

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 21 July 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Casey, Evans, Lock, Murphy, Rennie, Stark and Stevens.

Co-opted Representatives: Janet Isaac, University of Plymouth

Apologies for absence: Councillor Delbridge

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Bowyer - Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, Mark Grimley - Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development, Chris Trevitt – Head of Capital and Assets, Karen Ward – Superintendent Registrar, Paul Chapman – Head of Value for Money and Efficiencies and Ross Johnston – Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 1.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

15. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

16. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2011 are confirmed as a correct record.

17. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

18. **STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a Strategic Workforce Overview report and verbally updated the committee with regard staff terms and conditions.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) a collective agreement had been proposed with all three trade unions; after it was agreed by their memberships', it was assumed that the

council could now proceed with signing the collective agreement;

- (b) the terms and conditions had been simplified to reduce workforce overheads and introduce a single rate for overtime which would enable simplified administration and therefore a reduction in staff costs;
- (c) the delay in having to re-ballot the terms and conditions had cost the council £400K;
- (d) over 3,000 staff had been briefed on the terms and conditions and there was a comprehensive electronic briefing on the council's staffroom web pages.

Members congratulated Mark Grimley on the excellent staff terms and conditions package agreed and commented that the achievements in implementing the terms and conditions were remarkable.

Following members questions it was commented that –

- (e) the £400K deficit created by the delay in the terms and conditions being accepted by unions was being offset by savings created through the voluntary release scheme;
- (f) the local authority's sickness figures were a concern for the Council and the Cabinet would be reviewing this issue at their next meeting in August 2011;
- (g) a new capability procedure had been introduced to manage sickness absence which incorporated a form of target intervention rather than previous punitive measures;
- (h) the six per cent of staff who were not appraised included staff who had recently been employed or who were on long term sick; if managers did not complete their staff appraisals it meant that they themselves would fail to meet their appraisal expectations;
- (i) the 94 per cent of staff who had completed an appraisal did not include the 200 agency staff employed by the council each month.

It was agreed that –

- (1) the sickness policy and a report on sickness figures are to be submitted to a future panel meeting;
- (2) a report on appraisal completion rates by directorate is to be submitted to a future panel meeting;
- (3) following agency staff not receiving an appraisal a position statement on the management of agency staff and their capabilities is submitted to a future panel meeting;

- (4) a written response be provided to Councillor Tudor Evans by the Monitoring Officer on the legal advice given with regards to declarations of interest.

(During this item members requested legal advice on declarations of interest with regard to Agenda item 21 – School Academy Transfers and were advised by Tim Howes, Monitoring Officer of the following –

It is always for individual Councillors to determine whether they should declare interests; however the advice was that local authority school governors and academy school governors would not be obliged to declare an interest in the particular matter under discussion.)

19. **SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a verbal update about senior management restructuring.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) senior management restructuring was in response to the budget setting process which had planned to achieve cumulative savings of £1.05M by 2013-2014 with 20 per cent of that figure being achieved by the end of 2011-2012;
- (b) the Chief Executive was leading on the restructure and a final draft report would be completed by September when a consultation exercise would begin with managers;
- (c) the restructure was focused on Director's and Assistant Directors but would affect the management and reporting of approximately 200 Team Plymouth managers;
- (d) there was limited information available at this time as work was on-going to draft the report and meet the delivery plans; more information would be available after the consultation was undertaken with all managers.

Councillor James, Chair of the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel informed members that in September the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would receive feedback on the progress of the budget scrutiny recommendations agreed in January and more information on the senior management restructuring would be available at that time.

20. **REDEPLOYMENT POLICY**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a verbal update about Redeployment Policy.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) a new scheme had been introduced to provide more support to staff threatened with redundancy and to improve the prospects of staff being redeployed;
- (b) the voluntary redundancy scheme had created vacancies for staff in the redeployment pool and a new on-line application process and internal role matching had provided further opportunities for redeployment;
- (c) the new scheme ensured that when any council post was vacated employees in the redeployment pool were given priority for the role; feedback from staff who had used this process was that it had been significantly improved.

Following questions from members it was reported that –

- (d) there were currently 42 staff in the redeployment pool;
- (e) agency staff did not have access to the jobs in the redeployment pool, however, staff who were in the pool were automatically put on the books of Pertemps employment agency giving them access to temporary positions across the city;
- (f) the council were working closely with the jobcentre plus to ensure that staff received the required level of support when they were faced with possible redundancy, in addition to this the council had also produced a helpful redundancy handbook.

It was commented by members that the achievements in the new redeployment scheme were excellent.

