



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Personnel Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on 20 October 2009 at 2.00 pm at East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present:

Councillors

Roger Glithero (**Chairman**)
Wendy Brackenbury
Sylvia Hughes
Andy Mercer

Katy Everitt

Mark Lovell

Keith Osborne

Head of Organisational Development (KE)

Chief Finance Officer (ML)

Democratic Services Manager (KO)

Action

1.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2009 were approved and signed as a correct record.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 David Brackenbury and David Oliver sent apologies.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/QUESTIONS

- 3.1 There were no declarations and no questions

4.0 CURRENT OUTSTANDING STAFF VACANCIES

- 4.1 The Sub-Committee received a Schedule of current outstanding staff vacancies, arranged in four categories (a) vacant posts not being filled (b) vacant hours not being filled; (c) appointments made, and (d) comments on other posts.

- 4.2 Members asked that the following refinements be made to future Schedules:

- An additional column showing savings made in 2009/10
- More detail in the "Comments" column
- An indication of those posts which have been vacant for more than 6 months but temporary staff have not been engaged to undertake some or all the work.

**KE/
ML**

5.0 REVENUE BUDGET – STAFF COSTS

- 5.1 ML submitted a report giving details of the staff costs provided in the 2009/10

revenue budget. Members commented on a number of the areas of expenditure, principally –

- Car allowances
- Staff advertising (which was lower than the budgeted expenditure)
- CRB checks.

5.2 It was

RESOLVED:

That further information be submitted to the next meeting on

- (a) the various heads of expenditure broken down into function or team order
- (b) car allowances expenditure broken down into (i) essential users (ii) casual users and (iii) leased cars.
- (c) the cost of expected ISA checks and whether it can be absorbed under the CRB budget provision.

ML

6.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.1 The Sub-Committee noted that the next meeting had been arranged for Tuesday 1 December 2009.

KO

7.0 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

7.1 RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because exempt information, as defined under paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 may be disclosed.

8.0 CONSULTATION ON STAFF BENEFITS – LIFE ASSURANCE & BUPA HEALTH CARE

8.1 Further to minute 6.1 of the last meeting, the Sub-Committee received and considered the responses following staff consultation on the removal of Life Assurance cover and BUPA membership for private health care.

8.2 There had been 135 responses, as follows:-

	Strongly agree	Agree	No Preference	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Council should remove life assurance as an employee benefit	14	57	20	26	18
The Council should remove BUPA as an employee benefit	10	36	21	44	24

Members reviewed the comments received from employees, particularly those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals.

- 8.3 KE outlined, in detail, the risks associated with the removal of these staff benefits and emphasised the need to work with UNISON to reach an agreement. Members noted that the majority of staff who had responded to the consultation had accepted the proposal to remove the life assurance benefit and that the pensions regulations now provided for cover at the rate of 3 times final salary. They appreciated that the staff had, by a narrow margin, disagreed with the proposal to remove BUPA private health care, but emphasised that the Council was faced with making considerable cuts in its expenditure and that it would be preferable to remove benefits rather than impose redundancies.
- 8.4 KE advised the Sub-Committee that only a few employees were not members of the pension scheme and that they would be invited to join.
- 8.5 After further discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the staff be thanked for their response to the consultation. **KE**
- (2) That life assurance cover be removed as an employee benefit with effect from 1 January 2010.
- (3) That the Council is mindful of removing the BUPA private health care benefit and negotiations be conducted with UNISON with a view to closing the scheme to new staff as soon as practicable, and for other staff by October 2010.
- (4) That, at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee, information be presented on (a) the number of occasions BUPA has been accessed by staff in the last few years (b) how the Council's sickness absence levels compare with other local authorities.

Chairman