

## **NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, NORDON, SALISBURY ROAD, BLANDFORD FORUM, ON MONDAY, 23 JUNE 2008 STARTING AT 2.15 PM**

**Present:** Cllr Peter Webb (Chairman)  
Cllr John Tanner (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr Barrie Cooper  
Cllr Su Hunt  
Cllr Mike Oliver  
Cllr Chris Tomlinson

**Officers:** Bobbie Bragg, Senior Personnel Adviser  
Berenice Deakin, UNISON  
Stephen Hill, General Manager Development and Resources

**Apologies:** Cllr Richard Moyle

#### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by members.

#### **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 April 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3. REVIEW OF PERSONNEL POLICIES**

##### **Draft Travel and Subsistence Policy**

The General Manager, Development and Resources, advised members that there was no recommendation in the report requesting approval. The aim was to gather comments from members before further consultation was undertaken.

He outlined that the Travel and Subsistence Policy and the Working Hours Policy were part of the Job Evaluation process and formed The Toolbox. It had been decided that the implementation of the Pay and Grading Structure was important to get right and these two policies had been put to one side to allow its completion. The Working Hours Policy would be presented to members in the next 3 months.

He advised that the basis for the policy was to promote equality for all staff. He stressed that other issues such as affordability, sustainability, Health and Safety were also an integral part. He stated that it was important that the policy could be reviewed and changed in the future and this had been built-in.

The Key Point contained in the policy was the local definition of Essential or Casual users to complement the National Framework Agreement. Cllr Oliver asked how the definition between the two was made. The General Manager stated that the policy covered a whole range of staff and did not focus on

leased car usage only. He highlighted the current scheme, which was attached as Appendix A to the agenda report which had been written some years ago and the eligibility criteria written at that time was felt to be open to a wide interpretation. It was pointed out that since 2003 no new starters had received lease cars. The proposed new policy gave a much clearer definition of the criteria as follows:-

*'an officer whose normal work for North Dorset District Council requires them to have a vehicle available for their primary use at all times whilst at work to enable them to carry out their duties. Typically there will be a requirement for either the vehicle to be used on the majority of working days, to undertake a significant number of business miles per annum (i.e. in excess of 2,000 miles per annum), use of vehicles during evenings or for emergency use.*

In answer to a further question members were advised that staff working for the authority were either classed as Essential or Casual Users. However, there were a large number of staff who did not require to drive. He added that there was an option for those classed as essential users to use the council's pool cars.

The rates paid for travel were reimbursed at rates nationally agreed with the Unions and Employers and were reviewed annually. Currently the rates were as follows:-

Essential	-	Lump sum of £1,000 and mileage rate of 45p
Casual	-	No lump sum - mileage rate of 59p

The payments for lease cars is agreed locally and are currently

Lease Cars	-	No lump sum as car provided and maintenance and road tax paid for. Mileage rate of 8p for Diesel and 10p for Petrol
------------	---	---

The General Manager stated that in 2006/07 the lease car rate was reviewed with those paid by Dorset County Council and had remained the same. Lease car drivers now felt that the rates were not high enough and it was now felt that a lead on rates should be taken from elsewhere such as DCC or HM Customs and Revenue.

Cllr Tanner asked if the rates reduced after a certain number of miles claimed. He was advised that the NJC rates for 2008/09 varied on the size of engine and the amount payable was reduced after 8,500 miles.

The General Manager explained to members that incorporated into the new policy was a transitional period for lease car drivers. These drivers would continue with the scheme for the next three years and would then, with some exceptions, revert to essential user status which would require them to provide a car for work.

The General Manager then advised members that the comments received following consultations with the Unions and staff had been placed on the Council's intranet and a lot of comments had been included in the proposed policy. However, where suggestions had not been able to be incorporated the reasons why had been explained. He pointed out that an officer group covering

all sections of the Council had helped to prepare the policy and revisions. This had been in addition to the consultation with the Unions.

He highlighted that the following comments from Unison were still not agreed:-

- The Transition period is too short
- The APR included in the Car Loan Scheme was too high.
- The amount an employee can borrow for a loan from the Council was too low
- Concern that equal pay claims could be an issue.

The Chairman asked Mrs Deakin, as the Unison representative, if she would like to make any comments on the proposal.

She explained to the Committee that she had not originally felt able to assist in the negotiations as she was not a lease car driver and was therefore not qualified to raise the issues surrounding this. Regional Officers had taken over, but due to their illness this had passed to two officers which had resulted in delays. She was aware that the consultation period had ended but felt that further consultation was still required, but it was now important to move things on.

In answer to a question the General Manager stated that now the job evaluation process had been completed and both the employers and unions are satisfied that staff were being paid the right amount for their jobs, the tools required to undertake the jobs had to be looked at. He accepted that this was an emotive subject but had to be separated from the issue of pay.

He stated that it was important to get the input from members before further consultation was undertaken with the Unions. He stressed that it was important to get agreement of the policy through the collective agreement, to avoid having to reach agreement with each individual member of staff.

He added that the cost to the Council, in relation to lease cars, under the proposed scheme would be £15,000 per year for the three years of the scheme and after this savings would be achieved. Following a question on how many staff would be affected by the new policy he indicated that there were currently 21 lease car drivers, most of whom would be classed as Essential Drivers, but there were 2 or 3 who wouldn't fit the new criteria. There were currently 15 posts which do not have a lease car but would comply with the draft Essential User criteria. These posts were currently not being reimbursed at an equitable rate.

It was important that any further changes suggested by the Union did not make the scheme unaffordable and that the inequalities currently being experienced by some posts were properly addressed.

The Chairman reiterated the comments of the General Manager that if negotiation was required with individual members of staff all sorts of issues could arise. It was important that agreement was reached with the Union. He felt that in the current financial climate the proposed policy was generous and did not reflect the financial position the Council was in. He added that if the scheme were to be made more generous then members may resist its

implementation.

### **Resolved**

That further consultation with the Senior Management Team and the Union be undertaken to work towards Collective Agreement.

The Chairman thanked the General Manager for his presentation and hoped that all parties could move this on as quickly as possible.

#### **4. Change of Name for the Committee**

The Chairman then advised members that following discussions it had been considered that the Council's Constitution required amendment to re-name the Personnel Committee as the Personnel Policy Committee. This change was required to ensure that it was clear that the Committee did not deal with day to day management issues of staffing. A report making this recommendation would be presented to the Full Council meeting on 27 June.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

**CHAIRMAN**