

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

31 August, 2007

The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. in Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre, Kendal Road, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer
Peter Turner, Principal Strategy Development Officer
Liz Crookston, Principal Strategy and Research Officer
Lisa Anderson, Research Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

13. Early and Ill-Health Retirements 2006-07 – Annual Report (*Chief Financial Officer and Chief Personnel Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the Council's performance in 2006/07 and future targets in relation to early and ill-health retirements.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

Details of the Council's performance and future targets in relation to early retirement and ill health retirements were set out in the report. Detailed breakdowns of the performance against the two Corporate Health Performance Indicators were set out in the report. The two indicators were:-

BVPI14 The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a percentage of the total workforce

BVPI15 The percentage of employees retiring on the grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total workforce

A detailed breakdown of 2006/07 performance by departments was appended to the report. In line with Audit Commission recommendations, details of the costs to the Council associated with the release of employees who were members of the Teesside Pension Fund were also appended to the report.

In relation to 2007/08 and future years' indicators and targets, the Government had provided upper quartile targets, which all authorities should aim to reach. Locally the Council had set three year targets for the BVPI. which were set out in the report. Early retirements only occur after individual employees apply or compulsory redundancies are declared. Since the Council cannot control whether an employee submitted an application, the setting (and achievement) of targets is relatively arbitrary, particularly as the Council use early retirements as part of its change management arrangements and has no control over decisions made by schools.

The future targets for ill health retirements (BVPI15) had been set at a level which, if achieved, would represent upper quartile performance.

The Portfolio Holder requested clarification on the extent of member involvement. The Chief Personnel Officer advised that officers were delegated to make decisions on retirement up to a certain level but decisions on any officers directly appointed by Councillors would be taken to General Purposes Committee. The Portfolio Holder also queried why the targets set for 2007/8 were identical to the previous year and was advised that officers had very little control over how many would satisfy the criteria for early or ill-health retirement. These targets were a best guess scenario.

Decision

That the outturn figures for 2006/7 be noted and the targets set for 2007/8 onwards be endorsed.

14. Implementing The Revised Equality Standard for Local Government *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the revised Equality Standard for Local Government and the financial pressures associated with implementing it.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The Equality Standard is a framework that sets up a way of working within local authorities which, when fully implemented, will mainstream equality into service delivery and employment. In March 2006 the Council declared itself as being at Level 2 and set a target of achieving Level 3 by March 2008.

The revised Equality Standard was published in May 2007 and was appended to the report. This review had led to some simplification and clarification but the general framework had been re-affirmed and unaltered. The original

primary aim was to improve outcomes in employment and service delivery through implementing sound performance management practices and this had been given greater emphasis within the revised version. The process meanwhile had been strengthened through external assessment and by the introduction of an equality mark for Local Government.

Any declarations of Level 3 and 5 of the Standard would be subject to external validation and the award of the Equality Mark by the Improvement and Development Agency and the Centre for Local Policy Studies. Details were given of what the external assessment may involve. Earlier in the year the Council commissioned an informal 'Critical Friend' Peer Assessment. The findings were that overall there was strong evidence to support the Level 2 claim but improvements would be needed in 7 areas to achieve Level 3. In March 2007 the previous Portfolio Holder endorsed an action plan to make the suggested improvements and work was ongoing in relation to this.

The Portfolio Holder queried how the stakeholder panels would interact with the scrutiny process. The Chief Personnel Officer advised that the only way to meet the Level 3 assessment was to be subject to external assessment. Membership of the general public on scrutiny forums could be used as evidence at Level 3.

Details were given of the funding pressures associated with this process. The Portfolio Holder drew particular attention to issues surrounding an existing contract with the Tees Valley and Durham Communication Service for the provision of communication services for the deaf and hard of hearing. Currently departments pay for usage of the service while Human Resources fund the administration fee from reserves. However the reserves would run out this year and the contract was due for renewal in 2008. The Portfolio Holder indicated that she felt that this service was important and would support the budget pressure request for the administration fee.

Decision

- That the report be noted and the proposed actions endorsed.
- That the changes in the revised Equality Standard be noted and the Council's commitment to the equality standard be re-affirmed.

15. Bereavement and Compassionate Leave (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To obtain the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the update bereavement and compassionate leave provision.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of the new provisions available to employees under bereavement and compassionate leave, with the aim of improved and sustainable work-life strategies which meet customer needs, corporate goals and enhance the quality of life for individual employee.

The Portfolio Holder asked if all the updated provisions to be discussed during the meeting would be affected by the forthcoming Single Status Agreement. The Chief Personnel Officer advised that they would be incorporated into the Single Status package but not affected by it. The proposed changes had all been agreed by the Trade Unions in light of Single Status.

Decision

That the updated provisions for bereavement and compassionate leave and the updated caring for adults and caring for children leave schemes be endorsed.

16. Working at Home Policy and Procedure *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To obtain the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the updated Working at Home Policy and Procedure.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of the new provisions available for Working at Home through Information, Communication and Technology whilst incorporating changes in employment legislation, with the aim of providing a work-life balance to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

The Portfolio Holder felt that the policy seemed to benefit more senior officers and hoped there would be flexibility at all levels. The Chief Personnel Officer reported that a comprehensive working from home policy was being formulated for employees whose jobs were not primarily office-based.

