

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee

At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 20th September, 2022 in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, Northants, NN15 7QX

Present:-

Members

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair)
Councillor William Colquhoun
Councillor Matt Keane
Councillor Lora Lawman

Councillor Matt Binley
Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Helen Howell
Councillor Ian Jelley

Officers

Rob Bridge – Chief Executive
Marie Devlin-Hogg – Assistant Director Human Resources
Nicky McLoughlin – Workforce, Policy and Projects Strategic Lead
Tracey Simoniti-Stocker – Workforce, Policy and Projects Specialist
Paul Goult – Democratic Services

19 Apologies for absence (08.09.22)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr, Howell, Partridge-Underwood & Fedorowycz.

Given the announcement prior to the meeting of the death of HM The Queen Elizabeth II, the Chair expressed condolences to the Royal Family on behalf of the assembled meeting. A one-minute silence was observed.

20 Motion Without Notice (08.09.22)

A motion to adjourn the meeting until a future date and time was MOVED by Councillor Lora Lawman and SECONDED by Councillor Steven North.

RESOLVED that: -

The meeting be adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 pm.

[Meeting Reconvened on 20 September 2022]

The meeting reconvened on Tuesday 20th September 2022 at 7:00 pm in the Council Chamber, Bowling Green Road, Kettering.

Those in attendance at that time – Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair), Councillor Matt Binley, Councillor Ian Jelley, Councillor Lora Lawman, Councillor Jan O’Hara, Councillor Russell Roberts, Councillor William Colquhoun, Councillor Matt Keane, Councillor Steven North, Councillor Mark Rowley and Councillor Helen Howell.

Officers in attendance – Rob Bridge, Marie Devlin-Hogg, Nicky McLoughlin, Paul Gault.

21 Apologies for absence (20.09.22)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr, Partridge-Underwood & Fedorowycz.

22 Members' Declarations of interest (20.09.22)

No declarations were made.

23 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022 (20.09.22)

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Employment Committee held on 28th June 2022 had been circulated.

RESOLVED that: -

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24 Proposals for a Revised Corporate Leadership Structure (20.09.22)

The Chief Executive introduced the report. It was noted that the original senior management structure had been developed by the Shadow Authority and implemented prior to Vesting Day (1st April 2021). The management and directorate structure had been in operations since Vesting Day and had now been subject to review.

The report highlighted the success achieved since Vesting Day and councillors wished their thanks to staff be recorded. The Chief Executive emphasised the good work undertaken to date in transforming service delivery but that there was a need to refocus and ensure that the respective directorates take ownership and have accountability for the next stage of the process.

The Chief Executive confirmed to the Committee that there had been full engagement with staff and trade unions over the proposals. Trade unions had thanked the Chief Executive for the full and comprehensive engagement.

It was being proposed that the Transformation and Corporate Leadership Team be restructured, with a proposal that some posts within the Transformation Team would be deleted (7 posts) with others transferred to other service directorates. There was also a proposal to create 6 new posts.

In addition the report indicated that there would be a realignment of service directorate responsibilities; these were detailed within the report and appendices, together with a “current” and a “proposed” Corporate Leadership Structure.

The report suggested that approval of the recommendations would provide benefits to the Authority, including –

- i) Greater ownership, accountability and delivery of transformation and service improvement projects across CLT and within Directorates.
- ii) Through joined up planning and reporting within and across Directorates more efficient governance and oversight of service improvement and change programmes through CLT and Members.
- iii) A single corporate Programme Management Office covering both transformation related projects and the capital projects process, including the business analyst resource which will be allocated to teams for specific projects.
- iv) Dedicated Assistant Director roles for Housing and Community & Leisure Services to enable delivery of ambition and wider strategic housing responsibilities.
- v) Wider responsibilities for the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing and opportunity for further integration / joining up of leisure and culture activities to reduce health inequalities.
- vi) Stronger governance and oversight of partnership and commercial arrangements
- vii) A dedicated Head of Performance and Partnerships role to provide greater focus on the development of the Council's performance management framework. Working closely with finance to strengthen integrated finance and performance reporting in support of effective decision making. The role will also ensure a robust governance and control environment for the strategic partnerships held by the Council.
- viii) A reduction in the overall cost of transformation to the organisation whilst freeing up resource to engage "expertise" as and when required.

