K

CABINET – 1 AUGUST 2001

THE COUNCIL'S PEOPLE STRATEGY

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Council's people or human resource are its most significant asset, both in terms of cost and in terms of their impact on services provided. It is therefore essential to develop a strategy to manage this asset effectively, and to plan for the future.

1.2   This report outlines the consultation process that the People Strategy has been through, and recommends the final version of the strategy to Members.

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   The People Strategy has been developed by Personnel services on behalf of the Council as the employer. It is important that this document is viewed as the Council's document, as opposed to a personnel services publication.

2.2   It is a document that should be jointly owned by all the stakeholders – i.e.Councillors (administration and opposition); Managers; employee side, personnel administrators and training co-ordinators.

2.3   Many of the building blocks for the strategy are already in place – i.e. pay and reward strategy; training and development strategy; recruitment policies; At Risk and redeployment policy; equal opportunities policy. The requirement for an overarching document to bring all these together was identified as part of Personnel's services pilot best value review. By producing such a document stakeholders are able to see the complete picture, to see the interaction between the various building blocks and ensure that the Council is concentrating on those initiatives, which will add most value as an employer.

2.4   The document is divided into the following main function areas:

- ❑   pay and benefits and conditions of service
- ❑   recruitment and resourcing
- ❑   employee relations/communications
- ❑   organisational development
- ❑   training, learning and development
- ❑   health and absence management
- ❑   safety management
- ❑   equal opportunities

2.5 The People strategy is an overarching document, and as such contains the overview rather than the detail. Detailed action plans are contained within Personnel Services business plan. These will be reviewed and if necessary revised each year.

3 CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

3.1 The People strategy was issued in draft form in March 2001. It was sent to Industrial Relations Committee, Corporate and Finance Review Panel, Corporate Management Team, Directorate Management Teams and Employee side. Comments were welcomed on this initial draft. At Industrial Relations Committee it was suggested that the most effective way to seek comment and input was to hold a workshop where representatives of all the stakeholders would be invited to attend.

3.2 The workshop was held on 23 May 2001 and was attended by over 20 stakeholders. The group was divided into smaller groups to concentrate on each of the functions. The groups were asked to consider the vision statement for each of the areas and to amend if necessary, and to consider further the drivers and blockages to change. Where possible these comments have been included in the final draft – although these have been limited as one of the overriding comments received was that the people strategy should be short and broad brush. The final document is attached as
Appendix A.

3.3 The most significant benefit from the workshop was the opportunity for representatives from all the different stakeholder groups to discuss the issues that affect the management of employees, and to understand better each others' viewpoints.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the People strategy. Where budget provision is required in order to implement changes that have been identified, this will be sought through the normal budgeting arrangements.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

7 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE COMMENTS

7.1 The Committee discussed the People Strategy, which had been produced by Personnel Services on behalf of the Council as employer. There had been a workshop on 23 May 2001, involving representatives of key stakeholders. This had made a valuable and constructive contribution to the final document.

7.2   The Committee supported the People Strategy, as it will be presented to Cabinet for adoption.

8   CONCLUSION

8.1   The People Strategy is an overarching document which brings together many of the existing personnel strategies and policies so that stakeholders can understand the interaction between them. It has enabled stakeholders to feed into the vision for each area, and to help identify the drivers and blockages for change.

9   RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1   It is recommended that the People strategy attached as appendix A to this report is adopted as the strategy for the council as employer.

For further information contact:

Jayne Griffiths   Manjit Sandhu
Personnel Manager   Senior Personnel Advisor
Appletree Court   Appletree Court
023 8028 5482   023 8028 5485
jayne.griffiths@nfdc.gov.uk   manjit.sandhu@nfdc.gov.uk

People Strategy

The Councils People Strategy aims to communicate the approach by which the Council manages and develops its employees to achieve its business objectives. The implementation of the Strategy will be co-ordinated by Personnel Services working closely with Corporate Management Team, Members, and the Employee Side.

