

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

12 November 2007

Attendance:

Councillors:

Godfrey (Chairman) (P)

Chapman
Collin (P)
Cooper
Fall
Goodall (P)
Johnston (P)

Learney (P)
Nelmes (P)
Read (P)
Weston (P)
Worrall (P)

Deputy Members

Councillors Howell and Hiscock (Standing Deputies for Councillors Cooper and Fall respectively)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting

Councillor Allgood (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chapman, Cooper and Fall.

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillor Allgood declared a personal and prejudicial interest, due to his involvement as a Cabinet Member in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Committee requested that he remain in the meeting, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder, under the provisions of Sections 21(13) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that he could provide additional information to the Committee and/or answer questions.

3. **MINUTES**

During discussion of the minutes, Councillor Allgood confirmed that Councillors Johnston and Read would soon be approached by officers regarding their offer of assistance with a review of the Council's publication processes.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2007 (less exempt item) be approved and adopted, subject to amendments to show that Councillor Hiscock was in attendance as Deputy Member for Councillor Collin, and that a third Resolution, as set out below, be

added to Minute 349 (2007/08 Winchester City Council Staff Establishment – Report PER126 refers).

‘3. That the use of approvals of agency staff at the Council be included in future Performance Monitoring reports to the Committee’.

4. **HUMAN RESOURCES – PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2 - 2007/08**
(Report PER130 refers)

The Head of Organisational Development reported that the level of sickness absence had remained stable during the second quarter, with a continued reduction overall in sickness absence on the previous year. Although instances of long-term sickness absence had increased during the period, she advised that these had also now reduced. She explained that an increase in occupational health referrals was due to the improvements made to the management of sickness absence, especially those instances of regular short-term absence. Responding to questions, she advised that the current target for sickness absence per employee was eight days and that the figures for October 2007 were not yet available and would be reported to the Committee outside the meeting.

During further discussion of the Key Performance Indicators at Appendix 1 to the Report, it was explained that the methodology of calculation BVPI Equalities data had changed from the previous year. The figure was previously shown as a percentage of the Council’s Full Time Equivalent (FTE) but was now reported as a percentage of those officers who had declared their ethnicity and/or disability. Therefore, the actual numbers of staff forming ethnic groups and/or with a disability remained stable.

The Head of Organisational Development reported that the Council continued to be proactive in promoting the Council as an equal opportunity employer. She also advised that the Council met criteria for Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (BVPI2a). This would be further improved once the equalities policies currently in place, and the Equality Impact Assessments of services, were embedded in all of the Council’s activities.

During discussion of Appendix 3 of the Report, the Committee noted with concern that joint training resources with the Royal Hampshire County Hospital had yet to be secured. It was intended that the joint initiative would improve Training and Development opportunities and assist the Council in achieving a positive outcome to the forthcoming reassessment of its Investors in People (IIP) accreditation. The Head of Organisational Development reported that, should this not be imminently forthcoming, a contingency plan was in place to fill the current Training Officer vacancy, in order to undertake all of the necessary work.

RESOLVED:

That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources have regard to the following:

- the concerns of the Committee for necessary resources to be in place to assist in a positive outcome to the Council’s imminent Investors in People (IIP) reassessment, and work with the Head of Organisational Development to achieve this aim as soon as possible.

- that the Council continues to be proactive in promoting the Council as an equal opportunity employer.

5. **EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY**
(Report PER131 refers)

The Chief Executive reported that the Policy was a positive initiative that had a number of benefits to the organisation, including being supportive of the aim of the Council to be attractive as an employer, to its customers, and to its partners and stakeholders.

During discussion, the Head of Organisational Development clarified that it was intended that the Council would liaise with Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) with regard to suitable projects. Further to this, it was also agreed that the management guidance within the new policy should set out examples of what was an appropriate voluntary activity to be considered under the scheme. Potentially inappropriate volunteer schemes were discussed and, in summary, were likely to include work that may be linked to possible new employment, any aspect of political activity, and examples of local activist work, especially those that may be in conflict with Council policy. It was also suggested that a directory of suitable volunteer work could eventually be made available to staff. It was also suggested that staff taking advantage of the scheme be requested to complete a revised proforma, to provide useful feedback to the Council via the Human Resources Division, e.g.

- (i) How I benefited from participating in voluntary work
- (ii) How the community benefited
- (iii) How Winchester City Council benefited

The Committee also discussed whether particular selection criteria should be applied, to ensure that officers who were working to a satisfactory standard in their job role were given some priority.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Organisational Development explained that there was to be a promotion of the Policy, balanced against predicted take-up following an initial survey. It was agreed that monitoring of the success of the Policy, including its take-up by staff (and inclusion of feedback from staff, as suggested above) be reported annually to the Committee.

