

Policy & Finance Committee - 7 September 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **7 September 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)
Cllr S P Smith (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C I Black
Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr C G Seagers

Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P K Savill and J Thomass

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive
R J Honey - Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)
D Deeks - Head of Financial Services
C McClellan - Manager, Human Resources
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

384 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

385 COUNCIL TAX PAYMENT METHODS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on Council Tax Payment Methods.

A Member observed that the survey had proved very useful. Responding to questions, the Head of Financial Services confirmed that vouchers could be used in the same way as the payment books and that the future would see local authorities and the banking community further encouraging cost effective payment methods to avoid paper handling.

The Committee concurred with the Chairman that vouchers be provided only in cases where payers should make an express request for paper based payment methods.

Resolved

- (1) That the existing format of payment books be no longer provided.
- (2) That where payers should make an express request for paper-based payment methods, these be supplied as a voucher supplement to the Council Tax bill. (HRHM)

386 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on the Citizen of the Year scheme and presented options for future years.

In terms of the Children of Courage (under 16 years) category, it was observed that this included provision for those who had helped others. It was felt that it would be appropriate to replace the term "Children of Courage" with "Young Citizens". The Committee agreed a motion moved by Councillor C A Hungate and seconded by Councillor M G B Starke in this regard.

Whilst it could be recognised that a previous award winner had been 19 years of age it was observed that there could, nevertheless, be merit in giving future consideration to an award category specific to the 16 to 21 year age group.

With regard to the community spirit category the Committee agreed a motion, moved by Councillor M G B Starke and seconded by Councillor C A Hungate, that District or Parish Council service should not be taken into account. This would not preclude the recognition of achievement by someone who was also a District/Parish Councillor, but would remove the possibility of the public misinterpreting the award.

It was noted that the judging panel should be cognisant of identifying achievements applicable to a particular year in question when undertaking its work. The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to retain panel makeup.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the term "Young Citizens" replacing the term "Children of Courage" in the under 16 years category and to further review of categories next year if necessary, the categories for the Citizen of the Year Awards be confirmed.
- (2) That the existing make-up of the Judging Panel be retained.
- (3) That District or Parish Council service should not be taken into account in the Community Spirit category. (CE)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that exempt information as disclosed in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

387 PAY AND GRADING

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) on undertaking a local pay review.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- The Greater London Whitley Council scheme was purely a methodology for job grading used by organisations nationally.
- Most authorities conclude that the application of more than one scheme is appropriate to their circumstances. Detailed testing is undertaken at the point where scheme grading levels are close with a view to maximising the parity between schemes.
- There would be a need to come forward with more information on the application of the HAY scheme. It would be appropriate for evaluation to be undertaken in tandem with succession planning/restructuring proposals with costs being factored in around that process.
- Notwithstanding capacity limitations, it would be appropriate for as many officers as possible (together with the Union) to be involved in understanding the scheme. In terms of communication, all staff would receive detailed paperwork on the scheme and briefings.

During debate it was recognised that the Whitley scheme was well established and respected. It was also observed that, in terms of staff retention, Rochford should be mindful of the activity of neighbouring authorities.

Whilst recognising that it would be practicable for officers to commence work on scheme detail, including consultation with the Union, it was felt that the details of the scheme as they roll-out through the organisation should be referred for consideration to the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed a motion, moved by Councillor C A Hungate and seconded by Councillor K H Hudson, in this regard.

Resolved

- (1) That a commitment to Job Evaluation being completed by March 2007, as set out in the National Pay Agreement, be endorsed in principle.
- (2) That progression with Job Evaluation using the Greater London Whitley Council Scheme for posts up to PO17 and HAY for all other posts, on the basis outlined in the report, be agreed in principle.
- (3) That the details of the scheme as they emerge and roll-out through the organisation be referred for consideration to the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee. (CD(LP&A))

388 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive on the current position regarding vacancies and long-term sickness absence within the authority.

The Chief Executive provided an update in respect of specific posts. It was noted that cross-working between authorities was now being progressed looking at the possibilities for jointly addressing capacity building in professional areas where shortages are common.

Resolved

That the current level of vacancies and long-term sickness be noted. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.38pm.

Chairman

Date