

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

6 October 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor The Mayor, Stuart Drummond (in the absence of the Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer
 Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer
 Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection
 David Dockree, Acting Estates Manager
 David Hart, Strategic Procurement Manager
 Paula Bass, Revenues Manager
 Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

51. 2010 Property Rating List – *Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the implications of the new 2010 Rating List and to seek approval to address the financial implications involved.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background of the planned revision to the rating of the Council's properties and identified a course of action to reduce the rate burden on the Council.

Decision

That the appointment of a Rating Surveyor on terms to be agreed subsequent to a competitive procurement process be agreed.

52. Irrecoverable Debts – Council Tax – Chief Financial Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to write-out a number of council tax debts, which are now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issues for Consideration

The Council's financial procedure rules provide that any debt due to the Council of over £1,000 could only be written out with the express permission of the Portfolio Holder. Whilst every effort was made to collect debts due to the Council certain debts become irrecoverable and the report sought the agreement of the Portfolio Holder to write these out. The Chief Financial Officer stated that the amount being written out each year by the Authority equated to 0.1%, in comparison with a national average of 0.3%.

Decision

That the write-out of the council tax accounts for the reasons detailed be approved.

53. Irrecoverable Debts – Business Rates – Chief Financial Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to write-out a number of business rates debts, which are now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issues for Consideration

The Council's financial procedure rules provide that any debt due to the Council of over £1,000 could only be written out with the express permission of the Portfolio Holder. Whilst every effort was made to collect debts due to the Council certain debts become irrecoverable and the report sought the agreement of the Portfolio Holder to write these out. The Chief Financial Officer stated that the amount being written

out each year by the Authority equated to 0.2%.

Decision

That the write-out of the business rates accounts for the reasons detailed be approved

54. Procedure for Managing Reorganisation, Redeployment and Redundancy – Chief Personnel Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To see the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the attached Procedure for Managing Reorganisation, Redeployment and Redundancy.

Issues for Consideration

For a number of years the Council has operated various policies and procedures in relation to structural change and the impact it can have on employees. These documents were developed and implemented at various stages and it was felt they required review, modernisation and reformatting in order to produce an accurate and more user friendly document. A streamlined procedure was also felt necessary to ensure consistency of application as part of Business Transformation. The revised procedure was appended to the report, Trade Union representatives had confirmed their agreement of this version. The Portfolio Holder was asked to delegate authority to make minor amendments to the Procedure to the Chief Personnel Officer with the agreement of the Single Table Group as required. Any fundamental changes would be brought back to the Portfolio Holder following Trade Union consultation.

Decision

That the procedure for Managing Reorganisation, Redeployment and Redundancy be endorsed.

55. 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 2009/10.

Issues for Consideration

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. They also agreed that leave arrangements at Christmas and New Year would continue to form part of on-going discussions with trade unions, regarding leave arrangements. The Single Status Agreement implemented in 2008 contained a provision requiring employees to take up to four days of their annual leave entitlement to achieve a close down over the Christmas and New Year period.

The proposals for 2009/10 were that the main administrative buildings be closed from 25th December 2009 to 3rd January 2010. The Chief Executive was supportive of these recommendations as were the Trade Unions.

Decision

That most of the main administrative buildings be closed between Christmas 2009 and New Year 2010 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.

56.	Postal Services – <i>Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection</i>
	Type of Decision
	Non key
	Purpose of Report
	To recommend the process of mini-competition to appoint a postal services provider
	Issues for Consideration
	The Mayor requested that this item be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Portfolio.

	Decision
	That the item be deferred.

57.	Tees Valley Agency Workers Contract – <i>Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection</i>
	Type of Decision
	Non key
	Purpose of Report
	To recommend the use of the Tees Valley Contract for the supply of agency staff,
	Issues for Consideration
	<p>The Tees Valley Agency Contract which commenced in April 2009 is a four-year framework with an option to extend for a further two 12 month periods. Stockton and Darlington Borough Council undertook the administration of the tendering process and all companies currently used by Hartlepool were given the opportunity to tender. The list of successful companies was appended to the report.</p> <p>The Procurement Team had analysed the new rates against current agency rates and there was potential for significant cost reductions. This was borne out by Darlington and Stockton Borough Council who had reported an approximate £10,000 saving. In order to provide effective administration of the new contract it was felt that this function would be ideally placed within the internal shared services unit which was due to be established under Business Transformation. Until then the contract detail would be disseminated to managers within the authority to call off their own arrangements. During this interim period managers would be provided with better guidance and training.</p>
	Decision
	That use of the new contract be approved immediately with Departments to operate this contract in the same manner as the current arrangement until the 'internal shared services unit' is established to undertake this function.

58.	Employee Survey 2009 – Chief Personnel Officer
	Type of Decision
	Non key
	Purpose of Report
	To obtain the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the 2009 Employee Survey and Action Plan.
	Issues for Consideration
	The Employee Survey was carried out February-March 2009. Topics included the Council as an employer, changes in workloads, use of family friendly arrangements and levels of unfair treatment, bullying and harassment in the workplace. 1,197 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of 40%. The completed surveys was analysed externally and a report of the findings was produced. An action plan to address areas for improvement was also produced. Both documents were appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's attention.
	Decision
	That the Employee Survey results be noted and the action plan endorsed

59. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order

Minute 59 – Cromwell Street Depot Restrictive Covenant - This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

Minute 60 Qualification Based Training Applications – Officer Holidays - This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or

business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Para 3)

60. Cromwell Street Depot Restrictive Covenant *(para 3)*
- Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the situation that has arisen as a consequence of the imposition of a restrictive covenant as part of a land disposal in 2006.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background to the disposal, details of the restrictive covenant and the current position.

Decision

Detailed within the closed minutes

61. Qualification Based Training Applications *(para 3) –*
Chief Personnel Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder for nominations for qualification support from the Departments of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and Child and Adult Services.

Issues for Consideration

In line with the Council's qualification based policy and procedure approval was sought for two employees to undertake recognised Masters level qualifications. Details of the applicants and courses were included in the report.

Decision

That the applications be approved.

The meeting concluded at 10:30am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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