



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 8TH JUNE 2010 AT 5.15 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Taylor - Chairman
Councillor Mrs. M.E. Sargent - Vice Chairman

Councillors

H.A. Andrews, L. Binding, Mrs. A. Blackman, D. Bolter, L. Hughes, Mrs. V. Jenkins,
D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds, A.S. Williams, J.M. Wilson

Also present:

Cabinet Member - Councillor C.P. Mann

Together with:

N. Barnett (Director of Corporate Services), P. Evans (Head of Information, Communications, Technology and Property Services), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Policy), D. Perkins (Head of Legal Services), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), D.A. Thomas (Policy Officer - Welsh Language), P. Lewis (Development Manager), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development), K. Evans (Corporate HR Manager), J. Jones (Scrutiny and Members' Services Manager), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.B. Criddle, D.T. Davies and G. Jones.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors H.A. Andrews, L. Hughes, D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds and A.S. Williams declared an interest in item 6(3), Managing Job Performance Process. Details are minuted with the respective item.

2. MINUTES - 20TH APRIL 2010

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 20th April 2010 (minute nos. 1 - 13 on page nos. 1 - 6)

3. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor C.P. Mann, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Sustainability gave a brief update on the various ICT projects that could become formal collaboration projects. He advised that these discussions are mainly all Wales based and include:

1. Standard desktop licensing/equipment procurement;
2. Data Centres and the PSBA network;
3. Citizen authentication and standardised web access for public services online;
4. DigiTV expansion, allowing GP appointments for example via the TV;
5. Collaboration development and procurement arrangements across Welsh Public Sector.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report and welcomed the opportunity to work in collaboration with other bodies.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TELL US ONCE PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report which advised of the implementation of a programme to provide a more effective service to the citizen to enable selected service areas to deal quickly and appropriately with changes of circumstances following the registration of a birth or death.

Members were advised that the Department of Work and Pensions has created the Tell Us Once Programme (TUO) to facilitate the process through which public sector organisations collect, share and respond to citizens' births and deaths which would provide a notification service through a single point of contact.

The objectives of the scheme and how it will be achieved were outlined and it was confirmed that in order for it to be successful, information relating to the individual associated with a birth or death registration will need to be collected and input into the national TUO IT system and notifications received from that system will need to be acted upon. It was anticipated that the collection and input will be undertaken by Staff from Registration Services and Face to Face Customer Services Centres (depending upon whether the process is completed at the time of the registration or at a later date) and Contact Centre staff will access Caerphilly notifications received from the system and undertake the required activity where possible or inform staff from the affected service areas where this cannot be achieved.

It was clarified that this is a discretionary process and it is for the individual to determine whether they wish to participate. Multiple copies of the relevant certificates will still be available on request. A query was raised as to the financial implications of the introduction of the scheme and it was confirmed that direct costs are anticipated as being limited as the majority of the requirement will be internal resource staff time only. An outline of the anticipated implementation staff time requirement was detailed within the report.

In noting that the process will assist citizens to notify appropriate services and agencies of births and deaths through a single straightforward, convenient and cost-effective process, it will facilitate a more speedy reaction and improve service delivery responsiveness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness whilst reducing the risk of inappropriate communication, Members supported the introduction of the programme.

7. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE SCHEME

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development detailed the content of the report which sought the views on the proposed revised leave of absence scheme prior to its presentation to Cabinet for determination. The scheme has undergone the consultation process and the views of the Council's recognised trade unions and the Equalities Group have been considered. There are still a number of areas where agreement has not been reached and these were highlighted in the report and during the course of the presentation on its content.

Mr. Hardacre referred to the number of procedures dealing with the different types of leave of absence, which quite often overlap and cause confusion amongst both Managers and employees and to the criticism of the current schemes from Managers, employees and the trade unions because there has been an inconsistent application of the schemes, policies and procedures across the Council. As such the new scheme attempts to remove the discretionary element of some of the leave of absence schemes to ensure consistency across the Directorates.

The report highlighted the changes from the previous scheme and expressed the views that have been put forward as part of the consultation process for the various areas within the policy (carers leave, leave when an employee has to leave work in an emergency situation, medical appointment, bereavement leave, military training, parental leave, public duties/political activities, paternity leave, attendance at meetings of professional bodies, representing the county/country at sport and unpaid leave). It was pointed out that many of the Council's leave of absence policies grant more than the Council is required to provide under its statutory obligations. As part of this review, the Council has taken the opportunity to revisit some of the provisions of the scheme and revert back to the statutory provisions in a number of areas.

The specific areas that the recognised trade unions had made comment on were identified and it was noted that it had originally been intended that the report would be considered at Cabinet on 22nd June 2010. However, following a request from the Trade Unions that further consultation should take place, this date would now be changed to facilitate that debate.

Detailed discussion ensued on the content of the report and concerns were expressed at some of the proposals contained therein particularly in relation to the definition of leave when an employee has to leave work in an emergency situation, medical appointments and the requirement to make arrangements outside normal working hours which is not always achievable, military training, representing the county/country at sport (which is was suggested should be extended to regional), public duties (particularly in relation to attendance at outside bodies and at identity parades) and a query was raised on the requirement for the 'discretion of the relevant Director' rather than the Head of Service.

