

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 25 June 2009 at 7.30pm

in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre, Addlestone

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

6. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

iii) HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 16 JUNE 2009

Health and Safety Review of Contract Management

The Housing and Community Services Committee at its meeting on 16 June 2009 approved the commissioning of a consultant to improve the Department's Health and Safety position in respect of Housing Maintenance.

Although the Council does not directly employ the workforce that undertakes repairs and maintenance to Council owned properties, there is still a responsibility to ensure that those operatives working in Council properties are competent and adequately trained.

Whilst the Council can never transfer its Health and Safety responsibilities onto contractors, larger companies have in place policies and procedures in respect of Health and Safety which provide a degree of reassurance that their employees are competent.

However, in the case of response maintenance, the Council employs a number of smaller contractors, many of which are single operatives. Whilst a number of these contractors have worked for the Council for many years, and have provided competent work throughout, it is difficult to provide evidence that these contractors have the required level of competency. This has been a cause of concern, which prompted Officers to commission a review of the Housing department's procedures. The review was undertaken by Croner Consulting Limited and a copy of their report has been placed in the Members' Room.

The Croner report states that "some effort is being made to ensure that the contractors who carry out work on behalf of the Housing and Community Services Department are competent to do so. There are policies and procedures in place, contractors are asked health and safety questions and how they manage health and safety in their company. All positive, but it does not go far enough". They identify a number of weaknesses. The main failings are in implementing the policies and procedures and monitoring what is taking place on site. The report recommends the following:

- i) Develop the pre qualification questionnaire for contractors with more than five employees in order to be certain of their competency following Appendix 4 of the Code of Practice for the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007;
- ii) Develop a separate pre qualification questionnaire for less than 5 employees;
- iii) Devise a scoring system or matrix for justifying approval or non-approval;
- iv) Develop the consultancy questionnaire to include health and safety;
- v) Review current questionnaires and update;
- vi) Implement the procedure for the monitoring of contractors;
- vii) Ensure regular monitoring takes place with reports produced;

- viii) Ensure prior to any contract being awarded that the specific risk assessments and method statements are reviewed and agreed;
- ix) Produce proforma for risk assessment and method statements for contractors to assist them in carrying out their duty, ensure consistency and raise the standard of health and safety amongst your contractors;
- x) Provide risk assessment training for contractors.

The Officers accept the findings of the report, and wish to adopt the recommendations.

Whilst it might be possible for maintenance staff to undertake the work required to meet the requirements of the Croner recommendations, the resources required would take staff away from the day to day management of the maintenance service, and it is felt that adopting the recommendations could not be achieved without additional resources. Officers estimate that as many as 759 hours would need to be devoted to the task, together with £8,500 costs for training and associated expenditure. The overall cost of attempting to undertake this work in-house has been estimated to be in the region of £30,000.

Croner have offered to undertake the work in the sum of £25,200, which in addition to being less expensive than the in-house option, has the additional advantage of having Croner's particular expertise in health and safety matters.

The Housing and Community Services Committee consider it essential that contractors working for the Council are competent and are adequately trained to undertake the work they are asked to perform. The Council must be able to show that it has taken steps to ensure contractors have an adequate level of competency and that any identified weaknesses are addressed. The Committee therefore have agreed that a consultant should be employed in this role and authorised the Director of Housing and Community Services to appoint a consultant to undertake the work required in order to comply with the recommendations of the Croner report, subject to the consideration of the proposals from Croner Consultancy Ltd., being considered with at least one other consultancy.

A supplementary estimate in the sum of £25,000 would be required therefore to enable the Council to commission a consultant to undertake the work required to ensure the recommendations in the report are adopted. The work would be a cost to the Housing Revenue Account.

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION
that –**

a supplementary estimate be approved in the sum of £25,000 to enable this work to be undertaken, with the cost to be a charge to the Housing Revenue Account.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

11. REVIEW OF SALARIES 2009 (ICEO)

The comments of UNISON are attached at Appendix 'O'.

12. PERSONNEL SERVICES MEMBER WORKING GROUP NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The notes of the Personnel Services Member Working Group meeting of 16 June 2009 can be found at Appendix 'P' attached.

Taking into account the respective advantages and disadvantages of various options for a way forward together with the Council's current financial situation and the contractual and equal pay implications, Members of the Working Group recommend that:-

- a) the PRP scheme be suspended for a period of two years, with a review of the situation after one year;
- b) during this period of suspension, PRP progression within salary scales be replaced by automatic 3% incremental progression subject to individuals having sufficient headroom in their scale and not being subject to formal disciplinary or capability proceedings;
- c) during this period, PRP one-off lump sum payments be suspended;
- d) new appointees be made aware of the suspension of the PRP scheme; and
- e) the current Appraisal scheme be retained

Equalities Issues

Officers have undertaken an equality impact assessment on these recommendations (attached at Appendix 'Q') and have not identified any particular group that would be potentially disadvantaged.

Resource Implications

The recommendations, if implemented, would save around £150,000 per annum from 2010/11 and would contribute towards the Council's requirement for revenue savings.

Legal Implications

These recommendations have contractual implications with the authority's staff and consequently it will be appropriate to undertake consultation with staff and UNISON prior to implementation.

UNISON Consultations

The comments of UNISON are attached at Appendix 'R'.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

if Members are minded to support the recommendations of the Personnel Services Member Working Group, Officers be instructed to undertake consultations with staff and UNISON prior to formal resolution.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Papers from the Personnel Services Member Working Group

14. SERVICE PLAN – OUTTURN 2008/09

Appendix 'H' to the main Agenda contains the Service Plan Outturn for 2008/09. Updated pages 44 to 47 are attached.