

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

21 December 2010

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

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Customer Services and Workforce Officer
John Morton, Assistant Chief Finance and Customer Services Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

32. Internal Bailiff Services – Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the planned future changes to the remit of the Council's Internal Bailiff Services and other potential work opportunities

Issues for consideration

The Council's internal bailiff function was established following a successful pilot in 2006 and currently employs 3 bailiffs supported by a back office Recovery Officer. Where debtors have moved outside the borough's boundaries cases were passed to external bailiff companies but in 2010 a reciprocal agreement was made between Hartlepool Borough Council and the City of Sunderland Council whereby each local authority would handle each others bailiff cases that fall within their respective boundaries. It was now proposed that unpaid Hartlepool car parking penalty charge notices be recovered internally rather than through an external bailiff company. It was forecast that approximately £55,000 per year could be generated by this work however the additional workload would require another full time recovery officer in the Enforcement Team on a short fixed term basis at £24,000 per year. An annual surplus of £31,000 would therefore be generated.

In addition Darlington Borough Council had recently announced plans to consolidate all bailiff recovery work with a single corporate contract in 2011. For a number of years Hartlepool had successfully delivered bailiff services for

Darlington and it was therefore proposed that Hartlepool express an interest in delivering those services to be covered by the new arrangement.

The Portfolio Holder raised the following queries:

- What percentage of work would £55,000 relate to? The Assistant Chief Finance and Customer Services Officer indicated that this would equate to the collection of 2,000 of the annual 2,500 unpaid penalty charge notices with an average bailiff cost charge of £27.50 per successful case based on other local authorities experiences. The £27.50 was an average and the actual bailiff costs would vary between cases depending upon the number of recovery stages which were gone through.
- Might there be opportunities for further service expansion around collection of other unpaid fixed penalty notices such as anti-social behaviour and littering? This was a possibility but it would be prudent to test the waters in relation to parking fixed penalty notices first before moving onto other avenues. The Portfolio Holder suggested that investigations be made into the number of fixed penalty notices which had been issued by the Council and Police and had not been paid as a way to clarify whether there was a market there for bailiff operations
- How long would the pilot last? The pilot would last 12 months which was felt to be the minimum amount of time needed to ascertain its effectiveness.
- What would happen to the additional monies earned from fixed penalty notices? The Portfolio Holder was concerned that this had been factored into the departmental budget and not been lost in corporate budgets and asked for this information to be provided.
- Did the monies paid by Darlington Borough Council for bailiff services cover costs or was there a surplus? This service generated a modest surplus however the objective had been to demonstrate Hartlepool could deliver quality services with a view to extending through time the range of services offered. The Assistant Chief Finance and Customer Services Officer indicated that the Hartlepool service was valued by Darlington and was cost competitive and effective.
- Was there a possibility of similar work being undertaken with other local authorities in the region? This had been explored and another local authority in the region had expressed interest.
- Were officers confident of achieving the targets outlined and therefore ensuring that the additional post fund itself? The Assistant Chief Finance and Customer Services Officer confirmed this, saying there would be no additional pressure on council budgets as the post would be self-funding.

The Portfolio Holder expressed his support for the proposals, which he hoped would dramatically expand the work currently being undertaken and provide further income generation opportunities in the future. He also welcomed the redeployment opportunity.

Decision

- I. That the internal commercial bailiff opportunities be noted and the proposed pilot of recovery of Penalty Charge Notices by the internal bailiff team be approved including the appointment of a recovery officer on a short fixed term basis to support the development
- II. That the likely charges to the existing bailiff shared services arrangement be noted and the active participation in any emerging proposals or bidding opportunities be endorsed

33. 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 34 –. Approval for Compulsory Redundancy. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely (para 4) information relating to any consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

34. Approval for Compulsory Redundancy – Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek a decision regarding the future employment of an employee.

Issues for Consideration.

The report set out the process which had been followed and the impact on specific posts and post holders.

Decision

Details given in the exempt report.

The meeting concluded at 3:25 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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