

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 14 November 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chairman

Councillors: Dr. Claire Daunton Mark Howell
John Williams

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
Liz Watts Chief Executive

Councillors Grenville Chamberlain, Neil Gough and Jose Hales were in attendance, by invitation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Dawn Percival and Peter Topping.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Committee agreed that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following agenda item in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Chief Executive presented this report on the proposed restructure of the senior management team at South Cambridgeshire District Council, by reporting on the background, the drivers for changes, the proposed structure and the process for the next steps.

Background

The Committee noted that the consultant Castlerigg had reported its findings in the summer, but it had been agreed to wait until the new Chief Executive had been appointed before deciding how to implement its recommendations. The Chief Executive apologised for the short notice with regards to the meeting, which was to ensure that there was no further delay in the process and to end the uncertainty affecting the Council.

Proposed Structure

The Committee noted that under the new structure there would be seven Heads of Service. The Chief Executive explained that the Head of Services would be solely responsible for their service area.

Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Executive explained that the Chief Operating Officer would have oversight of all the internal workings of the Council, which would allow the Chief Executive to focus on the external challenges facing the authority. The Chief Operating Officer would also

be responsible for working with some of the Council's partners. The Chief Executive and Chief Operation Officer would mentor the seven Heads of Service in a split that was to be agreed.

Timetable

The Chief Executive explained that if Cabinet agreed these proposals at their meeting on Monday 18 November, there would be a 30 day consultation period with the affected staff and the unions. If there were no substantive changes the seven posts would be advertised internally in January and then, if necessary, externally advertised in February. The Committee noted that if the consultation process resulted in a substantial change to the proposals in the report, these would have to come back to the Committee before being reconsidered by Cabinet.

Responsibilities of the Heads of Service posts and remuneration

The Chief Executive explained that seven Heads of Service would be a team of equals. She recognised that some of the posts could be seen to have more responsibilities than others. All posts would be subjected to a nationally agreed review process, which would determine their pay grade. It was possible that the posts would be evaluated on different pay grades, which was a normal arrangement.

Savings

The Chief Executive explained that the estimated savings detailed in paragraph 23 of the report assumed that all seven posts would be evaluated at Grade 10. Obviously this was subject to change, depending on the evaluation process.

The Chief Executive explained that delivering the savings detailed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy would have to be made collectively by the senior management team.

Responsibility for policies

The Chief Executive explained that the Heads of Service would be responsible for the policies that affected their own service, but cross cutting issues would have to be agreed collectively. It was noted that policies in technical areas were more likely to be the responsibility of middle managers than the Head of Service post.

ICT

The Chief Executive recognised the ICT challenges facing the Council and the need for a new telephone system. However, she praised the introduction of Council Anywhere, which allowed staff to work from home or any other location with an internet connection. It was noted that the Council's ongoing Digital by Default initiative continued to deliver savings, by allowing residents to access services online without directly contacting an officer. The Chief Executive suggested that providing councillors with standardised hardware could resolve the current problems that members were having with ICT.

In response to questioning, the Chief Executive concluded that it was important that the Council introduced these structural changes and it was unnecessary to delay the implementation of the restructure until a new phone system was introduced or all the ICT issues were resolved.

Responsibility for recruitment and retention

The Chief Executive explained that the Heads of Service would be responsible for recruitment within their own sections and for making decisions within the scope of their budgets. Decisions that affected other sections would need to be taken at a higher level.

Changes to lower management

The Chief Executive explained that whilst strategic changes to the Council's

management structure would be recommended by this Committee to Cabinet, any changes within the proposed Service areas would not be. The relevant Lead Cabinet member would be consulted on any changes affecting service areas within their portfolios.

Cross-cutting issues

It was noted that wellbeing and climate change were cross-cutting issues and so were not the responsibility of one of the seven Heads of Service.

The Committee unanimously voted to

RECOMMEND the proposed structure to Cabinet (subject to consultation) for approval.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.
