



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Personnel Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on 14 December 2009 at 6.00 pm at East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present:

Councillors

Roger Glithero (**Chairman**)

Wendy Brackenbury

Sylvia Hughes

Andy Mercer

Katy Everitt

Head of Organisational Development (KE)

David Oliver

Chief Executive (DO)

Keith Osborne

Democratic Services Manager (KO)

Action

1.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2009 were approved and signed as a correct record.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 David Brackenbury sent his apologies.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 David Oliver, Katy Everitt and Keith Osborne declared a personal interest in item 5 (Review of Employee Pay and Benefits) as proposals which eventually came forward for discussion could affect their wellbeing.

4.0 QUESTIONS

- 4.1 There were no questions.

5.0 REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE PAY & BENEFITS

- 5.1 KE reported that, following the decision on the cessation of life assurance benefits at the end of the current calendar year (minute 8.5 of the last meeting refers), all but three employees had agreed in writing to the change in their terms of employment. The Sub-Committee was advised of the process being followed in relation to the three employees who had not signed the form and associated risks to the Council.

- 5.2 Both DO and KE outlined the progress being made with the employee workshops

being held to discuss options for making savings in the staffing budget and hear staff views. Six workshops had been held so far, on 7 and 8 December, with a further two workshops planned for 15 December. The messages emerging from the workshops already held were reported to the Sub-Committee and there were already areas of potential agreement, which were noted by Members, who reiterated their wish to avoid redundancies but to effect other savings in the staffing budget instead.

- 5.3 The approach being adopted by the Council, and the discussions being held with staff, had been commended by UNISON. SMT hoped to finalise a package of proposals by the end of December 2009/early January 2010, and would keep the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee closely briefed on progress.

6.0 VETTING & BARRING SCHEME

- 6.1 Further to minute 5.1 of the last meeting, the Head of Organisational Development reported on the implications of undertaking ISA checks on employees who worked with children or vulnerable adults. There were a number of target dates to comply with but the Council was under an obligation to meet certain requirements of the appropriate supplementary legislation now. It was estimated that some 57 employees would be affected and the cost of checks would be £64 per employee. Approaches were being made to other local authorities to establish how the scheme would work in practice and the implications for staff if checks revealed issues or employees refused to undergo checks.

- 6.2 A further report would be made to the Sub-Committee in due course.

7.0 CURRENT OUTSTANDING STAFF VACANCIES

- 7.1 The Sub-Committee received and noted a Schedule of current outstanding staff vacancies, arranged in three categories (a) posts currently being advertised (b) vacant posts not being filled and (c) vacant hours not being filled. The dates when the posts had become vacant were indicated, together with the estimated savings for 2009/10 and the next two financial years if the posts or vacant hours remained unfilled.

- 7.2 It was

RESOLVED:

That SMT examine the vacant posts and vacant hours which are not being filled, and provided that there are no capacity issues, make recommendations to the Budget Review Group on permanent changes to the establishment.

8.0 XcHANGE GROUP

- 8.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Xchange Group held on 1 October 2009 were received. The minutes are set out on pages 4 to 6.

9.0 SICKNESS DATA & BUPA

- 9.1 The Sub-Committee were given comparative figures for days lost to sickness per full time equivalent for all District and Borough Councils in Northamptonshire in

2008/09 and the position in September 2009. Members were pleased to note that East Northamptonshire Council's figures for these periods were the lowest in the County, and stood currently at 2.86 days.

- 9.2 Details of the cost of BUPA payments and the number of claims in the last three years from October 2006 were given to the Sub-Committee.

