

**INTERNAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 5 APRIL 2000**

Present:- Councillor E C Abrahams - Chairman
Councillors W F Bowker, G R Brown, Mrs C A Cant, R P Chambers, A Dean, R A Merrion, A R Row and R W L Stone.

Officers in attendance: G Branchett, C Cooper, Mrs M Cox,
Ms D Eldridge and Mrs S West.

I. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs C A Bayley and A R Thawley.

I. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute IS48 - Internal Audit Section

Councillor Mrs Cant did not feel that this minute fully reflected the serious concern that had been expressed by Members to some aspects of a recent Internal Audit review. She was assured that the comments made at the meeting had been taken on board by the relevant officers and appropriate action was being taken.

I. IT WORKING PARTY

The Minutes of the meeting of the IT Working Party held on 22 March 2000 were received.

(i) Telecommunications

The Working Party had considered the tenders that had been received for the provision of a new telecommunications system for the Council. A short list of three companies had been drawn up and a detailed evaluation of their tenders had been carried out. Each proposal had been rated in percentage terms for compliance with the requirements of the specification. The Working Party had given this very careful consideration and it was

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 a Lucent INDeX switch based system be acquired from ML Voice Limited in the sum of £106,422 (including a CPU upgrade at a cost of £856) on contract terms and conditions to be agreed by the Chief Executive,
- 2 a support agreement, in the annual sum of £12,754, be taken out with ML Voice Limited on contract terms and conditions to be agreed by the Chief Executive.

(ii) Members' Home Computing

The Working Party had discussed the project for the provision of laptop computers to Members to access the Council's IT systems. The main uses would be for Members to communicate with the public and colleagues via e-mail, access information, including reports and agenda held on a Council Intranet site, and access the internet for research purposes and to utilise office automation facilities. Investigations were currently taking place to find a suitable make and model of laptop at an affordable price. The meeting had decided that each laptop should weigh no more than two and a half kilograms, have a battery life of two hours, a minimum screen of thirteen inches and be supplied with a mouse along with a carry case, charger and spare battery.

Hewlett Packard Jet Printer would also be provided. The meeting had agreed a timetable based on 3 July 2000 as the earliest possible time to "go live".

RESOLVED that the timetable, as set out in the Minute, be adopted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the IT Working Party held on 22 March 2000 be approved and adopted.

I. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

The Sub-Committee considered recommendations from the Amenities Sub-Committee on 16 March 2000 that had been approved by the Community Services Committee on 4 April 2000, regarding the appointment of a Gardener/Environmental Task Force Supervisor to be located at Bridge End Gardens, Saffron Walden. The Sub-Committee considered the proposed job description as amended by the Amenities Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the job description for the Gardener/Supervisor be amended by the addition of a penultimate key responsibility "to oversee the security of the gardens and of those visiting them" and by altering the words "would be desirable" in select criteria 2 to "will be necessary",
- 2 the words "as agreed with the postholder" not to be added to the last key responsibility,
- 3 the grading of the post at Scale 6 be approved,
- 4 the post be advertised at the earliest opportunity for an initial twelve month contract.

I. FINANCIAL SERVICES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The Sub-Committee received the proposed Equal Opportunity Service Statement for the Financial Services Business Centre. The Financial Services Manager said that the aim for this year was to identify the current accessibility of the services, and then to prepare an action plan to address any shortcomings.

RESOLVED that the Equal Opportunity Service Statement for the Financial Services Business Centre be approved.

I. RELOCATION BENEFITS

Members recalled that as part of the Single Status Agreement an Action Plan had been drawn up and approved by Members, which included the need to review the Council's relocation benefits. The objective of the review was to ensure that the scheme remained effective and efficient in encouraging recruitment and retention. The current relocation policy had last been reviewed in October 1992 and did not now give the same level of benefit, due to significant increases in the cost of buying, selling and renting properties in the District. Officers had obtained information regarding the levels paid by other authorities and typical costs associated with buying and selling properties. The report then set out proposed changes to the benefits. New criteria for eligibility were proposed. Members questioned criterion (a) which proposed that in exceptional circumstances, the benefits could apply to an existing employee who took up a different post within the Council. Members asked for further clarification of this proposal. Members also queried criteria (e) and (f) which referred to the twenty-five mile radius from the work base which would qualify employees for the relocation benefit. In response to a question, officers confirmed that an employee would not be required to repay relocation benefits in the event of the Council terminating their employment.

