

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, 22 October 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor A Blackwell – Chair.

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

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

14. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 1)

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources (HR) matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st April 2025 until 30th June 2025. 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 heard that the workforce totalled 696 people, the fulltime equivalent working out at 638.96 Officers, which was an increase from the previous Quarter. The Quarter ended with an underspend of £1.188 million and an overspend of £1.126 on Contractor and Agency costs.

It was confirmed that 25 individuals left the Council in Quarter 1 which was a slight increase from the previous Quarter when 21 employees left. The overall turnover was 17.6%. There were 3 retirements with a combined service period of 27 years. There had been a decrease in recruitment with 51 roles advertised as opposed to 81 in the previous Quarter. Sickness had increased from 8.3 days FTE to 8.4, however long-term sickness had decreased from 22 to 21 employees.

After a question from Councillor Cawley relating to long-term sickness, referencing anxiety and other mental health issues, Members were informed that Managers were utilising the My Conversation forms in the monthly 1:2:1 sessions with their staff and these discussions surrounded support, wellbeing and workloads. Managers were also receiving training in how to support their staff from an earlier point in the process which should positively impact the

amount of sick days taken.

Further information regarding Health and Safety, particularly Near Misses was requested by the Committee, believing tracking these will help people to learn and prevent incidents from happening. Members were advised that there was a discussion with the Health and Safety Manager who was putting an Action Plan together to promote this. The Committee invited the Health and Safety Manager to attend a future meeting so they could discuss this further with him.

Councillor Lowe asked if there was a plan to expand the Apprenticeship Scheme beyond the current roles. The Committee heard the Apprenticeships were driven by requests from Management and they were restricted in what they could offer as the uptake had been so high that the levy had been exhausted.

Councillor Davenport-Ray asked for further detail regarding the challenges faced whilst recruiting for specific roles within the One Leisure Team. It was confirmed that the roles were middle-management level roles in One Leisure and the candidates' skill set for the role were not a match. This was currently on hold and a review was being undertaken to reevaluate the roles in the new structure.

After a question from Councillor Keane, it was heard that the programme for Flu vaccinations was rolled out to Officers in October with good uptake from staff and was promoted in the Road Show week.

It was asked if Neurodiversity had been included in the Management training. It was confirmed that Neurodiversity was being threaded through every course they have to ensure colleagues with neurodiversity were being fully supported.

It was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

15. WORKFORCE STRATEGY UPDATE

By means of a presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Kiran Hans, HR Coordinator – Project Delivery, provided the Committee with an update on the Workforce Strategy. Reference was made to examples of training and development activities, such as the Management and Leadership programme.

Managers had been divided into different cohorts so they could learn from each other. The training included providing further insight into neurodiversity, recruitment and onboarding, Customer Excellence and the 1-2-1 form- My Conversation. The Wellbeing module was also being introduced to this training.

Attention was drawn to the Active Lifestyles Team and the sessions on Escape Pain Management they provided to staff, particularly

around knee, back, neck and shoulder pain. Health kiosks were located in Pathfinder House and Eastfield House as part of the Know Your Numbers programme which allowed staff to measure their blood pressure.

Councillor Jordan praised the efforts of the Team and shared the positive feedback she received from an Officer who was appreciative of all the incentives and the information shared at the events. She made special note of the Succession Plan and was pleased that it was a clear and positive way forward.

Councillor Davenport-Ray asked if there were any plans to target the employees who had not entered into the pension scheme. The Panel heard that opting into the pension scheme was always promoted on the Road Shows and bringing in pension advisors was expected to increase the uptake. The Employee Representative Group (ERG) also encouraged their colleagues to opt in.

Councillor Cawley sought further insight into how International Men's Day was being marked. It was confirmed that there would be a Panel event which would discuss wellbeing and challenges along with stalls where staff could receive further information.

After a question relating to the Staff Survey, it was confirmed that the analysis from this could be shared at the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Lowe enquired about employees' views on returning to the office and if the increase in the days in correlated with the terms of the Workforce Strategy. It was noted that more staff were present in the office now than in the previous year.

