
Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 20th June 2012

Matters for Information

1. HR & PAYROLL SUPPORT SERVICES

The Panel has received a presentation by Ms J Maulder, HR Business Partner on the future plans of Local Government Shared Services (LGSS), who has been providing Human Resources (HR) support to the District Council from 1 May 2012.

Information on the vision and values of LGSS, their governance arrangements and the benefits that they were able to offer their customers was presented. Members also have been advised of the work which was being undertaken by LGSS to develop their understanding of the District Council and its HR policies, and their expectations in terms of the service they can offer to the Authority in the future.

Arising from the presentation, a number of questions were raised about the future aspirations of LGSS and the point at which any benefits from economies of scale become impractical. Members also were advised of the benefits which could be achieved from the pooling of professional expertise. With regard to their contract with the District Council which had been in operation for a 6 week period, the Panel was pleased to note that the Managing Director had received positive feedback about the LGSS service thus far.

2. EMPLOYMENT REPORT

The Panel received a quarterly report on a range of information relating to the management of the Council's workforce and the workload of the Human Resources Team. On this occasion, the report included the latest position and trends relating to:-

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ salary costs;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ retention of new starters;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

In considering the information which was provided, the Panel has noted that employee numbers had fallen by just over 8% in the year

since 31st March 2011 and that salary costs had also reduced significantly. Whilst these figures did not include the recent transfer of HR employees to LGSS, Officers undertook to clarify this position in future reports. With regard to the overall reduction in employee numbers and having recognised the need to maintain staff morale, the Managing Director (Resources) has indicated that he hoped to be in a position to promote more positive messages about job security as progress was made with the Council's pay review.

Members have also noted that the annual average days sickness per FTE employee has reduced from 8.4 to 8.1 days in the year to 31st March 2012 and remains well below the average for local government. This also compares well with the figures for the private sector published by the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development. Whilst this outcome was pleasing, the Panel has been informed that sickness absence will remain a key focus for the Human Resources' Team and Heads of Services would continue to be directed to pay specific attention to this matter. With this in mind and to improve their understanding of the sickness absence policy and procedure, the Panel have requested a presentation on the subject at a future meeting.

A copy of the full report is available from Democratic Services on request and has been published on the District Council's website.

3. REVIEW OF ESSENTIAL MILEAGE, TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND POOL CARS

Further to Item No.5 of their Report to Council on 28th September 2011, the Panel has received an update on the impact of changes to employee mileage allowances for both essential and casual car users.

Although the reduction in mileage rates appears to have had little effect on business mileage at this stage, Members have noted that the effect of removing lump sum payments for essential users is still unknown. In this respect, the Panel has been advised that a review of pool car requirements will be undertaken shortly and that work is ongoing to identify service areas where special arrangements may be required. It was also intended to approach existing recipients on an individual basis to discuss the alternative arrangements which could be put in place to address their situation.

In considering the report, Members have discussed the cost and value of the Council's pool cars and the need to ensure that the changes did not have an adverse impact on service provision. Members have also been advised that the situation will remain under review and that further updates will be submitted to the Panel in due course.

4. ACCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURE

In order to fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities and to ensure consistency in the recording and reporting of accidents across the

organisation, the Panel has formally adopted a new Accident Reporting Procedure for the Authority. Whilst the Council has a number of informal service based practices for ensuring accidents are reported, the new procedure has been devised to establish a corporate system which clearly sets out the Council's duties and responsibilities.

To assist in the implementation and to introduce the procedure to Heads of Service and Activity Managers, a training seminar has been arranged to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities and have the necessary competencies to record and report accidents to the Health and Safety Executive's Incident Contact Centre.

5. EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT – EQUALITY PEER CHALLENGE – ACHIEVING ACCREDITATION

The outcome of a recent accreditation obtained by the Council as an "Achieving" authority under the Equality Framework for Local Government was noted by the Panel. The Framework is a performance improvement and benchmarking tool which is designed to help local government meet their equality duties.

The findings from the assessment will be incorporated into an action plan to take forward those areas which required further consideration.

Attention also has been drawn to the forthcoming welfare reforms and specifically the equality issues and financial pressures which may arise for the Council as a result. Members have been informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have given preliminary consideration to the matter and that further reports would be submitted to their future meetings.

6. RETIREMENT OF EMPLOYEES – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contributions made by the following employees during their employment in the local government service and conveyed its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement.

Name	Division	Local Government Service:
Mr A Yeldham	Customer Services	6 years
Mr M Mann	Operations Division	14 years
Mr S Plant	Housing Services	36 years

7. PAY REVIEW PROJECT

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made with the Council's Pay Review project and have been informed that the project had been split into a number of work streams with the first of these involving a review of the Council's existing job evaluation scheme. Once this activity has concluded, Local Government Shared Services (LGSS) will examine the Council's existing Grading Framework.

The Panel has been assured that any decisions regarding pay and pay structure will be determined by the District Council and not the LGSS Joint Committee.

S Cawley
Chairman