

REPORT TO: Appointments Committee
DATE: 21 September 2009
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy
TITLE: Staffing Protocol
WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek the Committee's approval to the attached draft Staffing Protocol.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That:

- (1) the Staffing Protocol be approved; and**
- (2) any minor drafting amendments be delegated to the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, in consultation with Corporate Services Portfolio Holder, to make.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council has embarked on a wide ranging Efficiency Programme, in order to meet the financial challenges it faces over the next few years.

3.2 To support the implementation of the Efficiency Programme, and recognising the natural concerns of employees through these processes, a Staffing Protocol document has been produced which deals with the staffing issues that inevitably arise from such programmes. It essentially brings together the relevant Human Resource Policies and Procedures of the Council into one coherent document. The development of this document into the Staffing Protocol (Appendix A) has been achieved through a series of joint trade union negotiation meetings with relevant trade unions (Unison and MPO/GMB).

3.3 It was recognised that adoption of such a Protocol would enable a consistent approach to the implementation of the Efficiency Programme for both management, employees and the Trade Unions. It is based on the sound processes the Council has had in place over many years and which have served the Authority well.

3.4 Whilst developing the Protocol the opportunity was taken to review the existing At Risk Policy and the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme. It was also checked to ensure that it complied with current employment

law. The amendments to the At Risk process mainly related to clarifying the processes and steps that are followed when employees are placed at risk. However, the review of Voluntary Early Retirement in the interest of Efficiency Scheme resulted in proposed changes in the way pension is augmented (the power of the employing authority to increase total pension scheme membership of active members). The revised Scheme introduces a sliding scale of augmentation based on length of service of the member of staff concerned and it is this issue which has been subject to Trade Union ballots. The MPO/GMB have now agreed to the revised augmentation scale but the Unison results will not be known until after the close of their ballot on 11 September 2009 (after the deadline for agenda circulation). The result will be reported at the meeting.

- 3.5 In essence the Unions have balloted as the revised arrangements within the Protocol result in a reduction in the terms and conditions of employees. In the existing policy the Authority has the discretion to provide $6 \frac{2}{3}$ augmented years where an individual has more than 5 years' service with the Authority. The revised arrangements within this Protocol means that the number of augmented years added will be determined by the number of years' service an employee has on a sliding scale (see page 23).

For example, under the old scheme an employee with 10 years' service would be eligible for $6 \frac{2}{3}$ augmented years to their pension, whilst under the revised proposal they would be eligible for 2 years augmentation.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The introduction of the Staffing Protocol will enable the consistent and transparent approach to implementing the Efficiency Programme as it affects staff. It provides the basis for strong employee relations with the Trade Unions, which will be of a paramount importance throughout this process. It also provides clarity for members of staff who may be affected by the Efficiency Programme.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are clearly financial implications to the Council in terminating someone's employment, either compulsorily or by voluntary means. The costs will depend on the individuals' circumstances and therefore cannot be reliably estimated at this time. The costs will be met from the overall savings generated from the Efficiency Programme. The Council will need to balance the interests of the Authority and the interests of the employee in applying this Protocol, at all times.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Efficiency Programme is being pursued in order to ensure the Council remains focussed and delivers on its priorities.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Efficiency Programme is being pursued in order to ensure the Council remains focussed and delivers on its priorities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The Efficiency Programme is being pursued in order to ensure the Council remains focussed and delivers on its priorities.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The Efficiency Programme is being pursued in order to ensure the Council remains focussed and delivers on its priorities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Efficiency Programme is being pursued in order to ensure the Council remains focussed and delivers on its priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Without such a Protocol it would be very difficult to manage the size of change required in a measured and transparent way.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The Protocol is needed to ensure that the changes are managed in a fair and reasonable manner.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.