

STAFF COMMITTEE

3 NOVEMBER 2014 - 10:00AM



PRESENT: Councillor M J Humphrey (Chairman), Councillor D Stebbing (Vice-Chairman), Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor J F Clark, Councillor S J E King, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor F H Yeulett.

S6/14 TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 7 JULY 2014

The minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2014 were confirmed and signed.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

S7/14 REVISED SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Phil Hughes, Head of Parks and Leisure, presented the Revised Safeguarding Policy and informed Members that the Council has revised its Safeguarding Policy in light of changes to safeguarding practices and the criminal records bureau (CRB) checks, with key areas such as:

- CRB checks have been replaced with Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) Checks;
- DBS Checks are only carried out once for staff in specific roles - much more focused than previous practice;
- Responsibilities for staff, managers and Members are made clearer;
- Flow charts of actions required made easier to follow;
- Revised reporting sheet for children's services included in the policy;
- The policy has been developed with the support of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

- Councillor Yeulett commented that the Revision of the Safeguarding Policy is very relevant at the moment as it is in the national press and it is good to have the policy in place;
- Councillor Yeulett asked if CRB checks carry on. Officers advised that Councillor Yeulett should check with the relevant organisations carrying out the DBS check, as they are usually carried out when a person joins an organisation and then annually with a 1-2-1.

It was AGREED that the recommendation to adopt the revised Safeguarding Policy be NOTED and APPROVED.

S8/14 FLEXIBLE AND EARLY RETIREMENT, PENSION DISCRETIONS

Sam Anthony, Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, presented the Flexible and Early Retirement, Pension Discretions report and informed Members that the purpose is to adopt an integrated Fenland District Council Policy on flexible and early retirement including pension discretions which are to be exercised under the Local Government Pension Scheme

(LGPS) Regulations from 1 April 2014.

The key areas are:

- The Council has an existing Early Retirement Policy, but has identified the need for a policy covering Flexible Retirement;
- The main purpose of the discretions is that it is Fenland District Council's decision on which benefits to release for payment, this can be a combination of at least pre April 2008 and/or April 2008 - March, April 2014;
- The LGPS was reformed from 1 April 2014 following discussions between Government and Trade Unions, previous membership of the LGPS is protected prior to that date;
- Fenland District Council is required to publish a policy on certain discretions, following consultation between the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Staffside Group they have endorsed the new policy and it is now ready for formal adoption;
- The LGPS Regulations provide an employee with the right to request flexible retirement, not the right to take flexible retirement, which must be approved by the Head of Service and Corporate Director;
- The benefits of the policy allow skills and knowledge to be passed on and to be kept in the organisation;
- An employee aged 55 or over can apply for flexible retirement where they have 3 or more months' membership of the LGPS;
- When an employee is granted early payment of pension benefits, there may be costs to the pension fund, the Council will not normally approve flexible retirement requests where there is a capital cost to the authority, dependent on age and length of service;
- Before making a request for flexible retirement employees are advised to obtain a pension estimate;
- If an application for flexible retirement is not approved employees have the right of appeal, they are entitled to make a subsequent application but this must be at least 12 months after the original application was refused.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

- Councillor Seaton commented that he understands that the Council has to adopt policies as a legal requirement and Officers were asked to confirm what difference the policy makes. Officers confirmed that the policy allows flexible retirement at the cost of the retiree;
- Councillor Booth made reference to point 10.1 in the policy and asked what was the purpose of referring the application for early retirement to CMT and then to Staff Committee afterwards as the assessment will already have been completed by the Line Manager and this appears to be an additional step which does not add value to the process. Officers responded that this refers to where there is a cost associated with early retirement options in point 9.1 and the application has to be presented to Staff Committee for their approval, this is only when there is an associated cost. Councillor Booth and officers agreed that this should be made clearer and added into the policy;
- Councillor Booth made reference to point 2.2 of the policy where the income cannot be greater/exceed the old monthly income prior to flexible retirement and asked if this is part of the regulations. Officers confirmed that this is part of the regulations and includes any pension that employee would be drawing. Officers confirmed that lawful changes regarding this came into effect from April 2014 and advised that employees should talk to HR and the Pensions service to ensure they make the right decision;
- Councillor Clark commented that some of the criteria are statutory and some negotiated and asked officers if there were any further enhancements not contained in the earlier Policy.

Officers confirmed no there was not;

- Councillor Yeulett asked if there were any comments from staff and Unison following consultation. Officers confirmed that the policy was endorsed by both parties and no suggestions were made. Councillor Yeulett asked how many staff over 55 and 65 were employed by the Council. Officers confirmed that the Council, in line with the demographic of many other Local Authorities, does statistically have an older workforce, and that people are working longer and leave the pension scheme at age 75;
- Officers informed members that the Council has worked with a pensions expert when drafting the Policy and Discretions and the Council is required to publish the Discretions under new regulations;
- Councillor Yeulett asked if employees would be able to challenge decisions. Officers confirmed that decisions could not be challenged once they had been approved and pointed out that there is a need for consistency in making decisions.
It was AGREED that Council approve the Flexible and Early Retirement policy and discretions statement to be exercised under the LGPS Regulations, the recommendations were NOTED and APPROVED, subject to clarification in the policy regarding costs associated with any of the early retirement options contained in point 9.1.

S9/14 BUILDING CONTROL - PROPOSAL TO JOIN THE CNC PARTNERSHIP

Graham Nourse, Head of Planning presented the Building Control: Proposal to join the CNC Partnership report.

Councillor Booth questioned the reason for this report being considered as confidential. Officers explained why the report was required to be considered as confidential and Members agreed that the report should be considered as a confidential item.

Members considered:

- the details of the proposed changes;
- the financial and staffing implications associated with the proposed changes;
- the comments and responses put forward during the consultation process.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

It was AGREED that the recommendations be NOTED and APPROVED.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting of this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

S10/14 REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTANCY TEAM

Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant presented the Review of the Accountancy Team report, the

rationale for the review and the associated proposed changes.

Members considered:

- the details of the proposed changes;
- the financial and staffing implications associated with the proposed changes;
- the comments and responses put forward during the consultation process.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

It was AGREED that the recommendations be NOTED and APPROVED.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting of this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

S11/14 REVIEW OF CUSTOMER ACCESS TEAM

Geoff Kent, Head of Customer Services presented the Review of Customer Access Team report, the rationale for the review and associated proposed changes.

Members considered:

- the details of the proposed changes;
- the financial and staffing implications associated with the proposed changes;
- the comments and responses put forward during the consultation process.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

It was AGREED that the recommendations be NOTED and APPROVED.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting of this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

S12/14 REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TEAM

Richard Cassidy, Corporate Director, presented the Review of the Environmental Health Team report, the rationale for the review and associated proposed changes.

Members considered:

- the details of the proposed changes;

- the financial and staffing implications associated with the proposed changes;
- the comments and responses put forward during the consultation process.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

It was AGREED that the recommendations be NOTED and APPROVED.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting of this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

S13/14 REVIEW OF THE DESIGN, PRINT, POST AND STORES TEAM

David Wright, Policy and Communications Manager presented the Review of the Design, Print, Post and Stores Team report, the rationale for the review and associated proposed changes.

Members considered:

- the details of the proposed changes;
- the financial and staffing implications associated with the proposed changes;
- the future delivery of the service;
- the comments and responses put forward during the consultation process.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses from officers.

It was AGREED that the recommendations be NOTED and APPROVED.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting of this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

11.30am

Chairman