

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Monday 21 November 2011 at 10.30 am in the Executive Meeting Room, third floor, Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting which can be found at www.portsmouth.gov.uk.)

Present

Councillors Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Chair)
Leo Madden (Vice-Chair)
Hugh Mason (deputising for
Councillor Lynne Stagg)
Jim Fleming
Donna Jones (deputising for
Councillor Simon Boshier)
Jim Patey
Rob Wood

Officers

David Williams, Chief Executive
Michael Lawther, City Solicitor and
Monitoring Officer
Stephen Todd, Senior Manager Pay & Policy
Jacqueline Coonie, Senior Manager
Employee Relations
Chris Ward, Head of Finance
Ama Juss, Employment Lawyer
Shaun Tetley, Payroll & Pensions Manager

47 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simon Boshier and Councillor Lynne Stagg.

48 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Jim Patey declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in that he is a life member of Gmb Union.

Councillor Rob Wood declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in that his son-in-law works at Harbour School.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson invited the unions to make their deputations.

Ms Lindsay Williams of Unison said that the three union members attending today represented all the unions. Ms Williams said that the unions would like to hear members' views and were concerned that at the last meeting it appeared that a decision had already been taken. Since that meeting a further survey had been carried out among union members and responses so far confirmed that members felt union representatives were on the right track with their negotiations. Basically that there should be no variation in the national terms and conditions appearing in the green book. The survey also indicated that union members had concerns around the voluntary redundancy or voluntary severance proposal.

There was some discussion about whether or not an increment freeze was covered under Part 2 of the green book. The unions' position was that increments were part of the national terms and conditions as determined by the joint council.

However Mr Michael Lawther, City Solicitor disagreed with the unions on this point.

Councillor Leo Madden said that members had not made up their minds on how to proceed yet and were open to all ways of making the necessary savings. However he said that the car parking and bailiff service would not in his view produce enough monetary savings and therefore additional measures would have to be taken.

Mr Chris Ward, Section 151 Officer, said that a severance scheme could offer the council greater savings than a voluntary redundancy scheme. During discussion the following points were made

- Some members favoured an increment freeze because the amount of the savings generated could be estimated with some degree of accuracy. However the Section 151 Officer said that there were other options where the savings to be made could also be predicted with a similar degree of accuracy.
- Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson said that advice he had received was that the multiplier that the unions wanted would be unaffordable by the city council.
- Ms Lindsay Williams said that the unions had been asked to provide figures for savings that could be made in part through changes to staff and member car parking. However, until there is one manager, one service and one audit trail, realistic figures could not be ascertained.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson asked the unions if there was anything else that they wished to say before the meeting moved into closed session. As they had no further points to make, Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson said that he would arrange for them to be invited back into the meeting to hear the decision which would be in open session.

49 Exclusion of Press and Public

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson and seconded by Councillor Leo Madden that the meeting move into exempt session and this was agreed.

RESOLVED that under the provisions of section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the press and public be excluded for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that the report contains information defined as exempt in part 1 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

50 Exempt report from the Chief Executive on terms and conditions

Discussion took place in exempt session on the following topics:

- The status of the nationally negotiated terms and conditions and what did or did not appear in Part 2 of the green book.
- Implications of implementing a pay freeze.
- A discussion about risks that the council may run under different scenarios.
- A discussion around whether in principle members wished to introduce an enhanced voluntary severance scheme.

A discussion took place when members were advised that PCC could only have one redundancy scheme so it would either have to be a voluntary redundancy scheme or a voluntary severance scheme.

Members decided that a letter from the Chief Executive to all staff was necessary to explain whatever decision was reached by the Employment Committee.

Members then agreed dates when a voluntary redundancy scheme would finish to be replaced by a voluntary severance. Expressions of interest would be invited and this would enable an estimate of the savings that could be achieved to be made.

After further deliberation, members decided on the decision that would be taken in open session. The meeting was adjourned at 12.25 pm so that the unions could be invited to return to hear the decision in open session. The meeting resumed in open session at 12.37 pm.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson welcomed the unions back to the meeting and advised that Employment Committee had

RESOLVED that

- (1) The City Council offers a Voluntary Severance Scheme to all staff. The scheme will have a multiplier of 1.5 for staff who will be under age 55 during the qualifying period. The City Council will be open to receive expressions of intention from 8 December 2011 to 5pm on 3 January 2012.**
- (2) The Voluntary Redundancy Scheme currently being run by the City Council will cease from 5pm on 7 December 2011**
- (3) The City Council will continue negotiations on a two year increment freeze from 2012 but if the Voluntary Severance Scheme produces the required financial total, then the increment freeze will not be imposed**

- (4) Although every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies, this provision will be kept in case it is required**
- (5) The Voluntary Severance Scheme will not be open to those included on the list in Appendix 5, to the report presented at this meeting (as amended to include higher grade Social Workers) or such additional posts which it is considered necessary to exclude in the business interests of the Council**
- (6) Any other ideas from staff and unions during the consultation period to find the savings identified by the section 151 officer, be welcomed.**

51 Date of next Scheduled Employment Committee Meeting

The next meeting of Employment Committee was scheduled for 12.45 pm on Friday 2 December 2011.

The meeting concluded at 12.47 pm.

Chair

VJP/DMF
1 December 2011
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