

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, 22nd November 2023

PRESENT: Councillor P A Jordan – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: None.

IN ATTENDANCE: C Easter – Employee Representatives Group.

19 MINUTES

Subject to the deletion of the words “In response to a question by Councillor” from the end of paragraph three of Minute No 14, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th September 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

21 WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT - QUARTER TWO 2023-24

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st July to 30th September 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 higher than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay costs for employees in 2023/24 was forecasted to be £528,000 lower than the year's budget. However, the expected overspend on contractors and agency staff meant there was likely to be an overall overspend of £285,000 against the staffing budget.

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

Following a comment by Councillor Hassall on the positive trend in staff turnover, the Strategic HR Manager added that some sections had higher rates, but this was expected. A gap analysis on salaries would be carried out when the new rates had been introduced. Having noted that the Planning section was experiencing lower turnover rates than previously, but that recruitment remained

a challenge, the Chief Executive outlined the measures being introduced to improve the situation, including the launch of a campaign in early January to attract those considering a move by demonstrating the investment and support the Council was putting into the service and value it had. The outcome of the campaign would be assessed for use in other areas.

The Chair expressed support for the reported developments in relation to apprenticeships and the Vice-Chair asked about action taken in respect of long-term sickness. The Strategic HR Manager outlined the resources and support that the Council dedicated to the latter.

Councillor Cawley commented on the fact that One Leisure posts currently being advertised were being offered on fixed-term contracts. In response the Strategic HR Manager informed the Committee that this was being done temporarily while a review was being undertaken. Following a further question by Councillor Cawley, the Strategic HR Manager outlined the steps being taken to establish employee networks.

Councillor Keane drew attention to the amount of time employees had taken off for Union duties. In answer to detailed questions, the Strategic HR Manager reported that the total of 111 hours involved four employees, that legislation required the Council to allow representatives reasonable time to perform their roles and this was part of the agreement reached with the Union. The arrangement had been the subject of benchmarking and was consistent with other local authorities. The time had been used for training and as the representatives had only recently been appointed it would not be at the same level in future years. Councillor Keane stressed the importance of reporting this information and requested that future reports contained figures for Union and Employee Representatives Group activities. 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 had recently retired from employment in the local government service and pass on its best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

22 WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The Chief Operating Officer, John Taylor, introduced the Committee to the development of the Workforce Strategy. The Strategy was required to address the challenges the Council faced by ensuring it had high quality employees. It would do this by developing and engaging with its workforce, which would lead to better retention of employees and career development.

HR Manager – Projects, Nicola Harpham, outlined the actions that had been completed to date, including the completion of a staff survey. The survey revealed that employees wanted to be involved in the project and they valued transparency and good communication. Themes that had emerged included pay, communication, the recruitment process, career progression and the use of up-

to-date technology. Having invited Members to take part in the project, she informed them of the key project milestones.

Members endorsed the focus on communications but warned against raising expectations. Regarding pay, they were informed that employees were realistic and that other benefits were being looked at. Workshops on the Strategy allowed conversations on these and other subjects such as motivation to take place.

In response to a question by Councillor Hassall, the Chief Operating Officer stated that pilot work would be carried out with a view to introducing more formalised succession planning, which would improve retention rates.

Having noted the importance of identifying champions, the Chief Executive advised that without the Strategy the Council's ability to deliver its services would be affected.

Caroline Easter confirmed that the Employee Representatives Group had been involved and was satisfied with the way the project was proceeding.

23 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 the following policies:

- IR35 Off Payroll Working Regulations: Status Determination Disagreement Process;
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure;
- Sickness Absence and Attendance Policy;
- Volunteer Policy; and
- Redundancy Policy.

In response to a question by Councillor West, the Strategic HR Manager informed the Committee that the Council had several measures in place in relation to menopause and that she would investigate obtaining Menopause Friendly Accreditation. Following further questions the Strategic HR Manager also agreed to clarify whether references to calendar days in the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure included weekends and explained that the trial period contained in the Redundancy Policy was prescribed in legislation. Finally, she confirmed that the Council was working towards providing support for volunteering. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Policies appended to the report now submitted be endorsed:

- IR35 Off Payroll Working Regulations: Status Determination Disagreement Process;
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure;
- Sickness Absence and Attendance Policy;
- Volunteer Policy; and
- Redundancy Policy.

24 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

No matters were identified for consideration.

Chair