

# HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 12th February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, D N Keane, Mrs J Tavener and D M Tysoe.

APOLOGYIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs P A Jordan, T D Sanderson and D Terry.

IN ATTENDANCE: A Barber, C Moss and D Moss.

## **22 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4th September 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **23 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were received.

## **24 WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 3)**

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 2019. 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 report indicated that three employees had retired in the quarter. Members recognised the employees' achievements and conveyed their congratulations to them.

The Committee was informed that the workforce headcount was lower than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay costs for employees in 2019/20 was forecast to be £1m less than the year's budget. Clarification was received that the figures for bonuses referred to non-consolidated payments for exceptional performance. Members drew attention to the positive position in respect of the gender pay gap.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that 72% of the workforce had no instances of sickness absence during the quarter, while 26 employees had experienced long-term sickness compared with 12 in the previous quarter. In response to questions by a Member, it was reported that the trends reported were influenced by very low long term sickness rates in the previous quarter.

and reflected usual seasonal variations. There was no cause for concern. It was confirmed that the Managing Director received sickness analysis reports.

Members discussed mental health and anxiety. While details of individual cases were confidential, the Mental Health First Aiders were examining trends. The outcome would be made available to HR. It was accepted that personal circumstances contributed to absence for reasons of anxiety, mental health, depression and stress but recognised that the Council was taking action to address them through the identification of Themes affecting the wider society in the Annual Governance Statement.

In the context of employees leaving the Council, it was reported that a level of turnover was beneficial. However, it was important to understand the reasons for leaving. Exit interviews were used but could not be made compulsory, so ways of encouraging leavers to provide such feedback would be investigated. Staff Council offered to support this process.

Having requested confirmation of the figures for High Earners and of the reasons for changes in the number of individuals in this category, it was

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 contributions made by the three employees who have recently retired from their employment in the local government service and convey its best wishes to them for long and happy retirements.

## **25 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21**

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 2020/21 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 format of the Statement had been amended to make the presentation of the information clearer. It 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. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21.

## **26 STAFF COUNCIL**

The current Chairman, George McDowell, had resigned from Staff Council. A replacement would be elected on 25th February. Until then Colin Moss would be acting as Chairman.

The Staff Council representatives then outlined their concerns relating to the current discussions on pay. To put the matter into context, Members were informed that, owing to a series of changes in the Staff Council membership, a proposed process, which had previously been submitted to the Committee (Minute No 18/31 refers), had not been formally ratified by Staff Council. Furthermore, the process had to comply with the Council's Budget setting process. It was proposed that the documented process should be revisited with a view to it being adopted, including seeking endorsement by the Employment Committee. The process would then be followed. In addition, HR would assist Staff Council to establish clear processes and to manage the way it operated. Staff Council Representatives expressed support for these proposals.

Chairman