

Minutes of the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES** Committee held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday 26 March 2009 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor Mrs J C Record

Councillors: B W Bano
D A Mayes
C J Smith

Officers: Chief Executive
Head of Finance & ICT
Human Resources Manager
Senior Human Resources Officer
Senior Democratic Support Officer

Also present: Representatives of UNISON and GMB

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P A Watkins.

558 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules, Councillor D A Mayes had been appointed as substitute for Councillor P A Watkins.

559 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Committee held on 9 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

560 DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Committee considered the report of the Human Resources Manager which contained new Disciplinary and Grievance policies for the Council produced in response to the Employment Act 2008 which would come into effect on 1 April 2009. The Act would repeal the existing procedures and replace them with new ones based on the ACAS Code of Practice for Disciplinary and Grievance procedures. The proposed new policies and procedure would ensure the Council's compliance with new legislation and contained a greatly increased level of help and guidance from Human Resources. The resulting documents were less bureaucratic and allowed suitably trained managers to apply the process thereby shortening the timescales involved.

While the level of Councillor involvement had been reduced, provision to include Councillors in the process remained for specific cases. The new policies and procedures had been welcomed by the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Joint Staff Consultative Forum which had considered the matter in September 2008. Staff training would be provided to support both policies and procedures.

Attention was drawn to the wording at paragraph 2.1 point (g) in the Grievance Procedure which referred to maintaining confidentiality and the fact that similar wording was not included in the Disciplinary Procedure. The Human Resources Manager was asked to ensure that confidentiality was made clear within the Disciplinary Procedure.

In response to questions, the Senior Human Resources Officer advised that detailed guidelines for investigating officers were appended to the report and would be supported by training. Action taken on misuse of computers would depend upon the details of the misuse; lack of skills or aptitude arising from a medical condition would not be dealt with under disciplinary procedures; and the cost implications were confirmed as officer time spent in training staff and updating the policies.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendment of the wording of the Disciplinary Policy to include reference to confidentiality, the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies and the Investigation Procedure Guidelines be adopted.

561 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the item to be considered involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

562 JOB EVALUATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on progress regarding the comprehensive job evaluation system which had been undertaken as part of the Employer of the Future Review in order to ensure that the Council's reward system was consistent and fair. The report included a Local Pay Review, a Review of Benefits and Allowances, East Kent Audit Partnership Equal Pay Review January 2009, year on year costs, the implementation plan and the appeals process. An extra document on the proposed new structure was circulated at the meeting.

The Joint Staff Consultative Forum had considered the same report at its meeting held earlier that day and had agreed that consultation be commenced. A further recommendation from the Forum regarding the composition of the Appeals Panel would be addressed at a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That agreement be given to commencing consultation with all staff and the recognised Trades Unions on the Council's job evaluation scheme, JESS, which had been developed in conjunction with the Reward Partnership.

(In accordance with paragraph 18.5 of Part 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules Councillor D A Mayes requested that his vote against the above decision be recorded.)

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm.