



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

Telephone 01572 722577 Facsimile 01572 758307 DX 28340 Oakham

Minutes of a meeting of the **Special RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, at 7.00 pm Thursday, 7 November 2013

PRESENT: Mr J M Lammie - Chairman (in the Chair)

Mr D C Hollis

Mr J R Munton

Mr D L Richardson

Miss G Waller

Mr A S Walters

In attendance: Mr T C King

Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property, Development Control, Planning Policy, Economic Development and Tourism

Mr M D A Pocock

Portfolio Holder for Highways, Waste and Recycling, Transport and Parking, Revenues and Benefits, Democratic Services

Officers present:

Mrs H Briggs

Chief Executive

Mr S Della Rocca

Assistant Director - Finance

Miss M Gamston

Support Officer

Mr C Jones

Strategic Communications Advisor

Mrs D Mogg

Director of Resources

Also present: Mr R J Gale

Apologies: Mr G Condé, Mr W J Cross, Mr B A Montgomery and Mrs C L Vernon

492 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in respect of the items on the agenda for this meeting.

493 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received from members of the public.

494 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from members.

SCRUTINY

495 COMMUNICATIONS – ANNUAL LEAVE/SICKNESS COVER

Report No. 245/2013 from the Chief Executive received.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Briggs, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to

update Members about the plans that are put in place to cover the Strategic Communications Advisor during periods of annual leave or sickness.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) That the report was relatively self explanatory;
- ii) That the report was in response to concerns raised when the Resource Scrutiny Panel had reviewed the Strategic Risk Register (*Risk Reference 5: Media Influence, 30 May 2013*);
- iii) That the Senior Management Team had undertaken media training in 2012. This training had not specifically covered writing press releases; it had covered dealing with interviews and enquiries. However, the Senior Management Team did have experience of initiating, reading and signing off press releases.
- iv) Members were advised that if required a press/media statement would be produced by the PA to the Chief Executive and checked by relevant officers. If strategic or sensitive then the statement would be sent to the Chief Executive to state whom it should be directed to; the senior officer would contribute to the response prior to the statement being signed off;
- v) That if there a period of absence that was for a significant amount of time, interim arrangements would be put in place;
- vi) That if during a major incident occurred during a period of absence resilience would be provided by Peterborough City Council and through the multi agency resilience partnership, for example, police, fire and other authorities, which would provide high intensive support;
- vii) That the Authority whilst aware of the content on social media did not usually feed into it;
- viii) That it was possible to schedule general advice in advance of a period of leave.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive, Mrs Briggs and the Communications Strategic Advisor, Mr Jones for attending and for the report.

AGREED

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 245/2013.

496 REPORTING OF STAFF NUMBERS

Report No. 242/2013 from the Director of Resources was received.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Mr Pocock, introduced the report the purpose of which was to report to Scrutiny on recent inconsistencies with staff number reports and the measures being taken to address these issues.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) That definitions and numbers had been reconciled to how many positions some people held;
- ii) That all pay scale were published on the Council's website;
- iii) In response to a query relating to the People FTE figure of 135.07 (chart 5.2 in Report No. 242/2013) the Director of Resources, Mrs Mogg, undertook to provide a written explanation on the breakdown of the figure to the meeting of this Panel on 12 December 2013;
- iv) That staff costs needed to be mapped out clearly;
- v) That quarterly reports on staffing numbers were to be produced;
- vi) That previous inconsistencies had been due to the way that data had