Decision

That the updated Working at Home Policy and Procedure be approved.

17. Workforce Profile and Monitoring – Annual Report 2006/7 *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the Council's workforce profile performance in 2006/7, how it compares to the local population and applicants for jobs in 2006/7, actions taken during the period and planned future actions and targets.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder considered a comprehensive report, together with accompanying appendices, which set out details of the Council's workforce profile performance in 2006/7, how it compared to the local population and applicants for jobs in 2006/07, actions taken during the period and planned future actions and targets.

The Portfolio Holder felt the targets needed to be more ambitious, particularly in relation to the recruitment of young people. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that these targets had been set in anticipation of the effect which Age Discrimination legislation would inevitably have on older staff retention targets needed to be achievable. However the Portfolio Holder requested that the targets be increased slightly and reported back to a future portfolio meeting.

Decision

- That the report be noted
- That the planned actions be endorsed
- That the planned targets be revised for consideration at a future portfolio meeting

18. Employee Attendance 2007/8 1st Quarter *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on performance up to the first quarter of 2007/8 and actions taken in relation to employee absence.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of employee absence for the first quarter of 2007/8 and actions taken.

The Portfolio Holder advised she was really pleased with the “excellent” results and requested that the Public Relations Office issue a press release highlighting these achievements. Her positive comments would be fed back to those officers directly involved in these improvements.

Decision

That the report be noted.

19. Chief Executive’s Departmental Plan 2007/08 – 1st Quarter Monitoring Report *(Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Chief Executive’s Departmental Plan 2007/08 in the first quarter of the year.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report detailed the progress against the actions contained in the Chief Executive’s Departmental Plan 2007/08 and the first quarter outturns of key performance indicators.

The Portfolio Holder commented particularly on the failure to implement the Contact Centre Partnership Working Action Plan by the September 2007 deadline. The Chief Personnel Officer reported that the majority of the work had been delayed because of technical difficulties. The Portfolio Holder indicated she would like further information on the Contact Centre and would discuss further with the Chief Personnel Officer.

Decision

- That the achievement on key actions and first quarter outturns of performance indicators be noted
- That the proposed revision to the completion date as detailed in Table 2 be agreed
- That the Chief Personnel Officer brief the Portfolio Holder on the Contact Centre.

20. Corporate Complaints – April to June 2007 *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To report to the Portfolio Holder on corporate complaints performance for the first quarter of 2007/8, providing information on recent recommendations from the Local Government Ombudsman on complaints and partnership arrangements.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report covered performance information on numbers of complaints, timescales for investigation and outcomes of investigations for formal complaints dealt with in the first quarter of 2006/07. It also discussed a new report from the Local Government Ombudsman on “Local Partnerships and citizen redress” and how the authority would deal with that.

The Portfolio Holder queried Hartlepool’s performance on meeting complaints investigation deadlines in relation to neighbouring local authorities. The Principal Strategy and Research Officer indicated that, with reference to the 15-day deadline, Hartlepool had achieved 86% in the first quarter in comparison with Stockton’s 87% dealt with within their deadlines in the previous year.

In consideration of the “Local Partnerships and citizen redress” report, the Portfolio Holder endorsed the next steps proposed in the report and indicated that she would be pleased to see these issues considered by Scrutiny provided it went to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee initially.

Decision

That the report be noted and the next steps identified in the report be endorsed.

21. Viewpoint – Citizen’s Panel Results *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the results of the 21st phase of Viewpoint, Hartlepool Borough Council’s Citizen’s Panel that was distributed in January

2007; to provide some information about an Open Spaces consultation event and to report on the use of past Viewpoint results.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report summarised the results achieved in the latest Viewpoint questionnaire. The 21st Viewpoint Survey Results Overall Report was appended to the report. The Portfolio Holder was advised that the current phase had included questions on the following topics:

- Healthy Eating
- Highways Management
- Building Control
- Council-Run Community Centres
- Consulting with the Public

The report contained a summary of the main results including the numbers of individuals involved and the percentage of returns, including the returns completed “on-line”. Each of the above topics was reported on in detail and key findings were highlighted.

In July 2006 Viewpoint members were questioned on behalf of Cleveland Police Authority. They wanted to find out residents views on Neighbourhood Policing, local policing and the new alcohol and licensing laws. Some feedback about what Cleveland Police Authority had done with the results was included in this report. Cleveland Police Authority had contributed financially to this survey. Information regarding an annual public meeting to be held on behalf of Cleveland Police and Cleveland Police Authority on 2nd October 2007 was also given.

The Portfolio Holder made the following comments in relation to the findings of the survey:

- 74% had not heard of the Planning Department “One Stop Shop” – it was probable that only those who needed to use it would have heard of it. Those who had used it regarded it as a very good service.
- 52% were dissatisfied with the condition of pavements in their local neighbourhood and 55% with the condition of roads in Hartlepool as a whole – this needed to be put right as people regarded the Council primarily as a provider of these services.
- 64% had not heard of Neighbourhood Consultative Forums – These were always advertised in Hartbeat magazine which people always indicated they had received and read.

Decision

That the results of the survey be noted

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 20th September 2007