Mission

To establish and promote New Forest District Council as an employer of choice, highly respected for the quality and value of its services and for its reputation as a best practice employer, which embraces diversity and is rich in development opportunities.

Key objectives
To achieve its People mission the Council must maintain its achievement of three key objectives:

♦ To attract and retain a skilled flexible and efficient workforce that is commonly committed to the achievement of the Council's goals and to the enhancement of the quality and value of its services.
♦ To maintain a culture of openness and trust that encourages initiative and joint approaches to problem solving.
♦ To continuously develop employees in line with Investors In People (IIP) standard.

Guiding principles
Achievement of the Councils key objectives requires Personnel Services (on behalf of the Council) to provide an expert information, advisory and consultancy service, which is highly responsive to customer demand and external forces. Personnel Services will work in partnership, with managers, Members, employee side and directorate contacts using the following guiding principles:

♦ To be expert in the understanding and interpretation of the employment law.
♦ To be aware of changing demands and the skills required to meet them.
♦ To ensure an inclusive approach, which involves all of the relevant stakeholders in decision-making, especially the Employee Side.
♦ To be able to apply new concepts and techniques.
♦ To set and maintain the highest standards of professional practice
♦ To review in detail the human resource processes of the Council to identify service improvements.
♦ To review the People Strategy in every 3 years to ensure it continues to address the key issues facing the Council.

In addition the People strategy recognises the need for service managers to have maximum control of and accountability for the management of their **People/employees.**

Appendix 1 shows diagrammatically the elements if the Employment/People framework together with some indicators of internal and external key influences and challenges.

Stakeholders

The advancement of the People strategy is co-ordinated by Personnel Services with the very close involvement of stakeholders in the following ways:

♦ The cabinet is responsible for personnel matters and will be responsible for determining the overall policy framework.

♦ The Industrial Relations Committee considers and makes decisions (recommendations to cabinet) on personnel related matters. The committee consists of 8 Councillors and 8 Employee Side representatives (from 3 recognised Trade Unions).

♦ Corporate and Finance Review Panel considers policy and strategy proposals and makes recommendations on these to Cabinet.

♦ Members, managers, and employee side representatives work with Personnel Services to develop and revise personnel policies. Communication is seen as a very important element of the People strategy and for this reason a Personnel Information Network (PIN) has been established to ensure that managers and employee side representatives receive personnel information in draft format on both policy and procedure as early as possible.

♦ Personnel Services present reports to Corporate Management Team on a regular basis on key areas of policy and practice.

Who are the key stakeholders?
Members
Employee Side Representatives
Corporate Management Team
Heads of Service
Managers and Employees
Payroll Services
Personnel Systems Group
Training Co-ordinators Group
Personnel Information Network (incorporates many of the groups above)
Potential Employees

Appendix 2 gives general detail of how key stakeholders work in partnership to deliver the People strategy.

Key influences and challenges

The following issues will have a particular effect on the Council's ability to deliver its objectives through the effective use of its people resource:

Internal/External Influences
- Members policy aspirations
- Employee Side aspirations
- Business needs and service diversity identified by managers
- Budgetary constraints
- Impact of legislation on the organisation
- Impact of turnover
- Impact of implementing Single Status and changes to Pay and Reward Strategy in a locally responsive way

Modernising Local Government and Best Value
- Changing Government Agenda and Legislation – Impact on organisation
- Political awareness of managers
- Code of conduct, ethics, probity and good government
- Partnerships/market testing/competition/out-sourcing
- Continuous improvement

Equal Opportunity and diversity in employment
- Mainstreaming of equalities policies
- Changing social expectations

Europe
- Legislation on worker protection
- The social dialogue and social partnership

The Changing world of Work
- 'A typical' working patterns
- A change in focus from 'Job for Life' to 'More than one career'

