

# STAFF COMMITTEE

5 AUGUST 2016 - 10.00AM



**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Davis (Chairman), Councillor Mason (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Booth, Councillor Butcher, Councillor Murphy, Councillor Seaton, Councillor Tierney, Councillor Yeulett.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Sam Anthony (Head of HR & OD), Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance), Rob Bridge (Corporate Director), Gary Garford (Corporate Director) and Sally Taylor (Observing) (Member Services and Governance)

## **S5/16      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 13 June 2016 were agreed and signed.

### Matters Arising:

Councillor Tierney apologised that his name did not appear in either the 'present list' or the 'apologies list' for the last meeting and explained that he had arrived for the meeting on the wrong day. Councillor Yeulett stated that the last meeting date had been changed several times and that there had been confusion over the meeting date.

Councillor Murphy stated that on the last page of the previous minutes Sam Anthony agreed to circulate a breakdown of the 480 employees, he confirmed that members have not received this. Councillor Booth confirmed that he had received a breakdown into service areas. Councillor Murphy confirmed that he had not received this. Sam Anthony agreed to check and circulate this information again;

**\* FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL \***

## **S6/16      COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW - INTERNAL AUDIT PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS**

The Staff Committee considered the Comprehensive Spending Review - Internal Audit Partnership Proposals Report presented by Rob Bridge.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Booth confirmed that he is in support of the proposal. He asked for confirmation as KLWN (Kings Lynn and West Norfolk) will be buying back the time, will there will be a formal agreement so they cannot just decide to withdraw. Rob Bridge confirmed that we will draw up a partnership agreement which will include appropriate exit arrangements should either party wish to withdraw, he added that he has a confirmation letter from KLWN saying that their Cabinet have agreed and what we have agreed to;
2. Councillor Booth asked that with regards to recruitment, will we be confining to someone already in local government. Rob Bridge stated that the Council would be looking for someone who is suitable for both councils and can do the work that we need them to. This is a good opportunity for someone who might like to take a step up and be involved in a partnership arrangement;

3. Councillor Seaton confirmed that he fully supports the proposal; he asked how much KLWN will be involved in the recruitment process. Rob Bridge confirmed that this post will be managed 50/50 by each council and therefore we have agreed that we will jointly carry out the interviews;
4. Councillor Yeulett stated that we have many shared services currently taking place and asked if a list could be circulated to members. Rob Bridge agreed to provide list of shared arrangements that are in place;
5. Councillor Yeulett stated that we need to ensure that all of the arrangements that are in place are working well. Rob Bridge confirmed that the performance of all partnerships are considered at various meetings like, Portfolio Holder Briefings and Overview and Scrutiny, however this would come to the Corporate Governance Committee as it will be around the delivery of the audit plan. All partnership arrangements that are in place are regularly looked at and discussions take place to decide if there might be a better way to deliver. He agreed to circulate the list as a starting point for members to look at and if there is anything that members want to discuss further these can be picked up in a meeting. Councillor Yeulett asked that this information is circulated to all members. Councillor Mrs Davis agreed;
6. Councillor Booth asked if the external auditors are happy with the proposals. Rob Bridge confirmed that the external auditors are happy and the only thing that they have made clear is that the head of internal audit has to have an appropriate qualification.

**The Staff Committee agreed to:**

- **Note the proposed Shared Internal Audit arrangements approved by Cabinet, and;**
- **Note that the structure of the Internal Audit team is not changing and Fenland District Council will employ the new Shared Internal Audit Manager post, and KLWN will buy-back 50% of their time.**

