

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Room 15 Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford. on Thursday, 17 December 2009.

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (Chairman)
Cllr K Sharer (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs R A Baker
P A Blaine

Cllrs P Rawcliffe
Mrs P E Turner MBE

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R C Stay

Substitutes: Cllrs K C Matthews (In place of R C Stay)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs D Bowater
D J Lawrence
S F Male
P Snelling
B Wells

Officers in Attendance:	Mr S Cooke	Electoral/Members' Services Manager
	Mr B Dunleavy	Democratic and Administrative Services Manager
	Mrs C Jones	Human Resources Manager, MBDC
	Mr G McFarlane	Acting Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development
	Ms M Peaston	Senior Democratic Services Officer

GPC/09/1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Stay.

GPC/09/2 **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 August 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GPC/09/3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

GPC/09/4 **Public Questions, Statements and Deputations**

There were no public questions, statements or deputations.

GPC/09/5 **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

GPC/09/6 **Working Group report on Proposed Electoral Arrangements**

The Committee considered the draft submission to be made in response to the consultation by the Boundary Committee for England on the number and location of electoral wards for Central Bedfordshire. It was noted that a recommendation from the Committee would be considered by full Council at its meeting on 7 January 2010.

The Committee noted the presentation from Councillor Rawcliffe, Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group which the Committee had set up to enable detailed consideration of the associated matters. He explained that the Working Group had established a preference for separating town and rural communities into separate wards, and had also tried to restrict the variance from the Boundary Committee's preferred number of electorate per 1, 2 and 3 members wards to no more than 10%.

Comments were made that the Boundary Committee's decision that there should be 59 elected members for Central Bedfordshire and not the 66 recommended by the Council meant that it was necessary to be pragmatic in the approach to determining the number and location of wards as the ideal, based on additional numbers of members, was not a possibility.

The Working Party had put forward the majority political group's preferred solution and had also allowed the Liberal Democrat Group's solution to be submitted to this Committee. The Committee therefore had two proposals before it for consideration; the Conservative Group's preferred option was set out at Appendix A of the papers and the Liberal Democrat Group's was set out at Appendix B.

Councillor Rawcliffe thanked the Working Group for the work they had put in to achieve the proposals before the Committee. He also paid tribute to the invaluable help the Working Group had received from Stephen Cooke and Brian Dunleavy who had provided detailed guidance to the Working Group and had worked through the many comments and suggestions which had been made.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Rawcliffe for the considerable work he had carried out as Chairman of the Working Group.

A discussion ensued and it became evident that the different political groups had different approaches and preferences regarding numbers of elected members for each ward.

RESOLVED:-

1. that having considered the conclusions of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group in relation to the number and

location of wards for Central Bedfordshire, the Committee determined that it would recommend to Council to approve the pattern of wards as shown in Appendix A set out in the report as the Conservative Group's option;

2. that the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Group and the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to prepare the draft submission to be presented to Council on 7 January 2010 including taking account of any further responses to consultation received in the intervening period prior to the Council meeting;
3. to thank the officers, Stephen Cooke and Brian Dunleavy, for the invaluable help they had provided whilst supporting the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Party

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

1. **to endorse the proposed pattern of wards set out in Appendix A of the submitted report;**
2. **to take into consideration any responses received from the Town and Parish Councils;**
3. **to approve the Submission to the Boundary Committee for England on the number and location of electoral wards for Central Bedfordshire;**
4. **to authorise the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Group, to respond to questions raised by the Boundary Committee regarding the Submission.**

GPC/09/7 Policies

The Committee received a report setting out a number of proposed policies in relation to Human Resources matters. These were as follows:

- Managing Change Policy
- Redundancy/Redeployment Guidelines
- Work Life Balance and Flexible Working Policy
- Flexible Retirement Policy.

It was noted that these policies had been submitted to the Employee Partnership Committee on 17 November 2009 which had unanimously agreed to recommend them to the Committee for adoption.

The Committee gave careful consideration to each of the policies and commented on them. Some drafting amendments were identified as set out below.

A discussion took place regarding the Corporate Implications paragraph relating to the financial implications of the proposed policies. It was noted that adopting the policies was necessary to enable the management of change. As change happened, it would become possible to quantify the financial implications.

