

# PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD 29 August 2008

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer  
Stuart Langston, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager  
Liz Crookston, Principal Strategy and Research Officer  
Lisa Anderson, Research Officer  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

## **22. Hartlepool Connect – Proposed Annual Review** (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

To provide the Portfolio Holder with the proposed Hartlepool Connect Annual Report that details actions taken over the last 12 months.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

Hartlepool Connect, the Council's corporate contact centre, had been developing since 2004. Following a successful pilot phase Hartlepool Connect was launched in 2005 and had been gathering performance and customer satisfaction information over the last couple of years. This proposed report was the first Annual Report to be produced by the Hartlepool Connect Team, providing details of the progress made in making it easier to contact the Council. It included details of the services provided and statistical information for various performance measures.

The Portfolio Holder queried the intended circulation for the document and was advised that it would be available on the Council website and in the Members Library and copies would be sent to the Service Client Managers and Corporate Management Team. The Portfolio Holder requested that a

copy be sent to each Councillor as there was a misapprehension among members that statistics were on a downward trend. She also asked that page numbers be added to the document. A query was made in relation to the volume of calls and how this compared to other authorities. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that this information had been included to illustrate the increase in the amount of calls dealt with by Hartlepool Connect. To compare Hartlepool with other authorities would be akin to comparing apples and pears. Human Resources had this information but it had not been felt necessary to include it as part of the report. The Chief Personnel Officer also advised that a Steering Group monitors trends in the number and nature of calls and includes members of Chief Executive's Management Team and representatives from the Trade Union and Northgate.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and the proposed amendments be actioned.

## **23. Stress Risk Assessment Action Plan** *(Chief Personnel Officer)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the intention to undertake a stress risk assessment and request the Portfolio Holder's support for the action plan for undertaking a stress risk assessment and to become a 'Mindful Employer'.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In June 2000 the Government launched the "Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy" to reduce the incidence of work related ill health. This was a 10-year-plan which aimed to reduce work related ill health by 20% in 2010. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the Government's regulatory enforcement agency regarding health and safety compliance and in March 2008 an HSE inspector visited Hartlepool Borough Council. During this visit revised guidance regarding managing and controlling and risk to employees from stress at work was highlighted and a recommendation made that the Council review its systems regarding the issue of stress. In response the Chief Personnel Officer proposed that a thorough corporate risk assessment be undertaken.

An action plan had duly been developed to provide a thorough investigation into the potential for stress. A copy of the action plan was appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's attention. In addition, and to supplement the

work being undertaken to minimise the risk of stress and other mental health related issues the Council had been invited by the Department of Health to become a 'Mindful Employer'. This was a free and voluntary scheme aimed at demonstrating that the Council was a good employer and supported people with mental health issues to stay in work. Details of this scheme were also provided. There were no cost implications.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the Council's becoming part of the 'Mindful Employer' scheme, commenting that stress was a major issue and not something to be ashamed or embarrassed about.

### **Decision**

- I. That the report be noted
- II. That the stress management action plan be agreed
- III. That the proposal that the Council becomes a 'Mindful Employer' be agreed

## **24. 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 24<sup>th</sup> phase of Viewpoint, Hartlepool Borough Council's Citizen's Panel, which was distributed in February 2008.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

Viewpoint is one of the ways that the Authority consults with and involves local people in the governance of Hartlepool. It is a statistically balanced panel of local people who receive questionnaires at regular intervals throughout the year, asking for their views on a variety of local issues facing the Council and Hartlepool as a whole.

Viewpoint's aim is to ensure that the Council listens to the community and involves local people in the Council's decision making. There are often important issues on which the Council needs to consult the local population and discover what the community's priorities are for the future.

Each phase of Viewpoint covers various topics and within this phase there were questions on:-

- Tall Ships Races 2010
- Neighbourhood Consultative Forums
- Emergency Planning
- Contacting the Council

The results had been reported back to the relevant departments within the council and back to Viewpoint members via the regular Viewpoint newsletter. A copy of the overall report had also been placed in the members' library, in all public libraries across the Borough for public access as well as the Council's website.

The key findings were as follows:

- Tall Ships Races 2010 – most people had heard about them and were interested in attending
- Neighbourhood Consultative Forums – the proportion of people attending these meetings had increased slightly since 2007 but was still very low. There was a lack of awareness that the meetings were taking place and of venues, times and agendas.
- Emergency Planning – a small increase in awareness of the Emergency Planning Unit and its work
- Contacting the Council – a desire for longer opening hours had led to a trial period of longer opening hours for Hartlepool Connect

Details were also given of feedback from previous Viewpoint surveys including The Internet and You, Kerbside Collections and An Annual Report for the Council. In all cases specific actions had been taken as a result of comments made by Viewpoint respondents.

The Portfolio Holder advised that she had been unaware that a newsletter was despatched to Viewpoint members but was pleased that this was the case as it was important that respondents received feedback for their efforts. The Research Officer indicated that the results were also available on the Council website. She did however feel that the newsletter might be improved by the use of bullet points.

## **Decision**

That the results of the survey be noted

**25. Employee Attendance 2008/9 – 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2008/9 and actions taken in relation to employee sickness absence.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report provided details of employee absence for the first quarter of 2008/9 and actions taken. The Portfolio Holder commented that it was good to see a downward trend in sickness absence. The Chief Personnel Officer indicated that the expected upturn as a result of job evaluation had not happened. The Sickness Champions Group would be targeting the reasons for sickness absence in an attempt to reduce absence levels further.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

**26. Occupational Health Services** (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of the procurement exercise to obtain a provider of occupational health services.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In March 2008 the Portfolio Holder agreed to allow a procurement exercise to obtain a provider of Occupational Health Services on a 50:50 price:quality basis. Following an advert four companies submitted formal

bids and following evaluation National Britannia was awarded the contract. This will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 for three years with the provision for a two-year extension. Performance will be monitored by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team and the Sickness Champions Group.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.35pm

**PETER DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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