

## Staff and Support Services

Thursday, 29th July, 2010

6.00 - 7.30 pm

Attendees	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Garth Barnes, Jackie Fletcher, Wendy Flynn, Rob Garnham (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Les Godwin, Colin Hay, Rowena Hay, Heather McLain, Lloyd Surgenor and John Webster
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Jan Bridges, Sara Feckleton, Julie McCarthy, Clive Minett and Owen Parry

### Minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Steve Jordan (Chairman) and Nigel Britter. Amanda Attfield (Assistant Director – Human Resources and Organisational Development).

**2. AGREEMENT OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting.

**RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of meeting held on 27 May 2010 be signed as an accurate record.**

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were declared.

**4. MEMBERS WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer reminded members that at Council on 22 March 2010, having considered the report of the Review Working Group, it was agreed that a further report should come to the this committee in relation to Recommendations 4 and 5.

The recommendations proposed an alternative approach to the appointment of Chief Officers, different to how it had been done at Cheltenham Borough Council in the past and to how other authorities appointed Chief Officers.

The Council sought assurances from this Committee that the recommended action would demonstrate best practice and ensure engagement of wider membership in the process, prior to one preferred candidate being recommended to Council for decision.

Appendix 2, a report commissioned by the Council, set out, in detail, the key elements of a process that demonstrated best practice.

In response to a question from a member of the committee, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Appointments Committee would nominate an Officer

to make the conditional offer for employment. This would be included in the terms of reference for the Committee.

The Chairman was confident that the process demonstrated good practice and moved to formally consider the recommendations.

**RESOLVED THAT the Constitution Working Group includes within it's review of the Constitution;**

- 1. the establishment of an Appointments Committee specifying its composition and terms of reference**
- 2. an amendment to the Council Procedure Rules to introduce a requirement for a 2/3rds majority vote on the appointment by Council of any Chief Officer (Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Director).**

#### **5. SMARTER TRAVEL PLAN**

The Integrated Transport Manager introduced his information/discussion paper, which provided members with details of progress to date.

In June the Department of Transport had released the "Effects of smarter choice programmes in sustainable travel towns". This included Worcestershire, Darlington and Peterborough and would enable effective benchmarking and comparison against current best practice.

Various frameworks had been tabled with the employee and staff representative forum earlier in the week (26 July 2010) and one suggestion had been that the staff travel survey be tabled with each team at their team meetings.

The Web Team were currently looking at how best to gather staff feedback and provide them with information about the different options available to them via the intranet.

Discussions with Gloucestershire County Council were ongoing with regard to funding and possible cuts, in an attempt to avoid initiatives for which there would be no funding.

Rather than just looking at this as an employer, Cheltenham Borough Council were approaching this was a member of the community and whilst a number of business had pulled out due to economic challenges, GCHQ had recently launched their own smarter travel plan.

A key issue would be staff parking charges; this would form a large part of the consultation and would be a sensitive issue.

The following responses were given to questions and comments from members;

- He agreed that staff parking charges should not be seen as a money making exercise and one thing he had ascertained from around the country was that authorities needed to demonstrate reinvestment.
- Nottingham was one example where they were charging local employers for parking in the city centre. This was something that would be considered as part of ongoing discussions.

- Smarter travel was about more than just cars and parking. Cycle provisions were also being assessed, with the view to enhancing current facilities and providing more secure spaces for cyclists in Cheltenham.
- A review of current parking provisions had highlighted the opportunity for sustainable travel hubs, bringing together various travel options in one place.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services suggested that this committee should only consider staff issues and that the Environment Committee would need to consider environmental issues.

## **6. JCC (INC. HEALTH AND SAFETY)**

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, explained that other items on the JCC agenda had included the policies which were scheduled on the agenda of this Committee.

The Corporate Health and Safety Report had been considered by the JCC and members had been particularly concerned with 2.2 (the incident in which, two employees were dealing with a noise complaint and became trapped in premises which were being attacked with bricks until Police arrived to help deal with the situation). He commended the fact that there were two Officers and the quick response of the Police and noted that communication and information sharing had improved since the incident.

The JCC had requested that they be kept informed of incidents at other authorities or organisations, in order that the Council could learn from them, this would include the HSE digest of incidents and would form part of the report in the future.

In relation to this, the Human Resources Operations Manager referred members to 2.9 / page 31, sessions using real life experiences of tragic at work accidents. An employee of CBC who had witnessed the death of a colleague whilst working for a company in the Forest of Dean had spoken about the effect it had, had on him.

In reference to 2.10 / page 31 (the public liability claim dated 26/05/10), Cabinet Member Corporate Services was unable to confirm when the alleged incident had occurred, before or after the changes to the method of working at the Depot.