It was noted that the Central Bedfordshire Management Team had been required by the Chief Executive to find savings at a senior level representing 20%. Members considered whether there was anything in the Managing Change Policy which would prevent this being carried out and concluded that there was not.

In view of a recent case at another local authority Members sought an assurance that the Council was unlikely to carry out age discrimination by reason of the policies before it. The assurance was given.

In response to questions, Members noted the financial implications for the Council and the pension fund if an employee took a career break. It was noted that when an application was made for a career break such implications were taken into account.

Managing Change Policy

- Section 2 Consultation paragraph 2 2nd sentence add the word “formal” before “consultation” so the sentence reads “Managers must seek the advice of Human Resources before any formal consultation takes place.”.
- Section 8 Compulsory Redundancy final sentence starting NB: the term “establishment” to be replaced with a clearer description.

Redundancy/Redeployment Guidelines for Employees

- Section 5 Appeal paragraph 5.1 final sentence replace the word “Corporation” with a better description indicating that the appeal would be considered by people independent of determining the original decision.
- Career Profile Guidance Notes section 7.5 – add an explanation of the process if a person has changed between full time and part time work.
- Add a reference to the Pension Scheme Guidance Notes so employees know where to find help.

Flexible Retirement

- Pages 124, 128 and 129 – correct the entry 25%/40% which should read 40%.

RESOLVED, subject to the drafting amendments detailed above being incorporated:-

1. to adopt the Managing Change Policy for non-schools based employees with immediate effect;

2. to adopt the Redundancy/Redeployment Guidelines for non-schools based employees with immediate effect;
3. to adopt the Work Life Balance Policy for non-schools based employees with immediate effect;
4. to adopt the Flexible retirement Policy for non-schools based employees with immediate effect.

GPC/09/8 **Redundancies**

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for the delegation of decisions involving the termination of employment on the grounds of redundancy/early retirement for both non-school and schools-based employees.

It was noted that redundancies tended to arise most often during a period of organisational change, such as the Council was currently undergoing. It was important to have robust procedures in place and ensuring that appropriate delegated powers were available contributed to this.

Members commented that they would like to see a statistical summary of the numbers of redundancies made together with associated costs brought to the Committee on a regular basis. The report should be anonymised so that it could be considered in public.

The Committee considered that the use of the proposed delegated powers should be monitored as it may not be appropriate for them to stay in place indefinitely, beyond the current period of management change. Members indicated that they would like a report to be brought to the February 2010 meeting indicating how much longer the delegated powers in relation to redundancies/early retirement should remain in place.

RESOLVED:-

1. that a report be brought to the Committee on a regular basis setting out in broad terms the number of redundancies which had been made together with associated costs;
2. in accordance with paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report, to delegate authority to the relevant service Director in consultation with the service Portfolio Holder, the Director for Customer and Shared Services and the Chairman of General Purposes Committee, to approve redundancy/early retirement scenarios for all non-school employees;
3. that any redundancy/early retirement payments for non-schools based employees are made in accordance with the Managing Change policy of the Council or any other appropriate policy in force at the time of the delegation being implemented;

4. that in line with the practice of the predecessor authority, Central Bedfordshire Council should operate the discretion available under Regulation 52 of the Local Government Pension Scheme or the Teachers (Compensation for Redundancy or Premature Retirement) Regulations 2006 only in the most exceptional circumstances;
5. in accordance with paragraph 10 of the report, to delegate authority to the Director of Children, Families and Learning for all redundancy/early retirement cases for schools-based employees
6. that for a limited time only, in relation to any compulsory redundancies/early retirements relating to the senior management review and budget efficiencies, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant Service Director and relevant Portfolio Holder;
7. that a report be brought to the February 2010 meeting indicating the extent to which the delegated powers in relation to redundancies under resolution 6 above had been used and how much longer the powers should remain in place.

GPC/09/9 **Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions**

The Committee received an oral report advising on the progress of the project to harmonise terms and conditions of employees. It was noted that the work was progressing well despite some practical difficulties arising from the current directorates' re-organisation. It was noted that the effective date of the implementation of new terms and conditions would be 1 April 2010 and any which had not been finalised before then would be backdated to that date.

RESOLVED to note the oral report.

GPC/09/10 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting was 10 February 2010.

The scheduled meeting date of 4 March 2010 would also be kept in reserve in case there was a need to consider Boundary Committee matters at that juncture.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.00 p.m..)