

CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2006

Present – Councillors Hussain (Chair), P. Brierley (Vice – Chair), Connell, Darvesh, Hollick, Hornby, Peel, Mrs. Ronson, J. Rothwell, Rushton, J. Silvester, Spencer and Mrs Fairclough.

Also in attendance:

Councillor Morris	-	Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance
Councillor White	-	Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity
Mr. B. Knight	-	Chief Executive
Mr. A. Eastwood	-	Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr. S. Arnfield	-	Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. D. Winstanley	-	Assistant Chief Executive
Mr M. Dixon	-	Principal Fairness Officer
Mr. A. Jennings	-	Democratic Services Manager
Miss K. Treadwell	-	Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Adia, D. Wilkinson, Gradwell and Mrs. S. Curran.

Councillor Hussain in the Chair.

41. MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9th October, 2006.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

42. THE COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PLAN

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted the Forward Plan for the submission of items to this Committee.

The document contained details of the key decisions contained within the Executive's and the relevant Executive Members Forward Plan that fell within the remit of this Committee.

Members were informed that the Work Programme described the items that had been identified by members to be considered at the Committee at future meetings.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

43. EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on the 16th October, 13th and 20th November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on the 25th October and 16th November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted

45. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND DIVERSITY

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity held on the 11th October, 1st and 22nd November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted.

46. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND DIVERSITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy Development Group held on the 15th November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Strategy and Finance Policy Development Group held on the 13th November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

48. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE GAMBLING ACT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Gambling Act Policy Development Group held on the 26th October, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

49. EMPLOYEE AUDIT RESULTS, 2005/06

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the results of the Council's staff audit for 2005/06

The report advised that the targets for the Council in terms of race, gender and disability were as follows:

- _____ 55% of senior staff should be male, and 45% female;
- _____ 8% of staff should be from minority communities; and
- _____ 7.5 % of staff should be disabled people.

The report advised that, at present, 76% of the workforce was now female compared to 24% male. In addition, according to the BVPI definition, which excluded schools, 46.36% of staff in the top paid 5% were female. This meant that the Council target of 45% of women in such roles had been achieved.

The report went on to state that the number of black staff had risen by 255 people since the last audit which equated to a 60% rise. In addition, 5.9% of the workforce was recorded as being from ethnic minorities. This equated to 74% of the Council's employment target and represented progress.

Members were informed that the BVPI results showed a substantial fall in the proportion of staff who were disabled since last year, from 3.06% to 2.33%. However, the report stated that when closely examined there had been an increase of 14% in the number of disabled staff, but because of the increase in the total numbers of staff in the post audit analysis the percentage had remained exactly the same. The report highlighted, that in terms of pay and disability, the older the person was the more likely they were to be disabled and in a senior position. Therefore, the first BVPI showed that 4.35% of staff in the top 5% were disabled.

The report went on to advise that, in terms of age, 60% of the Council's workforce was aged over 40 whilst only 15% of the staff were aged under 30. The report stated that the process of introducing age legislation meant that age might be given greater significance in future audits.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

50. EMPLOYMENT REVIEW - DEPARTMENTAL COMPARISONS 2005/06

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the results of the Council's employment auditing for 2005/06.

The report advised that the overall corporate audit participation rate was 76%. However, the departmental breakdown showed a more varied picture. Children's Services had a lower participation rate which had, consequently, brought the overall level down.

The report went on to state that the three top departments for part-time working was virtually unchanged from previous audits which included Adult Services who employed staff which consisted of part-time carers and Environmental Services whom employed cleaners and cooks on a part-time basis. However, what was noticeable was that departments with low levels of part time working had seen further reductions this year.

The report concluded by stating that existing Bolton Council staff had a much greater chance in succeeding getting a job at Bolton Council. Although departments had attempted to rectify and understand this problem the result for 2005/06 showed that these efforts had to be increased.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

51. RESULTS OF RECRUITMENT MONITOR 2005/06

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the results of the Council's recruitment monitoring for 2005/06.

The report stated that staff from ethnic minorities were much less well represented at senior level than within the rest of the Council. However, there had been a significant improvement on last year's figures. The report advised that, whereas, last year there had been only a single member from ethnic minorities earning £45,000 per annum, by March, 2006 this had increased to four members of staff within three departments. The report went on to state that one of the major problems was that it took time for individuals to reach senior pay levels and this time meant most people were of an older age group than the age profile for the Council's black staff. Only 38% of the Council's staff were old enough to be in the age groups which supplied 80% of the higher paid staff.

The report advised that, in terms of recruitment, 14.9% of appointments went to ethnic minorities. This was the highest ever recorded in the Council. However, departmental levels were mixed. In addition, overall, the Council appointed 21% fewer people from ethnic minorities than applied. The report acknowledged that this was unacceptable and was an area that it was important to make improvements on to create a fairer system.