21. **SCHOOL ACADEMY TRANSFERS**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a verbal update on School Academy Transfers.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) over the past 12 months, Plymouth City Council had seen the establishment of 10 Academy Schools, which had resulted in the transfer of 1868 staff to new employers;
- (b) the transfer of staff had a minimal impact on council overheads which would be further mitigated by the trading of services to academy schools;
- (c) in total six out of the 10 Academies were trading with Plymouth City

Council and due to changes in legislation new contracts had been designed and signed with these schools;

- (d) the council were offering services to all schools but could not subsidise services and as such may not always have been the cheapest option;
- (e) maintaining income through trading with academies was a risk, however, it was minimal and being monitored by a Corporate Impact Assessment Group.

Members commented that –

- (f) the Council should hold discussions with other local authorities in the South West Peninsula to deliver a shared service approach with academy schools as this would mitigate the financial risk on all local authorities;
- (g) if schools opted not to trade with the council there would be a financial burden with staff overheads increasing significantly.

Agreed –

- (1) to recommend that Cabinet undertake urgent discussions with Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and Torbay Council to minimise the difficulties that the exodus of local authority maintained schools to become Academies is causing Plymouth and its neighbouring authorities.

(The above recommendation was voted on and carried by 6 votes to 3 with 1 abstention, however, due to the current Constitution the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel are not permitted to recommend direct to Cabinet and therefore the recommendation will be heard by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at their meeting on 27 July 2011.)

- (2) a report is submitted to the next panel meeting assessing the impact of traded services and the indirect impact of increased overheads as well as highlighting the risk to the council if academy schools were to discontinue trading with the council.

Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development was thanked for his attendance.

22. **RELOCATION OF THE REGISTER OFFICE TO POUNDS HOUSE**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Property, Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets, Karen Ward, Superintendent Registrar and Phillip Walker, Project Services gave a presentation on the Relocation of the Register Office to Pounds House. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the proposal to relocate the Register Office to Pounds House formed

part of the second phase of the Accommodation Strategy;

- (b) Pounds House was a Grade II listed building currently used by Children's Services and previously as an office for the Life Centre project Team and formerly used as a wedding venue;
- (c) relocating the Register Office to Pounds House would be an advantage as it was a traditional building, would provide more office space and provide improved accessibility due to its proximity to the A38;
- (d) the relocation would cost £482k of capital and would create a revenue of saving of £75k per annum. Additionally the Lockyer Street building would be vacant and if sold could potentially raise in excess of £400k which would offset the majority of the initial cost.

Councillors were provided with copies of existing and proposed landscape drawings of Pounds House and were further informed that –

- (d) the plans were draft and could be amended, however, they could not alter or hinder the listed status of the building;
- (e) in order to improve accessibility and parking facilities the entrance to Pounds House would be widened and trees, without Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), removed to increase parking spaces;
- (f) following a survey of car users the majority of current users of car parking facilities at Pounds House were visitors of the Doctor Surgery..

Following questions councillors were informed that –

- (g) the temporary ramp could not be a permanent feature as it would impinge on the listed status of the building;
- (h) there was a growing list of guests delaying their wedding waiting until the Register Office was relocated to Pounds House;
- (i) rather than being sold Lockyer Street could be used as a corporate facility or be leased out when the relocation was completed;
- (j) a traffic impact assessment had not been completed on Outland Road.

It was commented by members that –

- (k) Pounds House was not completely Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant as the Second Floor, to be used as a storage facility and potentially a staff meeting room, was not accessible by lift;
- (l) the parking spaces proposed at Pounds House were not sufficient as car parking at Lockyer Street was augmented by the amount of available car parking on the Hoe and in the surrounding area;

- (m) the levels of public transport to and from Pounds House were not satisfactory and could lead to increased car users visiting the Register Office.

Agreed that –

- (1) an email would be sent to all panel members stating the destination and origin figures of buses going to and from Pounds House; this would be balanced out against bus company figures for the Register Office's current location on Lockyer Street;
- (2) a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), to include traffic modelling on the impact of users of Outland Road and Peverell Park Road, to be completed and submitted to the panel's next meeting on 15 September 2011.

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets were thanked for their attendance.

23. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The panel noted previous tracking resolutions and was informed by the Chair that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had recommended that –

- (a) Plymouth's Local Carbon Framework be added to the Support Services OSP work programme to undertake pre-decision scrutiny at their next meeting on 15 September 2011;
- (b) the Procure to Pay item be removed from the Support Services OSP work programme.

24. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel agreed its work programme subject to the –

- (a) inclusion of Plymouth's Local Carbon Framework;
- (b) removal of the Procure to Pay item.

25. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.