

JOINT PERFORMANCE & REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

29 July 2011

The meeting commenced at 9.00am at the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
 Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
 Diane Martin, Principal Economic Development Officer (Employment)
 Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

1. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Hargreaves was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

2. Council Apprentice Arrangements *(Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer and Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of Decision

Non-key

Purpose of Report

To comment on and endorse a change in the Council Apprentice arrangements which support wider Economic Development initiatives.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holders

The Council currently employs 30 apprentices at various levels. These posts are graded in accordance with the Council's Pay and Grading Structure agreed as part of the Single Status Agreement. Recent budget reductions have significantly reduced the Council's

capacity to recruit and manage directly employed apprentices however there is both local and national commitment to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities. In order to increase the number and range of Apprentice opportunities while reducing costs to the Council it was proposed that the Council enter into a partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE). Under this proposal HCFE would become a Managing Training Agent for Council Apprentices and would recruit, employ and place apprentices within the Council. The Council would continue to be responsible for salary costs also pension costs, national insurance costs and business expenses. Details were also given of annual and sickness leave entitlements. The duration of an apprenticeship would be dependent upon the level of qualification and occupational area.

The Apprentice Working Group would be responsible for the day to day management of the formal agreement and would be the main point of contact with HCFE. This group would be led by the Corporate Organisational Development Team and be comprised of departmental Workforce Development representatives. Details of their remit were given within the report. It was expected that the new arrangements would result in savings of approximately £170,000 in the first year excluding employer on costs.

The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer further advised that the College-based Employers Forum was in the process of being reviewed. This was a group comprised of representatives of the College and the employers whose apprentices were provided by the College. It was felt necessary that the format and remit of this group be reviewed in order to give employers the opportunity to highlight what they would wish the group to deliver. As new members the Council would have the opportunity to contribute to this review. The Chair acknowledged this but was concerned that the Forum had no fixed terms of reference. She also queried how issues relating to rebate would be solved.

The Portfolio Holders raised a number of concerns. While they were very much in favour of the increase in apprenticeships which would be generated they both felt that their wish to take a central role in finding more innovative delivery methods had been somewhat neglected. The Chair commented that the Council was a significant employer in the town and there would be a lot of kudos for the College to have the Council as one of their customers and yet she felt that the college seemed to be getting what they wanted out of the arrangement but the Council less so as the finer details had yet to be nailed down. The Chair expressed her disappointment that the aspects of the deal that were important to the Council were either still in flux or seemed to have been refused. The College seemed to be taking the Council's custom and then dictating terms and the Council seemed to be failing to exercise the buying power they had. The Principal Economic Development Officer commented that the proposal's main aim was to

increase the number of apprenticeships in Hartlepool and increase value for money. The Chair felt, however, that this was not the only aim for the Council and further noted that their viewpoint on the process and what was important had been expressed at the very start of discussions about this arrangement.

Councillor Brash concurred with the Chair's comments, stating that while those unknown or undecided elements could be agreed, the desire to do so on the part of the College would diminish when monies were handed over. His view was that the current proposal should be agreed for a short-term period only and that if no further progress were made within 6 months the Council should consider its position. The Chair further commented that while they were happy to support the College there should be mutual financial benefit to both parties.

The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer commented that by becoming part of the Employers Forum the Council would have the opportunity to meet with other employers and form a collective group which might have more impact on the College. The Chair acknowledged this but would prefer to have extra leverage should it be needed. She reiterated that these issues had been raised at the start of the process and felt that the many positive aspects which the Council provided to the College should be recognised by their representatives.

The Portfolio Holders also noted that there had been no discussion as to which council representatives should take the 2 seats available on the Employers Forum. They felt that the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer or the Portfolio Holder for Performance should be on board representing the employers while the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development or the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning) could represent the strategic vision aspects.

In light of the discussions it was felt expedient to arrange a meeting between the Portfolio Holders and representatives of the College as soon as possible in order to resolve these issues. In terms of the proposal the Portfolio Holders agreed that this year's intake of apprentices should proceed as proposed in the report however any future intake would be subject to the successful outcome of further discussions. The Chair asked that these discussions conclude by no later than December 2011 with a report back to the Portfolio Holders in January 2012.

Decision

That the arrangements be endorsed for the 2011 apprentices with any future arrangements subject to the successful outcome of future discussions and that a further report be submitted to the Portfolio Holders by January 2012.

That the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer/Portfolio Holder for Performance and the Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)/Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration should represent the Council on the Employers Forum.

The meeting concluded at 9:30am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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