Councillor Kadewere sought further information about the Succession Plan and about the Support Groups available to employees. Regarding the Succession plan, the Panel heard that a process and flowchart had been developed which would guide Managers in identifying critical roles within their Teams. It was then stated that the Support Groups were based on what the staff wanted and needed, such as a Menopause Group where information could be shared and accessed. There was mention of a potential Mental Health Support Group in the future.

The Panel also heard that someone from the Kidney Research UK had attended a Road Show at Pathfinder House to raise awareness and that there would be a talk on the 14th November for World Diabetes Day which was an issue raised by an Officer.

It was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

16. WORKFORCE EQUALITY REPORT WITH ACTION PLAN UPDATE

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. It covered the period to October 2025.

The report showed that the staff profile had been reviewed against the census data to evaluate how representative the figures were and this would feed into updating the Action Plan for areas of improvement. It was acknowledged that even for areas that appeared reflective of the census data, actions had still been identified for improvement. Regarding gender identity, the split was reflective of the census data and the local demographic. Work had been completed to establish regular Wellbeing Cafes which covered menopause, and Menopause Awareness Day had been marked for an event. The work also focused on promoting more Men's initiatives such as Men's International Day and more Mental Health Awareness schemes. Regarding Disability, the Council had hired more staff that had shared having a disability compared to the census data. The Council would take steps to achieve a higher declaration rate in the coming year.

It was confirmed there was an outstanding Action relating to using a standardised dyslexia friendly font for correspondence and emails. It was confirmed this Action would be completed in the coming year.

The Panel heard that steps would also be taken into achieving a higher declaration rate for ethnicity which had decreased to 9% from the previous year's 13%. Members were advised that the Anti Racism Charter would be reviewed to identify further Actions.

Councillor Cawley asked how this data would influence Policy and how it would inform the Actions. It was stated that the work surrounding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network which was being set up would include reviewing the Policies to assist in influencing policy. The Network would also include ERG Representation and would be involved in engagement.

Having noted the link between the data presented and the Workforce Strategy Action Plan, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

17. HR POLICY UPDATES

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 Hybrid Working and Disciplinary policies.

Councillor Cawley suggested that a definition should be added for Hybrid working effectiveness, such as measuring productivity. Reference was made to the use of discretion and it was further

suggested that changes to office days should be discussed in advance with HR or Managers to ensure fairness to all colleagues. It was queried who would be reviewing the Hybrid Policy moving forward and the Panel were advised this would be reviewed under the Policy Review and by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) in six months.

Councillor Davenport-Ray suggested that the Policy should be adopted and then brought back to the Panel for further review after a year.

Councillor Cawley suggested that a distinction should be made between serious misconduct and gross misconduct. Examples of each would be beneficial.

Councillor Lowe enquired what support was available to employees during the disciplinary process. The Committee was advised that the ERG had expanded and all Representatives had been trained in supporting employees throughout the process.

Further clarification was sought regarding mitigating circumstances and whether these were taken into account. It was confirmed that mitigation was considered throughout the process. The question was asked of an employee during the initial investigation interview to ascertain if there were circumstances which should be taken into account.

After a further question, it was confirmed that the Code of Conduct was available on the Council's Intranet for all employees to access and there was an acknowledgement box to tick confirming this had been read and understood by employees. Employees who did not have access to the Intranet had hard copies on site and Managers have explained this via Tool Box Talks..

A question was raised relating to the Policy around password protection of sensitive information. The Panel heard that this was overseen by the Information Governance Team who worked with staff directly on this.

It was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the comments outlined above the Hybrid Working and the Disciplinary Policies be endorsed.

18. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

Ben Clifton-Atfield attended his first meeting as an Employee Representative. He informed Members that the ERG had received positive feedback about the HR team at the Road Shows.

He was appreciative that ERG feedback regarding the Hybrid Working Policy had been taken into account.

Chair

