
CHIEF OFFICERS APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE, 05.07.12

Present: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Chairman)
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: David Gwynfor Edwards, Dyfed Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Jean Forsyth, Sian Gwenllian, Peredur Jenkins, Aeron Jones, Eric M. Jones, Linda W. Jones, Angela Russell, R.H. Wyn Williams

Also Present: Harry Thomas (Chief Executive), Alwyn Evans-Jones (Head of Human Resources Department) and Gwyn Parry Williams (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Stephen Churchman, Liz Saville Roberts

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn as Chairman of the Committee for 2012/13.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd as Vice-chairman of the Committee for 2012/13.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

4. POST OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- (a) Submitted – the report of the Chief Executive that the present holder of the post above had accepted a post with a nearby authority and that the post was now vacant. As the Head of the Paid Service, he had a statutory role to advise the Council as to how it should deal with this vacant post which was a very important post, not only because of the size and complexity of the service but also because its very nature captured the essence of public service, which was to help the most needy people in society. In considering the options for dealing with the vacant post, the Council must be balanced. On the one hand, the risk and instability that could arise from losing an experienced and skilful officer must be considered and also therefore the potential side effects of delaying the making of decisions. On the other hand, it also presented an opportunity to think strategically about the type of service and leadership needed in order to deal with the challenges and opportunities that this service, and therefore the Council, would face in the future. Comments by key individuals on national, regional and local levels

had been considered when making the recommendations and he expanded on the nature of those comments in the meeting.

He referred to the service's key strengths and the fields that needed to be improved. He provided details about the three main drivers on the national level namely -

- a) Social Services (Wales) Bill.
- b) Present national funding arrangements for social care were totally unsustainable.
- c) The general financial context.

In relation to the options available to the Council, he noted that the Council could either go into partnership with another Council or advertise externally to fill the post. In addition one of the corporate directors could be appointed to the statutory post and a head of service post without the statutory responsibilities could be created. Or, the post could be advertised internally without any changes to the present post or advantage taken of the vacancy in order to restructure services to create a new department.

The options were assessed and the possibility of advertising externally with the leadership of the two nearby authorities in the North West was discussed, and for various reasons, both agreed that this approach would be a high-risk one at present. Therefore he was of the opinion that the post should be advertised internally by restructuring in order to achieve more efficiencies and better change management by integrating the present Social Services Department with aspects of the present Provider and Leisure Department. He noted that the current social care functions on the provider side were the ones with obvious synergy. However, bearing in mind the importance of the preventative agenda in the future, he was of the opinion that synergy with the leisure service could be realised should it be included in the new department. The remaining functions of the Provider and Leisure Department, namely cleaning and catering, could be reallocated to client departments e.g. catering to the Education Department. The location of the housing service within the Council in the future could also be considered.

He noted that integrating services internally was not the only opportunity to realise efficiency and improve user experiences – further external integration with health also offered opportunities. Gwynedd had already embarked on this route but some authorities in Wales had already gone further. Also, the new Social Services (Wales) Bill proposed to introduce new powers to strengthen the internal and external integration of social care services in order to make better use of the capacity that already existed across the public sector in Wales.

He drew attention that the core skills and competencies required for this post should reflect the main challenges and opportunities that faced the service in the near future. The successful candidate would need to demonstrate enterprise and innovation, effective change management and leadership skills and strong customer focus and these were essential requirements for the post. A more traditional approach would demand that professional qualifications in social care should also be one of the essential requirements.

However, although it was considered that professional qualifications should be desirable rather than essential, they should be a consideration in the appointment process. Therefore, should the successful candidate not have professional qualifications there should be a requirement to compensate for this through development activities such as peer support and mentoring.

He provided details of the timetable in relation to advertising/appointing to the post. He suggested that a sub-committee of three or five members of the committee could be established to draw the short list.

- (b) Members were invited to make observations.
- (i) A member referred that it was necessary at the time of local government reorganisation in 1996 for the Head of Social Services to have qualifications in the field. He noted that greater emphasis was now placed on the business elements of the post.

In response, the Chief Executive informed that experience in the health and care field were also relevant factors and in relation to continuation and the ability to progress quickly to fill the post, knowledge of the Council's experience and procedures was very useful. In relation to the proposal to merge the two departments, he noted that several Councils had already done so. He anticipated opportunities hereby to reduce costs.

- (ii) A member noted, as this was a statutory post, that it was important to appoint person with experience of the field to the post.

In response, the Chief Executive informed the committee that this was not critical in terms of the post's requirements. He noted that it was important to alleviate any risks that would be associated with a person who was inexperienced in the field and he drew attention to the methods of doing so. In terms of the fact that critical core skills were needed for the post the advice given by external consultants would be followed.

- (iii) A member noted his wish to merge the Care Unit with the Health Unit.
- (iv) Another member welcomed the restructuring that was recommended since it was a way to reduce the senior tier of officers in order to generate savings. However, he expressed concern about the work load for one head of department especially when taking over the leisure fields.

In response, the Chief Executive informed the committee that the current head of department's remit in her new post with Anglesey County Council would be much broader than the remit of the post within this Council as it would include not only leisure centres but also libraries and the arts.

- (V) In response to a question from a member in relation to the statutory role, the Chief Executive informed that it would be possible to appoint a person without social services qualifications to the post and that this already existed in some councils in Wales. The statutory function should not be allocated on a lower level than head of service.

- (vi) A member was of the opinion that the words "who will be a Statutory Officer" should be added to recommendation 8.4 of the report.
- (vii) A member proposed an amendment that the post should be advertised externally and that the post-holder should have the appropriate qualifications in the social services field.

The amendment fell.

RESOLVED

a) To merge the Housing and Social Services Department with parts of the Provider and Leisure Department.

b) To transfer the remaining parts of the Provider and Leisure Department to other departments – these exact details are to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council Leader.

c) That the new post deriving from restructuring is to be advertised internally.

ch) That the new post-holder, who will be a Statutory Officer, receives a mandate to establish a new management structure that achieves the objectives of further internal and external integration.

d) To hold a meeting of the committee at 3.00pm on 20 July 2012 to draw the short list.

(Councillor Aeron Jones requested for it to be recorded that he had abstained his vote).

The meeting commenced at 10:00am. and concluded at 11.45am.