

Appendix 2

Cabinet Response to Legal Services Working Group Recommendations

4th March 2014

Note of a discussion which took place between the Cabinet, the Chief Executive and the Head of HR and Development on the Scrutiny Committee Working Party Report of the Legal Services Section (report dated 20th January 2014).

Looking at the five recommendations the following observations/agreements were reached:-

1. Opportunities should be seized following any staff leaving in the future to recruit somebody with the necessary advocacy skills (it is understood that the Head of Human Resources will be undertaking a review of the skills needed early in the New Year).

Note: The working group would like to make the comment that this does not necessarily need to be a one full time officer and suggest that consideration be given to other flexible/innovative working arrangements such as job share or part time hours.

Response: following the resignation due to retirement of one of the Solicitors in the team the Head of HR and Development will be putting to Management Team within a fortnight a reorganisation of the team and an advertisement will be placed looking for someone with predominantly advocacy, property and some management skills. Consideration would be given to full time, job share or part time dependant on the applicants' suitability for the role.

2. In advance of a permanent solution being found consideration be given to a temporary arrangement in order to fill some of the gaps in procedural knowledge provided to the full Council, for example, approach an ex member of staff to act as a mentor in the short term?

Response: With the new Principle Member Services Officer and new Monitoring Officer in office the Cabinet and Chief Executive felt that full Council had sufficient support in place and no further action needed to be taken on this point.

3. Photocopier – the Working Group strongly recommend that the photocopier is returned to the Legal Services Office especially as this was originally purchased from their budget. There are confidentiality reasons as to why the

Legal Services staff cannot leave the copier unmanned. Its current location is having a significant impact upon the amount of time spent copying documents and leads to a great deal of frustration within the team.

Response: The photocopier which had formerly been in the Legal Section and latterly was situated outside the Chief Executive's office has now been moved elsewhere in the building as part of an overall strategy of better utilisation of equipment. However the Head of HR has been looking at what can be done to assist the team and will work with them to see what can be achieved to reduce the impact mentioned in point 3.

4. Consideration be given to using funds from the Housing Revenue Account to fund housing legal expertise.

Response: this already happens as and when necessary.

5. Service Level Agreements be drawn up with Parish and Town Councils when a request is made for the District Council to provide legal advice.

Response: it was agreed that Town Councils should have a service level agreement put in place and a charge made however it was felt that this would be incorrect for Parish Councils with their lack of resources.