

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Friday, 1 May 2009 at 4.15 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: MP Howell

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor: MB Loynes  
Opposition spokesmen RB Martlew and RT Summerfield

### **Officers:**

Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Ian Cawthra Human Resources Officer  
Stephen Hills Corporate Manager, Affordable Homes  
Paul Swift Policy and Performance Review Manager

#### **40. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **Travellers' Issues – Position Statement and Stock Condition Survey**

The Staffing portfolio holder explained that following further officer advice it had become apparent that the Travellers Budget could be used to fund the above project.

#### **41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **42. CONSIDERATION OF WATER & SERVICE CHARGES ON COUNCIL-OWNED TRAVELLERS' SITES**

The Corporate Manager, Affordable Housing introduced this report which sought the Staffing Portfolio Holder's endorsement of a recommendation to Cabinet to introduce a water and service charge for the District Council-managed Traveller Sites.

The Corporate Manager, Affordable Housing apologised to the Staffing Portfolio Holder for the wording of the first sentence in paragraph 4 which erroneously implied that residents were not paying anything for their water charges. The sentence was amended to "Residents are not currently paying a specific charge for the water they use on the two sites". It was noted that residents were paying extra rent to cover these charges. The Head of Revenues had advised that charges for rent and water needed to be separate.

It was noted that those residents on full housing benefit did not pay rent and would now have to pay a water charge. The Staffing Portfolio Holder rejected the option of phasing in the charge over 2 years and he recommended that the new charging regime be brought in from 1 June 2009.

The Staffing Portfolio Holder

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

that the introduction of £4.87 per pitch per week for water across both of the Council managed Traveller Sites be approved by Cabinet subject to a review being undertaken in 6 months.

**43. PAY NEGOTIATION ARRANGEMENTS**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder received a report which recommended to both the Finance and the Staffing Portfolio Holders that the Council remain on local pay negotiation arrangements.

It was suggested that the local pay negotiators would reach an agreement more quickly than the national negotiators.

Both the Staffing and the Finance Portfolio Holders

**AGREED** that the Council should remain on local pay negotiation arrangements for the foreseeable future.

**44. PROBATION POLICY**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder received a report which sought approval for the revised and updated Probation policy and requested that it be implemented by all managers receiving new employees.

It was noted that in line with professional officer guidance, the probation period would apply to all new post holders, including those who had transferred internally.

The Staffing Portfolio Holder

**AGREED** the amended policy and supported its implementation by managers at all levels for all new appointments to their Service.

**45. LEAVERS REPORT APRIL 2008-MARCH 2009**

This item was discussed before the item on gender and race equality.

It was understood that the number of leavers had reduced due to the economic downturn. The Staffing Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report.

**46. COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITIES POLICY 2009-2012: GENDER EQUALITY AND RACE EQUALITY SCHEMES**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder received this report which sought approval for a 12-week consultation period on the Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme.

**Transgender community**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder expressed concern that no local data was available on the Transgender community in South Cambridgeshire. It was noted that relevant questions would be included in the staff survey to ensure that the Council had relevant data about its own staff.

The Staffing Portfolio Holder suggested that the Council should contact the Beaumont Society to attempt to further local knowledge. He requested that the second paragraph on page 39 be amended to make it clear the abuse described was illustrative and was not found to be taking place at this authority.

**Gender equality targets**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder noted the targets regarding the elimination of discrimination and harassment and removing barriers to the recruitment of transgender staff, but

requested that details on how this was to be achieved be included in the report.

The Policy Review Manager explained that the Action Plan would include details of how targets would be achieved.

It was noted that the timescales for the gender equality scheme shown on page 47 needed to be amended from 2007-2010.

#### **Race equality scheme**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder requested that the review of the 2005-2008 scheme be put in the appendices of the scheme for 2008-2011, to ensure that focus was brought on the actions instead of on the past.

The Staffing Portfolio Holder

**AGREED** to endorse and recommend the draft Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme for a 12-week consultation period with internal and external stakeholders.

#### **47. SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING APRIL 2008-MARCH 2009 (INCLUDING ABSENTEE ACTION PLANS)**

The Staffing Portfolio Holder received this report on sickness absence for April 2008 to March 2009.

##### **Presentation of data**

The Human Resource Officer reported that presenting the data into different types of sickness was a time consuming task that had not yet been completed. The Portfolio Holder asked that the benchmark and long term/short term statistical breakdown be circulated outside the meeting.

##### **Managing sickness**

The Human Resource Officer explained that senior managers were being informed when an employee reached a "trigger" on their short-term or long-term sickness. The management of sickness was being reviewed by a management group, which would report to EMT in June. It was understood that if there was a flu pandemic staff sickness could greatly increase.

##### **Benchmarking**

It was noted that this authority's sickness rates would be compared against the rates of other Councils in the surrounding area and against the rates of Basildon District Council, Crawley Borough Council and Nottingham City Council, as these three authorities had been shortlisted for an Employee Benefits Magazine Award 2009 in managing staff sickness or staff wellbeing.

##### **Long-term sickness**

It was noted that long term sickness was being well managed and by working with the GPs and Occupational Health, officers who had been on long term sick could return to work.

The Staffing Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report.

#### **48. 2008 SCDC STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY UPDATE**

It was noted that the next Staff Satisfaction Survey would take place in September 2009.

**49. FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted.

**50. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be arranged in due course.

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**The Meeting ended at 5.15 p.m.**

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