**S7/16      VALUATION & ESTATES PROPOSALS**

The Staff Committee considered the Valuations and Estates Proposals Report presented by Gary Garford.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Butcher asked for clarification that further to Councillor Yeulett's comment about shared services in the previous item, this was a shared service that was reviewed and it was decided that this would be better delivered in-house. Gary Garford agreed that we will look at the options when they arise to see which is the best for the Council;
2. Councillor Murphy stated that Gary Garford had referred to the fact that we will make a few thousand in his presentation and asked for clarification. Gary Garford stated that it depends on the final post, but would be £5,000 - £6,000 less than budget;
3. Councillor Booth stated that he is not inclined to support this proposal as there are elements that are unclear. The report refers to 0.6 of an FTE but you want to recruit 1.5, it is not clear why and members need clarification of this. He added that the committee have asked in the past that the banding and pay should be included in the report. Rob Bridge confirmed that pay ranges were circulated to members as requested previously. Councillor Mrs Davis asked if the details could be included within the report moving forward. Rob Bridge agreed;
4. Councillor Butcher stated with reference to 0.6 FTE to 1.5 FTE, this will not be costing the council any more money. Gary Garford agreed stating that we will be getting a better service and will be getting better value by employing someone in-house;
5. Councillor Booth reiterated that he is concerned that the role is currently 0.6 FTE but that we will be recruiting 1.5 FTE, he added that other services have had to cut administration costs and the report does not show what other considerations have been made. Councillor Butcher stated that the biggest consideration is being made at the moment, the current

arrangements are not working as they should be, we are paying £68,840 for 0.6 FTE and for less than that we will get 1.5 FTE who will spend their whole time working for Fenland;

6. Councillor Yeulett stated that the report refers to Peterborough outsourcing their service moving forward, he asked if we had the opportunity to join in with this arrangement. Gary Garford confirmed that Peterborough have set up a new arrangement with a company and this was also an option for us, but was once again paying a salary at an enhanced rate. We have made an assessment and decided that it is better for Fenland to engage our own staff and to take back full control of this service based at Fenland;
7. Rob Bridge stated for clarification with reference to the questions about changing from a 0.6 to 1.5, we were previously paying quite a high amount for 0.6 FTE, and although it looks like an increase for that service, we have been looking at getting a better service and using that money to try something different as the previous arrangement was not quite right;
8. Councillor Tierney asked when we are looking at carrying out the recruitment process how do we decide what level of pay to offer. Gary Garford stated that we have a base job description from the post before and the pay value is pitched at the right level for the role looking at the experience, profession and the market, the grades will then be scored through our job evaluation process;
9. Councillor Tierney asked for clarification of the job evaluation process. Rob Bridge confirmed that the job evaluation panels carry out the assessments, the panels are made up of union members and staff who have received training. Sam Anthony confirmed that we use the national joint council job evaluation scheme. This role would go through the formal job evaluation process for which there is a questionnaire to complete, which is around 26 pages, and that is formally evaluated by 4 panel members who have been trained by the LGA;
10. Councillor Tierney asked how often a panel decide to offer a lower grade. Sam Anthony stated that each of the panel members evaluate the questionnaire individually and come together for a discussion to agree an overall score. The value that is agreed by the panel is converted to a grade by the HR team, the panel have no concept of where they are pitching at or the value of the post. HR feed the results back to the manager and if the manager is not happy with the grade, the manager can appeal once, the evaluation then goes through an appeals process, and the result of the appeal is the final grade for the post;
11. Councillor Tierney stated that it would be useful for the committee to have a look at the decisions made over the past few years and to see how the whole process works to get a better understanding. Sam Anthony confirmed that job evaluation was covered during training for the staff committee. Rob Bridge stated that there has to be a balance between the different roles for officers and committee members, but agreed to put something together for members being mindful of what the committee role is, as this would be straying into operational matters. He added that he understands that staff committee would want to understand the function to ensure that it is carried out correctly;
12. Councillor Tierney stated that he believes that it is of interest to the staff committee to look at the rates that staff are paid and how that decision has been made and that he does not think that it is outside of this committee's remit to look at this. Councillor Mrs Davis confirmed that it is a very fine line between what is operational and what the committee role is. Rob Bridge agreed to look into this further following the meeting;
13. Councillor Booth stated that it is the oversight that this committee needs to be looking at. Councillor Mrs Davis asked the officers if they would be able to put something together that would be meaningful for the committee. Rob Bridge agreed to meet with Sam Anthony to look at what they can put together for the committee;
14. Councillor Mrs Davis asked if there is a similar banding across other councils and if we can look at other valuation officer posts. Rob Bridge confirmed that some councils have a local scheme whereas we run a national scheme, so there would be a difference in some cases. He stated that his understanding of Councillor Tierney's query was with regards to the consistency of the job evaluation panel decisions and how many times those decisions are challenged;

15. Councillor Tierney stated that he would like to see how the system works as the most questions that he is asked about are with regards to staffing and I would like to be able to understand the system and structure better to be able to defend the council and answer some of those questions. Councillor Mrs Davis stated that those matters are not in this committees remit, staffing is the responsibility of the officers. Rob Bridge suggested that a training session should be offered, a repeat of what has already been offered with more focus on the job evaluation, including some case studies around decisions that have been made. Sam Anthony agreed and stated that as Councillor Tierney was not available for the previous staff committee training session she would arrange to meet with him and go through some of the matters raised here today;
16. Councillor Butcher stated that he understands the point that Councillor Tierney is making as he also gets questions about the staffing at the Council, but that we appear to be moving away from the agenda and the scale of pay for the role, we will not know where to pitch the band at until we see the quality of the applications. He agreed that more information and better understanding of the staffing matters and salaries will help councillors to be able to answer questions when they are asked moving forward;
17. Councillor Booth stated that the proposed bands are contained in the report. Councillor Butcher stated that we have to get an applicant that is good enough to do the job. Gary Garford stated that this is an important role within the council, looking at disposal of assets and better use of assets moving forward. Work that is essential for us to get income from those that we let and identify and dispose of those that we no longer need anymore;
18. Councillor Booth stated that Gary Garford's comments have been very informative. Gary Garford apologised if this was not clear in the report. Councillor Booth asked on that basis what savings are we looking at, and are we looking at setting targets. Gary Garford stated that the targets are set in the financial strategy, we look at the level of disposals we can achieve in a year and then we work towards that target. There are also performance targets with regards to turning around leases for the business centres and factories within a certain time. This role also deals with wharfage fees across the ports and setting land values. The head of service also needs to look at some more strategic work moving forward like the Nene sites;
19. Councillor Seaton stated that this role is about future assets too, we might be looking at investing in further assets to generate further income;
20. Councillor Booth confirmed that he is more minded to support the proposal now having had further information today, he asked about the plans for the administrative support and questioned why the support team that are currently doing this work cannot continue to achieve more savings. Gary Garford confirmed that officers had a long debate about this. The assets and project team administrators have been reduced to 2 and their work is to manage phone calls for street lighting, repairs to car parks, manage all the orders for the assets and projects team. He added that there is a matrix of 4 part time business centre receptionists that cover the Boathouse and South Fens and this new post will join this team. When they are not busy they can carry out some administrative work for the port, as the administrative post to the port was lost last year too. So we are looking at a flexible group of staff that can cover this work. He stated that he would not be putting a post in place that we do not need, but we currently have had the scenario that the head of service is covering the phones or the desk during busy periods or holiday and sickness and we need that flexibility in place;
21. Councillor Booth stated with regards to street lighting, if this team are dealing with this they are wasting a lot of time. He added that he had received an email from the parish council where they have been chasing for quotes from Balfour Beatty and what is coming through is still not right. Gary Garford stated that frank discussions have taken place about street lighting and we are doing our best to get Balfour Beatty to deliver the service that we expect, we will put them on a trial period until improvements are made. Councillor Booth stated that it must be wasting a lot of administration time chasing this company up. Gary Garford agreed and stated that when a contractor is not performing as they should it puts pressure on the client, we are getting complaints that need to be investigated and dealt with and we

want to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion;

22. Councillor Mason stated that asset management is very important role for the council and that he fully supports this proposal.

**The Staff Committee agreed to approve the recruitment of a permanent, full time Valuation & Estates Surveyor and a permanent, part time Technical Administration Assistant as outlined in the report.**

11.45am

Chairman