

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 September 2008

PRESENT: Councillor Collins (Chair); Councillor Garlick (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Clarke, Davies, Edwards and Matthews

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March and reconvened on 20 March were signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED: That Mr Mike Littlewood on behalf of the Trade Union Side be granted leave to address the Committee in respect of item 6 "Restructure Policy".

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Clarke declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in terms of staffing issues generally as he had a relative who was an employee of Northampton Borough Council. The Chief Executive declared a personal interest in respect of item 7 "Proposed Changes to the Relocation Policy" and the Solicitor to the Council and Head of Finance both declared a personal interest in respect of item 10 "New Management Pay Structure/PRP Arrangements".

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. RESTRUCTURE POLICY

Mr Mike Littlewood then addressed the Committee speaking on behalf of the Trade Union Side for the Joint Trade Unions. He stated that the restructure document represented a great deal of hard work and negotiation on the part of both management and trade unions. However there were still three points of concern that he wished to bring to the Committee's attention. The first was with regard to paragraph 2 of the report entitled "Scope". He stated that management considered that there may be circumstances when they would wish to adopt a different approach. However the Trade Union Side felt that this was potentially unfair to some employees and that this policy should not be deviated from and should be the only way the Council managed change until such time that it was replaced by a fully consulted and agreed upon new policy. Deviation from agreed policy could leave the Council open to criticism and potential claims for unfair dismissal. The second point was with regard to paragraph 16 of the redeployment process. He stated that management

proposed that employees facing redundancy would go into the redeployment process for the duration of their notice period. This was between 8-12 weeks dependent upon their length of service. ACAS guidelines stressed that an employer should do everything possible to avoid redundancy. It was the view of the Unison regional officers that it was best achieved by putting employees on the register for 12 weeks thus maximising the opportunity for redeployment. Should a suitable alternative post not be identified the employee would then be given their notice for their contractual period. This would actually be of financial benefit to the Council as redeployment was less costly to the Council than redundancy. The third issue was with regard to paragraph 18 "Pay Protection". It was noted that management proposed that pay protection was 12 months at full protection and 6 months at 50%. The Trade Union Side considered a more sensible approach would be to protect at full pay until the new pay and grading scheme was in place which was proposed to be April 2010. The numbers requiring protection were likely to be small but the detrimental effect to those people would be worrying and demoralising particularly in this financial climate. It was also likely that the loss of morale and goodwill could affect other colleagues in the Council. In conclusion the Trade Union Side was asking the General Purposes Committee to give full and serious consideration to address these issues.

Consideration was then given to the report which sought approval to a new Corporate Restructure Policy as detailed under Appendix A to come into effect immediately. Members discussed in some detail the points raised by Mike Littlewood and further discussed ways of resolving these issues.

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the Restructure Policy as detailed be approved subject to the following:-
- (a) the removal of paragraph 2 dealing with the scoping provision;
 - (b) that with regard to paragraph 16 regarding the redeployment process and the period of notice delegated authority be given to management to discuss this further with the Trade Unions to fine tune this;
 - (c) that the Trade Unions' comments regarding paragraph 18 concerning pay protection be noted and that a report be submitted to Committee at a later date on how the proposal outlined would impact upon the pay and grading scheme which was proposed to come into effect in 2010.

7. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RELOCATION POLICY

The Chief Executive having declared an interest in this item left the meeting whilst the matter was under discussion.

The Interim Corporate Manager Human Resources then presented the report which sought approval to the changes to the Council's Relocation Policy (as appended) to take effect from 1 October 2008. It was noted that this policy had not been reviewed since 1999 which meant that the current levels of allowance were no longer realistic in today's market place.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and the recommended changes to the Relocation Policy as detailed be agreed to take effect from 1 October 2008.

8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public be excluded from the remainder of the business of the

meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as was listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was carried.

9. PAY AND GRADING PROJECT/EQUAL PAY (1)

The Interim Corporate Manager Human Resources presented the report asking Committee to note and agree the attached Cabinet report regarding the Pay and Grading Project/Equal Pay. It was noted that the report had been considered and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 August 2008. Whilst Cabinet had essentially agreed the financial requirements the report was now before this Committee for noting and agreeing the process. .

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet report be noted and agreed.

10. NEW MANAGEMENT PAY STRUCTURE / PRP ARRANGEMENTS (1)

At this juncture the Solicitor to the Council and the Head of Finance having declared a personal interest in this item left the meeting whilst it was under discussion.

Consideration was then given to a report of the Interim Corporate Manager Human Resources advising on the introduction of a new Management Pay and Grading Structure from 1 October 2008. It was anticipated that new PRP arrangements would be introduced from 1 April 2009 and a remuneration committee would need to be independently established to administer the PRP arrangements

RESOLVED: That the new structure and PRP arrangements which have been implemented by the Chief Executive under his delegated authority be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.45pm