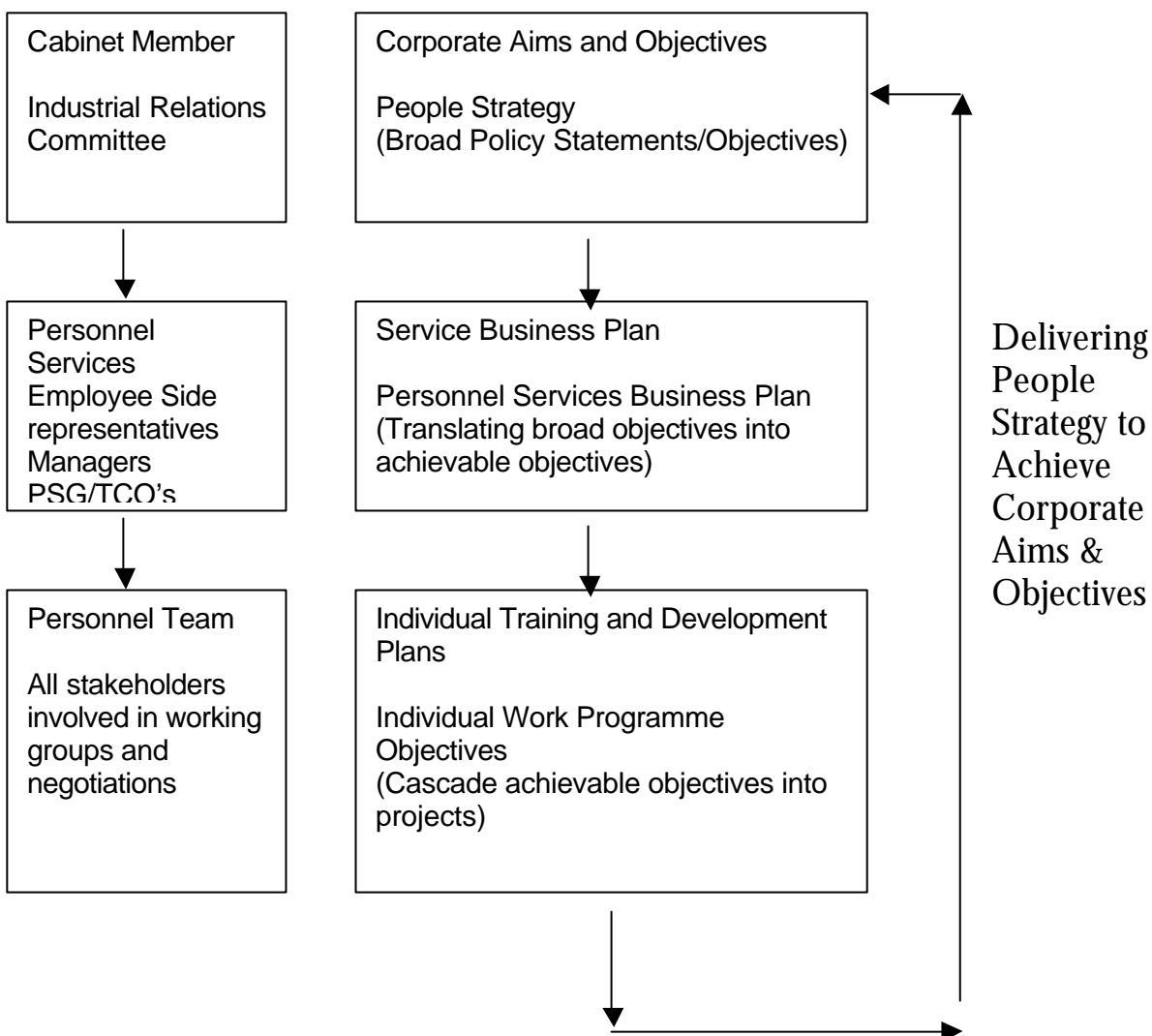The People Strategy is broken down into eight key themes:

1. Pay, Benefits and Conditions of Service
2. Recruitment and Resourcing
3. Employee Relations/Communication
4. Organisational Development
5. Training, Learning and Development
6. Health and Absence Management
7. Safety Management
8. Equal Opportunities

Together these themes cover the spectrum of the people related policy framework. The People Strategy is inextricably linked to the Personnel Services Business Plan (approved by Industrial Relations Committee on 4 January 2001), which gives detail on work to be undertaken for each of the eight themes making up the overall framework.

