

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

13th February, 2008

Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee and
Substitute Members

Present:-

Councillor Charley (Substitute for Councillor Arrowsmith)
Councillor Crookes (Substitute for Councillor Ms. Hunter)
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Lee
Councillor Maton
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Ridge
Councillor Williams

Other Scrutiny

Member Present:-

Councillor Lakha

Cabinet Member

Present:-

Councillor Mrs. Johnson (Cabinet Member (Customer,
Workforce and Legal Services))

Employees Present:-

C. Campbell (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. Townsend (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
A. West (Chief Executive's Directorate)

139. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

140. Policy Development

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Customer and Workforce Services that had previously been considered by the Cabinet Member (Customer, Workforce and Legal Services) (her Minute 29/07 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Lakha, Mutton and Clifford. The report presented revisions to two Council policy documents, the Travel and Reimbursement Scheme and the leave of Absence for Special Purposes.

The Travel and Reimbursement Scheme had been in place since 1999, the proposed revisions reflected additional charges that employees could incur when using their own vehicles on Council business, including congestion charges and toll road charges. Also, since the inception of the scheme, the methods of reimbursing employees had changed, the document had been amended to respond to these changes.

With regard to the Leave of Absence Scheme for Special Purposes Policy, the proposed revisions brought together a range of circumstances why employees could require time off work for reasons other than those covered by the provision of annual

leave. The revisions included provision for discretionary unpaid leave for elective surgery, if such procedures and surgery were reported as sickness absence they may, increasingly, contribute to the Council's sickness absence levels. Defining the expectations for employees to pursue elective surgery during their own time (by taking annual leave or discretionary unpaid leave) would ensure consistency in equity across the Council.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officer on aspects of the report, in particular:-

- Payments for use of privately owned bicycles.
- HMRC exemptions for completing an annual return showing personal expenditure reimbursed to employees.
- The Management approach to elective surgery required for psychological reasons.
- The need to ensure that managers across the Council applied the policy consistently.

There were some concerns that a GP may not always be the most appropriate person to provide medical evidence, for example in the case of surgery required for psychological reasons. The Committee requested that the Cabinet Member reconsider the revisions, replacing the term 'GP' with 'Medical Practitioner'. The Committee agreed that time off for medical procedures should be treated consistently across the organisation, the Committee requested that guidance for managers on the treatment of common procedures, such as laser eye surgery, be drawn up. The Committee requested a briefing note be produced once the procedure had been operating for twelve months setting out how the procedure had been used.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Cabinet Member be requested to reconsider the report, replacing the term "G.P" with "Medical Practitioner" in the Leave of Absence for Special Purposes Policy.**
- (2) That officers be requested to draw up guidance for managers on how common procedures should be treated under the Leave of Absence for Special Purposes Policy.**
- (3) Request that officers draw up a briefing note once the procedure has been in operation for 12 months, setting out statistics on the application of the Leave of Absence for Special Purposes Policy.**

141. Call-Ins Stage 1

The Committee noted that no Cabinet and Cabinet Member meetings had been held during the week commencing 4th February, 2008, therefore no decisions were open to call-in this week.

142. Outstanding Issues

The Committee considered and noted a report of the Director of Customer and Workforce Services that had identified those issues on which further reports had been requested so that Members could monitor progress.

143. **2007/08 Work Programme**

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year. The Committee requested that officers give consideration to rolling forward outstanding issues from this year's Work Programme into the new Municipal Year. The Committee went on to debate the implications of the fact that the Cabinet Member plans were not available until late summer on the Work Programmes for Scrutiny. The Committee requested that officers give consideration to the practicalities of the new Cabinet Member Plans being available by June, 2008.