

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, 18 September 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Blackwell – Chair.

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

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

11 MINUTES

Subject to the deletion from the first line of Minute No 4 of the word “Many” to be replaced by the word “May” and to the deletion from the second line of the second paragraph of Minute No 6 of the word “free” and the inclusion of the words “at a reduced rate” at the end of the sentence, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

13 WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT - QUARTER 1

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 June 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 slightly higher than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay costs for employees in 2024/25 was forecasted to be £415,000 higher than the year's budget. The expected overspend on contractors and agency staff meant there was likely to be an overall overspend of £1,167,000 against the staffing 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.

Having been acquainted with the benefits of listing recruitment opportunities via various mediums, the Committee congratulated Officers for being nominated for a workforce award and endorsed the upgrade to the Learning Management System. In response to a question from Councillor Davenport-Ray about the pay

bill, Members were informed that the increase reflected the fact that the Council benefitted from higher levels of external funding. Furthermore, approval to fill all vacancies was required from the Senior Leadership Team, with the decision being subject to the Team being satisfied with what was being done to transform the service.

Following further questions by Councillors Jordan and Kadeware, it was stated that apprenticeships lasted between one and three years and that while there were some transfers within the Council, most promotions were through career pathways.

Councillor Davenport-Ray enquired about how the Council mitigated the risk of falls from height. The Strategic HR Manager explained that the incident referred to in the report had been investigated and it had been established that all the measures required of the Council were in place. On a more general point raised by Councillor Keane whether the Council had sufficiently robust arrangements in place to enable employees to deal with serious medical episodes, Members were assured that One Leisure were aware of what the Council offered including individual and group counselling.

In summing up the report the Chief Executive drew attention to the fact that receiving ICARE nominations on an ongoing basis meant that actions early in the year were not forgotten, that it was recognised that traditional recruitment avenues had been replaced by modern ones such as LinkedIn and the Council had developed a strong brand. She also emphasised that steps were taken to establish a network for apprentices.

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.

14 WORKFORCE PROFILE AND ACTION PLAN

Pursuant to Minute No 8/24, the Committee received an updated report on the Workforce Profile (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which now included the results of analysis of the workforce profile compared with Census data. The aim of the process was to identify where the Council was succeeding and where it might improve. Following a comment at the last meeting the terminology used had been amended to “gender identity”.

In introducing the report, Kiran Hans, HR Manager, reported that a significant amount of work had been done on menopause, including the identification of an organisation to provide sessions on related subjects and speakers for Menopause Awareness Day in October. She then referred to the fact that the Council had a higher proportion of people who had a disability than the local position. The Council would be exploring a dyslexia friendly font standard and the Mindful Employer Charter. On sexual orientation, the results matched the local demographic, but it was considered necessary to provide training on the

categories and definitions because the data was limited. Overall, the Council workforce did not differ significantly from the local demographic. The HR Manager concluded by outlining the Council's performance against the previous year's Action Plan. Of the 28 Actions, 20 had been completed and eight had been carried over. The latter had strong links to the Workforce Strategy. In addition, four new actions had been added to the Plan. Work also would continue on the overarching data capture action. Furthermore, a new raising concerns policy would be introduced, which would incorporate the Grievance and the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

The Chief Executive then outlined her expectations for significant changes nationally, including evaluation of the equal pay framework especially regarding ethnicity. The Council was already carrying out work in these areas and would be in a strong position to respond. It was likely this would be recognised in the employment market and act as an attraction for new recruits. Following a question by Councillor Howell, the Chief Executive confirmed the Council would be focussing on equity as well as equality.

In response to a question by Councillor Kadeware the Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Council had a positive relationship with the Employee Representative Group and the Union. Meetings were held bi-monthly at which discussion topics included the Workforce Strategy.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

At 7.30 pm Councillor Davenport-Ray left the meeting.

15 WORKFORCE STRATEGY UPDATE

Kiran Hans, HR Manager – Project Delivery, updated the Committee on progress of the Workforce Strategy. Following employees' comments during consultation, resources had been made available to support this work, including the appointment of Chloe George as HR Coordinator – Project Delivery. The Action Plan encompassed 49 overarching actions, which had been broken down into 110 individual actions. Eleven actions were already in progress and Priorities were being developed. A copy of the Action Plan would be circulated to Members.

The HR Manager went on to report that a "Staff Temperature Check" survey had been distributed to employees to gauge their views on working for the Council and the results were being analysed. In addition, a Communications Plan was being developed to bring the Strategy to life and employees had been asked to identify which initiatives under the Strategy they wanted to be involved in.

Other initiatives being pursued included holding a pensions awareness week, receiving ICARE nominations throughout the year, establishing a system for donating to local charities, investigating options for employee support, promoting menopause awareness, providing flu vaccinations, introducing a new Employee

Handbook and Code of Conduct and developing a Raising Concerns Policy. It was stressed that a team approach had been adopted.

The Committee welcomed the planned activity and made particular reference to making donations to local charities. The Chief Executive assured Members that the views expressed at the last full Council meeting on resourcing the Strategy had been taken on board and acted on. There was an expectation that the Strategy would deliver results very quickly. Two examples of the latter were offered up, which were internal promotion and agile external recruitment to key positions.

Members expressed their appreciation of the work being undertaken and of the efforts being made.

16 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

No matters were identified for consideration.

Chair