

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in the GROUND FLOOR MEETING ROOM (CONINGSBY/BOURNE ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 26 June 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Blackwell – Chair.

Councillors S Cawley, L Davenport-Ray, S A Howell, P Kadewere and D N Keane.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P A Jordan and C Lowe.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17th April and 22nd May 2024 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

5 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

6 WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by the Strategic HR Manager to which was append Pillars 1, 2 and 3 of the Workforce Strategy. Copies of the report and appendices are appended in the Minute Book. Following a question by Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Strategic HR Manager informed Members that the Council was in the process of recruiting two full-time-equivalent officers to support the delivery of the Strategy.

Councillor Cawley asked about the provisions in the Strategy to promote physical well-being. It was confirmed that the Council provided employees with free membership of One Leisure. Following further questions by Councillor Cawley, the Committee was advised that the terms of the Strategy relating to reward required forward planning and an understanding of the market. The latter included benchmarking. The Chief Executive stressed that while pay was significant, other factors attracted individuals to work. D Pope confirmed that pay was an important issue as were a number of other issues.

Having noted the intention to submit the Action Plan to the next meeting of the Committee for endorsement, Members placed on record their appreciation of the work of N Harpham and N Bane in producing a high quality and easy to read document. It was then

RESOLVED

- a) that the full Workforce Strategy be endorsed, and

- b) that the Council be recommended to approve the Strategy at its meeting on 17th July 2024.

7 WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT QUARTER FOUR 2023-24

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 2024. 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 virtually the same as at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay costs for employees in 2023/24 was £330k higher than the year's budget. The report indicated that four employees had retired in the quarter. Members recognised the employees' achievements and asked that their congratulations be passed on to them.

Members' attention was drawn to the success of a recent recruitment initiative, which was designed to encourage applications for vacant posts in the Development Management section. A video, which had been produced to support the initiative, was played to the Committee. It was intended to use such initiatives for future recruitment drives. In response to a question by Councillor Keane, it was confirmed that the video had been posted on LinkedIn. In addition, candidates had reported they had used LinkedIn to obtain background information about the Council.

Regarding health and safety, and after a question by Councillor Cawley, the Committee was informed that all manual staff received manual handling and safe lifting training in a face-to-face context. On a related subject, all Lifeguards received monthly training. Councillor Cawley suggested that the Council should introduce a system to record near-misses.

The Chair expressed concern at the reported sickness absence trends, particularly those attributed to stress. It was reported that these cases tended to be associated with longer serving employees. In that context and following a question by Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Committee noted that the position reported was consistent with national trends and was held by some to reflect that economic situation.

Councillor Keane asked about the use made by the Council of apprenticeships. Members were advised that full use was made of the Apprenticeship Levy and that courses varied in their costs. Furthermore, they could be taken up at different stages of individuals' careers and the establishment of a network of apprentices provided them with an extra layer of support. Members commended the Council's approach to apprenticeships.

Following a further question by the Chair, the Committee was acquainted with the new arrangements for the iCare Awards, which would become an ongoing process. Members were advised that they were able make nominations.

D Pope questioned the definition of High Earners given the length of time the current one had been in place. It was confirmed that the figure was prescribed in

legislation but that the Council would consider whether there was scope to report any additional information voluntarily. The Strategic HR Manager would liaise with the East of England Local Government Association on this question. 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.

8 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 profile of the workforce according to their protected characteristics as required by the Equality Act 2010. Following a question by Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Committee was advised that the potential of social media to attract candidates had been investigated and use had been made of it but not to target particular demographic groups. Having requested that the use of the term “gender” was reviewed, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

9 USE OF CONSULTANTS, HIRED STAFF AND TEMPORARY STAFF 2023/24

Consideration was given to the report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing the annual monitoring information on the use of interim staff. Having been acquainted with new requirements to submit information to the Government, Members were informed that compared with the previous year there had been a net decrease of £315k in the cost of interim staff. The Council continued to use consultants when external funding was available and when the Council needed technical and professional advice.

In response to a question by Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Committee was informed that the reported position differed from that contained in the Workforce Report (Minute No 24/7 Refers) because the latter comprised capital and revenue costs and external funding received after the Budget was set.

Following a question by Councillor Keane, it was explained that consultants and temporary staff had been used to bring the Old Falcon, St Neots into use, which would mean it had a value. The Market Towns Programme covered its use as an asset. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

10 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

D Pope informed Members that the Employee Representative Group was looking forward to engaging with the Council on the Workforce Strategy. He also reported that the Group had supported three individuals on cases in the last quarter. Following a question by Councillor Cawley, Mr Pope also reported that the Group had directed individuals who were experiencing restructuring to appropriate sources of advice.

Chair