

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2015

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**Agenda Item
No.**

- (d) Employment Panel (Pages 95 - 98)

Report of the meeting held on 23rd September 2015 to follow.

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Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 23rd September 2015

Matters for Information

7. **JOB EVALUATION POLICY**

The Panel has been acquainted with changes to the processes and the membership of panels undertaking Job Evaluation. The Job Evaluation Questionnaire has been amended to make it more constructive and the outcomes more accurate. The guidance also has been made clearer.

With regard to the membership of Job Evaluation Panels, an additional 12 Officers have been trained in Job Evaluation, thereby extending the pool of available Officers. As a result, the rules on the composition of Panels have been amended so that they now comprise two senior officers with one from Senior Management Team and one Staff Council representative. This is considered to be more flexible.

The Panel has supported the changes made to the arrangements for preparation for job evaluations, for the evaluations themselves and for moderation on the grounds that they will lead to better outcomes.

8. **EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2015**

The Panel has received a presentation on the views expressed through the Employee Opinion Survey 2015. The presentation was substantially the same as the one delivered to employees.

The Survey largely repeated questions previously asked in 2014, in order to assist with the identification of trends. It aimed to demonstrate to employees that the organisation is listening to them and that management wants to work with them to address the issues raised.

The response rate of 55% is considered to be good for a local authority and improvements against 94% of the questions compared with the findings in 2014 is a positive result. The Panel is, however, aware that general results across the organisation do not reveal variations between sections.

Members have been acquainted with the broad findings under each of the subject areas in the questionnaire. While there has been an overall improvement since last year, management are not complacent and is seeking to understand better precisely what the views expressed mean.

Referring to the results on bullying, harassment and discrimination, Members have stressed that these will not be tolerated. They also have highlighted the need to improve the Council's internal communications. Management and leadership training will be key in achieving the latter.

It has been recognised that many of the areas that require work cannot easily or quickly be resolved. The Panel will receive a more detailed breakdown of the results once they have been presented to Officers. Heads of Service will receive detailed data on their sections compared with trends across the Council. It is intended to co-opt Officers and Staff Council into fully understanding what the issues are facing the Council and into introducing measures to develop the organisational culture.

9. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 1)

The Panel has received a quarterly report on Human Resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation during the period 1st April to 30th June 2015. The report includes the latest position and trends relating to:-

- employee numbers;
- salary costs; and
- sickness absence reporting.

In reviewing the workforce information, Members have been informed that the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts has increased slightly and this has led to an increase of approximately £4k in the monthly salary cost. They also have noted the reasons why employees have left the Council. Despite the increase in FTE posts, the longer term trend reflects a significant overall reduction in numbers. The Panel has been pleased to note that feedback from customers indicates the Council is continuing to deliver excellent services.

The Panel has been advised that the annual number of days lost to sickness per FTE has decreased and, compared to the last quarter, the total number of sickness days has reduced by 87 days. Members have been acquainted with the reasons for sickness absence, which include the introduction of the Employee Well-Being Scheme in March. Members have, nevertheless, requested further analysis in future reports of the causes and type of sickness and of variations within sections. The reported trends continue to be affected by the reduction in the size of the workforce. Information on the HR caseload indicates that the Council is dealing with all instances of sickness where this is necessary.

Five individuals have retired from the Council's service who had a combined length of service of 129 years. Members have placed on record their recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contributions the individuals have made during their employment in the local government service. The Panel has noted with regret that one of them, Mr C Sneesby who was employed in Operations, died shortly after retiring. Members have conveyed their best wishes to the remaining individuals for long and happy retirements.

10. LGSS QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT

The Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services across the key service measures agreed under the current contract during the period 1st April to 30th June 2015. For the first time, the report has been compiled by the Council rather than LGSS. Members have concurred with the view that the report now contains better and more useful data. The report will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the organisation.

LGSS performance is measured in four areas, namely:

- General Service Standards;
- HR Strategic and Advisory;
- Recruitment and Payroll; and
- Organisational workforce development.

Members have been informed that high levels of accuracy have been achieved by the payroll service. They have, however, queried how the target has been arrived at. While it is currently set at 95%, this reflects historical performance. It has been suggested that a more challenging target should be introduced. This will be discussed with LGSS during contract monitoring procedures.

With regard to future development, the Panel has been informed that an exercise is to be carried out to establish whether any of the policies employed by LGSS' other partner organisations could usefully be employed by the Council. Furthermore, analysis will be undertaken of the training arrangements and of course contents to inform subsequent agreements for training services. In addition, Members have been acquainted with progress of the harmonisation of HR processes and policies between the three Councils who are party to the shared service agreement.

11. DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

The Panel has reviewed and endorsed a Drug and Alcohol Policy. The Policy builds on the existing procedures by introducing additional provisions for individuals in non-safety critical roles. It also now applies to Members.

The policy aims to:

- promote greater awareness of how alcohol, drugs and substance misuse and/or dependency can be prevented;
- achieve a balance between employee support and discipline when dealing with isolated incidents of substance misuse or employees who have dependency problems;
- encourage and support self-referral or intervention at an early stage of dependency; and
- meet the Council's legal obligation to discharge its duty of care to its employees and clients.

The policy is directed primarily at safety critical roles. Members have welcomed the fact that it emphasises the importance of identifying individuals' health and well-being issues so that they can be provided with support.

J W Davies
Chairman