In Performance Management terms the People Strategy will work as follows:

Key Stakeholders   **Performance Management**

| Cabinet Member

Industrial Relations Committee |

| Corporate Aims and Objectives

People Strategy
(Broad Policy Statements/Objectives) |

| Personnel Services Employee Side representatives Managers PSG/TCO's |

| Service Business Plan

Personnel Services Business Plan
(Translating broad objectives into achievable objectives) |

| Personnel Team

All stakeholders involved in working groups and negotiations |

| Individual Training and Development Plans

Individual Work Programme Objectives
(Cascade achievable objectives into projects) |

Delivering People Strategy to Achieve Corporate Aims & Objectives

It is important to note that all stakeholders will be consultees in developing the People strategy and the Personnel Services Business Plan.

Similarly all policy development is widely consulted upon with all stakeholders before being submitted for approval.

For each of the eight key themes the People Strategy will:

♦ Identify the key theme
♦ Detail the Council's Corporate Aim
♦ Reproduce the Policy for the Key theme
♦ Give a brief description of the activity associated with the theme
♦ Identify the key influences/drivers (both internal and external)
♦ List the key priorities (broad objectives) for 2001-2004
♦ Identify potential blockages
♦ Give further information sources for the key theme

The sections with the People strategy should be read in conjunction with the more detailed Personnel Services Business Plan to give an overall picture of the Councils business objectives. For more detailed information on each of the eight areas please refer to the Personnel Services Business Plan.

1.   Pay and Benefits and Conditions of Service

Corporate Aim
The Council wishes to continue to attract and retain the highest calibre of employees. It is the Councils aim to ensure as far as possible the security of employment for its employees.

Policy
The employees of the Council represent its greatest asset. By providing opportunities, facilities and appropriate financial resources, the Council aims to ensure that all employees possess the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform their jobs to a high standard. Wherever possible, appointments should be made at a salary point that provides for retention and performance progression.

Description
The Council's Pay and Reward Strategy was developed in conjunction with PE Inbucon in 1990. It aims to provide competitive rates of pay and benefits to employees to ensure we can attract and retain the highest calibre employees. The Pay and Reward Strategy is made up a number of components including local pay scales and financial assistance towards training and development activities.

Key influences/drivers
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining high calibre employees
- Pay levels compared to competitors
- High cost of living in the district
- Equal Pay legislation
- Changes in National Terms and Conditions (Green Book)

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
- Review of Employee Handbook
- Review of Pay and Reward Strategy
- Review pay structure including bandings
- Achievement of Harmonisation in Terms and Conditions

Potential blockages
- Increase costs to Business Units
- Increase cost to Pay bill and Impact on Council Tax
- Employee Side's aspirations to move to National Conditions
- Public perception

Further Information
- Management Advice Notes – Section 3
- New Forest Local Agreements
- Employee Handbook

2. Recruitment and Resourcing

Corporate Aim
The Council wishes to continue to attract and retain the highest calibre of employees.

Policy
The Council will recruit from the widest possible field and will appoint on the sole criterion of merit, except where race or sex is a genuine occupational qualification.

To ensure that we attract and retain a skilled flexible efficient workforce that is commonly committed to the achievement of the Council's goals and to the enhancement of the quality and values of its Services. The Council aims to ensure that all business units have employees who possess the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform their job to a high standard.

Description
This involves Personnel Services working closely with Directorates in developing and maintaining best practice for recruitment and selection including a range of recruitment centres for different levels and ensuring consistency with regard to job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment literature.

