

report



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 28 January 2010

agenda item number **7a ix**

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PERSONNEL AND PERFORMANCE

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to the Personnel portfolio.

2. Implementation of the pay strategy

- 2.1 The majority of back pay settlements have now been made to staff. A further signing event is planned for 4 March 2010, and this will mean that most of the outstanding payments will be completed in the current financial year.
- 2.2 There will be a relatively small number of residual payments outstanding which relate to employees where the score information is incomplete or those that left the Authority before October 2007.
- 2.3 The process of job evaluation for school support staff is continuing and schools are currently undertaking the matching process following the issue of the administrative staff role profiles as outlined in my last report. As the matched profiles are received the Job Evaluation team will be starting the evaluations for this group. Profiles for Site Staff are being issued mid January and thereafter the roll out of profiles, matching and evaluation for other groups will continue over the coming months. It is still intended that all evaluations will be completed by early 2011 for full implementation by July 2011.
- 2.4 As the evaluation process rolls out it will be possible to review the estimated back pay and equal pay liability costs. I confirmed in my last report that agreement had been reached with the Schools Forum on a shared funding arrangement for the costs arising from the job

evaluation process. The details of this will be finalised once the actual costs become clearer.

3. Proposed changes to employment policies and terms and conditions of employment

- 3.1 Formal consultation and negotiation with the recognised Trades Unions has been ongoing and a revised package of changes has been offered to the Trades Unions for consideration. The Trades Unions are currently considering those revised proposals and will be consulting their membership prior to the meeting of Personnel Committee on 29th January 2010.

4. Attendance Management

- 4.1 The latest absence figures show a reduction to 9.56 days lost per employee per year. These figures are calculated on the basis of a rolling twelve month period from 1st October 2008 to 30th September 2009.
Information in relation to Swine Flu is being collated separately in order that its impact on sickness absence can be assessed. If the number of days recorded as lost for this reason (including schools) were removed from the absence data this would reduce the overall average number of days lost per employee across the Authority to 9.28 days.
- 4.2 Figures for the quarter 1st October to 31st December 2009 will be available at the end of February 2010 and will be contained within my report to County Council at that time.
- 4.3 Reports on levels of absence and trends; reasons for absence and the breakdown of long term and short term absence were circulated to Members in the papers for the previous County Council meeting. This information is also being circulated to Corporate Directors and Service Directors in order that action plans can be developed to address the common themes and issues identified.
- 4.4 The information being circulated to managers also identifies levels and reasons for absence down to individual divisional level. This will enable more preventative and targeted action to be taken by local managers in relation to specific areas of service.
- 4.5 Service Directors continue to receive regular reports on the percentage of trigger interviews completed so that they can take appropriate follow up action and Service Heads are also informed of the performance in their areas.
- 4.6 A priority area for action highlighted by the HR service, managers, Trades Union representatives and elected members relates to absence

due to stress/depression. This is the second highest reason for absence across the Council. A scoping meeting has taken place and a steering group is being convened to look at this issue holistically across the Authority and develop a plan of specific activity. This will link up information available from the stress audits; evidence available as part of the absence management process and preventative measures identified as part of the wellbeing action plan including training, support, early identification and strategies for management of stress.

- 4.7 A number of changes to the Attendance Management Procedure are also being implemented. These include reducing the trigger levels at which action in relation to absence is initiated to 10 days in any rolling 12 month period for long term sickness and to 3 occurrences of absence in any 6 month period for short term absence. This has been identified as a key area of activity in order to reduce absence figures to meet the current target of 8.75 days lost per employee.
- 4.8 Changes have also been made to the appeal process in relation to final warnings issued under the Attendance Management Procedure. It is intended that these will now be dealt with by senior managers and not elected members.
- 4.9 The recognised Trades Unions are not in agreement with either the proposed changes to the trigger levels or appeal process. However, a range of other changes to the Attendance Management Procedure have been agreed with Trades Union colleagues with the aim of clarifying the procedure and making it easier for managers to apply.
- 4.10 These changes were effective from 1st January 2010. A report, for information, will be presented to Personnel Committee on 29th January 2010 which outlines these changes in more detail.
- 4.11 Work is continuing to ensure that accurate and timely sickness absence reporting is undertaken in order to comply with Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) regulations, ensure accuracy of records and allow monitoring against corporate and departmental absence targets. A pilot is being developed in which employees will initially contact a qualified nurse to report absence rather than their line manager. This would ensure that employees have direct access to appropriately qualified medical professionals for advice and support in the first instance. An update on the impact of this approach will be presented at a later date.

5. Comprehensive Area Assessment

- 5.1 The process by which the council is externally assessed was changed in 2009. Coordinated by the Audit Commission, Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which replaces Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), is an independent assessment by six inspectorates of how well local public services are tackling the major issues in

Nottinghamshire as well as looking closely at how the county operates as an organisation. CAA is the only external whole organisation assessment made and is an important source of recommendations for improvement to key processes. The results of this assessment were announced in December 2009.

- 5.2 The so called 'area' assessment awarded 2 green flags for exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from in **use of public transport** and **access to services for older people**. A red flag was also awarded for 'significant concerns' around **crime and community safety in the north of the county**. Work is well underway with our partners to address and action improvements in this key area. Nottinghamshire was one of only 4 counties nationally to receive 2 or more green flags and the only East Midlands' county to do so.
- 5.3 The 'organisational' assessment looked specifically at how the council manages performance and how it uses it's resources. This part of the assessment is scored out of 4 and the council was awarded a 3; **'performing well'**. Nottinghamshire's score was very much in line with other counties nationally with only 4 other counties being awarded 4 out of 4.

Cllr Andy Stewart
Cabinet Member for Personnel and Performance