

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Report on Learning from the Planning &amp; Building Control Service Redesign</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>13 October 2016</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director for Finance &amp; Resources</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Sue Moorman</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3629</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 In accordance with the recommendations from a Personnel Appeal Panel to the dispute lodged by Unison on behalf of some staff within the Planning Service, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the Committee on the key factors to this dispute and the organisational learning undertaken.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee note the context of report and the organisational learning.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.2 A service re-design in Planning & Building Control began in November 2013 with the purpose of developing a more pro-active service with an improved focus on the customer and the need to deliver Budget savings. The guiding principles for the service were published and circulated to all staff:

- A design that facilitates a positive customer experience.
- A design that facilitates the modelling of positive behaviours and the sharing of knowledge and skills.
- A design that facilitates the development of enhanced career prospects.
- A design that facilitates streamlined service delivery.
- A design that facilitates clear communications across our teams with all our customers.

Using these principles a detailed service re-design was prepared and published for a 30 day period of consultation beginning on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and ending on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014.

- 3.3 The responsibility for service redesign rests with the service manager, who will be advised on the process by HR & Finance.
- 3.4 Correspondence was received from Unison during the consultation period (7<sup>th</sup> May) setting out more than 50 comments and questions. These issues were considered

fully as part of the consultation and responses included in the formal outcome. Many of these issues were addressed in one-to-one meetings and correspondence with individuals during the consultation.

- 3.5 One core proposal was the removal of the grade M9 and M11 Planning Officer posts. The rationale for removing these grades was that the structure in Planning was congested, leading to a situation where there were too many management layers (as well as grades) at that level in the structure resulting in blurred lines of accountability. This also meant that there were not enough posts at the front line dealing with day to day high volume/small scale work. Roles were redesigned accordingly and evaluation took place and confirmed a new Manager role at grade M10 and a generic Planning Officer role at grade S01/2 (which was a downgrading). Benefits of this included:-
- Clearer lines of decision-making accountability
  - Clear professional distinction between roles leading to promotions being more meaningful
  - A better fit between the structure and volumes / level of work (more front line / first level roles)
- 3.6 The council's Service Redesign Tool Kit and the Change Management Framework was fully adhered to in the service redesign consultation process and outcome. The new structure became operational from April 2015. Appendix A details the consultation document and outcome document.
- 3.7 As a result of the conclusion of the evaluation, Planning Officers who were previously working at grade M11 submitted a grading appeal on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015. This was heard as a Stage 1 appeal on 25<sup>th</sup> June 15 and the appeal was dismissed. Subsequently Planning Officers proceeded to a Stage 2 appeal.
- 3.8 At the stage 2 appeal held in 2<sup>nd</sup> October, it became apparent that the management structure above this post had not been properly implemented and consequently the grading appeal had to be adjourned. The reasons for this appear to be that the Head of Service, who had left the council, had not fully completed the service redesign and management responsibility changes. It would have been inappropriate to have progressed the appeal without further reference to local management.
- 3.9 The Stage 2 appeal was reconvened on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The outcome of this appeal was inconclusive as whilst the panel felt that there was merit in the post being regraded, due to technical constraints within the structure, this was not possible.
- 3.10 This highlighted a difficulty in the role of the panel to ensure the integrity of the council's pay line was maintained to meet our duties under equal pay but also recognising this was complicated by the reorganisation not being fully implemented. However it has also highlighted that when processes are delayed for whatever reason, it is important to maintain regular communication with the staff concerned, as it is not incumbent upon them to have a detailed understanding of how these processes work.
- 3.11 Unison subsequently raised the outcome and process of the job evaluation grading as a dispute and this hearing took place on 25<sup>th</sup> April and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The panel highlighted concerns about the application and experience of the process, namely the unacceptable length of time the process took, the inconclusive and

unacceptable outcome and the distress and perceived lack of value experienced by the staff.

3.12 In summary the Personnel Appeal Panel recommended that:-

- the stage 2 grading appeal was reconvened, with a new panel;
- the employees concerned received an apology;
- a report be commissioned for Policy, Resources & Growth Committee on the matter;
- the Executive Directors for Finance & Resources and Environment, Economy & Culture were kept informed of the matter and assured of organisational learning that had taken place.

All the areas for recommendations have been addressed. In respect of the reconvened panel, which was held on 7<sup>th</sup> September, the outcome was to regrade the post to grade M11 and this has been now implemented and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. This was the majority view of the panel.

Further work on reviewing and improving the job evaluation process is underway jointly with the trades unions.

3.13 The context in which this matter arose was that the Planning Service was underperforming due to a variety of challenges in both staffing, workload and technology. Members will be aware that the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) undertook a Planning Peer Challenge in March 2016. The findings support a number of the changes the service redesign attempted to address such as reducing layers of management responsible for checking and quality assurance work, empowering staff and case workers and refocusing management on the key added value areas.

3.14 Following the PAS report the Executive Director has led on key actions for improvement including securing resource at a senior level to drive improvement and establishing a modernisation programme to develop a sustainable future for the service, with improved customer service, in the context of reducing council budgets and an increase in customer demand. Existing projects were consolidated into a programme framework alongside new projects to create a long-term delivery plan for the service, incorporating the four year budget savings proposals. The work streams within the modernisation programme include:

- Performance improvement – with a focus upon minor and other applications
- A Digital First approach to service delivery – with the introduction of new ICT platform.
- Developing new revenue streams – through the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements and charging for pre-application advice
- City Plan Part 2 – to streamline planning policy
- Business process improvement and cultural change – to drive efficiency and customer focused approach.

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

4.1 Unison represented members throughout the process and continue to work with HR on improvements to the Job Evaluation (JE) process and guidance for panels. Unison has been consulted on this report who have confirmed they are satisfied with the outcome for their members and have no further comment to make.

## 5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report which is focused on the process itself and the organisational learning gained. The outcome of the grading panel has resulted in a salary increase for 12 staff, which is being addressed by the service as part of their financial planning.

Finance Officer consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 20/09/2016

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report other than those expressed at 5.3 .

Laywer consulted: Carol Haynes

Date: 20/09/2016

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The council has a duty to ensure equal pay legislation is complied with. The purpose of job evaluation is to create a reasonable rank order for the organisations jobs to be able to demonstrate that there is fairness across our diverse roles.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

### Any other significant Implications:

- 5.5 There are no other significant implications arising from this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Consultation document and outcome document.

