



## Personnel Sub-Committee

**Minutes of a Meeting held on Monday 18 September 2017 at 11.30am (on the meeting becoming quorate), East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston**

**Present:** Councillors: Wendy Brackenbury  
Roger Glithero  
Glenn Harwood MBE  
Steven North  
Sarah Peacock

Officers: David Oliver Chief Executive  
Sharn Matthews Executive Director  
Mike Deacon Head of Environmental Services  
Aime Armstrong Human Resources Manager  
Michelle Drewery Finance Manager  
Jenny Walker Environmental Protection Manager

### **1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 No apologies for absence had been received.

### **2.0 MINUTES**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 10 July 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 No declarations of interest were made by Members of the Sub-Committee. All Staff present declared an interest in the item "Christmas Closure and Extra Annual Leave Proposal" which would be of benefit for all members of staff. All staff remained in the meeting.

### **4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3**

4.1 There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

### **5.0 WORKFORCE STATISTICS**

5.1 The Sub-Committee reviewed data concerning staff sickness, turnover and the number of staff employed, particularly the impact of long-term absences on the overall sickness levels.

- 5.2 It was noted that it had previously been agreed that a report on vacant posts would no longer be submitted to each meeting of the Sub-Committee. As the Council was in the process of setting next year's budget, Members requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting identifying current vacant posts and proposed courses of action for each post.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted and a report on vacant posts be submitted to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

**6.0 UPDATE ON VACANT POSTS WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TEAM, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

- 6.1 The Environmental Protection Manager reported that in June 2016 the creation of two new part-time, fixed-term posts within Environmental Protection had been approved by the Sub-Committee.
- 6.2 The posts approved were for an additional part-time Technical Officer to support the full-time post with technical drawings for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) with the costs being met from the capital budget for DFGs. The creation of a second post was to assist the Environmental Protection team in continuing to provide planning consultation responses. This post was to be funded from Planning Applications fees.
- 6.3 As a result of not being able to recruit to the roles, alternative measures had been put in place. These were to use the funding allocation for the planning consultation role to appoint external consultants to assist the Environmental Services team as and when required. The Head of Planning would be advised if it was felt that circumstances required a consultant to be appointed for a particular application.
- 6.4 With regard to the Technical Officer role, in June 2016 this Council had sought to share a resource with Daventry District Council, although DDC had now trialled other options. Due to the failure to find a suitable candidate, ENC were working with Kettering and Corby Borough Councils to examine the resourcing and resilience of this role. In the interim, ENC had utilised consultants to carry out some of the work as well as the Adapt Service run by Spire Homes Care and Repair which, as an interim measure, had proved successful.
- 6.5 The future position on the posts would be clarified in the report on vacant posts to be submitted to the next meeting as agreed under the previous item.

**RESOLVED:**

That the current position of the two vacant posts be noted and the interim measures generated as a result of not being able to recruit, as set out in the report, be approved.

*(Reason: The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective)*

## **7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – LICENSING PROJECTS SUPPORT**

- 7.1 The Head of Environmental Services presented a report seeking approval for an additional project support resource in Environmental Services to enable the progress of projects which were aimed at developing the Central Licensing Administration Unit (CLAU) partnership into new areas of working.
- 7.2 The CLAU partnership, which this Council hosted on behalf of 5 Councils, was looking to further develop its work into additional areas of licensing, specifically taxi licensing and the licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO).
- 7.3 A report on changes to housing legislation had been considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in February 2017. This report had identified the need for additional resources to implement the new HMO regime and this would be subject to a further report to this Sub-Committee.
- 7.4 During 2017/18 the proposed post would be financed from forecast service salary savings and for the remainder of the period the costs would be covered by a combination of partner contributions and fee income. Government guidance indicated that costs associated with setting up and running this service in the first five years could be reflected in the fees set for the licence and the budget would therefore need to be built into the base budget from 2018/19 onwards

### **RESOLVED:**

That the creation of a Licensing Projects Support Officer post as a 2- year part time (14.8 hours per week) fixed term post be approved.

*(Reason: To enable the identified projects to proceed without detriment to existing service provision)*

## **8.0 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION CANVASS RATES OF PAY**

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, in his capacity as the Authority's Electoral Registration Officer, presented a report seeking approval for new rates of pay for the authority's canvassing activity being undertaken during the Autumn of 2017 and, potentially, in future years.
- 8.2 Details of the rates of pay paid by the authority since the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) were submitted, together with an outline of the procedures involved in conducting the canvass.
- 8.3 It was noted that over the previous two canvasses the return rates had dropped by approximately 6-8%. This was thought to be partly due to the introduction of IER and potentially due to the current payment scheme, which did not give the canvasser an incentive to ensure that people who were visited then submitted the relevant forms and went onto the register. Accordingly, a new fees structure was proposed to address this matter and it was anticipated that the costs of the proposed change could be accommodated within the existing Electoral Registration budget.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the Fees Structure for Electoral Registration for the 2017 canvass set out below be approved and the canvass return rate be reviewed after the publication of the Electoral Register to consider if the payment structure needs to be reviewed prior to the 2018 canvass.