## **7. HR PERFORMANCE**

The Human Resources Operations Manager introduced the report and highlighted some of the key points.

Sickness absence would be an area of key focus this year. Currently the average was just over 8 days per full time member of staff. The aim was to reduce this by using a number of initiatives, including meeting with Service Managers to discuss alternative ways of supporting staff and introducing interventions to help reduce sickness absence levels. Musculo-skeletal related absences remained an issue and discussions would be ongoing throughout the year, as to what interventions could be put in place.

IMASS the new Occupational Health provider was performing exceptionally well. Where Gloucestershire County Council, the previous provider of this service, had taken up to seven weeks, IMASS had taken just five days in most cases.

Apprentices had been a success story for Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC), with all five from last year having completed their NVQ Level 2 and four of the five working towards an NVQ Level 3. Two had secured fixed term positions at CBC and work was underway to secure employment for the rest, though not necessarily at CBC.

Overall, employee turnover was currently at 12.85%, which was within the Council's target. In the last quarter some figures had increased, which could be attributed to the fact that some fixed term positions were not extended.

Members were also asked to be mindful of a number of employees, for whom payment protection was due to come to an end, as of 1 April 2011.

The following comments were made by members;

- (3.15) the figures related to ECDL were confusing. More clarity should be given with regard to the 470 assessments over 7 modules and the overall pass rate being 98%.
- (3.12) Figures should be included in future updates with regards to employee turnover updates, as percentages alone, were not entirely helpful.
- (3.3) could a graph be included in future sickness absence updates, in order to better demonstrate trends.

## **8. PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Human Resources Learning and Organisational Development Manager introduced her report and the revised People and Organisational Development Strategy (2010-2015).

The HR Strategy had lapsed at the end of 2009 and the new strategy brought together workforce development and culture, with regards to organisational development. It pulled these two things together, along with all major initiatives (major work streams).

The document itself was intended to be brief, providing an overview rather than including lots of information and show where CBC was going, but be open to change.

At this time, she sought endorsement from the committee in relation to the general direction of travel for the organisation, as set out in the document. As initiatives within the strategy came to fruition, further updates would be provided to the committee.

The following responses were given to questions from members;

- The current financial climate was a difficult one and expectations would need to be managed. The aim was to get people working smarter rather

than harder and Managers would be supported through this period of change.

- All vacant positions were advertised internally in the first instance, providing opportunities for development and progression for existing members of staff.
- Employees were asked two years ago, if they had an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent and 78% said yes. The current target set by central government was 95% but this was likely to change soon. CBC continued to be committed to offering NVQs and whilst it is envisaged that funding would still be available, there was uncertainty about how this would be accessed in the future.
- Almost 100% of staff were using the Learning Gateway and this was attributed to the fact that it formed part of the appraisal process this year.

The following comments were made by members of the committee;

- In the current climate, recruitment and retention would prove difficult. CBC needed to consider the effect that the pay freeze would have on the motivation of its staff and manage the expectations of staff at the end of that period. Staff could also feel added pressure not to take time off sick and this could have a negative impact on their overall health and wellbeing.
- The strategy not only set out what CBC would do but what it was doing and putting a number of initiatives in place over the last few years had already generated changes for the better across CBC. The document demonstrated CBC's aspirations for its employees and whilst pay was a significant factor for staff, so was the belief that they could make a difference.
- CBC needed to resurrect public sector work as a vocation and challenge the stereotypes by changing public perception.

## **9. WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY**

The Human Resources Operations Manager introduced the report and explained that the policy and procedure had been refreshed, to reflect the new corporate format and the changes to current post titles of Officers involved in the procedure.

The policy and procedure applied to all members of staff and as such would be republished on the intranet, along with a briefing for all Managers and would continue to be issued to new members of staff during induction.

Whilst there had been no incidents, it was important to have the policy and procedure in place.

The following responses were given to questions from members;

- Once a policy was ratified by a committee, minor amendments would be made by the Officer with delegated authority to do so, with the support of One Legal. Significant changes would be referred back to the committee.

Corporate Member Corporate Services suggested that in future, changes were summarised or highlighted to the committee.

**10. HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY**

The Human Resources Operations Manager introduced the report and Employee Health and Wellbeing Policy. This was a new policy which set out how CBC would support employees and reaffirmed the commitment to their employees.

The Chairman highlighted the new Occupational Health provider IMASS, which had improved the service which ultimately benefited CBC and employees.

**11. STAFF AND SUPPORT SERVICES WORKPLAN**

The Chairman referred members of the committee to the work plan, there were no additional items to add.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES URGENT AND REQUIRES A DECISION**

There was no urgent business for discussion.

**13. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 28 October 2010.

**Chairman  
Councillor Jordan**