

COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

28th March 2007

Present: Councillor Wylie (Chair)
Councillor D Scudder (Vice-Chair)
Councillors I Brown, Counter, Hastrick, Mann and Razzaq

CF18-
06/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor McGovern.

CF19-
06/07 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

CF20-
06/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2007 were submitted and signed.

CF21-
06/07 **INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES FOR STAFF AND
COUNCILLORS AND PARKING SPACE ALLOCATION POLICY**

The Head of Human Resources presented a report outlining an amendment to the policy agreed at the Council Functions Committee on the 4 December 2006. The report recommended one change to the original recommendations.

RESOLVED –

that the introduction of the revised car parking charges for staff and Councillors for the use of the Town Hall car park, The Avenue, Radius House (51 Clarendon Road) and Sutton car parks as set out in the report from 1st April 2007 be agreed.

CF22-
06/07 **REVISED MATERNITY LEAVE POLICY**

The Head of Human Resources presented the report containing the amended maternity leave policy which set out the rights and responsibilities of employees who were expecting babies on or after 1st April 2007.

In response to a Member's question about the Equality Impact Assessment, the Head of Human Resources said it was due to be completed by the end of the week but there were no problems anticipated as the policy was more advantageous to employees. Members also asked if the figures quoted based on 17 employees taking maternity leave in one year were about average. The Head of Human Resources said this was the figure taken from the previous

year but that there were no statistics on this. A Member commended the clarity of the policy.

RESOLVED –

that the revised maternity leave policy as set out in the report be approved.

CF23-
06/07

PROPOSALS FOR A REVISED EARLY RETIREMENT SCHEME

The Head of Human Resources presented a report outlining the proposals for the revised early retirement scheme. She explained that following the publication of the new Discretionary Compensation Regulations 2006 in December 2006, the Council needed to consider such proposals. The Head of Human Resources explained the options available for the new scheme and UNISON's response to them.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Human Resources explained the difference between redundancy and interest of efficiency of the service terminations, augmentation and added years and actuarial strain.

A Member observed that option two, the cost of the statutory limit only, gave the most savings to the Council. The Head of Human Resources agreed but said this would potentially cause alienation of staff as they would be financially much worse off and had not been an option other authorities had chosen. The Member also asked about the history of employment tribunals at Watford Borough Council (WBC) to which the Head of Human Resources said in recent years, none had been lost and a small number had been settled where there had been a procedural issue.

A Member spoke of the proposed future shared services with Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) and Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) and that their chosen options were option four as outlined in the report where a 2.2 multiplier was applied to the number of weeks emanating from the redundancy ready reckoner up to a maximum of 66 weeks. The Member said that if the Committee chose option three where a 1.5 multiplier would be used up to a maximum of 45 weeks, the staff at WBC would be in a worse situation than those at DBC and TRDC which could be seen as unfair.

The Head of Human Resources said as the shared services programme was likely to be 18 months away, it was possible to choose option three now and harmonise with the policies of TRDC and DBC at a later date. She said there would potentially be problems if redundancies as a result of the shared services programme were given different packages at WBC than the other councils. The Head of Human Resources said that if the Committee chose option three now, the policies could still be harmonised before such redundancies took place. She said that this option had been recommended as WBC had a higher rate of redundancies due to the amount of change that had taken place.

Members were concerned that it could seem unfair to have a different policy to that of the councils involved in the shared services proposal. One Member said,

however, that if the shared services programme was not adopted, it would not have been necessary to choose the option the other councils had selected. The Chair said it was highly likely that some form of collaboration would be realised with the other councils even if not the shared services programme.

A Member proposed that the option four as set out in the report be adopted where a 2.2 multiplier was applied to the statutory calculator (i.e. a 66 weeks pay maximum) to which Members agreed. Members also agreed the option for employees to convert the discretionary element into additional service in the pension scheme and that the payment of the discretionary element would be withheld for the three month period for submission of employment tribunal or wrongful dismissal claim as set out in the second part of the recommendation at 4.8 of the report.

The Chair then asked Members to consider the recommendation as set out in 5.2 of the report regarding the policy on termination in the interest of the efficiency of the service and joint appointments respectively with which Members agreed.

RESOLVED –

1. that option four i.e. applying a multiplier of 2.2 up to a maximum of 66 weeks pay inclusive of their statutory redundancy payment be adopted with the option for employees to convert the discretionary element into additional service in the pension scheme (if they wish).
2. that payment of the discretionary element be withheld for the 3 month period for submission of employment tribunal or wrongful dismissal claims paying it only if no claim is made.
3. that early retirements in the interests of the efficiency of the service and in cases of joint appointments be determined on a case by case basis. Discretion would be used to pay up to a 104 weeks pay taking into account individual circumstances and without specific formula. This may be linked to the use of compromise agreements to protect the Council's interests as appropriate. Objective reasons to be required in each case for the award made and should be recorded for audit purposes. A Procedure and guidance document for using this discretion to be drawn up for officer's use.

Chair
Council Functions Committee

The meeting started at 7.30 pm.
and ended at 8.30 pm