

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 8th February 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A M Blackwell – Vice-Chair in the Chair.

Councillors S Cawley, C M Gleadow, D N Keane,
B A Mickelburgh and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M A Hassall and P A Jordan.

IN ATTENDANCE: R Turner and M Ward (Unison) and C Easter (Employee Representative)

15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

17 WORKFORCE REPORT QUARTER THREE 2022-23

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st October to 31st December 2022. The report included the latest position and trends relating to employee numbers, salary costs and sickness absence. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

The Committee was informed that the total number of employees at the end of the last quarter was lower than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay costs for employees in 2022/23 was forecasted to be £1,525,434 lower than the year's budget.

The report indicated that one employee had retired in the quarter. Members recognised the employee's achievements and asked that their congratulations be passed on.

In response to a question by Councillor West on whether the overspend on contractors was partly caused by difficulties recruiting to empty posts, it was confirmed that some roles were covered by agencies and that ways of reducing spending on contractors were being investigated. However, some sections, such as Operations and Planning, routinely needed to use temporary employees and it was sometimes necessary to use contractors to obtain specific skills. Generally, the Council aimed to use permanent staff where at all possible.

Following a further question by Councillor Cawley, the Strategic HR Manager reported that it was a challenge to find published comparison data from other local authorities on sickness absence, but it was recognised as a national issue arising from such factors as Covid and increases of mental ill-health. On a related subject, the Strategic HR Manager outlined the difficulties associated with monitoring uptake of vaccinations. Officers agreed to carry out further work on sickness absence trends by service compared with other councils. It was then

RESOLVED

- a) that the contents of the report be noted, and
- b) that the Council place on record its recognition of and gratitude for the excellent contribution made by the employee who have recently retired from employment in the local government service and pass on its best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

18 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/2024

With the assistance of a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee considered the draft 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement. The Statement provided information about the Council's policies relating to the pay and reward of Chief Officers and other employees, as required by the Localism Act. The Statement would be published on the Council's website together with data on Senior Officers' salaries as required by the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

Having noted the requirement for the Statement to be approved by the Council, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.

19 NEW POLICY - TIME OFF FOR TRADE UNION DUTIES

Consideration was given to a report by the Strategic HR Manager to which was attached a proposed new policy relating to Time Off for Trade Union Duties. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book. During their deliberations on the Policy, Members focussed on what was considered to be reasonable time off. While national standard procedures would be taken into account, they were advised that the particular circumstances within the Council also would be relevant. It was suggested that potential terms for checks and balances should be examined to establish an agreed context for the Policy. It was further suggested that time off recorded for Union duties should be incorporated into the quarterly Workforce Report. However, to avoid delaying the commencement of closer working between management and the Union, it was agreed that the Managing Director should review and amend the Policy along the lines referred to by Members and the outcome reported to the next meeting. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

that the Managing Director be requested to review and amend the draft Time Off for Union Duties Policy to include clearer guidance on what is considered to be reasonable time off and the outcome be reported to the next meeting.

20 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

No matters were identified for consideration.

Chair

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