Councillor North sought assurance that the loss of the central Transformation Team would not undermine the corporate approach and a corporate overview of progress. There had been good work undertaken and experience gained, Councillor North was concerned this may be dissipated. The Chief Executive had sought out good practise from other local authorities and stressed that CLT would provide a corporate overview with monthly updates on progress. CLT would provide an improved focus on timescales and would find it easier to resolve problems.

Councillor North was keen on identifying savings and efficiencies through transformation to be evidenced by appropriate performance indicators.

Councillor Roberts welcomed the progress to date and felt that it was important to ensure the transformation ethos was embedded throughout the Authority, in all service areas.

Councillor Rowley felt it was a well-balanced report and appreciated that the potential was being created to accelerate transformation across service areas.

Councillor Jelley felt it was an excellent report but sought assurance that there were ongoing discussions with those staff directly impacted by the proposed recommendations. The Chief Executive confirmed that the proposals had been subject to full and open discussion with those staff members effected and discussions held with the trade unions. Dependant upon the Committee's determination of the report the Chief Executive indicated that there would be a 1:1 discussion conducted with

every staff member affected over the next few days. The Authority would seek to ensure that staff potentially “at risk” were provided every opportunity to find alternative employment within the Authority. Whilst the Chief Executive could not exclude the possibility of redundancies every effort would be made to negate or minimise these.

Councillor O’Hara welcomed the report. Councillor O’Hara recognised that staff had been required to cope with enormous pressure over the previous two years with the Covid pandemic, home working, Vesting Day etc. Councillor O’Hara stressed the importance of supporting staff to ensure transformation was successful including training etc.

The Chief Executive agreed given the problems faced by staff the Authority would need to provide appropriate support through training, new ways of working etc. The Chief Executive stated that the aim was to attract and retain a high-quality of staff and for the Authority to be an “employer of choice.” The Chief Executive cited the importance of ensuring the Assistant Director of Housing role was filled as soon as possible as this was a key area of service delivery.

Councillor Lawman recognised the difficulties staff had needed to deal with leading up and immediately after Vesting Day and progress to date was to be commended. Councillor Lawman agreed that giving service areas more responsibility and ownership to take the transformation process forward was to be commended. It was importance that staff had support to manage the change process.

The Chief Executive agreed that staff were crucial to get the Authority to where it wanted to be and to fulfil its ambitions. The Authority through CLT would monitor performance and where appropriate hold service areas to account.

Councillor Binley expressed concern that transformation was being left to the respective service areas and there would be “self-policing” and felt that reviewing performance indicators was a key element of ensuring that transformation continued to be progressed. The Chief Executive confirmed that performance would be monitored through CLT and the retained Transformation Board.

Councillor Binley queried whether any staff impacted by these proposals had resigned since the launch of the consultation process. Officers confirmed there had been one resignation however the team were fairly stable and not subject to a high level of turnover of staff.

Councillor Binley also queried what impact there would be on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to the proposal given the creation of the new Assistant Director position. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Assistant Director Communities would be financed from the General Fund, with the majority of the Assistant Director Housing costs being met from the HRA. The Executive Director Finance was comfortable that the proposed changes could be accommodated within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, wished their thanks and appreciation be recorded for the work and achievement of the officer’s involved in commencing and progressing the Transformation process during the Shadow Period and since Vesting Day. It was recognised that a constructive start had been made on implementing

Transformation within the new Authority which hopefully would be taken forward within the new structure and further benefits realised. The Chief Executive confirmed the Committee's gratitude would be communicated to the staff impacted by the report.

