

FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

13 February 2013

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

Present:

Councillor: Paul Thompson (Finance and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Roy Horseman, Revenues Manager
Rachel Clark, HR Business Partner
Wally Stagg, Organisational Development Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

59. Irrecoverable Debts – National Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to write-out a number of National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) which are now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Council's financial procedure rules provided that any debt due to the Council of £1,000 or more could only be written out with the express permission of the Portfolio Holder. Each year the Council billed and collected business rates of around £29m on behalf of Central Government. This system would change on 1 April under the Localisation of Business Rates framework. Whilst every effort was made to collect these sums, certain debts became irrecoverable.

Appendices attached to the report detailed the individual business rates debts over £1,000 and the reasons why each debt remained unrecovered.

Whilst the Portfolio Holder expressed disappointment regarding the level of write-offs, the reasons why the debts were unrecovered were acknowledged. The Portfolio Holder noted that the write-offs had been comprehensively scrutinised by officers.

Decision

That the write-out of irrecoverable National Non Domestic Rates debts to the value of £175,192.19 be approved for the reasons detailed in the report.

60. General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee – Redundancy Dismissal Appeals Procedure (HR Business Partners)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To review and agree a new appendix to the Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment Policy to include the revised General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee Redundancy Dismissal Appeals Procedure.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Human Resources Business Partner reported on the Council's Reorganisation and Redundancy and Redeployment Policy and the benefits of inclusion of a Redundancy Dismissal Appeals Procedure as an appendix to the Policy.

Background information in relation to the current redundancy dismissal appeal process was provided which stated that if Members upheld an appeal a review would be instigated and the findings be reported back to the Committee. The need for a review had caused a number of issues and, as a result of discussions on this process, it had been agreed that the need for a review should be removed and, should Members require further clarification, before making a decision, there would be the option to adjourn the appeal. The policy amendment had been agreed through Single Table, Corporate Management Team Support Group and the General Purposes Committee.

The revised procedure was attached at Appendix 1 and the main changes included:-

- Ensuring clarity as to the decisions that could be made as a result of

- an appeal
- Removal of the need for a review process
- Introduction of flow chart for ease of reference
- Updated job title reference for those involved in the appeal

Decision

That the proposed new appendix to the Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment Policy be approved and the Policy be amended accordingly.

61. Third Quarter Sickness Absence *(HR Business Partners)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on sickness absence performance up to the third quarter of 2012/13.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of employee sickness absence for the third quarter of 2012/13 and actions taken across the Council to achieve this. The Portfolio Holder was informed that the target figure for 2012/13 was 7.70 days absence per wte (whole time equivalent). The end of year prediction at the end of the third quarter showed the Council's performance was on target at 7.69 days per whole time equivalent employee per annum. There had been continuous improvement since 2006, as detailed in the Council's annual sickness absence statistics included in the report. . The Council continued to focus on sickness absence management to ensure the Council achieved its target of 7.70 wte.

The report included sickness absence statistics by department which identified there was an overall downward trend in sickness absence rates across all departments compared with the last three years.

A breakdown of long, medium and short term sickness absence was included in the report. Long and medium term absence had decreased in 2012, However, there had been no change in overall short term absence. Details of ongoing actions to help to achieve the future sickness targets were set out in the report.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note the continuing year on year

reductions in sickness absence given the increasing pressures placed on staff as a result of ongoing budget cuts.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the employee absence rates in the third quarter of 2012/13.

62 . Workforce Equality Report 2011/12 (*Organisational Development Manager*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the statutory workforce equality data reporting requirements and how these have been complied with.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information to the Equality Act Regulations 2011 including the Council's arrangements to comply with statutory workforce equality data reporting requirements. The regulations stated that the Council had to publish relevant information not later than 31 January 2011 and every 12 months thereafter. For a number of years the Council had published workforce profile reports and published its first Workforce Equality Report in January 2012. Details of publication requirements for schools were provided, as detailed in the report. High Tunstall and English Martrys schools had been advised of the requirements to publish workforce data and arrangements were in place to support them in doing so.

In relation to collating the data and compliance with the regulations, the Portfolio Holder queried whether any difficulties had been encountered in terms of staff responses. The Organisational Development Manager advised that some staff were reluctant to provide data relating to religion and sexual orientation, although it was anticipated that the reluctance would reduce in much the same way as the initial reluctance to provide disability and ethnicity data had reduced.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the publication of the Workforce Equality Report 2011-12.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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