

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

25 January 2011

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

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
Peter Turner, Performance and Consultation Manager
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

37. Reorganisation Policy Appeal Section 22 Amendments

– *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek a decision regarding the proposed amendments to the Reorganisation Appeal (Section 22)

Issues for consideration

The current reorganisation appeal process in relation to employee complaints has 2 formal levels of appeal. This can lead to delays due to both stages requiring formal meetings and the additional pressure of the final stage having to be heard by the Chief Executive or a Director. It was therefore proposed that there be 2 different stages of appeal – an informal stage between the manager and the employee and a formal stage between the employee and the Chief Executive or a Director. Discussions had been undertaken with local Trade Union representatives who had approved the change. The right to appeal to General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Sub-Committee regarding employee dismissal would remain unchanged. A copy of the final draft of the agreement wording was given within the report.

The Portfolio Holder raised concerns that the requirement for the employee with the grievance to have informal discussions with their manager might disenfranchise the employee depending on the nature of the relationship. Some employees might be happier to proceed directly to the formal stage. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer acknowledged this but felt that the informal stage might lead to better understanding between individuals and

reduce the need for the formal stage. On a practical level the introduction of an informal stage would speed the process up as there would be no need for several officers to formally meet. Support via the trade union or a work colleague could still be provided at the informal stage and it might aid an employee in formulating the grounds of their appeal more clearly.

The Portfolio Holder requested the views of the Trade Union. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer indicated that they had been more concerned that the final decision would remain formalised. They supported an informal first stage. The Portfolio Holder retained slight concerns at the changes but noted the lack of criticism on the part of the Trade Union. He asked that a review be brought back to his Portfolio meeting in 6 months giving details of any noticeable increase or decrease in the number of appeals received following the changes.

Decision

That the proposed amendments to the Reorganisation Appeal (Section 22) be approved.

38. Viewpoint – Citizen's Panel Results – *Head of Performance and Partnerships*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the results of the 33rd phase of Viewpoint, Hartlepool Borough Council's citizen's panel, that was distributed in August 2010.

Issues for Consideration.

The report presented the results from the 33rd Viewpoint Questionnaire which included council spending, contacting the council to make a complaint, consulting with the public and Hartbeat.

Key findings were:-

- 30% of members agreed that the Council provided value for money and 50% were pleased with the overall service currently provided. Viewpoint members were more likely to support cuts for councillors and democratic arrangements and least likely to want to reduce spending on maintaining roads, footpaths, street lights and gullies/drains. There was support from members for the council to deliver services in different ways if it helped to protect them.
- 28% of members had contacted the council with the complaint in the

past year. Of these 46% were complaining about a problem in their local area. A third had been satisfied with how their complaint was handled.

- A third of members agreed that the council listens to the concerns of local residents. 40% agreed that residents were kept informed about what they were doing and that local people were regularly asked for their views and opinions on various local issues. However 40% felt the council was out of touch with what local people wanted.
- A majority of members had received a copy of Heartbeat in the last 12 months. They had read some or most of it and found it easy to read.

The Portfolio Holder queried how the Viewpoint results were disseminated to the departments and what responses were received. The Performance and Consultation Manager advised that all the questions were included at the request of individual departments. The results were then fed back to them to enable consideration of service planning arrangements. In addition the Council Complaints Group had been discussing ways to address less formal complaints. The Portfolio Holder felt that as the Viewpoint results were part of a public record then departmental responses and action plans should be too. He requested that the Viewpoint results be disseminated back to departments without commentary and that formal feedback be sought. The resultant feedback to come back to his portfolio and to other portfolio holders with service responsibility.

The Portfolio Holder asked what impact the budget cuts would have on the future delivery of Viewpoint. The Performance and Consultation Manager indicated that there would only be 2 phases in 2011/12 rather than the usual 3, fewer questions included and more in-house work carried out. The refreshing of panel members had been brought forward so the current membership would be viable for 18 months. The Portfolio Holder queried whether the service was offered to other public sector organisations. The Performance and Consultation Manager confirmed it was but promotion of the service could be improved. Discussions had taken place with other Tees Valley local authorities with a view to partnership work in this area. The Portfolio Holder encouraged the active pursuit of local authorities, public sector organisations and businesses. The public might be more receptive to consultation if it were more co-ordinated and by charging organisations to submit questions there could be income generation opportunities.

The Portfolio Holder queried how the demographics of the panel were ensured. The Performance and Consultation Manager reported that a questionnaire was sent out during the refreshment process asking for basic demographic information which was used to balance the panel. When individual phases were undertaken further checks were carried out on various factors

Decision

That the results of the 33rd phase of Viewpoint be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4:25 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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