

JOINT STAFF EMPLOYER FORUM

4 June 2003
(4.30-5.55pm)

PRESENT: Councillors: Smart (Chair), Adigun-Harris, Bradnack, Dryden, Stebbings, Graham Cuffley (Unison), Richard O'Leary (GMB).

Chief Executive, Head of Human Resources, Director of City Services.

1. MINUTES – 6 MARCH 2003

The minutes of the meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor White and Councillor Taylor, Executive Councillor (Commercial & Human Resources).

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests: Councillor Smart as a member of ATL, Councillor Dryden as a member of Amicus (and his wife as a member of Unison) and Councillor Bradnack as a member of NUT.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

6. RESULTS OF RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE MONITORING FOR 2002/3

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report. She asked the Forum to consider whether the report in future should have a different format eg focusing on particular successes and shortcomings. She then highlighted several aspects of the report to comment on as indicated below:

Section	Comments
4.1 Gender – women in senior posts	The Performance Indicator had now changed to the percentage in the top 5% of earners. A target had been set for 2009/10 of 34% (22% in 2002/3)
4.3 Ethnicity	The Audit Commission had just issued new figures for Cambridge - 11.3% of the population were in ethnic minority groups (4% were employed by the Council in 2002/3). New strategies were needed to

	address the imbalance.
4.4 Age Profile	One third would be approaching retirement age within the next 10 years. The authority managed early retirements well in that few in the 50+ age group took early retirement with its associated costs. However, it also meant that there was a potential problem over the coming years.
4.5 Salary Levels	The new pay structure would be introduced in September/October
5 Analysis of Recruitment Data	The number of people appointed to posts was disappointing. There needed to be more emphasis on improving the quality of job descriptions and other paperwork to attract high quality applicants. Exploring the possibility of bringing in less experienced people and developing them should be explored as a means of filling the posts in the “professional” occupational groups where there was most difficulty in recruiting.
6 Analysis of New Recruits	The analysis of the figures for those leaving within the first 6 months and the first year indicated that the job and the culture were not what some applicants had been led to expect. Others were moving on to better paid jobs elsewhere. Advertising costs were high, increasing year on year more than budgets. Action was being taken to use composite adverts which save money. The internal market was an important source of applicants especially as they were already settled in Cambridge and able to afford to live here. 31% of new recruits had attended the Corporate Induction programme

The Chair invited the union representatives to make their comments on the report.

Comments/Questions	Answer
Richard O’Leary (GMB) – Re section 4.2, the unions would welcome the opportunity to discuss the need to set up a policy in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act and the incidence of occupational injury	The Head of Human Resources agreed that this was needed especially as the incidences of diabetes and heart conditions were more prevalent in the third of the work force in the 50+ age group. She also clarified in response to a question from the Chair that the Capability Procedure was now used solely in relation to competence to do the job and that sickness monitoring was managed separately.

<p>Richard O’Leary (GMB)– Re section 5 on the Recruitment data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Services Learning Centre and the Mature Apprentices Scheme were both working well and were positive contributions to some of the recruitment issues raised. 	
<p>Graham Cuffley (Unison) – Re section 4 on the Workforce data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The figure for those with a disability seemed rather low and he wondered if this was under-reported. • He also commented that the age profile was part of a national trend in Local Government. • He thought that cost of living in Cambridge was more a factor in people leaving within the first year than the characteristics of the job. • Re: Appendix 10 and figures about the grievance procedure: The low figure could be attributed to the fact that much of the work was done more informally so that those that went to the full procedure were very serious examples. • In relation to monitored groups, new legislation would mean that sexuality would be an issue to be monitored in future which would require sensitivity. • Figures needed to be kept of the number of employees with multiple disadvantages. • It would be vital to monitor the results of the new job evaluation scheme to ensure that there was no discrimination. It seemed likely that low-paid caring jobs would benefit from the scheme. • More should be done to understand why employees left within the first year and at other stages too. • The unions would like to see those services which were externalised monitored as these often disadvantaged the lower paid even more than when they were under Local Government terms and conditions 	
<p>The Chair noted the change to the statistics by the change in Performance Indicator 11 shown at Appendix 2. The percentage of women employed in Senior Management Posts was 26% in 2001/2 and those in the top 5% of earners in the authority was 22%</p>	
<p>Members of the Forum then commented on the report and asked questions. These and the answers provided are given below:</p>	
<p>Councillor Adigun-Harris, as a new member of the Forum, asked for clarification on who and what was monitored and how</p>	<p>Graham Cuffley (Unison) explained the role of the Monitoring Officer for each post advertised. The Monitoring Officer was responsible for checking that the reason an applicant was not offered a job was not to do with their belonging to one of the categories monitored but to their level of competence in relation to the job.</p>
<p>Councillor Bradnack pointed out that while the 50+ age group due to retire over the next 10 years would lead to a loss of much experience to the Council, it would also allow career opportunities for</p>	

