

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, 22 May 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs P A Jordan, D N Keane, T D Sanderson, Mrs J Tavener and D M Tysoe.

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

4 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed Councillor T D Sanderson to his first meeting of the Committee.

5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 13th February and 15th May 2019 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

6 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

7 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

The Committee received a presentation by Ms C Ward, the Learning and Development Manager, on the Mental Health First Aid initiative. She referred to its terms of reference, the approval of the Time to Change plan, the fact that to-date 359 conversations had been held with individuals on mental health matters and the Mental Health First Aid qualification. 31 Council employees had completed the qualification. The cost of training under the initiative amounted to £14k. Ms Ward concluded by outlining the initiatives that had been implemented including holding a stress awareness month, the production of communication materials, the establishment of a quiet area and the trend towards a reduction in absence attributed to mental health causes.

During discussion the Committee established that the Council now was able to train its own Mental Health First Aiders and that the outcomes of the initiative were difficult to measure. Members, nevertheless, concurred with a suggestion that there would be benefit in receiving an annual update on this subject.

The Committee was of the view that the initiative demonstrated the value the Council placed on its employees and that the Council was a caring employer. Having expressed their gratitude for the contributions made by the Mental Health First Aiders, it was

RESOLVED

that an annual update report be submitted to the Committee on the Mental Health First Aid initiative.

8 ICARE VALUE - ENTERPRISING

The Lead Human Resources Manager advised Members that to coincide with the anniversary of the adoption of the ICARE values, an awards ceremony would be held to recognise Officers who had been nominated by their colleagues for exhibiting the Council's values. The ceremony would be held on 11th June 2019, and Members of the Committee were invited to attend.

The Lead HR Manager went on to define the Enterprising value and invited the Committee to consider how the Council might employ it as an organisation and through its engagement with the community. Following discussion, Members reported on the broad conclusions they had reached. Detailed accounts of their deliberations would be used to develop ICARE.

9 EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2018 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

With the aid of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Committee received a presentation on progress of the two Phases of actions that had been identified to respond to issues resulting from the Employee Survey 2018. Mr A Dobbyne, the Corporate Team Manager, informed Members that Phase 1 comprised 27 actions. Motivation was a particular issue and examples were provided of the actions that had been taken. He emphasised the importance of involving employees and of ensuring commitments were delivered. A total of 40 actions would be undertaken through the two phases of work.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the individual performance management process now required a minimum of four meetings per year with managers compared with the previous requirement to hold an annual and a mid-year review. Following a further question, it was reported that to encourage employees to respond to the survey, the confidentiality of responses was assured; however other ways of providing support to enable employees to respond would be considered. Finally, a comment was made about the rate at which employees indicated that did not feel appreciated. The ICARE awards would assist in this respect and generally, compliments were beneficial.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

10 WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 4)

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st January to 31st March 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.

Having noted the numbers of individuals who had left and joined the Council, the Committee was informed that the workforce headcount was slightly lower than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay for employees in 2018/19 was forecast to be £2.1m less than budgeted for the year. In addition, 73% of the workforce had no instances of sickness absence during the quarter. 17 employees had experienced long-term sickness, which was a reduction from 26 in the previous quarter.

The Committee discussed the effect of the customer portal on employment. Digital was increasingly being adopted by customer facing organisations and had benefits for the Council in terms of cost. Managers had been asked to identify processes that had the potential to be delivered through the portal, though it was recognised that there was a need to improve communications through it. A Member requested guidance for parish councils on the portal. The Head of Resources undertook to forward the request to the Assistant Director (Transformation).

In response to a question, the Committee was informed that fire alarm tests took place on a monthly basis. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

11 REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Consideration was given to a report by the HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on pay and reward. Members were reminded of the decisions that had been taken in 2018/19 in relation to pay. Staff Council had been consulted and had expressed support for them. They would be communicated to Employees after the meeting.

Members then were informed of the objectives of the review of pay and reward in 2019/20 and of the factors that had been taken into account. The Committee discussed the range of options being considered and the research and consultation that had been undertaken. The People Group had been asked to generate ideas for this purpose. The options included measuring teams' performance, a system of instant rewards, incremental progression and, subject to the requirements of their services, allowing employees to purchase additional leave. Members endorsed the approach that had been adopted. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

12 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CONSTITUTION OF THE STAFF COUNCIL

To enable representatives of Staff Council to be present to discuss the terms of a report containing proposed Terms of Reference and Constitution of the Staff Council (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), it was

RESOLVED

consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting.

13 STAFF COUNCIL

No matters had been identified for consideration.

Chairman