

PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE
29 JANUARY 1998

Present: Councillor Sargeant (Chairman), Councillors Beadsley, Blatchford, Grayson, Mrs Keene, Harrison, Mills, Mrs Shillcock and Ward

Also present: Councillor Barnard

26 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 13 October 1997 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. **Minutes - Sub Committees**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Committee held on 13 January 1998 be received and noted.

28. **Payroll in a Unitary Context (Item 1)**

The Sub Committee was advised that from 1 April 1998 CSL Managed Services would be providing payroll services for those employees transferring to the Borough from the County Council. The Council's in-house team would continue to provide payroll services for existing Borough employees. For the duration of the CSL contract, each category of permanent employee would continue to be paid on their current payment date: incoming Berkshire County Council employees on the last working day of each month; and existing Borough Council employees on the 22nd of each month. The Sub Committee concluded that it would be both more economical and efficient to consolidate all employees on a single pay date. The Sub Committee was advised that any change to their payment date would require consultation with employees.

The Sub Committee was advised that the number of weekly-paid casual employees had increased in recent years. The cost of payroll processing for these employees was significantly more than that for monthly-paid staff. The Sub Committee concluded that apart from casual employees called in to provide emergency cover, all employees of the Unitary Authority should be paid monthly rather than weekly. It was also agreed that a further report would be required on the fully costed options for alternative payment dates.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) all staff be moved to a monthly pay period; and
- (ii) subject to consultation with employee representatives, a common pay date be agreed for all staff.

29. **Introduction of a No Smoking Policy (Item 2)**

Following the decision at the Sub-Committee's last meeting (Minute 18 - October 1997) a Working Party had been constituted with appropriate representatives to discuss the practical issues relating to the Council's intention to have a total smoking ban in its offices. The Sub Committee approved a Smoking at Work Policy, which would be used as a reference document to cover all aspects of a smoking ban, together with a synopsis of the policy for circulation to all employees. The Sub Committee agreed that, subject to planning permission, purpose built shelters and fixed ashtrays would be constructed at the rear of Time Square, Fitzwilliam House and Easthampstead House for use by smokers. It also agreed that counselling would be made available for those staff wishing to give up smoking for limited period until 1 October 1998. This would be funded from departmental training budgets and would be limited to a total of £5,000. Line managers would exercise their discretion in monitoring the time used by staff for smoking breaks. The ban would be effective from 1 April 1998 and notification of the policy would be sent to all employees during February/March.

RECOMMENDED to the Strategy and Policy Committee that:

- (i) the approach to a smoking strategy outlined in the report (Item 1 of the agenda) be approved;
- (ii) the finance required to assist with the introduction of the policy be approved;
- (iii) the policy document, attached as Appendix A to the report, be endorsed; and
- (iv) the timetable for implementation outlined in the report be approved.

30. **Consultation (Item 3)**

The Sub Committee considered the issue as to whether teachers' associations and those trade unions representing non-teaching employees should have separate consultative mechanisms or if a joint forum should be agreed. In the light of the different nature of teachers' conditions of service and the different role of teacher representatives within schools, the Sub Committee concluded that a separate teachers' consultative committee, reporting directly to the Education Committee, should be established. This approach was supported by the Education Transition Committee on 22 January. The Sub-Committee agreed on the importance of ensuring that it and the Education Committee would liaise on common personnel policy issues. The Council's existing Local Joint Committee should be expanded to include all non-teaching staff. Further work with trade union representatives would be required on the detailed constitutions of the two consultative committees as well as consultation arrangements at an operational level within departments.

The Sub-Committee considered and noted a draft Facilities Agreement, which would specify, for example, time off for trade union activities. The general allocation of funding for time off for trade union activities was also considered. In both these instances, the Sub-Committee agreed that further discussions with trade union representatives was appropriate, with a report being submitted to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

RECOMMENDED to the Strategy and Policy Committee that:

- (i) the Local Joint Committee be expanded to included all non teaching staff in the unitary authority; and

- (ii) a separate teachers' consultative committee for teaching unions be established in accordance with Appendix A of the report (Item 3 of the agenda).

RESOLVED that:

- (iii) the draft Facilities Agreement, as set out at Appendix C of the report, be noted as a basis for further consultation with trade union representatives;
- (iv) the Borough Personnel Manager and appropriate Directors be instructed to discuss with trade union representatives detailed constitutions for the consultative forums including:
 - composition
 - representation
 - range of activities
 - allocation of time for trade union duties for and between employee representatives
- (v) the basis of allocating funds to trade unions be discussed with trade union representatives; and
- (vi) the Borough Personnel Manager be instructed to report back to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on the discussion relating to the decisions in (iii) and (v) above.

31. **Audit Commission: Retiring Nature (Item 4)**

The Sub Committee considered the synopsis submitted by the Borough Personnel Manager of the study by the Audit Commission into the planning and control of early retirement in local Government. In particular, the Audit Commission had identified ten key questions which were recommended for consideration as part of a local review of retirement arrangements. The Sub Committee noted that the Council had adopted a best practice approach to early retirement payments and in relation to these ten Audit Commission questions on prudence in the approach to retirement issues, Bracknell Forest's response was generally good.

The Sub Committee was also advised that new pension regulations would come into force from 1 April 1998 and agreed that there was a need to consider the Council's approach to both its existing and new discretionary powers on severance payments.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Council's performance in respect of the findings of the Audit Commission's report be noted; and
- (ii) officers produce a policy document suggesting the Council's approach to the new pension regulations (which come into effect on 1 April 1998) and to the exercise of the Council's discretionary powers on severance.

32. **Lease Cars (Item 5)**

The Sub Committee was advised that there would be a number of employees who would be transferring to the Borough's employment with a lease car on 1 April 1998. The Council did not currently operate a lease car scheme. The Sub Committee agreed that it was inequitable in the long term for such staff to retain a lease car while other staff would not have access to such a scheme. Taking account of the need for practical arrangements during the transition period, the Sub-Committee concluded that existing lease car contracts for transferring staff should be honoured but on the expiry of these contracts no further leasing arrangements would be made. For those lease car contracts expiring in the first six months of the unitary authority, the appropriate Director and Borough Personnel Manager were authorised to extend lease car contracts for six additional months. As part of the Council's approach to limit any perceived detrimental effects on employees the Sub Committee also noted the Finance and Property Sub-Committee's approval of an upper limit of £15,000 for the Council's car loan scheme for qualifying employees.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the existing car lease contracts for transferring County staff be honoured, but on the expiry of those contracts no further long term leasing arrangements be made;
- (ii) the appropriate Director and the Borough Personnel Manager be authorised to extend an existing car lease contract which was to due to expire in the first six months of the unitary authority, for up to an additional six months;
- (iii) on the expiry of any individual's car lease, that individual's entitlement to a car allowance be reviewed; and
- (iv) any potential alternatives to a personal lease car scheme at no cost to the Council be examined.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 8.42pm.

CHAIRMAN