
Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 19th September 2012

Matters for Information

8. MANAGING ABSENCE & ATTENDANCE WITHIN THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Further to Item No. 2 of their previous Report to Council, the Panel has received a presentation by Ms J Maulder, HR Business Partner on the management of absence and attendance within the Authority.

It is well recognised that the effective management of absence is key to the wellbeing and cost of an organisation. During 2011/12, the average sickness per employee was 8.5 days and the Panel has noted that this was reasonable compared to other local authorities within the area and remains well below the average for local government. Having received information on the national picture, the Panel also been acquainted with details of the Council's existing absence management process, the challenges which face Managers in dealing with sickness within their teams and the support provided from human resources to assist them.

In response to the questions raised as part of the presentation, the Panel has received information on the way in which the Human Resources Team has dealt with stress related absence and has noted that further work would be undertaken shortly by LGSS to review the existing caseload. Members also have requested that future reports should include information on the number of individuals who were hitting the prescribed trigger points within the absence monitoring process.

9. EMPLOYMENT REPORT

The Panel received a quarterly report on the Human Resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation. On this occasion, the report included the latest position and trends relating to:-

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ salary costs;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ retention of new starters;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

Having congratulated LGSS on the quality of the report, Members have suggested that, in future, it would be useful to be able to make comparisons with other public sector organisations. In this respect further information has been requested on employee turnover and the number of days lost to sickness per quarter.

Members also commented on stress related absences and the need to manage information to ease any perception of uncertainty amongst employees. The Panel also have noted that the various services will experience different types of absence depending on the nature of their work.

In terms of sickness absence and having received clarification on a number of aspects, the Panel has endorsed a series of measures which have been designed to improve the Council's existing absence policies and procedures. It was hoped that a review of the District Council's Sickness Absence Policy would be undertaken shortly and considered by the Panel at a future meeting.

The Chairman has congratulated LGSS on their recent showcase event to demonstrate the training and development opportunities which were to be made available to District Council employees.

10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY

In order to fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities and to ensure consistency in health and safety across the organisation, the Panel has adopted a new set of arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of District Council employees which will be incorporated within the Council's existing Health and Safety Policy. These arrangements set out the way in which specific issues are to be dealt with and collate individual service based standards into a single document, which will be easier to access and maintain. It was envisaged that performance standards will be developed for the specific arrangements detailed in the policy in due course.

Having regard to the disadvantages which had been highlighted in terms of the potential isolation of those individuals who were regularly working from home, the Panel was assured that these employees were receiving adequate support. Members also have noted that there are measures in place to ensure that employees were informed of the best ways to use Visual Display Equipment.

Having noted a request from Employees' Side representatives that a representative should be appointed to the Council's Safety Advisory Group to help with consultation on health and safety matters, it has been suggested that this request could be considered as part of a review of the operation of the Employment Panel and Employee Liaison Advisory Group.

11. EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

The responses to an opinion survey undertaken during April 2012 to find out how employees felt about working for the Council have been

presented to the Panel. Where possible, the findings have been used as benchmarks for comparisons with survey results in previous years.

In considering the results, Members were mindful that the effect of recent reductions in local government funding, the general economic climate and a number of significant changes within the Council would have had an impact on the survey outcome. Their attention having been drawn to the responses by Management to the issues highlighted, the Panel has noted that the findings will now be used by the Senior Management Group in conjunction with LGSS and Team Managers to develop local action plans. In order to ensure that those issues highlighted by employees are addressed the survey will now be run on an annual basis.

In considering the results of the survey, Councillor P J Downes has expressed his concern that only 75% of employees felt that they were treated with dignity and respect at work by District Councillors. The Panel noted that arrangements were being made for a meeting of Group Leaders to discuss the matter further. Members also have commented on the need to address some of the longer term issues which had been identified by the survey.

The Panel also has discussed the views expressed by employees on the adequacy of information available to them on the Council and, having been reminded of the context in which the survey was undertaken, has made a number of comments concerning the need to supply key concise information to staff. Having commented that it was difficult for Members to interpret the general information which had been presented to them, the Panel noted that this had been analysed by Division for use by Heads of Service.

A copy of the full report is available from the Corporate Office on request.

12. RETIREMENT OF EMPLOYEES – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contributions made by the following employees during their employment in the local government service and conveyed its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement.

Name	Division	Local Government Service
Mr A Bradshaw	Operations Division	4 years
Mr D Bacon	Environmental Management	15 years
Mr D Hartley	One Leisure, St Ives	17 years
Mr M Smith	Operations Division	7 years
Mr R Philcox	Operations Division	5 years

Mrs P Prior

Environmental Management

10 years

13. PAY REVIEW PROJECT

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made on the Council's Pay Review project. Members have been informed that Phase 1 had now been completed and 38 core posts (which equated to 218 staff) within the organisation had been evaluated and moderated using a revised Job Evaluation Scheme. Phase 2 is expected to start shortly and the outcome will enable work to commence on the modelling of a new District Council pay structure early in the New Year.

The Panel also has authorised the Managing Director (Resources) after consultation with the Chairman of the Panel and the Executive Leader to agree and offer a pay award to District Council employees in the 2013/14 financial year.

S Cawley
Chairman