

JOINT CABINET AND EMPLOYMENT & GENERAL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 18th July, 2023

Present:-

Councillor Gilby (Chair)

Councillors	Holmes	Councillors	Falconer
	Serjeant		J Innes
	Baldauf-Good		P Innes
	Brock		Sarvent
	Davenport		Staton
	Davies		Stone

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

1 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting of Joint Cabinet and Employment & General Committee held on 7 February, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY SCHEME

The Service Director for Digital, HR and Customer Services presented a report seeking the adoption of a new Voluntary Redundancy and

Voluntary Early Retirement policy which would support the Council in meeting its future savings targets. The policy supplemented the position that was included within the Council's Restructure, Redeployment and Redundancy policy.

The report also recommended that a Voluntary Redundancy (VR) and Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) scheme was launched to employees from 27 July 2023. This scheme would help to underpin future service reshapes and staff reductions.

Chesterfield Borough Council had offered employees the opportunity to request VR or VER for several years. The existing scheme was first introduced in 2016, with an initial request from the Council to ask for volunteers to leave the organisation during a fixed period. The scheme had subsequently remained available for employees to request that their role was considered for VR or VER on an ad hoc basis.

In view of the significant financial pressure the Council was under, it was expected that there would be a further requirement to implement a reduced workforce by the end of 2023-24. As a result, the Council's VR and VER procedures had been reviewed and updated to support this need, with the expectation that around 30 full time equivalent posts would be saved as part of this approach.

A new policy had been developed and was attached at appendix 1 of the Director's report, and if approved, the scheme would be opened for applications from 27 July 2023 – 15 September 2023. All applications would be considered by the Council's Workforce Planning Group and S151 officer, in consultation with Trade Unions. A final decision would be taken by the Chief Executive.

It was noted that consultation in respect of the proposed policy and processes had been undertaken with the Trade Unions prior to consideration by elected members.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the adoption of a new voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement policy be approved.

2. That the launch of a voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement scheme, to be open between 27 July 2023 and 15 September 2023, be approved.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

Launching a voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement scheme will support the Council's budget strategy and help to minimise the requirement for compulsory redundancies in the future.

5 SKILLS ACTION PLAN REFRESH

The Senior Economic Development Officer presented an update on the development of the Skills Action Plan, including the establishment of the Chesterfield Skills and Employment Partnership and to seek Cabinet approval for the refreshed Skills Action Plan 2023-27 and for the appointment of a new fixed term post to support the delivery of the UKSPF Skills Brokerage Project.

The purpose of the Skills Action Plan was to provide a framework of activity that supported the overall aim of the Chesterfield's Growth Strategy 2023 – 2027. The Skills Action Plan was attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report.

The refreshed Skills Action Plan had been developed following an extensive evidence review, consultation and input from a dedicated steering group. Chesterfield Borough Council had worked with a steering group of partners to develop the plan (attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report), ensuring it was owned and would be delivered collaboratively by those who could make a difference, with governance through a newly established Skills & Employment Partnership.

The Skills and Employment Partnership would sit alongside other strategic community wellbeing partnerships within the Chesterfield System Framework, formalising existing partner and stakeholder relationships to provide a forum from which to support delivery of and maximise the benefits of national and regional funding; thereby creating a mechanism for better and stronger delivery of skills activity in Chesterfield. Appendix 4 of the officer's report detailed the terms of reference for the partnership and showed the structure of the Chesterfield Community Wellbeing Systems Framework.

The Skills Action Plan set out 12 actions across 6 priority themes, which were detailed in Table 1 in the officer' report.

Activity within the Skills Action Plan would be monitored by the Council's skills delivery function, with regular updates provided to the Skills and Employment Partnership.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the refreshed Skills Action Plan 2023-2027 be approved.
2. That the proposed appointment of a new fixed term post to support the delivery of the UKSPF Skills Brokerage Project be approved.
3. That the Service Director - Economic Growth, in consultation the Service Director – Finance, be authorised to finalise arrangements in respect of the procurement for commissioned activity contained within the Skills Action Plan.
4. That authority be delegated to the Service Director - Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, to make minor amendments to the final version of the Skills Action Plan prior to publication.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

1. To secure the adoption of the Skills Action Plan (2023-2027).
2. To ensure the successful delivery of activity within Skills Action Plan (2023-2027), including the People and Skills Investment Priority of the Chesterfield UKSPF Investment Plan.

6 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on

the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

7 REVIEW OF CATERING

The Service Director for Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing presented a report to set out the results of a review of the council's catering operations at its two facilities, the Market Hall and Queens Park Sports Centre, and consider the future operation of the facilities.

The primary focus of the review had been on the financial performance of the facilities, given the discretionary nature of their provision and the challenging financial situation facing the Council.

The financial performance for Queens Park Sports Centre café was set out in Appendix 1 of the Director's report. It compared the original budget for 2022/23 and the actual 2022/23 outturn position. The outturn position for 2022/23 showed that Queens Park Sports Centre café significantly under-performed against its budgeted position.

The financial performance for Market Hall café was set out in Appendix 2 of the Director's report. The Market Hall café had also under-performed against the original budget for 2022/23, but to a much lesser degree than Queens Park Sports Centre café.

Since the original review and petition debate, the Council had been approached by a third party who had expressed an interest in operating the Queens Park Sports Centre café on a commercial basis. Taking this into account, together with the positive interest that had been presented to the Council, it was recommended to Members that a commercial lease be developed and offered for the operation of both of the Council's café operations.

There would be implications for staff working at both café facilities whatever the final outcome. These were set out in the Human Resources section of the Director's report. Staff would be supported throughout the process and the Council would work with trade unions, following HR policies and procedures, as the implications for staff become clearer.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the results of the review of the council's catering operations at the Market Hall and Queens Park Sports Centre and the outcomes of the petition debate at Full Council on 22 February 2023 be noted.
2. That officers be authorised to offer a commercial lease opportunity for the operation of one or both of the cafés by third party operators and if suitable offers are received, to enter into appropriate lease arrangements.
3. That the closure of Queens Park Sports Centre café be approved should no suitable commercial lease arrangement be secured.
4. That, subject to resolution 3, officers be authorised to investigate, and implement the extension of the existing food and beverage vending facilities at Queens Park Sports Centre to provide an enhanced food and beverage vending offer at the facility.
5. That the continued operation of the Market Hall café directly by the Council, be approved, should no suitable commercial lease arrangement be secured.
6. That, subject to resolution 5, officers be authorised to continue to actively manage the Market Hall café to support the development and improvement of its operation and financial performance.
7. That the staffing implications associated with these changes, as set out in the Human Resources implications sections of the report be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

1. The council's catering provision is a discretionary service and as with any service it is appropriate to carry out regular reviews of performance to ensure that a relevant and value for money offer was still able to be provided.
2. The Council continues to face significant financial challenges. The sustained period of austerity since 2010, the ongoing risks and uncertainties over future funding arrangements, the budgetary impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a sustained period of

exceptionally high inflation, have all impacted on the Council's financial position.

3. The performance of Queens Park Sports Centre café is not at a level that was sustainable by the Council, it carried significant risk of budget overspend and is not considered to be offering value for money for residents of the borough.
4. The Market Hall café operation is currently considered manageable in terms of its financial performance in the context of its key role within the Market Hall in supporting tenants and their associated economic activity.
5. It is considered appropriate to offer the opportunity to third parties to take a commercial lease for the operation of one or both of the cafés. If this is not successful then consideration must be given to the sustainability, budget risks and value for money that is being provided by the current in-house operations.