younger employees	
The Chair asked about the recruitment profile in City Services where nearly half were in the 35-49 age group.	The Director of City Services explained that many had worked under standard construction work conditions which were under review and Local Government contracts looked more attractive as a result. Other older people who had left school early were attracted by the opportunity to attend evening classes and improve their skills. Richard O'Leary (GMB) said that City Services was also attracting younger people who had just completed their apprenticeship.
The Chair wondered whether the Forum were being over-concerned about the ageing workforce.	The Head of Human Resources thought it was important to have a diverse workforce where it was important to get the mix right. The retiring of the 50+ age group would have more impact at managerial level. It was important to decide what were the key indicators to monitor in the near future.
Graham Cuffley (Unison) said that Single Status would have the biggest impact on the workforce. For the first time Mill Road staff would have salary increments and the opportunity to enhance their career by taking on more responsibility rather than more money.	The Head of Human Resources reported that Local Government was now one of the top 10 career preferences for graduates. However, job design had to improve in order to retain graduates who joined.
Councillor Bradnack re section 6: the 3 main reasons for leaving needed addressing	The Head of Human Resources replied that more proactive measures were needed to deal with these issues before staff resigned as well as trying to encourage more staff to complete exit questionnaires. The staff survey currently being carried out would also inform the proactive strategy.
Councillor Dryden asked whether the NHS had similar problems of recruitment and retention.	The Chief Executive said benchmarking with a variety of organisations was important.
Councillor Bradnack asked that data be provided about all staff who resigned.	Graham Cuffley (Unison) agreed saying that the figures included those on short term contracts. In some jobs competence could be reached in 6 weeks whereas with others it took 6 months (eg in Housing Benefit).
Councillor Adigun-Harris re sections 7 and 5: There had been an increase in applicants from ethnic minority groups but a decrease in appointments. Was there any explanation for this? Benchmarking should be used for all	The Head of Human Resources acknowledged that there was a need with all the statistics to have more information about what they meant and what actions should be taken to address problems and issues.

monitored groups. Using the same organisation to benchmark made for meaningful comparisons.	
Councillor Adigun-Harris re sections 9.2 and 9.3: Why was the decision made to use psychometric tests and were staff trained in their use?	The Head of Human Resources confirmed that staff were trained in their use and that all were aware of the limitations of such techniques. Best practice involved using a range of tools – in-tray exercises, presentations and tests as well as interviews. Graham Cuffley (Unison) confirmed that the unions had been involved in the decision about what tests to use because of the known risks of ethnic and gender bias in tests. The unions were satisfied that those used by the Council were satisfactory from those aspects.
The Forum agreed that there needed to be more emphasis on concerns and the actions taken to address these.	The Head of Human Resources proposed that specific issues such as recruitment and retention be considered at the quarterly meetings of the Forum and that there would then be an end of year summary.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 30 October at 4.30pm.

The meeting ended at 5.55 p.m.

Chair