

MINUTE EXTRACT

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

11 June 2012

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: Cath Hill, Children's and Communities Portfolio Holder
John Lauderdale, Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder
Paul Thompson, Finance and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder

Also Present: Councillor Marjorie James, Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating
Committee
Councillors Richardson and Wells

Officers: Nicola Bailey, Acting Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
John Morton, Assistant Chief Finance Officer
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and
Specialist Services
John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health
Alastair Rae, Public Relations Manager
Clare Clark, Neighbourhood Manager, Central
James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

10. Future Options for the Provision of a Strategic HR Function (*Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To set out options for the future provision of a strategic HR function. This report will present three options for cabinet to consider.

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- Reappointment of a Chief Customer & Workforce Services Officer,
- Undertake an internal restructure which removes the strategic HR post
- Continue to share a Head of HR with Darlington Borough Council.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chief Executive provided background information to the current HR strategic provision and the options available in terms of future provision following the resignation of the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer.

Members were referred to the benefits and implications of the three options, as set out in the report.

With regard to option 1, to recruit into an HBC only Chief Customer and Workforce Services Manager post would mean taking on employment liability at a time when the Council were looking to limit such liabilities.

In relation to option 2, to undertake an internal restructure that removed the Strategic HR Post, this would allow the Council to make some savings as a result of this change. However, these would be limited by the need to provide additional HR capacity at a lower level. This more operational post would be expected to lead strategically on a number of areas as detailed in the report. This approach to removing the strategic HR post was one that had been used in two neighbouring councils, the outcome of which was detailed in the report. The significant risks of this option were outlined.

In terms of Option 3, to continue in a shared arrangement with Darlington Borough Council, Darlington had considered their options regarding a future HR service and decided they did wish to retain a strategic HR lead. As a result they would progress and appoint into a strategic HR post irrespective of the HBC decision on the future option they wished to take. In light of the successful shared arrangement for the last 6 months Darlington had offered to take the role as lead authority so that the shared arrangements could continue and would welcome HBC Members and Officers' involvement in the recruitment process.

Members were referred to the financial implications of the three options as detailed in the report.

A number of scrutiny chairs had made representations to CMT in relation to the future delivery of a strategic HR function. Whilst they were fully cognisant of the challenges ahead and supportive of the need to continue to provide a dedicated and clear strategic HR service they did not feel that this should be done by Option 1 i.e. reappointing to a permanent full time Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer post. They felt the costs of this option were prohibitive and did not feel it met the authority's needs going forward. Option 3 i.e. a shared service with Darlington was also not one that they wished to see continue as they felt the costs of continuing with this arrangement were also prohibitive.

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They had indicated that in their view some form of internal restructure would be of more value to the council but would wish to see the costs associated with this limited significantly. This would mean that the increase in HR capacity that was required for Option 2 would potentially not be able to be fulfilled by the appointment of an additional HR advisor, but via the re-grading of staff currently providing an HR service. This would have the impact of altering the nature and type of duties undertaken by staff but would not offer the additional capacity CMT felt was required.

Cabinet considered the various options and discussed which options best met the needs of the authority going forward. Following discussion, Cabinet were of the view that Option 3 should be pursued given the ongoing financial challenges facing the authority and the success of the current arrangement with Darlington.

Decision

- (i) Cabinet agreed to enter into a new agreement with Darlington Borough Council to share a joint Head of HR and that the Acting Chief Executive and/or Chief Solicitor be delegated to finalise the legal agreement with the General Purposes Committee.
- (ii) That the arrangement be reviewed in 12 months time.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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