

**COUNCIL
30 JANUARY 2002**

REPORT FROM THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 16 January, the Employment Committee considered two reports which sought the approval of the Council to meet the costs of a total of four redundancies from the Restructuring Fund.
- 1.2 The first report outlined the staffing implications arising from the merger of the Planning & Transportation/Public & Environmental Services Departments into the new Environment Department. The Committee gave approval to the redundancy of one post arising from this reorganisation.
- 1.3 The second report set out the staffing implications arising from the Best Value Review of Building Maintenance and the Committee gave approval to the redundancy of three posts arising from this review.
- 1.4 The Committee has requested the Council to approve the funding of the associated one off costs of these redundancies from the Restructuring Fund. The Fund was established by the Strategy & Policy Committee in September 2000 specifically to support this type of organisational change.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the associated one off costs of the redundancies approved by the Employment Committee on 16 January 2002 and as outlined in sections 1.2 and 1.3 of this report, be met from the Restructuring Fund.**

3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 Borough Solicitor stated that he had nothing to add to the reports.

Borough Finance Officer

- 3.2 The Restructuring Fund was established by the Council to meet the one off costs associated with staff restructures such as redundancy, first year protected salary and early retirement costs where these could not be met within existing revenue budgets. In using the fund, it is anticipated that, in most circumstances, savings would compensate for these one off costs in future years. The structure for the departmental reorganisation of the Environment Department has been fully costed and when compared with the current devolved staffing budget it produces a saving in a full year of £256,000. The Best Value Report on Building Maintenance has identified savings of £1.255 million over the next five years.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Merger of Planning and Transportation / Public and Environmental Services Departments

- 4.1 The Employment Committee was advised of the background and rationale to the Council's decision to create a new Environment Department. The Committee noted that, notwithstanding the difficulty of merging two departments, this merger had been achieved with the minimum amount of disruption to the majority of employees and service delivery in the two departments.
- 4.2 In bringing together the two service areas a number of posts had been identified as "changed" and therefore at risk from redundancy. Work had taken place to identify the impact on individual staff, including those posts which were substantially changed from their existing roles. A Personnel Protocol and timetable for implementation had been agreed with Unison which included the appropriate elements of the Council's policies on Job Evaluation, Redundancy Handling, Redeployment and Severance. The Protocol included a process of direct job offer in preference to a recruitment exercise in order to minimise unnecessary severance payments and maximise the retention of existing staff. The results of this Protocol meant that most vulnerable posts had been slotted in to other jobs but one post could not be accommodated and had therefore been declared redundant. The details of that redundancy were reported to the Committee and the redundancy was approved.

Best Value Review of Building Maintenance

- 4.3 The Employment Committee was advised of the background and rationale to the Council's decision to create a freestanding single Commercial Services Unit arising from the Best Value Review of Building Maintenance.
- 4.4 The Committee noted that the majority of employees would continue in their existing roles, with some changes to duties and reporting lines. The proposed structure contained seven posts less than the current establishment; four of these posts had become vacant during the review process and had been frozen. There was therefore a requirement for three redundancies. Offers of Voluntary redundancy from employees were accepted wherever possible but two of the three redundancies were subject to the process of redundancy selection which was followed in accordance with the Council's Policy on Redundancy Handling. The Borough Personnel Manager explained to the Committee that the level of savings generated to the HRA as a result of the restructuring had specifically been taken into account when the HRA budget proposals for 2002/03 were developed. This meant that it had been possible to avoid a reduction in maintenance expenditure of £0.143m in the next year in the rent options put forward to all tenants for consultation.
- 4.5 The Employment Committee approved the redundancies outlined above, at their meeting of 16 January 2002 and now requests that the Council approve the funding of the associated one off costs of the redundancies from the Restructuring Fund.

Background Papers

Agenda and Minutes Employment Committee 16 January 2002 (part exempt).

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