

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday 10 April 2012 at 12.15 pm in Conference Room B, Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

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

Present

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

Officers

Mr David Williams, Chief Executive
Mr Michael Lawther, City Solicitor, Strategic Director and
Section 151 Officer
Mr Chris Ward, Head of Finance & Section 121 Officer
Ms Jacqueline Coonie, Senior Manager HR Employee
Relations
Ms Kathy Wadsworth, Strategic Director
Ms S Binjal, Head of Legal, Licensing & Registrars

13 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rob Wood and Councillor Simon Boshier.

14 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

15 Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 March 2012 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 1 March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16 Exclusion of Press and Public (AI 4)

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, seconded by Councillor Leo Madden that in view of the contents of the following item on the agenda, the Committee was recommended to adopt the following motion:-

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.

RESOLVED that the Committee adopt the motion set out above.

17 Exempt Report from the Chief Executive on Proposals for Changes to the Senior Management Structure (AI 5)

(TAKE IN EXEMPT REPORT)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson invited the Chief Executive to outline the proposals contained in the report and suggested that Members then be given time to put questions to him.

Exempt Appendix 4 was then circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Chief Executive explained that the budget report to the council on 8 February 2011 explained that over the next 3 years the Council would undertake further organisational changes to drive down costs. The approved budget requires a reduction of 2 posts at Head of Service level over the next 6 months. Members had also indicated that they would expect to see reductions in the number of service units for the support services and a greater equalisation of the size of the service units in this area.

The Chief Executive went on to say that the proposals contained in the report before the Committee today would have direct implications for a number of staff including 2 post holders whose posts are at risk as a consequence of the proposals. The Council have an obligation to consult unions and employees on an individual basis to ensure a fair redundancy procedure.

The Chief Executive explained that Members need to decide what structure best meets the need and circumstances of the Council. The report before the Committee today sets out a recommended structure which the Committee is advised to consult upon with staff and unions. At the end of the consultation period, the Committee will need to consider any representations received and decide on its final structure.

If Members decide to implement a structure that results in posts being at risk of redundancy and the creation of a new post at Head of Service, then Members will need to decide whether to ring-fence recruitment to those post holders at that level who are at risk or whether to advertise the post on the open market and invite the post holders to apply accordingly.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the risks set out in the appendix to the report and outlined the representations that he had received prior to the meeting. In doing so he advised that the number of staff related to the proposals about sustainability/carbon management was 2, not 3 as the appendix indicated.

In response to questions the following matters were clarified:-

- There were no proposals to change workstreams under the Transformation Programme.
- The consultation period ie the minimum number of days consultation was determined by the number of staff at risk of leaving across the council as a whole at the time. If the number of staff at risk of leaving was 99 or more then a consultation period of 90 days was the minimum. However, if there were fewer than 99 staff at risk, the minimum consultation period was 30 days. The numbers of staff at risk across the council, including the two posts at risk in the proposed re-structure was 82, and therefore a 30 day minimum consultation period was appropriate.
- The Chief Executive said that following the meeting, internal communications channels would be used to invite representations from staff about the senior management changes and that these would be placed before Members before the next meeting. The Chief Executive said that the representations would be placed before Members in the form in which they were received and that this would be made clear in the communication to staff inviting representations.
In response to Members' request, it was also agreed that the representations would be anonymised before being placed before Members.
- It was confirmed by the Chief Executive that all staff would be made aware of the period of consultation and the form it would take in the communication from him to all staff following the meeting. Ms Jacqueline Coonie said that feedback would also be collected by Heads of Service during meetings with their management teams. The Chief Executive felt that the 30 day consultation period was adequate and fair. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gerald Vernon Jackson said that if it transpired that more time was needed in order to ensure that all the correct procedures were adhered to, then the 30 day period could be extended in those circumstances.
- It was confirmed that the redundancy payments could be accommodated within the MTRS Reserve.
- It was confirmed that the 3 Heads of Service applying for voluntary redundancy were not subject to a specific retirement age and that therefore the date on which they would leave service if they were not offered voluntary redundancy (and therefore the comparative cost) could not be determined.

A discussion then took place about the appropriate level at which professional lead roles would be undertaken should the proposed restructure be implemented following the consultation. As no decision had yet been taken on the restructure, the Committee decided that it was premature to consider the matter in any detail at present.

The Leader of the Council asked those officers present whether they had any further representations they wished to make. They did not. The Leader of the Council then said that the matters for discussion by the Committee today were particularly sensitive and therefore asked all officers to leave the meeting with the exception of the Chief Executive. Officers left the meeting at 12.38 pm.

The Chief Executive reported that Members discussed the proposals, the risks associated, the representations that had been outlined by the Chief Executive and the proposed consultation period.

At 1.20 pm the officer taking the minutes was invited back in to the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, seconded by Councillor Leo Madden that the meeting resume in open session and this was agreed.

The Committee decided that the report before it today would no longer be classified as an exempt report with the exception of Appendix 4 which related to individuals' financial details.

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon Jackson, seconded by Councillor Leo Madden that the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

RESOLVED that

- (1) Members agree the proposed four further reductions in senior management posts as the basis for consultation with staff and unions;**
- (2) Members note the financial implications of the proposals as set out in the exempt financial appendix, the costs of which will be funded from the MTRS Reserve;**
- (3) Members agree to the voluntary redundancy of three Heads of Service as set out in the report and financial appendix;**
- (4) Members record their thanks to those senior managers taking voluntary redundancy for their work for the Council and the city;**

18 Date of Next Employment Committee Meeting (AI 6)

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee was on Thursday 21 June at 12.15 pm. The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson said that it was likely that an additional meeting may be needed before that date.

The meeting ended at 1.35 pm.

Chair