Key Influences/drivers
- Buoyant employment market
- Broad banding pay structure
- Increase use of technology in recruiting
- Cost of Living in the District

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
- Putting all vacancies on Intranet/Internet
- Review electronic systems including application forms on internet
- Recruitment and Selection training for managers
- Review overall costs of Personnel function in the Council as part of Best Value review

Potential blockages
- Career progression is limited in some parts of the Council
- Skills shortages (Apprenticeships/Trainees)
- Perception of Local Government
- Inadequate Relocation Package
- Cost of Recruitment
- Perceived lack of commitment from stakeholders

Further Information
- Management Advice Notes – Section 2
- Recruitment Pack
- Employee Handbook

3.   Employee Relations/Communication

Corporate Aim
The Council wishes to create a climate of understanding and goodwill and will promote effective employee relations and welfare thorough a spirit of openness and trust, promoting flexibility and innovation and encouraging joint approaches to problem solving. To establish and maintain effective two-way communication both within the organisation and with the public and media.

Policy
The Council will promote and maintain good industrial relations by:
♦ Maintaining and improving its personnel policies and procedures.
♦ The fair and consistent application of local agreements including agreed procedures
♦ Conforming to the requirements of employment legislation and related codes of practice.
♦ Enabling employees, through consultation with recognised trade union representatives, to have a role in the joint determination of decisions that will affect their working lives.

Description
Good industrial relations must be maintained to ensure that the Council conforms to the requirements of Employment Legislation and maintain our role as a best practice organisation. To enable employees through a recognised body to have a say in decisions that will affect them. The Council believes that partnership and involvement in the development of processes is key to the successful continuation of the excellent industrial relations enjoyed by the Council. All key priorities with the People Strategy will be developed as far as possible in partnership with the Employee Side and other key stakeholders and in broad principles.

Key influences/drivers
♦   Employment Relations Act 1999/Employee involvement throughout the Council
♦   The Councils commitment to its Values
♦   Increase use of Information Technology to communicate
♦   The need for improved Service Delivery through efficiency and employee development
♦   The need for employees to know what is expected of them.

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
♦   To review the structure of Industrial Relations Committee
♦   To review Disciplinary Procedure
♦   To review Grievance Procedure
♦   To review Employee Side consultation mechanism to encourage wider participation

Potential blockages
♦   Employees resistant to change
♦   Poor communication leading to distorted messages

Further Information

♦   Management Advice Notes – Section 4
♦   Employee Handbook

4.   Organisational Development

Corporate Aim
The Council is committed to achieving Best Value and this will have an effect on the organisational structures and flexibility needed to changing demands on the Council

Policy
The Council is committed to the establishment of effective organisational structures that are flexible and responsive to changing needs. Employee development is essential to achieving this policy.

Description
Organisational Development embraces all the arrangements and processes by which an organisation continuously adapts and improves, taking account of environmental, technological, sociological, and other impacting factors. Managers maintain the Council's culture by ensuring that their behaviour and that of their employees reflects the declared values.

Organisational structures should facilitate the functions of policy formulation, strategic and operational planning, service delivery, and performance review. Flexible working arrangements and contracts should be considered to ensure the best match between jobs and skills required. Employee Development is an essential part of organisational development

Key influences/drivers
♦   Objectives of the Council and the Administration
♦   Changes in legislation
♦   The increased demand on the use of technology
♦   Higher expectation of employees with reference communication and development
♦   To continue to be a best practice employer

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
♦   Review of Management Advice Notes
♦   Develop more flexible organisational structures including peak resourcing model
♦   Introduce Succession Planning and Human Resource Planning
♦   Career planning linked to pay and competency

Potential blockages
♦   Values not always adhered to
♦   Difficulties in managing a flexible workforce
♦   Employees resistant to change

Further Information
- Management Advice Notes – Section 1
- Managing Performance through Continuous Development pack

5.   Training, Learning, and Development

Corporate Aim
The Council wishes to continue to attract and retain the highest calibre of employees.

Policy
The employees of the Council represent its greatest asset. By providing opportunities, facilities and appropriate financial resources, the Council aims to ensure that all employees possess the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform their jobs to a high standard. To provide each employee with a personal development plan to cover the skills, knowledge, and attributes required to effectively carry out their duties both now and in the future.

Description
The Training and Development Strategy is designed to promote achievement of the following objectives:

- Attracting and retaining a skilled, flexible, and efficient workforce that is commonly committed to the achievement of the Council's goals and to the enhancement to the quality and values of its services.
- Providing opportunities, facilities, and appropriate financial resources to allow employees to acquire appropriate skills.