Activity	Fee
Attendance at a briefing session provided by the Electoral Services Team	£25.00
Property visit	£0.21 per property
Return of a completed HEF or ITR	£1.00 per form
Mileage payable from first property visited to last property (mileage cannot be claimed from home or to home)	£0.45 per mile

*(Reason: To ensure that the canvass process is successful in maximising electoral registration)*

### **9.0 COUNSELLING SERVICE**

- 9.1 The Human Resources Manager presented a report outlining the counselling service currently provided for staff, together with information regarding use of the service since 2014/15.
- 9.2 It was noted that the current provider of counselling would cease to trade at the end of 2017 and a replacement provider would need to be found. One option would be to consider a broader employee support product in the longer term, which could include face to face counselling as well as telephone counselling. It was also noted that the counselling service referred consultees to specialist advisory services, such as debt management advisors, where this was appropriate.
- 9.3 The counselling service was also available to Members of the Council and it was considered that this should be publicised among Members, including the issue of a Member Briefing, as the availability of the service appeared to not be widely known.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

### **10.0 CHRISTMAS CLOSURE AND EXTRA ANNUAL LEAVE PROPOSAL**

- 10.1 The Chief Executive set out proposals for awarding ENC staff a one-off additional day's leave (pro-rata for part-time staff) to recognise their continued commitment and hard work during challenging times and to close earlier on the last working day before Christmas.
- 10.2 The Sub-Committee had approved an additional day's leave for staff in June 2013 in recognition of their hard work and commitment during several years of austerity during which staff numbers reduced by around 15%. There had been no increase in costs arising from the additional leave as backfill for the extra leave had not been provided and there had been no noticeable impact on customers.

- 10.3 For the last 2 years, the Council Offices had closed at 4.00 p.m. on the last working day before the Christmas break and there had been no negative feedback from customers. Calls and visits from customers had historically been very low in the afternoon on the last working day before the Christmas and New Year closure (only about a dozen in 2016) and many staff took the afternoon or the whole day off in any case. It was proposed to trial a closure of the offices at 12.00 noon on 22 December 2017, which was the last working day of the year. This would be treated as a further additional half-day's leave, with appropriate adjustments/arrangements for part-time staff.

**RESOLVED:** That

- i) a one-off extra day's leave for all staff, pro-rata for part-time staff, to be taken between 1 October 2017 and 30 April 2018 be approved.
- ii) the closure of the Council Offices at 12.00 noon on Friday 22 December 2017 be approved and a further half-day's leave with appropriate arrangements for part-time staff be awarded.
- iii) it be noted that a report will be submitted to a subsequent meeting setting out the impact on customer service of early Christmas closure, with a view to deciding whether to make this a permanent arrangement.

*(Reason: In recognition of continued staff contribution to the council's service delivery during a prolonged challenging period for local government)*

## **11.0 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**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 paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

## **12.0 CHANGE TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES OFFICER ROLE**

- 12.1 The Head of Environmental Services presented a report seeking approval to integrate the Grounds Maintenance Contract monitoring function into the Environmental Services Officer (ESO) role in the Waste Services Team and to recruit to the vacancy within the team.
- 12.2 The integration of duties would provide additional resilience for all the duties currently being undertaken as part of the existing ESO role. These duties included patrols and enforcement of offences covered under the Council's Enforcement Policy, specifically littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping. The proposal would also enhance the ability for enforcement actions against those who committed offences impacting on grounds maintenance, such as littering.
- 12.3 The integrated posts had been job evaluated and had been graded at a higher grade than anticipated. The report proposed to reduce the hours of the part-time post to keep the overall costs within the existing budget. However, the Sub-Committee considered that the Council should have adequate resources in place to support this important area of activity and the hours of the part-time post should remain as originally proposed and the additional costs met..

**RESOLVED:** That

- i) the Equality Implications set out in section 4 of the report have been considered.
- ii) the amalgamation of the Amenities Supervisor post with the part time Environmental Services Officer post be approved.
- iii) the recruitment to the newly amalgamated and vacant Environmental Services Officer post be approved.
- iv) notwithstanding that the posts have been job evaluated at a grade higher than anticipated, the hours of the part-time post be retained as proposed at 28 hours per week and the additional cost of approximately £10,000 per year for the two posts be met from the overall forecast underspend in 2017/18 and be built into the base budget from 2018/19 onwards.

*(Reason: To discharge the Council's contractual obligations with regard to the Grounds Maintenance Consortium)*

**Chairman**