

PERSONNEL PARTNERSHIP

2 October 2019

Present:-

Councillors S Aves, A Connett, J Hart (Chair), B Parsons and P Twiss.
Mr A Bowman, Mr M Dyer, Ms D Flemington and Mr S Ryles.

Non-voting Members:-

Ms J Shadbolt (County Solicitor, Chief Officer for Legal, Communications and Human Resources) and Ms J Wilson (Head of Human Resources).

In Attendance

Ms M Davis (County Treasurer), minute *4
Mr S Kitchen (Head of Communities), minute *3
Ms H Marsh (HR Strategy Manager).

Apologies:-

Mr M Richards.

* 1 **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

AGREED that Councillor Hart and Mr Dyer be elected Chair and Vice-Chair respectively for the remainder of the municipal year.

* 2 **Minutes**

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2015 be signed as a correct record.

* 3 **Future Provision of the Devon Library Service**

Following the Devon library service transfer to a mutual organisation, Libraries Unlimited in 2016 the Staff Side sought clarification on: -

- the current status of contractual negotiations;
- the Council consideration of providing additional funding for pay during 2019/20;
- whether the Council would require Libraries Unlimited to provide full union recognition in future arrangements;
- concerns around the perceived reduction in staffing terms & conditions compared to County Council employees;
- how Libraries Unlimited may meet the Fair Living Wage level by 2025 as detailed by central government;
- the Staff Side's desire to see a commitment that all contracted out service employees would receive the same relative pay and increases as County Council staff;
- the Council maintaining its commitment to the existing 50 libraries in Devon; and

- that library buildings would not be transferred to Libraries Unlimited particularly in order gain a capital receipt.

The Partnership further noted:-

- Libraries Unlimited remained a standalone charitable organisation and as such its Board was responsible for setting the pay and terms & conditions of staff. No request for additional funding for the current financial year had been made to the Council;
- Years 4 (current year) and 5 funding had been determined in December 2018 between the County Council and Libraries Unlimited (subject to further negotiation as a result of current economic uncertainties and awaited Provisional Local Government Settlement in December);
- the extension of any additional years contract would not necessarily require a renegotiation of the contact (therefore an option for parties to consider new terms);
- the significant and ongoing opportunities of moving away from a tight arrangement with the County Council which was enabling Libraries Unlimited to take on other contracts, obtain other funding (e.g. Arts Council England) and explore other innovative options. This brought mutual benefit, allowed the growth of the organisation and enabled further opportunities for staff and communities;
- that the County Council was committed to ongoing library services and keeping libraries open, and wished to explore where appropriate, the best use of buildings currently owned and leased across the estate. The Council planned to develop a new strategy for Devon's libraries which would reflect changing needs and demands of citizens, opportunities for development and futureproof the Council's understanding and expectations on libraries for the coming years. No plans for the transfer of library buildings existed; and
- colleagues were encouraged to consider the recent scrutiny session and the CIPFA 2018 publication which highlighted the current performance of libraries in an international and national context. The recognised decline over 10 years in library visits and book issues was a complex picture, but Devon was bucking the trend in some areas e.g. digital downloads and in some smaller libraries (Topsham has seen a 10% increase in book issues in the last six months).

AGREED that the Employers Side noted all the comments of the Staff Side and the opportunities for commissioners to work with Libraries Unlimited on key issues for the service.

* 4

Budget 2019/20

The Staff Side shared the Employers Side concerns at the projected County Council overspend and significant financial strain Education services and Social Care services, in particular, were operating under due to growth in cost and complexity of cases against a background of unprecedented political uncertainty.

The Partnership noted the month 4 budget monitoring Report and update on the Spending Round 2019 to Cabinet (CT/19/87) on 11 September 2019 by way of background. Month 4 total projected overspend was £4.3m assuming adjustments for SEND (£15.8m) and planned contributions to reserves (£8m). Without these adjustments the projected overspending would be £28.1m.

The significant challenge for the County Council continued to be the projected SEND funding shortfall (£15.8m) and was an issue experienced by local authorities nationally (as detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of Report CT/19/87).

Central government underfunding of rural areas continued across many services including education.

Staff Side referred to recruitment and retention issues within both children and adult residential services and settings, the additional training required for staff to support young people with increasing complex needs/mental health needs.

Staff Side were also concerned that long term staff sickness was increasing where staff were not able to access some services in a timely manner eg NHS mental health services and how this may be impacting on staff dismissals.

AGREED that the Head of Human Resources circulate data on dismissals on ill health grounds to the Partnership.

* **5**

Dates of Future Meetings

All meetings commence at 10.30am.

Tuesday 28 April 2020

Tuesday 20 October 2020

Tuesday 27 April 2021.

The County Council Calendar can be found at:-

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.50 am