The report stated that although 2004/05 figures showed the worst recruitment for men ever recorded, 2005/06 showed a recovery. This year more men were appointed, proportionally, than were interviewed; 18% fewer men were appointed than applied to the Council and 13% more women. This was the best figure for men ever recorded in the Council. The report advised that these figures should be viewed in the light of the impending gender legislation due in 2007.

Members discussed the importance of improving Council applications from ethnic minority backgrounds and the possibility of this being achieved through Outreach work.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

52. EXIT, DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE MONITORING 2005/06

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the results of the Council's exit monitoring and the monitoring of grievances and disciplinary actions for 2005/06.

The report advised that only 0.9% of people in the Council had left because they did not like the organisation or the job And 2.1% were dismissed. The report advised that the two largest categories of leavers were the 17% who were on short term contracts or were transferred.

The report highlighted that black staff were less likely to leave the Council than white staff. The report stated that this had given an encouraging message in the Council's attempt to increase the number of staff from ethnic minorities

In terms of age, the report advised that, a disproportionately high rate of under 20s and 20s to 30s had left the organisation. However, within the 30s to 40s and 40-50s years of age category, employees were leaving at a disproportionately low rate.

The report went on to state that, as with disciplinary actions, full time staff were far more likely to engage in the grievance procedure. This might have been due to the feeling that part-time staff could leave more readily if they were unhappy. The report stated that men and women declared grievances at almost exactly the same rate they were represented in the workforce. In terms, of race and gender the report advised that the numbers were too small to have any significance. Similarly, the small numbers associated with age meant that the data was difficult to draw conclusions from.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

53. VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT AND ILL HEALTH RETIREMENTS 1ST APRIL, 2006 TO 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2006

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which detailed the total number of Voluntary Early Retirements (VERs) for the reporting period of 1st April, 2006 to 30th September, 2006.

Members were advised that between the reporting period 33 employees took VERs compared to 103 in the year 2005/06.

The report stated that the total allowance for 2006/07 was £1,260,000. The total of £894,991 suggested an overspend on VERs. However, it was stated that the significant under spend on Ill Health Retirement (IHRs) on current and previous years should be considered which counterbalanced the overspend.

Members were informed that IHRs for the reporting period 1st April, 2006 to 30th September, 2006 was 5 compared to 21 for the year 2005/06. The allowance for 2006/07 was £2,483,000 with the total spend coming to £245,219 which suggested a significant under spend on the year to date for Ill Health Retirements.

In conclusion, members were advised that the Council had a significant under spend from the previous two financial years of £2,000,394. When added to the allowance for VERs and IHRs this gave a total allowance for the year of £5,743,394. Therefore, the total spend of £1,140,210 suggested a significant

under spend on the year.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

54. SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING, APRIL, 2005 TO MARCH, 2006

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which outlined the sickness absence statistics for the Council from the period of 1st April, 2005 to 31st March, 2006.

Members were advised that the overall sickness levels, including teachers, had remained static in 2005/06 at 5.14%. In addition, overall absence levels excluding teachers was 5.66% which showed a decrease on 2004/05. However, the latest comparative figures for all Metropolitan Authorities, excluding teachers, showed a median performance of 5.5% and a lower quartile (best 25%) of 5.2% which indicated that there was still room for improvement.

The report stated that that long term absence accounted for 50.85% of all absence last year compared with 56% in 2004/05. Furthermore, illnesses due to musco-skeletal problems and stress and depression problems remained the principal causes of absence at 22.26% and 21.47% respectively.

The report went on to state that the new Managing Absence Framework and the early intervention strategies introduced by Occupational Safety and Health were anticipated to bring about the sustained improvements to the management of sickness within the Council.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

55. UPDATE ON ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Access to Council Services Scrutiny Panel gave members a verbal update on the work of the Scrutiny Panel to date.

The Chair advised that the Access to Council Services Scrutiny Panel had examined access for people with a disability to Council services and, in light of the recent Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements, the accessibility of Council buildings.

The Chair advised that, to date, the Panel had held five meetings and had a further three meetings arranged for the New Year.

The Chair stated that the Panel began by reviewing the requirements of the DDA legislation and where the Council was in terms of meeting the requirements of the DDA within its buildings. In addition, the Panel had identified any gaps in provision. This process remained ongoing and the Panel had gathered written and oral evidence from officers, from a site visit, and from a witness session with Bolton at Home.

The Chair advised that the Panel's aim was two-fold and were as follows:-

- _____ to produce evidence based recommendations to potentially improve the Council's compliance with the access to building requirements of the DDA; and
- _____ to improve the alternative arrangements the Council had in place to meet the needs of disabled citizens.

The Chair advised that the final report of the Scrutiny Panel would be submitted to the April, 2007 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished 6.40pm)