Key influences/drivers
- Political commitment to Training and Development of employees
- Investors In People standard – can be a recruitment attraction
- Positive attitude and feedback from training
- Legislative changes/working practices
- Personnel's positive approach to Training and Development

Key Priorities 2001-2004
- Member Training Programme for new structures
- Develop Team Training Plans
- Review Induction Programme
- Training managers on identifying training needs
- Introduction of Competency based assessment

Potential blockages
- Pressure on Training Budgets

♦　　　　　Some areas of the Council see training and development as a higher priority than others
♦　　　　　Pressure on employee's time spent on training and development
♦　　　　　Attitude to training (is it a reward or a penalty)

Further Information
♦　　　　　Induction Programme
♦　　　　　Managing Performance Through Continuous Development Pack
♦　　　　　Employee Handbook

6.　　Health and Absence Management

Corporate Aim

The Council wishes to create a climate of understanding and goodwill and will promote effective employee relations and welfare through a spirit of openness and trust, promoting flexibility and innovation and encouraging joint approaches to problem solving.

Policy

The Council recognises that a high level of attendance is vital to the planning and smooth operation of their business. It is also committed to the care and well being of their employees. The Council will provide the right working environments to manage absence and provide help and support to employees requiring additional assistance. The Council has also established procedures for reporting, monitoring, and management of sickness absence that are based on principles of fairness and support whilst ensuring operational efficiency.

Description

Information on sickness absence is crucial to ensure that trends and anomalies are identified early and the situation managed. The aim is to try and provide such management arrangements and support activities as required to considerably reduce the levels of sickness absence.

Key influences/drivers
♦　　　　　Increasing levels of sickness
♦　　　　　Stress-related illnesses
♦　　　　　Family Friendly policies
♦　　　　　Legislation, e.g. Working Time Directive, Disability Discrimination Act
♦　　　　　The requirement of the Business Units for a flexible workforce

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
♦　　　　　Revise procedures for dismissal on incapability through ill-health
♦　　　　　Review sickness reporting procedures
♦　　　　　Undertake Stress Audit
♦　　　　　Training for managers – Consistent application of procedures

Potential blockages
♦　　　　　Unsympathetic Line Managers

- Managers reluctant to tackle sickness at work
- Misuse of sickness procedure
- Constant change
- Instability/Insecurity

Further Information
- Management Advice Notes – Section 5
- Employee Handbook

7. Safety Management

The Council aims to minimise the incidence of workplace risks by providing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. The Council sees Health and Safety as being part of everyday good management.

Policy

All reasonable practical steps will be taken to safeguard from injury and ill-health, its employees and anyone else who may be affected by the Council's acts and omissions. All necessary information instruction, and training will be provided. Responsibility for discharging the Council's duty to safeguard health and safety rests with the Head of Paid Service who will discharge in turn this responsibility through the Directors and every employee.

Description

Employers have a legal and moral duty to make suitable and sufficient arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of their employees. Employees have a duty to safeguard their own health and safety at work and the health and safety of others. The employer and/or any employee who fails in this duty may be subject to disciplinary action and can be liable to legal penalties and/or compensation for damages.

Key influences/drivers
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and related Acts and Regulations, including the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.
- Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy (HSC & HSE)
- Securing Health Together Strategy (HSC, HSE et al)
- Corporate Governance and Internal Control - (Turnbull et al.)
- Dedicated and enthusiastic Safety Unit

Key Priorities – 2001-2004
- Complete safety audits and compare results with previous one to identify progress
- Consolidation of health and safety risk assessment/risk management process
- Complete the stress audit and report findings/make recommendations
- Implement procedures for health and safety competencies, appointed

Potential blockages

- Management perception of and commitment to Health and Safety ownership issues
- Pressure on resource generally and especially training and property management budgets
- Lack of education, understanding and communication on Safety issues

Further Information

- Management Advice Notes - Section 5
- Employee Handbook

For more detailed information please refer to the Health and Safety Unit work programme.

