

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the Transformation Committee held on  
Monday, 20 February 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor SGM Kindersley – Chairman

Councillors: Dr DR Bard JD Batchelor  
NN Cathcart RT Summerfield

Officers: Susan Gardner Craig Human Resources Manager

Councillors SJ Agnew, RE Barrett, RF Bryant, SM Edwards, R Hall, Mrs CA Hunt, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Mrs DP Roberts, Mrs GJ Smith, Mrs HM Smith, R Turner, Dr SEK van de Ven, Mrs BE Waters and Dr JR Williamson were in attendance, by invitation. Councillor Mrs DSK Spink sent apologies for absence

Simon Etheridge and Jane Stone of Mouchel Parkman were also in attendance.

### **1. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2006 were confirmed as a correct record, but it was noted that that timescale for the recruitment of a Chief Executive indicated by Mouchel Parkman (Minute 6) had been indicative only.

The Leader reported that Management Team would not be attending the meeting. The Chief Executive and the Finance and Resources Director had the right to attend, but had decided against it.

### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that discussion is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 9 and 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **3. BRIEFING NOTE ON EMPLOYMENT LAW**

A note from Human Resources on relevant aspects of employment law was received.

The Human Resources Manager confirmed that recent case law indicated that a Member could be held personally responsible for his or her actions towards an employee. The Leader urged all to be careful of their words and ensure they treated employees with respect, whilst giving an assurance that this caution did not stop Members asking questions or being critical where necessary.

Councillor Cathcart drew attention to the reference to the changes in senior management being a high-risk strategy.

### **4. JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND COMPETENCIES FOR SERVICE HEADS**

Jane Stone from Mouchel Parkman outlined their brief: to analyse current duties and align these to draft job profiles to capture key competencies; provide some outline for general competencies; and look at the organisational implications. They were looking at posts not postholders. Detailed job profiles had been produced for the existing posts and this led to the conclusion that although current job descriptions and person specifications were

service specific and varied in style and content, they already reflected a high degree of responsibility. The aim was to introduce a one-Council approach where a detailed functional description was unnecessary.

As to individual postholders, a process existed for changing job descriptions and it was hoped that this could be achieved by agreement since the proposals were not very different from existing job descriptions. Some Members expressed concern about the potential effect of new job descriptions and the new structure on second tier postholders, including the possibility that there would be gaps to fill. They were, however, advised that the recommendation was to retain the present second tier structure at this stage, for the new senior Management Team to consider. This would include any gaps in service cover. Second tier posts already had the authority to take on the responsibilities designated for them. Any individual issues would be for management and human resources consideration.

It was noted that the business process review would drive any further changes.

The Leader reminded Members of the need to focus on creating an organisation fit to deliver the best possible service while giving value for money in the circumstances of the reduced budget. He acknowledged that all the implications were not yet known and that this was causing concern, but referred to the savings expected from this project as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, inviting suggestions on alternative sources of savings.

By a majority vote, the Committee **RESOLVED** that

- (a) the Council moves towards developing a framework of competencies that can be used throughout the authority for all job descriptions;
- (b) pending the introduction of an organisation wide competency framework, the Assistant Director competencies presented to the meeting be used as a basis for the postholders' future development and appraisals, and for any Assistant Director recruitment.

Councillor Cathcart recorded his continuing fundamental concerns about the premise on which the project was based.

## **5. FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES - ALLOCATION TO TOP TIER POSTS**

Jane Stone emphasised that the tables of possible division of functions were not intended to be recommendations, only ideas to consider. In response to queries, she confirmed that each function line did not necessarily equate to one Assistant Director and that no assumption had been made of an Assistant Director for Customer Services.

It was recognised that the basic structure of reporting lines had to be decided in order to inform the advertisements, but that these should be open to amendment. Members favoured table 3, which split functions between support and service delivery, but considered that planning policy should be a matter of report to the Chief Executive given its high profile.

