

MATTER FOR REPORT

5/05 –**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES PANEL FINAL REPORT:** A copy of the draft Final Report of the Recruitment and Retention Issues Panel had been circulated previously to all Members of the Panel, and Council Resources Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The Chair invited the Scrutiny Officer to highlight the key issues set out in the report namely the draft considerations which would form the basis of the Panel’s final recommendations and which were set out at paragraphs 3.23, 3.37, 3.46, 3.52 and 3.65 of the report.

The Scrutiny Officer summarised the draft considerations and it was agreed that it would be necessary to include in the report, the conclusions that had been gathered from the work undertaken by the Panel since its establishment and which had led to the draft considerations and recommendations set out in the report. It was considered necessary by the Panel to contextualise the findings in terms of the length of the investigation carried out and the numerous initiatives which had emerged around the work of the Panel such as the Staff Opinion Survey, Single Status Job Evaluation and Council-wide Restructuring. It was considered that whilst there were concerns regarding recruitment and retention at the time the Panel was established, over the course of the investigation it was found that improvement and developments in relation to recruitment and retention levels had been made. It was acknowledged that there were still specific problems with certain posts within the Council and that the recommendations made by the Panel would address those particular issues.

The Chair then invited Members of the Panel to address the draft considerations as set out in the report to discuss each in greater detail as a means of agreeing final recommendations.

The draft considerations set out at paragraph 3.23 of the report were then **agreed** however it was also concluded that Consideration 1 should be amended to show that the Staff Opinion Survey would be “confidential”. It was also **agreed** that two further recommendations would be made to this section of the report as follows:

“3. The Council should work to raise the awareness of the Council within Schools and within the District by attending Job Fairs and marketing the Council as an employer.”

“4. The Council should continue to improve its image and Corporate Identity as a priority.”

The Panel then referred to those considerations set out at paragraph 3.37 of the report. The Panel discussed ways in which staff could be encouraged to stay within the employment of the Council, and acknowledged that there were particular issues with members of staff under the age of 25. The Panel discussed the possibility of recommending a staff mentoring scheme and monthly interviews for staff. It was acknowledged that Harrogate Borough Council provided an excellent opportunity for young people seeking employment in their gap years, and whilst acknowledging this strength, it was **agreed** that more should be done to identify those staff wishing to pursue a long term career within the Council and local government as well as those

staff who had decided to take up employment for a year or so before joining university. It was acknowledged that some posts would be used as stepping-stones to other opportunities and therefore it was considered important to continue to provide training opportunities to staff to ensure that those leaving the Council would do so with a positive experience.

The Panel were then referred to those draft considerations set out at paragraph 3.46 of the written report. The Panel discussed Draft Consideration 1 in relation to the establishment of departmental groups to regularly review recruitment and retention issues within their own department. It was suggested that these groups would be able to provide a degree of early intervention should issues arise and concluded that Departmental Heads should be encouraged to monitor recruitment and retention issues as discussed by the Panel in the form of a matrix which could be used to gather key information regarding retention turnover levels and related issues. The Panel then discussed draft consideration 2 in relation to the cost to the Council of employing cleaners direct against the cost of employing agency staff cleaners and it was **agreed** that this consideration be amended to read "A comparison of the cost of employing agency staff with employing similar staff within the Authority should be undertaken and reported on a regular basis to the senior management team in every department and for the whole Council. Draft consideration 3 referred to combined recruitment and retention initiatives to be explored with other authorities and discussions in relation to this item suggested the inclusion of job swaps and staff exchanges, and included the sharing of staff between local authorities. Draft consideration 4 was **agreed**. Draft consideration 5 referred to the increased use of smaller articles in the local press in comparison to the resultant cost of posting a higher number of job application packs to applicants. It was also **agreed** that the increased use of Internet job applications should be encouraged which would lead inevitably to savings, which could be analysed in due course.

The Panel were then referred to those draft considerations set out at paragraph 3.52 and in relation to consideration 1 regarding the Leave and Pension rights. It was **agreed** that the "full package" of benefits available to Council Employees should be promoted wherever possible when recruiting staff. Draft considerations 2 and 3 were agreed by the Panel who then referred to those considerations set out at paragraph 3.65 of the written report. It was **agreed** that draft consideration 1 should actually be included at paragraph 3.52 of the written report and reference should be made to the "Employee of the Year Award" which had been introduced during the work of the Recruitment and Retention Panel.

It was considered important that the report should offer a distinction between those issues that included Harrogate International Centre and those that did not.

The Panel were then invited by the Scrutiny Officer to consider the issue of whether there was any scope in introducing a Staff Discount Scheme and it was noted that such a scheme had been introduced for a trial period of a year but the planned evaluation had not taken place after the trial period. The Panel considered that such a scheme would be effective in encouraging and promoting good health amongst Council employees and should be reconsidered for introduction across the Council along the same lines as the old Staff Discount Scheme with the recommendation that a discount of 50% should be considered. It was then **agreed** that the Scrutiny

Officer would amend the report and recommendations as discussed by the Panel and agree them with the Chair. The report would then be presented to the Council Resources Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its next meeting to be held on 10 April 2006. It was acknowledged that the Chair of the Panel, Councillor Theakston would present the report.

Before the conclusion of the Panel meeting which it was anticipated would be the last meeting of the Panel, the Chair wished to place on record the Panel's, appreciation and thanks to all Officers involved in the Panel's work for all their efforts over the course of the four years.

(The Meeting concluded at 6.45 pm.)