

**INTERNAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 20 SEPTEMBER 2000**

Present: Councillor E C Abrahams – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs C A Bayley, W F Bowker, Mrs C A Cant,
R P Chambers, A Dean, D M Jones, A R Row and R W L Stone.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor R J Copping.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E Forbes and A Forrow.

IS11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R A Merrion and A R Thawley.

IS12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

IS13 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) MINUTE IS5 – IT WORKING PARTY

With reference to the Members' Home Computing project, it was noted that a number of Members had continued to experience difficulty with the installation of the second phone line.

In relation to the roll out of the project, it was suggested that Members should experiment with e-mail both to improve their own expertise and to test the efficiency of the system. With regard to full implementation, no formal decision had yet been made but Officers' initial thinking was that Committee and Council papers should be available in both hard copy and electronic form for the whole of the next cycle of meetings. It was then hoped that hard copies would be sent only to those Members who specifically requested them, though this would be subject to Members' experience between now and the close of the cycle ending on 9 January 2001.

IS14 IT WORKING PARTY

The Minutes of the meeting of the IT Working Party held on 31 August 2000 were received.

It was noted that it was proving extremely hard to find technical support for the Members' Home Computing project. In answer to a question from Councillor Jones, Councillor Stone confirmed that there was no tax liability in relation to Members use of the notepads for Council business.

Several Members had experienced problems with printing from email and the internet. Staff were understood to be investigating this matter and Officers undertook to check on what progress was being made.

Members stressed that it would be important that any agency worker appointed to support the Members' Project should be fully utilised.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the IT Working Party held on 31 August 2000 be approved and adopted, including recommendations IT9 and IT10.

IS15

POST OF HEAD OF PERSONNEL AND CONTRACT SERVICES

Members were asked to approve urgent action taken in relation to the appointment of a successor to the Head of Personnel and Contract Services. The action had been necessary because the postholder had resigned shortly after the last meeting of the Sub-Committee and it was necessary to fill the post as soon as possible. Group Leaders had been consulted and had approved the following urgent action:-

- (a) to remove the responsibility of Contract Services from the post and redesignate it Head of Personnel and Office Services
- (b) in keeping with the approved terms and conditions of the recently appointed Chief Executive to remove:-
 - (i) the fixed mileage payment based on 2520 notional miles per annum and the monthly subsistence payment of £37.90
 - (ii) payment of the evening meeting allowance of £21.86
- (c) To establish a Members' Appointments Panel comprising the four Group Leaders or their nominees.

In the event, the offer of appointment had included the 2520 miles and had been accepted on this basis. The appointee, Mrs Carole Hughes, would take up her post on 30 October 2000.

Councillor Row expressed the view that it was inappropriate for such appointments to be made by the Group Leaders since they were clearly within the remit of the Internal Services Sub-Committee. The practice adopted for appointing Chief and Second Tier Officers was explained. However, a number of Members endorsed Councillor Row's views and it was agreed that the Officers would prepare a clear proposed method for making such appointments for consideration at a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that the urgent action taken in respect of the appointment of Head of Personnel and Office Services be confirmed.

In answer to a question from Councillor A Dean, it was reported that the whole issue of travel and other allowances would be swept up in the Single Status negotiations and agreement.

IS16

STUDY AND EXAMINATION LEAVE

It was reported that the National Agreement for Pay and Conditions of Service recommended that, in addition to paid leave for sitting approved examinations, leave should also be given for the purposes of final revision or study before taking approved examinations. The Council actively promoted the training and development of its

employees including the pursuit of professional/technical examinations. It was the Council's practice to grant such leave but there was some inconsistency of approach between Business Centres. Following consultation with the Corporate Management Team, Business Centre Managers and UNISON, a policy had been agreed for recommendation to the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1 subject to the prior approval of the relevant Business Centre Manager and in accordance with service demands, an employee following an approved course of study be entitled to:-
 - (a) a half day paid study leave for each examination undertaken subject to a maximum of two days per course of study.
 - (b) Paid leave to sit an examination.
- 2 this policy be adopted with immediate effect.

IS17 **EXAMINATION SUCCESS**

It was reported that, following a period of study, Ms Julia Rodd had been awarded a National Certificate in Tenant Participation by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

RESOLVED that the Chairman on behalf of the Sub-Committee send a letter of congratulations to Ms Rodd.

It was further

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to Mr Graham Branchett thanking him for his services over the past five years and wishing him well in his future career.

IS18 **DETERMINATION OF THE COUNCIL'S WORKBASED TRAINING SCHEME**

Members were informed that, following negotiations, all the Council's trainees had transferred to Harlow College from 1 May 2000. This action had not only secured the potential maximum financial gain for the Council but had also ensured that the trainees would continue to receive the same training and levels of support and assistance as they had previously enjoyed with the Council.

IS19 **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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

IS20

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Members considered a report from the Chief Executive proposing a new Management Structure for the Council and recommending various stages and processes for implementation. The Chief Executive explained that the report formed part of the Best Value review of Political and Management Structures. The report did not propose an immediate “clean sweep” restructuring. It was judged that such a course would consume too much energy and attention and risk the Council not concentrating on the provision of services. It would also be damaging to staff morale. The report focused on particular issues needing attention. There had been several months consultation with Business Centre Managers and others as well as Members. There was broad agreement with the proposed structure and the direction it was proposed to follow, although there were individual anxieties. It was considered that the direction was clear, as were the first steps. Full change would be implemented over a period of time. Some changes would follow Best Value reviews others natural staff changes.

Members asked a number of detailed questions on the report and discussed considerations of a more general nature with particular reference to the implementation of the proposed new structure. The areas covered included timing, cost, the effect on the Council’s services and individuals and the process by which decisions would be made.

RECOMMENDED that the structure as set out in Annexe B to the report be welcomed and approved but that its implementation be deferred to enable the implementation process, including additional financial information, to be considered further not later than the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.