The report's recommendations were **MOVED** by Councillor Lora Lawman and **SECONDED** by Councillor Jan O'Hara.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) The content of the report and the revised proposed structure, including financial implications be noted;
- b) The new Corporate Leadership Structure set out in section 4 and Appendix B be approved;
- c) The deletion and creation of posts outlined in section 4 and summarised in 4.35 be approved;
- d) The realignment of CLT responsibilities as set out in section 4.10 be approved; and
- e) It be noted that within the Constitution's Officer Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) has authority.

25 Selection and Appointment of Director of Public Health and Wellbeing (20.09.22)

The purpose of the report was to ask the Employment Committee to appoint a sub-committee to undertake the recruitment and selection process for the role of Director of Public Health and Wellbeing.

Appointing a sub-committee would ensure that the recruitment and selection approach for this role was comprehensive and inclusive as well as enabling those who had a real stake and interest in this appointment to be part of the process. It was proposed that partners, stakeholders and members would play a role in helping to select the best candidates for the role.

The Appointment Sub-Committee for the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing would be responsible for selecting and recommending the successful candidate with the final ratification being given by UK Health Security Agency as was required by legislation.

On the 1st December 2021, Council had agreed to a change to the previously agreed blueprint to move away from a shared Public Health resource to create a single Director of Public Health which would be dedicated to North Northamptonshire.

In February 2022, a recruitment campaign was undertaken to recruit to the agreed single Director of Public Health. As part of this process, 3 individuals were shortlisted and invited to a final interview. However, following a robust final interview process, conducted by both members and colleagues from the UK Health Security Agency, no appointment was made in respect of this position. The role had been filled on an interim basis until the present time.

In July 2022, a review was undertaken of the current leadership structure which had been in operation for over 12 months. Part of this review included a consideration of the responsibilities and reporting line of the Director for Public Health. It was proposed that the role would be changed to Director of Public Health & Wellbeing which had

been contained in the recommendations of the Leadership Structure report agreed earlier in the meeting by the Committee.

The Housing and Communities service would be split into 2 roles – one focused on Housing and one focused on Communities. The Assistant Director - Communities role would report into the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing and take on the responsibility for Adult Learning. This brought together some key areas under the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing. The Director for Public Health & Wellbeing would report to the Chief Executive.

This senior, statutory role would play a vital part in shaping North Northamptonshire and it was therefore important that the best candidates were sourced and appointed. In order to achieve this, a national recruitment campaign would start in September 2022. The report before the Committee recommended the appointment of a sub-committee to undertake the recruitment and selection of this senior, statutory role for North Northamptonshire Council in order to ensure that a thorough and complete recruitment process was undertaken.

Councillor Keane queried whether membership of the sub-committee was restricted to members of the Employment Committee only. Officers confirmed that it was not restricted and that Group Leaders would be contacted to seek nominations from their respective groups.

The Chair stressed the time commitment required by sub-committee members and this needed to be clearly detailed prior to the respective groups forwarding nominations for membership of the sub-committee.

The Chief Executive confirmed that stakeholder panels would be included as part of the interview process including interaction with the wider CLT.

Councillor Binley noted that the draft job description required reformatting in some places. Officers noted this.

The report's recommendations were **MOVED** by Councillor Jan O'Hara and **SECONDED** by Councillor Matt Keane.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) The process specified in the report (paragraphs 5.1-5.11) be approved;
- b) A politically balanced sub-committee be established, consisting of six elected members to shortlist, interview and appoint the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing;
- c) Approval be given that membership of the sub-committee would consist of 4 Conservative members, 1 Labour member and 1 Green Alliance member, to be nominated by the respective Group Leaders; and
- d) Delegated authority be granted to the sub-committee in respect of the recruitment for the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing to:
 - Shortlist and interview suitably qualified applicants; and
 - Recommend the most suitable person for the position, with final approval being provided by the UK Health Security Agency.

26 Close of meeting (20.09.22)

There being no urgent or exempt items for discussion, the Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm