

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT PANEL held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 3 February 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – Chairman.  
Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs A D Curtis, Mrs L A Duffy, T Hayward, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S Cawley.

### **26. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **27. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were received.

### **28. STAFF COUNCIL**

The Staff Council informed the Panel of changes in its membership following the election in January 2016. Out of the total of eleven representatives, six were new. The induction process had already commenced and training would be provided as appropriate.

### **29. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 3)**

The Panel received and noted a report by the Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the organisation during the period 1st October to 31st December 2015. The report included the latest position and trends relating to:-

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

In reviewing the workforce information, Members were informed that that the workforce headcount had increased slightly since the last quarter as a result of staff joining the Council through the new Shared Service arrangements. Similarly, the monthly salary cost during the quarter had increased but this did not take into account the fact that budgets associated with the Shared Services also had transferred to the Council. To accommodate such changes associated with Shared Services, the reporting format would be revised in the future.

Members were advised that the level of absence through sickness had increased by 354 days when compared to the previous quarter. The total days lost in the Quarter was the highest absence rate ever recorded. This was mainly owing to a very high level of long-term sickness. In the circumstances, Members questioned what the causes of the reported trends were and what was being done about them. In response, they were informed that it was largely an inherited position and the Executive Councillor for Organisational Change and Development had developed proposals, which were expected to produce an improving trend in the next quarter.

A key change to reduce sickness levels was the adoption of a more consistent approach by management. In addition, there were a range of measures in place in relation to stress. With regard to the latter, the Panel emphasised the need to identify stress as early as possible. More generally, they also drew attention to the fact that the Council had an ageing workforce, which was likely to result in higher levels of absence through sickness.

Four employees had retired from the Council's service who had a combined length of service of 44 years. Members placed on record their recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contributions the individuals had made during their employment in the local government service.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

### **30. LGSS QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT (QUARTER 3)**

The Panel gave consideration to a joint report by the Corporate Team Manager, Programme and Project Manager and LGSS HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing data on the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services against the key service measures agreed under the current contract during the period 1st October to 31st December 2015. LGSS' performance was measured in four areas, namely:

- General Service Standards;
- HR Strategic and Advisory;
- Recruitment and Payroll; and
- Organisational Workforce Development

Pursuant to Minute No. 15/25 Members noted the position in respect of payroll accuracy. The Panel then paid particular attention to the arrangements for training. The Council had centralised the coordination of training and there had been a consequential change in the requirements of LGSS in this respect. Discussions were taking place to ensure resources were available to meet the training requirements identified in service plans. LGSS had indicated they were prepared to be flexible and, as far as was reasonably possible, to accommodate changes to the training provided. In order to make the best use of the contract, the take-up profile of training was likely to

be very different next year.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

### **31. EMPLOYMENT MATTERS WITHIN SECTIONS**

The Panel was reminded that this item had been added to the Agenda to enable Members to focus on the Key Metrics contained in the Workforce Development Strategy Plan on a Page. The purpose of Heads of Service attending regular meetings was to update Members on their service areas in relation to appropriate Key Metrics. It also ensured significant issues were addressed and challenged where necessary.

Mr A Merrick, Interim Head of Operations, informed Members that he had been tasked with introducing into Operations a new operating model centred on the customer. This had involved becoming more strategically driven with a greater focus on priorities. It also had been necessary to establish a new management structure and restructure the workforce. The latter had resulted in increases in employees' motivation and direction. An Operations forum was to be introduced shortly to obtain employees' views. In addition, sickness levels were being tackled by requiring teams to carry out their own sickness monitoring and holding weekly meetings with LGSS. Furthermore, advice on healthy lifestyles was provided.

In response to a question by a Member, Mr Merrick confirmed that One Leisure was involved in promoting healthy lifestyles. Public health funding had made this possible and meant it could be made available across the Council.

Mr C Stopford, Head of Community Services, then addressed the Panel. He referred to the key issues facing his section, which included sickness, restructuring of elements of the section, professional development and other training and staff turnover. Councillor R J West queried whether all checks of premises were carried out. In response, Members were informed that the service targeted resources based on intelligence, which incorporated reports by the public.

The Heads of Customer Services and of Development would make presentations to the Panel at the next meeting.

### **32. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ON A PAGE**

By means of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel was acquainted with the progress that has been made relating to the Workforce Development Strategy and with the Workforce Development Strategy Plan on a Page, which had been produced to give staff and Members an overview of the full Strategy. Various pieces of work to drive forward change and improvement had been completed, including:

- the introduction of a new appraisal process;
- centralised coordination of training;

- more robust management of the LGSS contract;
- all services now had a service plan with clear links to the Corporate Plan and the Customer Service Strategy;
- improved Council-wide communications;
- full staff access to the HDC network was now available at partner sites; and
- analysis had been undertaken of all employees' working patterns in order to facilitate further hot-desking opportunities and generate income from space utilisation.

Having examined the purpose of the introduction of Net Promoter Scores, which involved asking the same questions of employees at regular intervals to gauge trends, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Workforce Development Strategy Plan on a Page be endorsed.

### **33. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17**

With the assistance of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) the Panel considered a proposed 2016/17 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 Sections 38-43 of the Localism Act. It was noted that, in accordance with Government guidance, the Statement contained more information than the previous year. It would be published on the Council's website together with data on senior salaries required by the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to authorise the Head of Paid Service, after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Panel and the relevant Executive Councillor, to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17.

### **34. EMPLOYEE SURVEY - ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report by Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress with the development of an Action Plan in response to the results of the Employee Opinion Survey. The Action Plan had been drafted following consultation with staff. A focus group had subsequently been held with a cross-section of employees from across the organisation, including a representative from the Staff Council, where many of the proposals had been discussed and additional suggestions put forward. The Corporate Management Team had reviewed the actions and agreed responsibilities and timescales for them.

Having formed the view that delivering the actions contained in the Plan would contribute towards the continuing improvement in morale

and help further to improve the working environment for employees in all services, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Employee Opinion Survey Action Plan be endorsed.

### **35. GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Lead HR Manager (LGSS) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended a revised Grievance Policy and associated procedure. It was explained that the documents had been streamlined and clarified. What cannot be raised as a grievance had been defined to avoid misuse of the Policy and it made clear that financial compensation would not be one of the potential outcomes. Furthermore, it placed greater emphasis on resolving grievances quickly and effectively through more use of informal mechanisms, by specifying that grievances could not relate to incidents more than 12 months old and through the removal of the second stage of appeal. Other changes included:

- grievances would be raised through management rather than through HR;
- the stages of the procedure had been revised and were clearly stated;
- mediation could be used at any stage; and
- the Council was not obliged to hear grievances from former employees.

Finally, the links to the Disciplinary procedure were outlined. This applied where an employee raised a grievance as a direct result of disciplinary action being taken against him/her, where an employee raised a grievance at the same time misconduct was alleged against him/her or where the disciplinary procedure was invoked against another employee following investigation of a grievance.

RESOLVED

that the Grievance Policy and Procedure appended to the report now submitted be endorsed.

### **36. DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

With the assistance of to a report by the Lead HR Manager (LGSS) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel reviewed the contents of a revised Disciplinary Policy and procedure. The purpose and when it applied had been clarified and its scope remained the same. The changes included:

- greater clarity on the right to be accompanied at different stages of the procedure;
- there were now only four levels of disciplinary actions; and
- there was now no second right of appeal but the right of appeal to a higher authority remained.

The documents contained new sections on special circumstances to be taken into account, on links to other procedures and on advice and support.

RESOLVED

that the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure appended to the report now submitted be endorsed.

Chairman