RESOLVED that the time be deferred to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee to allow officers to review the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 17(a), (e) and (f) of the report.

I. MEMBERS' TRAINING

The Head of Personnel and Contract Services presented a report which proposed actions to meet the Member training needs that had been identified from the Personnel Development Plans which had been produced last year.

The report outlined the training proposed in the various categories. If the proposals within the report were accepted then most of the learning needs would have been addressed. For those items not specifically referred to, Personnel Services would liaise directly with the Members concerned and organise appropriate training. It was agreed that a calendar of monthly workshops should be set out for the coming year, to allow all Members the opportunity to plan their attendance.

The report then referred to the Charter on Member Development. This was a statement of intent designed to encourage improvements in the provision of Member development and the adoption of best practice. Local Authorities were being actively encouraged to sign up for it. If the Charter was adopted it would be desirable for a representative from the Council to attend a national conference in May which would be exploring and highlighting innovative ways that local authorities had approached Member development and training.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the IT Working Party oversee the training and development of Members for information technology learning needs,
- 2 a Members' Workshop be held on communications,
- 3 audio/video materials be purchased and loaned to relevant Members on time management, speed reading and customer care,
- 4 a Members' Workshop be held on Ethics and Probity,
- 5 a Members' Workshop be held on equal opportunities,
- 6 a Members' Workshop be held on regional issues,
- 7 for those identified learning needs not specifically addressed by this report, Personnel Services liaise directly with the Members concerned to identify and organise the appropriate delivery of the training required,
- 8 a calendar of monthly Members' Workshops be established for the municipal year,
- 9 the Council sign up to the IDeA charter for Member Development, and
- 10 Councillor Mrs Cant, if available, attend the national conference being held in May on Member development and training.

I. EXAMINATION SUCCESSES

The Sub-Committee received details of recent examination successes by Council employees.

RESOLVED that letters of congratulations, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, be sent to the employees concerned.

I. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 7 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

I. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The Sub-Committee was advised that under the National Terms and Conditions of Service of the Chief Executive, the Council was obliged to undertake an annual performance appraisal. For the last two years, since the introduction of this requirement, the Council had determined that the Leader of the Council should conduct the appraisal with external assistance from the Regional Employers' Organisation. A new Appraisal Scheme had now been developed, as part of the Council's work towards Investors in People accreditation, and it was proposed that this scheme be used in future.

It was suggested that the present arrangements continue and the appraisal be facilitated by the Regional Employers' new Director, who would provide independent guidance and ensure that the appraisal was conducted with both fairness and purpose. There was a general feeling that the Leader of the Council should consult other Members before undertaking the appraisal, possibly the strategic Chairmen, or the Group Leaders, as appropriate.

RESOLVED that future performance appraisals of the Chief Executive be conducted by the Leader of the Council and facilitated by the Regional Employers' Director.

I. UPDATE OF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The Sub-Committee was asked to approve a minor amendment to the Council's Grievance Procedure in order to cover all employees of the Council.

RESOLVED that the variation as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report be adopted.

I. ANNUAL EARLY RETIREMENT MONITORING REPORT

Members received a report which set out details of the employee early retirements which had taken place last year and reviewed the effectiveness of the Council's Early Pension Payments Policy. Members noted that the awards made last year had not been particularly large and felt the Council should continue to be very careful in awarding early retirement because of the associated costs. The current policy allowed early retirements arising from redundancy and efficiency of the service to be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Internal Services Sub-Committee, provided all delegated requirements in a financial year did not exceed £40,000 net. Members were happy with this policy but considered that the £40,000 limit was too large to be applied to individual cases, to which a limit of £20,000 should apply.

RESOLVED that the last paragraph of Personnel Policy Note 25 be amended so that individual cases where the net cost exceeded £20,000 be determined by the Internal Services Sub-Committee.

I. DETERMINATION OF PROTECTED SENIOR MANAGEMENT GRADE SALARIES

The Sub-Committee received a report which recommended the continuation of the salary calculation method for senior managers in receipt of protected salaries and criteria for cessation of the method.

RESOLVED that the protected salaries continue to be calculated on the basis of the uplifted 1993 Notional Chief Executive's salary until such time as either

- 1 the Council reviews its job evaluation scheme and pay structure as part of the single status agreement negotiations, or
- 2 a management restructuring take place, or
- 3 a protected senior manager's post is regraded in accordance with the Council's current job evaluation scheme.

I. LAST MEETING

The Chairman thanked officers and Members for all their support during the last year.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.