At the conclusion of debate, it was recognised that the Policy would have significant benefits overall to the Council and also that, in many cases, the three days granted would be in addition to many more hours volunteered throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Head of Organisational Development be authorised to implement an Employer Supported Volunteering Policy.
2. That the implementation of the Employer Supported Volunteering Policy, including feedback from staff, be monitored annually by the Committee.

6. **CHANGING OUR WORKING PRACTICES: FLEXIBLE WORKING**
(Report [CAB1540](#) and [PER134](#) Extract of Minutes refers)

The Head of Organisational Development circulated to the Committee an addition to Appendix 2 to Report CAB1540. She explained that the 'Flexible Working Policy and Procedure' was the over-arching document to all the associated policies compiled in the Appendix. This item had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. However, the Chairman agreed to accept it onto the agenda, as a matter requiring urgent consideration, as it assisted the Committee in its consideration of the approval of flexible working policies as set out.

The Head of Organisational Development reminded the Committee that both Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee had approved the flexible working initiative in principle, subject to this Committee's approval of the policies within Appendix 2 to Report CAB1540. The Committee referred to the minutes of those meetings as set out in Report PER134. She also explained that a separate Hot Desking policy would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee, and was undergoing amendment following further study of the proof of concept trial. A separate ICT Security Policy, including Flexible Working, was also to be compiled.

During discussion, the Head of Organisational Development reported that it had been recognised that flexible working presented many instances of changes to management techniques. Therefore, it was noted that appropriate guidance for managers had been set out within the policies, to ensure that a customer focus was maintained and for Heads of Division to continue to manage and monitor output etc. Additional training would be provided where necessary.

Councillor Allgood and the Chief Executive answered questions and advised that progress of the implementation of flexible working would be measured over time. It was confirmed that there were no tax implications for those officers who homework as part of contract with the Council. The Committee also discussed whether an officer may chose to not work from home, or be able to cease working from home, after finding it personally unsuitable. The Head of Organisational Development confirmed that any officer had a right to request their line manager that they be returned to office based working, whether or not previously contracted to be a home worker. There may also be occurrences when staff could request trial periods and these would also be given due consideration. However, she pointed out that requests to return to office-based working may be more difficult to accommodate over time, as office space within some Divisions was reduced. She also confirmed that home workers would still be obliged to return to the offices occasionally to attend meetings and training etc. Finally, it was noted that the rollout of flexible working would be introduced by reviewing whole divisional teams of officers, and not by focusing on individuals.

The Committee noted the concerns raised by Principal Scrutiny Committee of the annual allowance of £500 currently paid to full-time home workers and that this existing contractual obligation was to be reviewed. Principal Scrutiny Committee had also requested that the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources take account of the Council's health and safety obligations with regard to all aspects of flexible working initiatives.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Committee supported adopting flexible working practices as described within the Report. In approving the policies, as set out in Appendix 2, it was requested that the Committee review the progress of their implementation in October 2008.

RESOLVED:

1. That the flexible working policies as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report be approved.

2. That the Committee review the progress of the implementation of the flexible working policies in October 2008.

7. **EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF CABINET HELD 17 OCTOBER 2007 AND PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD 22 OCTOBER 2007**
[\(Report PER134 refers\)](#)

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Report and recommendations therein, be noted.

8. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
#	Exempt Minute of previous meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2007) Information relating to a particular individual. (Para 1 to Schedule 12A refers).)) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual (Para 2 to Schedule 12A refers)
	• Staff Restructure at Extra Sheltered Housing Schemes)
#	Cultural Services Division Staff Changes) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority. (Para 4 to Schedule 12A refers)
#	Personal Assistant Review)

9. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minute of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2007, be approved and adopted.

10. **CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION - STAFF CHANGES**

(Report PER132 refers)

The Committee noted that the Report was also to be considered by Cabinet on 14 November 2007 (to approve a maximum supplementary estimate) and Principal Scrutiny Committee on 19 November 2007, under its power of call-in.

The Committee considered a Report that set out proposals for changes to the current Cultural Services divisional establishment (detail in exempt minute).

11. **PERSONAL ASSISTANT REVIEW**

(Report PER133 refers)

The Committee noted that the Report was also to be considered by Cabinet on 14 November 2007, to approve a maximum supplementary estimate.

The Committee considered a Report that set out proposals for changes to the current establishment of the support staff to Corporate Directors (detail in exempt minute).

The meeting commenced at 6.50pm and concluded at 8.50pm.

Chairman