

## **Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 26th January, 2012.**

**Present:-** Councillors Sharif (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Coad, Dale-Gough, A S Dhaliwal (from 6.37 pm), Plenty and Stokes (until 8.00 pm)

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Bains, Dar and Grewal

### **PART I**

#### **17. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **18. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd September 2011**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

Councillor Stokes stated that he had requested on a number of occasions that the Committee consider a Central Government proposal that individuals in the authority earning over a £100,000 consider taking a voluntary reduction in their salary.

In the ensuing discussion a number of proposals were discussed, following which it was agreed that Officers would identify the context within which the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government stated that individuals in posts earning over a £100,000 consider taking a reduction of 5% in their salary. This information would be circulated to Members of the Committee and, if appropriate, the Committee would send a letter to the individuals concerned.

#### **19. HR Policies & Procedures - Employee Relations Machinery in the Council and Collective Grievance Policy and Procedure**

Carolyn Cotterell, on behalf of JTUC and Surjit Nagra from HR outlined the revised Employees Relations Framework. Members were informed that this framework was in place to ensure clear guidance was in place on all aspects of consultation and negotiation with Trade Unions. It was essential to ensure that good employee relations continued to exist between the Council and its staff and that this relationship was based on partnership.

It was highlighted that the Employee Relations Machinery had been reviewed in the following areas:-

- Formal / informal consultation and negotiations arrangements
- Trade union recognition
- Trade union representation at committees
- Trade Union Facilities.

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Committee Members were informed that the main objectives of reviewing the Employee Relations Machinery included ensuring that the Council had an effective representative body for consultation and negotiation and to ensure that appropriate resources were made available to employee representatives to ensure they could discharge their responsibilities.

Surjit Nagra, HR Business Partner, outlined the new Council's Collective Grievance Policy and Procedure. It was noted that the document had been jointly drafted by Human Resources and Trade Union colleagues.

Members were reminded that although the Council had a Grievance Policy and Procedure, which provided a mechanism for an individual employee to raise concerns to be considered fully and for them to be resolved, there was no procedure which allowed for collective issues raised by more than two employees to be dealt with together. The new Collective Grievance Policy and Procedure complemented the Grievance Policy and Procedure and was informed by the ACAS guidelines. It allowed for group grievances to be considered where the issue affected two or more employees. Members were informed that the main benefit of having a separate Collective Grievance Policy was to allow the Council and Trade Unions to deal with issues which were of concern to several employees quickly and consistently and therefore reduce the risk of a formal dispute arising.

In the ensuing discussion consideration was given to the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Consultative Forum (CCF). A Member suggested that Councillor representation on the CCF be increased from the current position of two councillors to five councillors. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference for the CCF would be examined in detail at a future meeting of the Committee.

A Member requested clarification regarding representation by a trade union representative for a group of staff who were not members of a union. It was explained that a group of staff not represented by a trade union would be advised and accompanied by individuals from staff side. If being represented by a trade union, this essentially meant that the representative would be putting the case forward on behalf of the employee.

**Resolved** – That the amended Employee Relations Framework and the new Collective Grievance Policy and Procedure be approved with immediate effect.

### 20. HR Statistics Review

The Assistant Director of Professional Services, Kevin Gordon, introduced the report and detailed staff turnover percentages for the period July to September 2011. It was noted that during this period 66 staff left employment whilst 57 started employment with the Council. The majority of staff turnover in the period was due to resignations (24) or completion of contracts (21). The reported average sickness rate for the quarter was an average of 2.5

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days per full time equivalent (FTE) which had decreased compared to the same period for the previous year.

It was outlined that the use of temporary staff had decreased and was showing an overall reducing trend. Members were informed that many of the plans, including retirement set out by Directorates in the December report had begun to take effect. It was submitted that uncertainty around funding arrangements post April 2012 and changes to how services were delivered, for example, Transactional Services, would influence how the Council made use of its temporary staff in the future.

Members' attention was also drawn to a number of posts which remained the most difficult to recruit and included children's social workers, mental health social workers and building control surveyors. A Member questioned what impact the recent legislation for temporary staff would have, to which it was acknowledged that the agency worker regulations would have some financial impact but that these costs would be consumed within existing budgets.

A Member raised the issue of the performance of the Council's recruitment agency Pertemps. The Assistant Director for Professional Services stated that Pertemps had been supplying agency staff to the Council for a number of years and performance of the contract would be added to the Forward Work Programme for the Committee and examined in detail at a future meeting.

(Councillor Stokes left the meeting).

A Member commented that the proportion of staff who are of Black or Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage as a ratio of the proportion of resident working age population had increased in 2011/12 Quarter 1 to 43.3% compared to 41.8% for the same period in 2010/11. It was submitted that whilst this was commendable, other sections of the staff work force may be under-represented. The Assistant Director for Professional Services stated that whilst the issue could be added to the Forward Work Programme, there would need to be clear evidence of a long term trend prior to making any changes to policies. In addition, it was suggested that the salary levels for BAME workers also be examined at a future meeting.

**Resolved** – That the report be noted.

### **21. What Transactional Services will mean for HR - Presentation**

Members were informed that a presentation on What Transactional Services meant for HR would now be made to the meeting of the Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012 .

### **22. Update on Planning for the Future**

Members were reminded that since the cuts in public sector funding were announced in 2010, the Council had achieved around half of the £25 million savings needed over the period 2011/2014. However, in light of the

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continuing budgetary pressures the Council had no option but to reduce its spending going forward. As staffing was a very significant part of the Council's overall expenditure this meant a reduction in staffing levels. Members were informed that ways of achieving savings were discussed with trade unions at an early stage and that they endorsed the process that had been followed to date. An outline of the process followed and the number of Expressions of Interest submitted by Directorate were outlined.

Whilst Committee Members endorsed the procedure that had been implemented with regard to Planning for the Future exercise, a number of Members expressed their disappointment that individuals could take early retirement and then return to work for the local authority after a relatively short period of time. The Assistant Director for Professional Services outlined that the Council was adhering to national guidance in relation to the matter.

**Resolved** – That the report be noted.

### **23. Date of Next Meeting**

4<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)