

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

Minute of Personnel Committee meeting

12 March 2007

held at: Consort House, Glasgow

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Minute of the meeting of the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's Personnel Committee held in Consort House, Glasgow, on 12 March 2007

- Present** Councillors Davie McLachlan (Chair), David Fagan, John Higgins, John McDowell, Allan Stewart (deputy) and Alistair Watson and appointed members Alan Malcolm and Niall McGrogan.
- Apologies** Councillors Irene Graham, Alan Lafferty, Sam Taylor, Chris Thomson and Margaret Toner.
- Attending** Valerie Davidson, Secretary; Valerie A Bowen, Assistant Clerk; Ron Culley, Chief Executive and Grant Brown, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

1. Terms of Reference

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The Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee, which were approved at the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport meeting on 18 August 2006, were submitted and noted.

Thereon Mr Culley advised members that the Terms of Reference would be re-visited after the forthcoming elections.

2. Update on SPT's Equalities Policy

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 26 February 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) advising members that, due to a number of new employment legislation requirements, there was a need to make additions and amendments to SPT's Equalities Policy;
- (2) explaining that the most notable feature arising from the legislation was with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the requirement of SPT to publish a "Disability Equality Scheme"; and
- (3) appending a copy of SPT's proposed revised Equalities Policy for members' approval.

After consideration and having noted that it would be necessary to incorporate the revised policy into the terms and conditions of employment for all SPT employees, the Committee approved the revised policy.

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3. Early retirement/severance policy

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 22 January 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) reminding members
 - (a) that in December 1997, the Accounts Commission had published a report "Bye Now, Pay Later" which covered the management of early retirement in local government and concluded that local authorities required to develop a clear policy for dealing with early retirement to avoid the build up of financial liabilities in the future; and
 - (b) that in June 2003, Audit Scotland had completed a follow up review on behalf of the Accounts Commission and this report had confirmed that early retirement provided local authorities and bodies such as SPT with a useful tool for improving efficiency through reductions in the size of the workforce;
- (2) appending a proposed early retirement/severance policy which covered three types of early retirement - permanent ill-health, redundancy and in the interests of efficiency of the service;
- (3) advising members that the proposed policy was consistent with those currently applied by constituent authorities; and
- (4) explaining that the Strathclyde Pension Fund had yet to receive any policy updates from the constituent authorities with regard to a new legally compliant approach to compensatory added years under efficiency.

After consideration and having noted

- (a) that references to "Grade F" in the report should read "Grade G";
- (b) that the option of staff re-deployment would be considered in full and that the committee would be advised in advance of any proposed compulsory redundancies; and
- (c) that the policy would be subject to further amendment as the impact of the age legislation was considered,

the committee approved SPT's early retirement/severance policy.

4. Modernising Government

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 22 February 2007 by the Chief Executive

- (1) reminding members that the Scottish Executive had determined that public bodies should strive to improve services, reduce costs, be more responsive to customer demands and introduce technologies to realise these ambitions;

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- (2) intimating that SPT required a measured approach to enable these principles to be embedded within the organisation;
- (3) informing members
 - (a) that since SPT structures were last made subject of a review of this nature ten years ago, there had been many changes not only to the legal status of the organisation but also to the functions it carried out;
 - (b) that rail franchise management powers and re-imburement of bus concessionary fares activities had been transferred to Transport Scotland, new opportunities might arise in respect of some form of bus regulation in urban areas and major projects required skilled project management staff to ensure that key developments were realised on time and within budget; and
 - (c) that the advent of the Regional Transport Strategy would present an enormous number of challenges and opportunities to the organisation in its determination to improve transport for the travelling public of the West of Scotland;
- (4) proposing changes, derived from the guidance and comments offered by SPT staff interviewed by representatives of the Hay Group as part of the previously approved structural re-organisation exercise, which would better enable SPT to meet these challenges;
- (5) highlighting the key issues and proposed structural solutions in each of SPT's areas of activity which would be undertaken within the resources available to the organisation and within overall approved budgets; and
- (6) confirming that reports on the need for change within the Subway, IT and Legal Services would be brought before the Personnel Committee as the fifth phase of this element of the Modernising Government process.

After consideration and having noted that work was continuing to establish the extent to which SPT information and services could be made available on-line, how service delivery could be improved via continuous improvement and how efficiency savings could be made, the committee approved the adjustment to the structure of SPT as set out in the report.

5. Managing workplace stress

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 26 February 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) advising members
 - (a) that, having had initial approval from the Partnership for the implementation of a new policy on managing workplace stress, a consultation exercise with representatives of the workforce had been carried out; and

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- (b) that no necessary substantive changes to the policy had emerged as a result of the exercise;
- (2) appending a copy of the proposed policy on managing workplace stress;
- (3) explaining that the policy had been drafted with the assistance of SPT's Safety Officer and would strengthen further the Subway Safety Case; and
- (4) concluding that, given the growing importance and sensitivity of this topic, it would be advantageous to SPT to implement a modern policy designed to deal with the problem of work related stress.

After consideration and having heard Mrs Davidson in answer to members' questions, the committee approved SPT's policy on managing workplace stress.

6. Maternity and adoption procedures

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There was submitted and approved report (issued) of 14 February 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) advising members that regulations made under the Work and Families Act 2006 which came into force in October 2006 required SPT's maternity procedure to be updated and for an updated adoption procedure to be implemented; and
- (2) appending proposed maternity and adoption procedures which had been modified to take account of the legislative changes.

7. Flexible working

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 26 February 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) reminding members that the Employment Act 2002 entitled all SPT employees with responsibility for children under the age of 6 years (18 years if disabled), the right to request flexible working from their employer;
- (2) explaining that the Work and Families Act 2006 extended this right to employees who were, or expected to be, caring for an adult;
- (3) appending a proposed procedure which detailed the precise relationship an employee had to have with regard to either child or adult in order to be eligible to apply for flexible working arrangements.

After consideration, the committee approved the proposed procedure on flexible working.

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8. Revision of alcohol and drugs policy

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There was submitted a report (issued) of 26 February 2007 by the Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development,

- (1) intimating
 - (a) that SPT had had a policy on alcohol and drugs in place for some considerable time, principally in response to the Transport and Works Act 1992, and was last modified in 2001; and
 - (b) that SPT now proposed to have two policies - one for safety critical staff in the Subway and one for all other staff;
- (2) explaining
 - (a) that since 2001, there had been changes to railway group standards applicable to alcohol and drugs testing and the policy and procedures applicable to safety critical staff had been modified to take account of the changes; and
 - (b) that the changes had been discussed in detail with Subway management and although there had been full and extensive consultation with the relevant trade unions, further consultation was required over the introduction of a two policy approach;
- (3) appending a revised set of alcohol and drugs policies and associated testing procedures;
- (4) advising members that following the introduction of the revised policies, a comprehensive programme of retraining for Subway management, supervisory staff and Subway shop stewards would require to be undertaken and copies would be sent to all Subway employees together with publicity leaflets highlighting the policies' main aspects and changes; and
- (5) recommending that the committee approve the revised policies as detailed in the Appendix to the report.

After consideration, the committee approved the recommendation at (5) above.