- been extracted rather than the information input to the Agresso system. The number of reports and user-definable fields had been reviewed to reduce the risk of inconsistency;
- vii) In response to a request to know how many staff were paid by revenue and how many by grant Members were advised that due to government funding changes there were very few specific grants, most were non ringfenced and went to the general expenditure. The Director of Resources, Mrs Mogg, undertook to provide the information in relation to grants received;
 - viii) That in September 2013 £83k had been spent on agency staff, on top of the staffing budget. Members were reminded that they were aware of certain sectors where time-to-time agency staff were employed where it was difficult to recruit to post, for example, social workers. A breakdown could be provided for a later meeting;
 - ix) That it was a management decision within allocated budget how many staff were required. Officers would take back to Council if not able to deliver service;
 - x) That it would be useful to Members for the quarterly report to contain the following information by directorate: number of FTE positions and number vacant, number filled by agency staff. The Portfolio Holder, Mr Pocock, agreed this would be produced;
 - xi) That for the previous two years, as part of the budget process, Members had accepted a gap in service where not critical. The Authority had looked at opportunities to deliver in a different format, for example, shared services, to give resilience rather than save money;
 - xii) That updated figures as at 1st September 2013 would be provided for the Panel meeting in December;
 - xiii) That it would be beneficial for Members to receive data relating to temporary working staff across the directorates;
 - xiv) That if Members had any concerns regarding a particular department a report could be taken at the relevant Panel;
 - xv) That a headcount report and a position report would be generated on the first and last day of each month. The headcount report would be published on the RCC website;
 - xvi) Members were advised that there was little variance in staffing numbers; that under national pay conditions the Authority had awarded a 1% pay rise and that the year end accounts, audited by KPMG, showed the average pay for one year compared to another;

AGREED

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 242/2013.
- 2) That a written explanation of the People FTE figure of 135.07 would be provided.
- 3) That information in relation to grants received would be provided.
- 4) That a breakdown of agency workers employed would be provided;
- 5) That updated figures as at 1st September 2013 would be provided.

497 HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICE REVIEW

Report No. 246/2013 from the Director OF Resources was received.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Mr Pocock, introduced the report the purpose of which was to present to the panel the findings of the Human Resources (HR) Service Review.

Following the Council's re-organisation, concluded in late 2011, which had resulted

in a number of appeals members of the Employment and Appeals Committee had raised some concerns about the support that HR had provided to the review process and the quality of advice given. Since then there had been significant changes in personnel in the HR team.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) That the Senior HR Adviser reported direct to the Director of Resources;
- ii) That advisors/administrators were previously aligned to the rest of organisation, this had been removed through working practice;
- iii) That policies and practices had recently been updated and were much more robust. Clear steps set out to minimise the risk to the Authority; backed up by guidance to managers;
- iv) That since the changes to the HR team a number of service reviews had taken place. There had not been any appeals or tribunals;
- v) Concern was expressed that managers were not taking enough responsibility for management relying too much on HR; that the report did not mention up-skilling;
- vi) That various options should be considered for the future provision of HR resources including the possibility of alternative providers, for example, legal advice or the department becoming an asset that other authorities would wish to buy into;
- vii) That suppliers had been approached and were cautious about providing quotes therefore needed to decide what type of service was required before speaking to suppliers;
- viii) That prior to the meeting of this Panel on 12th 2013 Mr Munton would submit a motion relating to the outsourcing of legal advice for HR;
- ix) It was acknowledged that previous problems relating to this department, and others, had been discussed at various committees. However, it was recognised by Councillors that in this particular case HR was demonstrably better than it had been and was a development in progress;
- x) In response to being asked if the Authority had been operating policies that had not been ratified, and if so, for how long and how many staff had been affected, especially where there had been redundancies Members were advised a report from the Employment and Appeals Committee would be taken at Full Council. A number of policies had been reviewed for clarification of language rather than being new policies;
- xi) That the Authority was not at risk due to issues raised in point x), as any appeal would be outline of the timeframe set. Employment law had changed on 1st October 2013, resulting in it being more difficult to get to tribunal;
- xii) That an update on HR would be brought to a future meeting of this Panel.

AGREED

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 246/2013.
- 2) That Officers continued discussions with external suppliers as to what support they can offer at what cost.

---oOo---

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.54 pm

Chairman