

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 10 OCTOBER 2007

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE STAFF SIDE

6(B) REVIEW OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None

RECOMMENDATION - that the report be received.

---

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 To enable Panel Members to debate issues and some of the concerns already voiced by staff on this review.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 A report was presented to the Executive on 4 September 2007 with recommendations to receive a business case for revising the Council's working arrangements, to approve the inclusion within the capital programme of £50,000 to commission professional advisors, and to set up a project group to manage the project.

4.0 Report

4.1 The Staff Side welcomes the make up of the project group, which includes staff from all service areas and union representatives and also welcomes the reference to consultation through the forum of the Local Joint Panel.

4.2 Briefing sessions have also been held with the Chief Executive which has given staff the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the pros and cons of alternative working arrangements.

- 4.3 Some of the concerns expressed so far include the need to make a decision sooner rather than later. Speculation on whether the Bishop's Stortford offices will remain open and on whether we will in future all work from a single site has been continuing for years now and there is a danger that staff will become weary of the subject and sceptical about change ever coming to fruition.
- 4.4 Many staff question the need to pay for professional advice when we have experienced, specialist employees at East Herts.
- 4.5 There are many positive aspects to changes in working arrangements and many staff welcome for example, the prospect of working from home. However, there are also many staff for whom working at home is not a viable option or those who simply would not wish to do this for all sorts of reasons, work/life balance issues being just one of them.
- 4.6 It must also be recognised that the majority of Council staff are women, many of whom work close to home because it is so convenient and fits in with their domestic arrangements. If staff have to travel further to work, many staff may just leave rather than face a longer journey.
- 4.7 There are also issues about service delivery and customer/user preferences and requirements. Although it has been stated that there will be a presence in Bishop's Stortford, the implication in the report is that the main offices will be located elsewhere which will impact on customers and Council Members.
- 4.8 The above are just a small sample of the many points raised at the briefing sessions and it is hoped that discussions will continue on a regular basis and that Council Members and the Staff Side will be able to have an open and frank exchange of views and ideas at forthcoming meetings.

#### 5.0 Consultation

5.1 As detailed above.

#### 6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 See Executive report.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 As detailed above.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 See Executive report.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Jane Sharp, Staff Side Secretary – Ext 2120

G:\BSWP\INPS\Local Joint Panel\10 Oct 2007\LJP\Working Arrangements101007.doc