

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, 21 June 2023

PRESENT: Councillor P A Jordan – Chair.

Councillors A M Blackwell, S Cawley, C M Gleadow,
M A Hassall, D N Keane, J E Kerr and R J West.

APOLOGIES: None.

IN ATTENDANCE: D Pope and S Russell (Unison) and C Easter (Employee Representative)

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 8th February and 17th May 2023 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

5 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

6 WORKFORCE REPORT QUARTER FOUR 2022-23

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 2023. 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 £374k lower than the year's budget.

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

Councillor West expressed concern at the number of employees who identified pay as their reason for leaving the Council and the associated challenge pay presented for recruiting new employees. In response, Councillor Hassall commented that pay had previously been number six on employees' list of employment priorities but that this might have changed. He reported that the Council was looking at new ways of raising revenue to help to address the situation. In addition, the Strategic HR Manager advised Members that external experts were helping the Council to establish best practice for recruitment.

Furthermore, a charity was providing support to individuals with the aim of retaining them in the Councils' employment.

On a related subject, following a question by Councillor Cawley, the Strategic HR Manager agreed to investigate whether the decrease in the size of the workforce had contributed to the increase in sickness levels.

Councillor Gleadow commented on the level of training provided to employees. It was explained that applications had initially been invited for Level 3 courses, but that the Council was now looking at training at Levels 5 to 7.

Following an enquiry by the Chair on the perception amongst employees of low morale, the Strategic HR Manager clarified that the finding related to how individuals perceived other employees and confirmed she would be meeting with groups of employees to try to understand why this was the case. 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 employees who have recently retired from employment in the local government service and pass on its best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

7 WORKFORCE PROFILE REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which contained the annual summary of the workforce according to their protected characteristics as required by the Equality Act 2010. Having had their attention drawn to the aims of the Equality Duty, Members discussed the Council's plans to hold activities to highlight inclusivity and diversity, which included working with other councils on an Equality Pledge.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

8 USE OF CONSULTANTS, HIRED STAFF AND TEMPORARY STAFF 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report by the Chief Finance Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing the annual monitoring information on the use of interim staff. Members were informed that compared with the previous year there had been a net decrease of 306k in the cost of interim staff and that all expenditure was within budget.

In response to a question by Councillor Gleadow, the Committee was informed that capital projects required interim staff to provide specialist key skills that the Council did not possess, such as project management or in relation to commercial estates. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

9 HR POLICY UPDATE

By means of a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was acquainted with the outcome of reviews of three policies. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the adjustments passport transferred with individuals if they left to take up employment with another employer.

In response to a question by Councillor Gleadow it was reported that employees could buy up to a maximum of five days of additional leave. Having noted the intention to incorporate volunteering into the Council's Workforce Strategy, it was

RESOLVED

that the Disability at Work, Improving Performance and Leave Arrangements Policies be endorsed.

10 REVISED POLICY - TIME OFF FOR TRADE UNION DUTIES

Pursuant to Minute No 23/19, consideration was given to a further report by the Strategic HR Manager following the completion of further work on what was considered to be reasonable time off for trade union duties. A copy of the report is appended in the minute Book.

Members were informed that benchmarking had been carried out with similar other local authorities and that a flexible approach would be adopted so that the time off allowed would be sufficient to allow individuals to fulfil their union role. Having reiterated their request for information on health and safety matters, it was

RESOLVED

that the Time Off for Trade Union Duties Policy appended to the report now submitted be endorsed.

11 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

No matters were identified for consideration.

Chair