10.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 The Sub-Committee noted that the next meeting had been arranged for Tuesday 2 February 2010. **KO**

Chairman



Xchange Group

Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 1 October 2009 in room CHG2

Present:	Palden Dorje	PD	Chair & Unison Representative
	Mark Lovell	ML	Executive Director
	Julie Lee	JL	Customer Services Representative
	Symon Adamson	SA	Revenues and Benefits Services Representative
	Carolyn Aldridge	CA	Policy & Community Development Representative
	Katy Everitt	KE	Head of Organisational Development
	Pauline Matheson	PM	Organisational Development Representative
	Rachel Reeds	RR	Resources Representative

Minutes: Alice Duggan

1 **Apologies for absence**

Brian Harrison
David Oliver
Thomas Morrissey
Heidi Lightfoot
Romina Vella

2 **Minutes of the last meeting 13 August**

- 2.1 It was noted that the minutes of the meeting on 13 August had been agreed but had not been recorded officially and approval of the minutes would need to be on each meeting agenda.

PD

3 **Matters arising from the minutes**

- 3.1 The group welcomed PD to her role as Chair of the group and KE and PD made it clear that PD was acting strictly as Chair and would not be using her position to promote Unison.

4 **Update on consultation**

- 4.1 KE tabled two papers which summarised the results of the consultations.

4.2 **Workplace Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Procedure**

The group noted that staff feedback had been presented to the Personnel Sub-Committee (PSC) on 8 September 2009 and it was decided that, at that current time, the Council did not want to put a Workplace Drugs and Alcohol Policy into place. Members asked that existing policies and procedures be used to deal with any drugs or alcohol issues that may arise in the workplace. KE and the PSC members would be looking at how this could be implemented to give staff clear guidance.

**KE & PSC
Members**

4.3 **Bupa and Life Assurance**

It was noted that 56% of the workforce had responded to the employee benefits consultation. The results from the consultation showed that the majority of staff agreed that the Life Assurance should be removed and KE said it is likely that this benefit will be removed in the near future subject to agreement by the PSC. The majority of staff felt that Bupa should remain in place. KE would discuss these results further with the PSC on 20 October 2009 and staff would be informed of decisions as soon as possible. KE confirmed that at the moment both benefits remain in place.

5 **Car Scheme**

5.1 As a result of the pressures on the budget. It was expected that the Budget Review Group (BRG) would be looking at it in the future but as part of the holistic approach highlighted elsewhere in these Minutes.

6 **Employee Workshop – reducing employee costs**

6.1 ML advised Xchange that the Council still need to make savings from the revenue budget and staffing budgets where a significant proportion of our controllable expenditure is. KE and ML asked Xchange members if they thought holding an employee workshop would be useful. Xchange said it would and said the workshop should consider the following:

1. Confirmation of how much money needs to be saved from the budget.
2. How the staffing budget is currently spent and it contributes to the overall spending.
3. Employee ideas on how the budget could be reduced with a view to producing a list of “saving priorities”.

6.2 Xchange agreed that they would rather have one decision about how the savings will be made rather than “dragging it out” over a series of decisions.

6.3 XChange noted the importance of engaging with staff that would be unable to attend the workshop and suggested that the list drawn up at the workshops should be published on Eunice.

7 **Big Team Meeting**

7.1 As agreed at the XChange meeting on 13 August, the first Big Team meeting would focus on the current financial situation. At that time a date had not been finalised.

8 **Pennies from Heaven**

8.1 KE gave an overview of how much money has been made from Pennies from Heaven in the past 12 months and also how much the Council have to pay towards administration charges. They were as follows:

- We have 38 employees (around 16% of our workforce) who contribute to the scheme
- In the past 12 months we raised £214.72
- The Council has to pay an administration cost of £115 per annum to participate in the scheme.

KE

8.2 Due to the administration cost of Pennies from Heaven, XChange agreed that the scheme should be removed and instead put charity collection boxes out around the Council. KE agreed to contact those staff who currently participate in the scheme to advise them of the change. It was agreed that more charity collection boxes could be displayed in addition to those that are already in place. JL noted that collection boxes could not be placed on the Reception area.

9 **Best Public Sector Employer to Work For**

9.1 KE noted that the questionnaires would be sent to staff for completion on 3 November.

10 **Future meeting dates**

10.1 KE noted that it was necessary to review the dates for meetings and that she would circulate proposed dates.