Further concerns were expressed about potential confusion over reporting lines and gaps in expertise and the financial implications of filling any gaps, with calls for further information to give reassurance on these matters. The Leader pointed out, however, that unless the division of functions was agreed, the advertisement for a Chief Executive could not proceed. He agreed to suggestions that a time limit be put on a review of the second tier, but urged that there should be no delay in the implementation of the senior

Management Team proposals. The Leader again gave an assurance that if problems were encountered they would be taken to the first possible Member forum.

In view of the finding of the consultants that the current second tier structure was fit for purpose at this stage, the Committee, by a majority vote, **RESOLVED** that

- (a) no action is taken at this stage to affect the structure or salary level of the Assistant Director level pending a detailed review of the structure; but
- (b) a review of the Assistant Director structure take place within 6 months of the appointment of the Chief Executive;
- (c) the reporting lines of Assistant Directors to the senior Management Team be split as shown in Table 3 of Mouchel Parkman's report, support functions reporting to the Chief Executive and front line services to the Executive Director, with planning strategy being transferred to the Chief Executive;
- (d) the reporting lines should be open to flexibility in the light of experience once the senior Management Team is in place.

The Mouchel Parkman representatives left the meeting.

## 6. **FEEDBACK FROM SECOND TIER WORKSHOP**

Notes from the workshop held on 20 January 2006 were received without comment.

## 7. **FIRST AT RISK CONSULTATION INTERVIEWS**

The Leader reported that he and the Human Resources Manager had met each of the Management Team individually and that three letters requesting consideration for voluntary redundancy had now been received. Extracts from the letters were read.

Concern was expressed about loss of continuity if all three requests were accepted and Members asked whether one request could be deferred. The alternative view was that no-one should be obliged to continue working in such circumstances. The Human Resources Manager advised on the Council's redundancy policy and on the rights of the individuals under employment law, suggesting that it might be possible to negotiate a deferred end of contract with one of the Directors, but that a definite end date would be required. It was noted that the policy guaranteed an interview for any internal applicant, but that assimilation would only apply if there were only one candidate, meeting the required criteria.

Considerable distress and anger were voiced that it had been the actions of Members which had precipitated this number of requests for redundancy.

The Committee, having considered the option of deferring the request by the Finance and Resources Director and understanding that a request could be considered at a later date, by a majority vote **RESOLVED** that

- (a) the application for voluntary redundancy from the Development Services Director be accepted;
- (b) the application for voluntary redundancy from the Finance and Resources Director be rejected.

## 8. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S POST**

By a majority vote, the Committee **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that

- (a) the application for voluntary redundancy from Chief Executive be accepted with a termination date of 30 June 2006, the Leader to discuss flexibility with the Chief Executive;
- (b) the terms for the redundancy of the Chief Executive as proposed by ALACE be accepted.

The Chairman of Council was asked to take steps to take the recommendations to a special meeting of Council.

The Committee

**AGREED** that, subject to Council accepting the above recommendations, the internal advertisement of the post of Chief Executive proceed.

## 9. REVIEW OF MOUCHEL PARKMAN'S OUTPUTS

No report was presented but the work done by Mouchel Parkman was noted.

## 10. CONSULTATION AND POTENTIAL RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Draft redundancy and recruitment timetables were presented and it was noted that

- a) if there were internal candidates the timetable for the external recruitment process would slip;
- b) any expenditure on external recruitment would have to be tailored to the budget;
- c) the appointments panel would be given specialist support.

It was confirmed that Council in November 2005 had delegated the whole project, including appointments, to the Transformation Committee.

## 11. STAFF AND MEDIA COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

It was **NOTED** that the Chief Executive had been asked to provide a weekly update to all staff, and

**AGREED** that the Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder, with the Communications Team, develop and implement a media communication strategy.

## 12. NEXT STEPS

The next steps were to arrange a special Council meeting and proceed to advertisements.

It was noted that to halt the project at this stage would raise serious employment issues and Councillor Cathcart emphasised the need to be careful with the rest of the elements of the project.

The Chairman of Council issued a warning to all Members to show respect to the officers discussed at this meeting and not to speak to or about them in a disrespectful manner.

## 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday, 6 March 2006 at 12 noon, to agree the advertisement for the Chief Executive's post.

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**The Meeting ended at 5.10 p.m.**

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