Concerns were expressed at certain of the information presented in paragraph 4.1 of the report and the reference to 'a considerable number of requests' that have been received under the leave of absence scheme. It was suggested that the data should be included to evidence this statement, including a breakdown of gender and age.

In view of the comments made by the Members during the course of the debate and those expressed by the Trade Union on its content it was agreed that a further detailed report be prepared incorporating a matrix of the existing scheme, the proposed scheme, the views expressed by members, those put forward by the recognised Trade Unions and the associated financial implications for presentation to the Policy and Resource Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet.

8. MANAGING JOB PERFORMANCE PROCESS

Councillors H.A. Andrews, L. Hughes, D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds and A.S. Williams declared an interest (as having family employed by the county borough). They remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting thereon.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development detailed the content of the report which sought the views on the managing job performance process prior to its presentation to Cabinet for determination. The process has been consulted on with the Council's recognised trade unions and a further meeting was held on 7th June 2010. During the course of the presentation on the report Mr. Hardacre highlighted the issues that had been raised at that time. It was noted that there are still a number of areas where agreement has not been reached.

It was reported that the vast majority of Council employees are hard working and achieve a very high level of performance but the Council needs a vehicle to allow it to address the minority of employees who do not achieve an acceptable level of performance. This process will provide Managers with that vehicle and allow areas of unacceptable performance to be rectified. It is proposed that guidance notes will be produced for Managers so that they are aware of all the avenues that must be considered when dealing with employees' performance (the process will apply to all employees except teaching employees).

The new disciplinary procedure, which became effective on 1st April 2010, now deals with matters of capability and revokes the Council's capability procedure. This process, the managing job performance process, is the vehicle designed for Managers to follow if they are experiencing issues with any of the employees' performance and forms an appendix to the disciplinary procedure. The process for Managers to follow is not dissimilar to the process laid down in the previous capability procedure. However, one of the main areas of difference in this process to the previous capability procedure is that now Managers and employees meet regularly as part of the supervision and personal development review (PDR) process.

The specific areas that the recognised trade unions had made comment on were identified and it was noted they had requested that the item be deferred to enable further consultation on the proposals.

Detailed discussion ensued on the content of the report and concerns were expressed at some of the proposals contained therein particularly in relation to underperformance, performance related pay, inequality in relation to the withdrawal of increment (if performance improves increment should be reinstated and backdated) and clarity was sought on the implementation of the process.

In view of the comments made by the Members during the course of the debate and those expressed by the Trade Union on its content it was agreed that a further detailed report be prepared incorporating the details of the existing scheme, proposed scheme, the views expressed by members and those put forward by the recognised Trade Unions for presentation to the Policy and Resource Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet.

In view of the reference to both the 'purple book' and 'green book' during the course of the debate it was agreed that copies be placed in the Resource Centre.

9. THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL WELSH LANGUAGE MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2009/10

It was noted that the Welsh Language Board requires that all public bodies that have an agreed Welsh Language Scheme must submit an annual report (in a prescribed format) detailing the progress and developments made during the previous financial year against the improvement targets within that scheme, and noting any areas of good practice and/or problem areas that will require further action.

Members were advised that monitoring of the scheme is undertaken internally by analysis of the cross-cutting Equalities section in annual Service Improvement Plans, that there is specific monitoring of areas relating to the various targets within the scheme and that externally commissioned monitoring surveys are also undertaken. It also has direct links with a number of other council policies and strategies.

During the course of the debate Members were advised of the success of the website initiative (whereby all staff would be able to access a full list of courses offered by Corporate Training), the establishment of the translating and interpreting intranet site and flexible training system for welsh language staff and partner organisations (including both early years and the youth service providers) and the exercise being undertaken on the linguistic profile of the workforce. They were pleased to note that Cabinet had taken on board the recommendation of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and as such monolingual street name plates will be used and the names of a street are to be selected on a broadly 50/50 basis (half English and half Welsh names).

Following discussion on the report, Members noted the progress made during 2009/10 against targets and recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein its content be noted and approved for submission to the Welsh Language Board by the national deadline of 30th June 2010.

Members wished to place on record their appreciation to the staff within the Welsh Language Unit.

10. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

There were no requests for any reports to be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the

11. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD

The following information items were brought forward for review.

12. SPEND ON CONSULTANCY 2008/09

Councillor K.V. Reynolds had asked that this item be brought forward for review. He sought clarification on paragraph 4.3 of the report which makes reference to the revenue spend with Gwent Healthcare Trust (funds 12 Health Visitors plus 3.5 others from the Flying Start Grant). He was advised that it is grant funding and as such is not funded from the base budget.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports.

1. Members Allowances and Expenses 2009/10;
2. Members Summary of Attendance - Quarter 4 - 15th February - 28th April 2010;
3. VALREC's Service Level Agreement Annual Report;
4. Design, Build, Deliver and Installation of Bus Shelters at Bargoed;
5. Provision of Treasury Management;
6. Provision of Consultancy Services to Deliver Gelligaer Roman Project;
7. Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance - Budget 2010/11;
8. Budget 2010/11 - Chief Executives Directorate;
9. Appointment of BT Redcare for Provision of Secure Fibre Optic Cable for CCTV Network;
10. Workforce Implementation Report.

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2010, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN