

Feedback from Consultation of proposed structure

Members will note that, in the report forming item 5 of the Agenda for the Human Resources Committee meeting on 31 August 2006, affected staff and the recognised union were provided with the opportunity to give feedback to the Committee in respect of the proposed restructure. To date, we have received comments from one Director and the Branch Secretary of the union and these are attached. Any further comments received will be sent to you separately or, if necessary, tabled.

20th August 2006

Dear Anne

SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING

Thank you for your letter of 15th August, outlining the proposals for the restructuring of the Council, which are to be put to Human Resources Committee at the end of the month.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to make representations to the Committee and the Executive.

Firstly, I would like both Committees to know that I very much like the senior management structure that you are proposing. There is a sound logic behind the division of Directorate responsibilities, which I strongly support, and which I think will make sense to the public, as well as to our staff.

I am particularly keen on the re-introduction of a “Chief Executive’s Department”, which I think will help strengthen the Council’s service delivery.

I would also like to thank you for taking the decision to involve the successful Directors in the structuring of the Service Head layer. It is important, I feel, that Directors should have the opportunity to shape and recruit their teams, rather than being presented with a fait accompli, and I am delighted that this layer will not be decided in advance of the Director level recruitment.

Inevitably, there are some service areas which could be fitted into more than one “box” – for example, Housing, Community Safety and Pest Control could all be argued to be Community Services. Common sense, however, dictates that decisions do need to be made on where the divides lie, and, with one exception, which I shall outline in more detail below, I feel that the proposed service groupings are the right ones.

The one service issue that I would urge Members to reconsider is the placing of the IT service as an “Internal Service”. I feel very strongly that the Council would be better served by positioning IT as a Customer and Community Service – which, I think, was your original proposal.

IT will be a hugely important service area for this Council in the coming years. East Herts has always had a strong tradition of effective front-line service delivery, and, over the past few years, those service areas which had been causing concern have been effectively turned around. The biggest performance issues now standing between us and an “Excellent” rating are, in my view, our people management processes, and our IT service development.

Placing Human Resources and Organisational Development in the “Chief Executive’s” box is exactly the right thing to do, and will mean that you will be well positioned to bring about the radical changes that are needed in that service area.

Placing IT services back into the “Internal Services” box is, I think a regressive move. When I first joined East Herts, IT was under the management of a Chief Finance Officer. The gulf that existed at that time between the needs of the front-line services and their customers, and the IT services that were provided was unimaginable by today’s standards: staff were generally not allowed access to the Internet or e-mail; direct telephone lines were not available; important service systems (such as the Planning System) had to be on the verge of collapse before a replacement would be considered; the concept of using IT investment as a way to make it easier for people to access the services they need was not evident in our service development or planning processes. This was little more than 4 years ago!

The reality is that major step changes in how this Council uses IT and Communication Systems have only been successfully introduced when staff from other, front-line, service areas have led the projects: the web-site; the Intranet; e-payment services; the new telephone system.

The Council now faces some very important IT developments – the introduction of Customer Relationship Management; development of remote working solutions; out-of-hours services; sophisticated use of GIS mapping to target services to where they are needed. None of these are “Internal” issues – they have everything to do with front-line service delivery to our communities.

It is my belief that we need a profound culture change in our thinking about IT. Why miss the opportunity to take this crucial service outside of the box, and integrate the team who need to make it happen with the teams whose day job is serving our communities? I would urge Councillors to think again on this one.

Turning to the recruitment and selection process, I would like to reassure the Committee that I am supportive of the process outlined in your report. I am interested in knowing more about two issues: firstly, the remuneration for each of the Director posts is not yet known. In the last senior management restructuring a principle of pay parity (at least in theory!) was introduced for Chief Officer posts. Will this principle be retained, or will each post attract a different salary? Secondly, I am unclear as to what the exact process will be for fitting people to posts: will I be invited to choose the post that I wish to apply for, or will I be invited to submit a generic application? If I, or one of my colleagues, feel that we are suited to more than one of the three vacancies, how will that be handled?

Please feel free to share my comments with Members of the Human Resources Committee and the Executive. I do not feel the need to have my views taken under “part 2” of the agenda; nor do I feel strongly about the issue of addressing the Committee, unless Members feel that it would be of assistance to them.

Yours sincerely

Mary Orton
Director of Policy & Contract Services

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 31 AUGUST 2006

UNISON REPOSE TO REPORT ON: SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR EAST HERTS COUNCIL

UNISON RECOMMENDATIONS

- A) That all the recommendations contained in the report are agreed
- B) That the current policies and procedures are used to determine any necessary redundancy, early retirement, redeployment or protection arrangements

UNISON welcomes and supports the report on the new management arrangements set out in Appendix 1 for the following reasons:

- The Council having undergone a period of instability during the past three years with a management structure, which clearly did not work now requires a team of leaders to rebuild trust, confidence and respect in East Herts Council in order to unite and motivate staff and deliver first class services to customers at the same time as achieving value for money.
- The proposed senior management structure based on a more traditional Chief Executive model takes into account views expressed by Council members, officers and UNISON, following extensive consultation in October 2005.
- These views also included the reallocation of resources from senior management level, which was perceived as top heavy to front line services. The report addresses this issue with the recommendation that savings achieved at director level will be used to fund changes at a lower level.
- The proposed structure with some minor amendments to the original, particularly in relation to building control and IT, represents a logical, clearly defined and workable arrangement of functions, which should enable performance and service improvement. Although the Chief

Executive and three new directors will be taking on large areas of responsibility, it is a less complex structure than the current one and one that should prove to be manageable.

- The recruitment and selection arrangements are based on good practice and take into account the needs of both the individuals affected and the Council. The proposal to offer career coaching is welcomed.
- UNISON looks forward to working with the new Corporate Management Team and other officers to help transform East Herts Council and achieve shared goals.

Points/Questions for Consideration

1. UNISON would request that new job descriptions and person specifications are drawn up and jobs evaluated as a matter of urgency so that individuals are in a better position to make an informed decision about which direction they wish to follow and the exact content of the job.
2. The jobs will in any case have to be evaluated before they can be advertised. It is essential to have a timetable of when these tasks will be completed and internal adverts due to be published.
3. UNISON would also request to be kept fully informed of the process for evaluating the posts including the timetable and the name of the organization undertaking the task. UNISON is of the view that Hay should evaluate the posts in order to maintain the consistency and integrity of the JE scheme. Since Hay have evaluated all other posts it seems logical that the same scheme should be applied to the posts in the new structure, to ensure the correct differentials are maintained between the different tiers.
4. UNISON would request that the review of the relevant HR policies and procedures is a joint process, with full involvement and consultation before the final versions are agreed.
5. Officers will need to know details of the policies to be applied so that they are aware of exactly which options are open to them in order to

plan for their future. It is only reasonable that the one officer who is not appointed to a Directorate is made aware of the choices available to him or her in respect of redundancy and redeployment. All officers must therefore be informed of redundancy packages and protection arrangements at the start of the process.

6. In view of the above how does the Council propose to revise and agree the policies in time for a September/October selection process? Is it possible for a meeting of full council to ratify these policies/procedures in time for the commencement of the selection process?
7. UNISON believes that the Council's existing policies/procedures should apply in order to comply with the tight deadlines. The union is also of the view that the Council's existing Severance policy will not breach the new age discrimination legislation since this allows for the continuation of enhanced years for those who retire early on the grounds of redundancy for existing members of the pension scheme. UNISON would request therefore that any officer who is made redundant as a result of the proposed restructure is awarded added years in accordance with current custom and practice and the current policy.
8. UNISON would also request that any officer redeployed as a result of the restructure, whether it be at director level or lower level is protected in accordance with the current redeployment policy, i.e. full protection for three years.
9. Finally UNISON is grateful for the opportunity of responding to this report and looks forward to involvement in the further stages of the restructure at Heads of Service level and beyond.

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