8.   Equal Opportunities

Corporate Aim

To ensure best practice is followed in ensuring equality of access to employment with the Council.

Policy

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity in Recruitment, Selection, Training, Career Development, and Promotion regardless of gender, marital status, race, religion, colour, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Description

The key to successful and positive employee relations is fairness and equity of treatment. The same philosophy underpins all aspects of equal opportunities. Removing artificial and unjustifiable barriers and out-moded practices is essential to the achievement of equality of opportunity and the maximisation of human potential.

Key influences/drivers

- McPherson Report
- New legislation
- Diversity Training
- Employee/Public Perceptions

Key Priorities – 2001-2004

- Produce Diversity Policy
- Run Diversity Training for all employees
- Develop Bullying and Harassment policy
- Develop EMIS reporting/sampling to analyse rationale for shortlisting decisions
- Customer Care Group – Looking at Race Relations Act and Service Delivery

Potential blockages

- Members, managers and employees believing there is no issue

- Attitudes and stereotyping
- Lack of Training

Further Information

- Management Advice Notes – Section 4 and 5
- Employee Handbook

Key Stakeholders – Partnership Arrangements

Employee Side

The Employee Side exists to:

- Represent all Council employees for collective bargaining purposes
- To evaluate jobs (a tripartite approach exists involving 1 employee side representative, 1 directorate manager and 1 member of Personnel Services) within the Councils Single Job Evaluation Scheme.
- To work in partnership with Personnel Services and managers to resolve difficult individual employee issues.
- To comment on all reports to CMT/Members which have employee implications.

Industrial Relations Committee

The Industrial Relations Committee exists to:

- Provide a forum for Members and Employee Side to meet and discuss issues;
- Develop advice for whoever takes decisions on employee issues such as;
  - Pay and Reward Strategy
  - Conditions of Service
  - Policies and protocols affecting/interpreting conditions of service
  - Any disputes over interpretation of conditions of service

Corporate and Finance Review Panel

The Corporate and Finance Review Panel exists to;

- To review how and to what effect Council employment policies and strategies are being implemented and to make reports and recommendations, including proposals for changes to policies and practices.
- To review performance against budgets.
- To undertake, in conjunction with the Cabinet and/or its Members, review of service performance under the Best Value regime.

Personnel Systems Group (PSG)

The Personnel Systems Group exists to:

- Regularly review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of day to day personnel administration procedures;
- Work in co-operation with Personnel/IT/Payroll and to liaise with other groups and Managers as necessary to ensure that the EMIS system is used to best effect and corporate standards for computerised personnel information are adhered to
- Promote and protect the Council's image as a good employer in respect of personnel procedures;
- Work with Personnel Services to ensure the development and communication of best practice for personnel systems within New Forest District Council

Training Co-ordinators Group (TCO's)

The Training Co-ordinators Group exists to:

- Determine, implement and evaluate corporate training within the Budget.
- Identify any other corporate training and development initiatives in addition to the training and development programme.
- Devise a system to link the training and development needs identified from the Performance and Development Interview (PDI) process to the In-house training and development programme.
- Ensure the principles of IIP are enshrined within the Council's training and development initiatives and the Councils Performance Management Systems.

Safety Group

The Safety Group exists to;

- Act as agent for Corporate Management Team to ensure the effective delivery of Health and Safety initiatives and legal requirements
- Receive minutes and other issues from Safety Panels and direct action if appropriate
- Receive and monitor the Health and Safety Unit work programme and direct action if appropriate
- Receive reports on Health and Safety issues submitted by the HSU or key individuals and direct action as appropriate
- Instigate Health and Safety initiatives as appropriate
- Ensure that CMT is regularly updated on all safety issues, initiatives and reported accidents

Personnel Information Network (PIN)

The Personnel Information Network exists to:

- To ensure that Personnel policies and procedures meet Business needs.
- To comment on draft Personnel related policies and procedures.
- To be a key player in implementing new and revised policies and procedures.