recruitment to the posts identified and to any consequential vacancies that may arise as a result of the recruitment process.

12. EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE – REVIEW

A system of exit questionnaires was introduced in August 2002 to better understand why employees chose to leave the Council's employment, to identify trends and take any action considered to be necessary to address issues which might be highlighted. The Panel has considered the results of the responses received during 2006/7 and although returns have reduced in comparison with previous years, the survey has revealed positive comments in respect of training opportunities offered, communications and working relationships. The Panel has noted the information presented and is satisfied that it is a reasonable indicator of the views of employees leaving the authority.

13. RECRUITMENT OF SUB-REGIONAL TOURISM OFFICER

The Council and partners, through the Greater Cambridge Economic Partnership, have developed a County wide tourism strategy to promote prosperity throughout Cambridgeshire. Partners have identified a need for an officer post to deliver this Strategy, to co-ordinate activity across the County and to manage cross boundary projects. For this purpose, the Panel has approved a proposal to establish a post of Sub-Regional Tourism Officer for a fixed term of 3 years on local grade 8. The post will be funded by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and other partner organisations.

The Panel has agreed to host the post within the Policy and Strategic Services Division with the officer appointed reporting to the Greater Cambridge Partnership and partners sharing the employment costs.

14. NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME 2008 – TIERED CONTRIBUTION RATES

The Panel has been advised of proposed changes to be introduced to the Local Government Pension Scheme with effect from 1st April 2008 and their impact on arrangements for employee contributions. Currently pension contributions are collected at a flat rate of 6% irrespective of the level of remuneration received by an individual. This approach will be replaced by a tiered contribution rate based on the full time equivalent salary for each post. Although final Regulations are yet to be published, it is estimated that the net monthly increment for the majority of posts with a proposed contribution rate of 6.5% and 6.8% would be less than £30. The changes will also affect the Council's rate of contribution but final confirmation on the exact costs is still awaited. The Panel has approved transitional arrangements to allow the increase to take effect over 3 years so employees will be paying the full revised banded contributions by 1st April 2010.

Similar transitional arrangements also have been approved by the Panel for those employees who have previously benefited from 'protected status'. Information on the proposed changes will be

placed on the intranet at the request of the Employees Side of the Employee Liaison Advisory Group.

15. RETIREMENT OF PERSONNEL - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Panel has placed on record its recognition of and gratitude for the excellent contribution made by Mrs N E Head, receptionist at the St Ivo Leisure Centre during her 33 years employment in the local government service and conveyed its best wishes to her for a long and happy retirement.

K Reynolds
Chairman