

## EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

5 July 2011

### PRESENT:

Councillors Powell (Chairman), Ms Perkins (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Arnold, Mrs Constable, Heath, Lewin, Mynott, Smedley, Thomas and Mrs Tranter.

**(AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was received from Councillor Bacon)

Also present: Councillor Greatorex as Cabinet Member for Organisational Development.

### 64 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 January 2011 and of the Special Meeting held on 15 April 2011, as printed and circulated, were taken as read, approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

### 65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 66 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

The Strategic Director (Organisational Development) and the Personnel Manager gave a presentation detailing the main roles and responsibilities of the Employment Committee.

It was reported that the primary role of the Committee was to act as the Council's Employer and make recommendations to Council on a range of employment policies and proposals as well as have oversight of Member training, legislative requirements and local procedures, terms and conditions.

Some of the key issues already identified for the future were noted as being, legislative changes, the Budget Reduction Programme, a review of terms and conditions, pension reforms and Member training.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the verbal report be noted.

### 67 CHANGES TO THE POST ENTRY TRAINING SCHEME

Members were advised of proposed changes to the Post Entry Training Scheme (PET) as part of the Budget Reduction Programme.

It was reported that the PET scheme was originally created to encourage employees to study for relevant qualifications. It was noted that the scheme provided a framework for financial assistance for the employee as well as making provision for the recovery of costs, within certain parameters, should an employee decide to leave the Authority.

The current scheme allows, on successful completion of a qualification, for a financial award of one increment on the employee's grade, or if they are at the top of their grade a one-off lump sum payment of £300.

There are currently eight employees partway through their PET studies and it was noted that the estimated cost of final awards would be in the region of £2036 for this Financial Year. Half of those due to complete their studies during this Financial Year were at the top of their grade and therefore would receive a one-off payment of £300, but others would receive incremental increases of up to £903.

Members further noted that some Managers had decided to offer training to employees but not through the PET scheme as there was no budget available for the payment upon qualification.

It was reported that the current scheme rules an employee on the PET scheme who leaves the Authority whilst still studying is required to repay only the last twelve months fees, compared with an employee who leaves the Authority upon completion of a qualification who is required to repay the full amount of fees on a reducing scale over two years. It was noted that this was not equitable and did not encourage employees to stay beyond their qualification.

Members noted the content of Appendix A to the report which set out the revised PET Scheme.

**RESOLVED: (1)** That the changes to the PET Scheme for new entrants to the Scheme be approved;

**(2)** That the incremental awards currently given to employees when qualifying be removed;

**(3)** That the one-off lump sum payment of £300 be removed; and

**(4)** That clause 6.iii in the Scheme be updated to read “An employee who leaves the employ of the Council while still studying for a qualification will be required to repay all PET costs incurred while studying this qualification.”

## **68 HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE AUDIT AND INSPECTION FINDINGS**

Members were advised of the outcome of an audit on the Council’s Health and Safety management by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

It was reported that the Strategic Plan 2008/12 sets out the nine top priorities for the District Council, of which the final one was Delivering through Improvement. Within this priority a key area is to “manage our risks through applying strong controls at all levels of the organisation” which included the management of Health and Safety within the District Council.

It was noted that Lichfield District Council’s Health and Safety team managed a shared service and had provided health and safety support to Tamworth Borough Council from February 2006 and Stafford Borough Council from November 2008 through a shared service agreement.

In October 2009 the HSE advised that they intended to conduct an enforcement audit as part of their national policy of inspecting key subject areas across all local authorities in Staffordshire. As part of this programme the District Council was visited by the HSE during November 2009 to inspect waste, refuse and recycling services and again in March 2011 for other subject areas. Members noted that Partners in the shared service arrangement had been similarly audited.

During March 2011 the HSE Inspector interviewed Directors, service managers, employees and union representatives on a variety of service and subject areas.

Members noted the content of the letter sent by the HSE confirming their findings which was attached to the Agenda at Appendix A and further noted the introductory comment by the Inspector that she was “encouraged by the attention that Health and Safety issues receive at the Council. The shared service with Stafford and Tamworth Councils appears to directly benefit all three Councils”.

In response to the seven areas which were identified as requiring recommendations an Action Plan was devised and Members noted its content at Appendix B to the report

**RESOLVED:** That the HSE recommendations and the actions being taken with regard to the findings be noted.

### **IN PRIVATE**

#### **69 BUDGET REDUCTION PROGRAMME – VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY APPLICATIONS**

Members considered applications for Voluntary Redundancy, which had been received as part of the Council’s Budget Reduction Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the Voluntary Redundancy applications detailed at Appendix A to the report be approved.

(The Meeting closed at 7.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN