

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

10 May 2011

The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Wally Stagg, Organisational Development Manager
Peter Turner, Performance and Consultation Manager
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

52. Politically Restricted Posts – *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To update the Portfolio Holder in respect of posts and post holders which are politically restricted and the role the Standards Committee play in respect of appeals by employees who are politically restricted.

Issues for Consideration

At his meeting on 23 March 2011 the Portfolio Holder had considered a report on politically restricted posts. At that time he had highlighted a number of unrestricted posts which he felt met the criteria for being politically restricted namely Scrutiny Support Officers, Solicitors, Democratic Services and Neighbourhood Managers. The Scrutiny Support Officers, Neighbourhood Managers and Solicitors who regularly provide advice and guidance to the Planning and Licensing Committees had duly been added to the list of politically restricted posts. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer post had also been added. However the Chief Solicitor felt it was inappropriate to politically restrict the Democratic Services team as their role was to provide factual evidence on the application of the constitution to Council meetings. The Portfolio Holder agreed with this position. The only exception to this was the Democratic Services Manager post which was automatically politically restricted due to it being a Deputy Chief Officer post.

Under the constitution the Standards Committee would deal with the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restrictions in respect of all relevant

council posts. Details were given within the report of the grounds for exemption as not all politically restricted post holders had the right to appeal for exemption. A report would be taken to the next Standards Committee advising members that the law surrounding political restriction had changed and giving details of the current list of posts and post holders which were politically restricted and the role of the Standards Committee should any post holder request exemption from political restriction.

The Portfolio Holder asked that the job titles given in the list be checked for accuracy. He asked what the practice was in relation to temporary workers coming into politically restricted areas such as public relations officers given temporary contracts during the Tall Ships event. The Organisational Development Manager advised that if they regularly met the political restriction criteria they would be added to the politically restricted list however this would not apply for short temporary arrangements such as during the Tall Ships event

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the further additions to the list of politically restricted posts and asked that a report be brought back to him annually reporting any changes to the current list for approval.

Decision

That the report be noted and the list of politically restricted post holders ratified.

53. Viewpoint – Citizen’s Panel Results – Assistant Chief Executive

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

- i. To provide an explanation of why topics were included in Viewpoint 34 and what departments plan to do with the results
- ii. To inform the Portfolio Holder of the results from the 34th phase of Viewpoint that was distributed to panel members in December 2010
- iii. To provide feedback from what has been done with results from Viewpoint 32

Issues for Consideration

The report presented the results from the 34th Viewpoint Questionnaire which included shopping in Hartlepool, climate change, trees in Hartlepool and Radio Hartlepool

Key findings were:-

- 67% of members agreed that the town centre was well kept but 76% felt

there was a poor choice of shops. 92% were more likely to regularly shop at supermarket chains with a majority rarely shopping at the farmers or outdoor markets. 39% were more likely to shop at Teesside Retail Park with 38% favouring Middlesbrough. They were more likely to visit other shopping areas because of their good range of shops and free parking.

- 75% of members were willing to make lifestyle or behavioural changes to tackle climate change with the most popular being the installation of loft and/or cavity wall insulation, the turning off of appliances when not in use and the use of energy saving light bulbs. Less popular were changes to travel patterns such as increased use of public transport and less car usage.
- A majority of members felt that trees were an important part of the local environment with 90% feeling they should be protected during new developments and 86% wanting more trees planted. Only 63% of members had trees in their street and for 20% these caused problems such as blocked drains or gullies.
- 56% of members had previously listened to Radio Hartlepool, most on weekday mornings. A majority found the news updates useful with the advertising less so.

At a previous meeting the Portfolio Holder had requested that future Viewpoint results be disseminated back to departments without commentary with formal feedback brought back to his portfolio and to other portfolio holders with service responsibility. Feedback on the following topics was detailed within the report:

- Emergency Planning Leaflet
- Summerhill
- Perceptions of Crime
- Viewpoint design
- Contacting the Council to make a complaint
- Consulting with the public
- Hartbeat
- Budget consultation

The Portfolio Holder referred to the results of the Shopping in Hartlepool questionnaire. The Performance and Consultation Manager felt that there were positives from the Council's perspective such as the feeling that the town centre was clean and well kept and that parking could be found easily. Of the negative aspects free parking was being offered in town centre car parks after 4pm on weekdays and all day Sunday. Amendments had also been made to the parking tariffs to encourage shoppers wishing to use the centre for shorter periods of time. Complaints about the poor choice of shops could not be addressed directly by the Council but there were positive signs from the private sector. The Middleton Grange landlords were planning to invest £0.5m in the

shopping centre. BHS were planning to open in the old Woolworths store and currently recruiting for management staff with an opening planned for October. The Council were seeking to promote the town centre through initiatives such as Buy Local and the Innovation and Skills Quarter based around the developments of the Hartlepool FE College and the Art and Design College. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the work which had been done on this by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development. The Performance and Consultation Manager confirmed that the results of the survey had been forwarded to her.

Regards Climate Change the Portfolio Holder was pleased to note the positive attitude of the public on this, particularly the large numbers who were prepared to switch to green forms of electricity. In terms of Radio Hartlepool he felt the results showed the station was genuinely valued by the public.

The Portfolio Holder queried what work was being done to expand Viewpoint outside the Council. The Performance and Consultation Manager indicated that discussions continued with schools and organisations such as the police with a view to carrying out surveys on their behalf. One stumbling block however was that this might require consultation across the Tees Valley and co-ordination with other Councils might not be straightforward. The Portfolio Holder also referred to the need to use other ways to engage the public such as social networking and hoped that this would be taken on board by officers. He noted the importance of Viewpoint in affecting and improving services and felt it was important that this information continue to be included in future reports.

Decision

That the results of the survey be noted and disseminated to the appropriate Portfolio.

The meeting concluded at 3:15 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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