

# **PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

21 September 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  
Claire Lowthian, Development Programme Trainee  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

## **22. Improving the Qualification Attainment Level of the Workforce** (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the proposed programme to up skill the workforce to ensure all have a minimum of NVQ level 2 qualification or equivalent as per the recommendation within the recent national government skills review undertaken by Lord Sandy Leitch.

**Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The Government commissioned Lord Leitch to undertake an independent review of the UK's long term skill needs in 2004. The final report was published in December 2006 and recommended that the UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills, committing to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020. Following the publication employers nationally were asked to voluntarily sign a "skills pledge" committing them to this vision. In June 2007 Hartlepool made the national and regional skills pledge. The Workforce Development Strategy 2007-2012 had already identified that action at a corporate level was required to audit the workforce to identify those employees without a first NVQ level 2 or equivalent qualification and make provision for this to be rectified.

Working with areas within Neighbourhood Services the Corporate Workforce Development Manager had held meetings with various services heads. Using Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding via the "Train to Gain" initiative,

employers were able to access formal qualifications for their employees at no cost provided they met the eligibility criteria. The LSC had employed “Skills Brokers” to assist employers to source training provision that meets their needs locally in service specific areas. Training providers must hold a “Train to Gain” contract.

The proposed scheme involves identifying the staff in a specific area and briefing them on the scheme before a small internal team would undertake a basic audit of the employees to ascertain who would be eligible for funding. The providers would then be contacted and asked to prepare a presentation on how they would deliver a project and what added value they could bring to the authority.

As the scheme will not physically incur any costs for the training delivery it is exempt from procurement rules and guidelines, as confirmed by the Procurement Team and legal division. Details of participant data and outcomes will be reported to the portfolio holder in the twice yearly Workforce Development reports.

The Portfolio Holder endorsed the proposals but requested that consideration be given to promoting the NVQ level 3 rather than just the level 2 qualification. The Chief Personnel Officer advised that the decision had been taken to focus on people with no qualifications at the moment as a response to Trade Union concerns however she acknowledged the need to look to develop all staff to NVQ 3 as a future target.

#### **Decision**

That the report be noted and the proposals endorsed.

### **23. Corporate Disciplinary Procedure** *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek Portfolio Holder endorsement to amend the Council's Disciplinary Policy for employees.

#### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report provided details of the proposed amendment and reasons for change. The current Corporate Disciplinary Procedure stated that the final internal stage of a disciplinary appeal would be heard by the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee. The specific procedure for this meeting stated that the Chief Personnel Officer must withdraw from the proceedings during the deliberation and decision-making process. Under the new proposed amendment the Chief Personnel Officer would be in attendance throughout the deliberations in order to advise members.

The Portfolio Holder indicated there had been a high level of comment in relation to this recommendation, some of it negative. In light of this the Portfolio Holder put forward a third suggestion whereby Members would continue to deliberate in closed session, agree on their decision and then before the decision was announced the panel would confirm their decision with the Chief Personnel Officer who could then advise on the legality and practicalities of the decision prior to official notification. The Chief Personnel Officer felt that this would run the risk of duplicate discussions however this alternative was preferable to the existing policy. The Portfolio Holder requested that the new procedure be tried for 12 months (or 3 cases whichever was the sooner) and then reviewed

### **Decision**

That the Corporate Disciplinary Procedure be amended on a trial basis as discussed above for a period of 12 months or 3 meetings whichever is the sooner.

## **24. Christmas and New Year Arrangements** (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To obtain a decision on the closure of most of the main administrative buildings during the Christmas and New Year period in 2007/08.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report advised that in previous years Hartlepool Council had closed most of its administrative buildings for the period in between Christmas and New Year and employees had taken annual leave as appropriate. In 2004 Cabinet had given its support, in principle, to closure of the administrative buildings during the Christmas and New Year period every year, in line with past practice. The proposals for 2007/08 were that the main administrative buildings be closed from 25<sup>th</sup> December 2007 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 with the additional option of closure on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> December. The Chief Executive was supportive of these recommendations as were the Trade Unions.

The Portfolio Holder indicated she was happy to agree the recommendations which would make economic sense while giving staff a nice long break. Her only regret was that staff would be obliged to use their leave allocation.

### **Decision**

1. That most of the main administrative buildings be closed between Christmas 2007 and New Year 2008 (24<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>

December) with employees taking leave from their current leave entitlement and that the usual essential emergency on-call and some other service arrangements apply and be publicised.

2. That the leave arrangements at Christmas and New Year continue to form part of the ongoing Single Status discussions with the Trade Unions regarding leave generally.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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