
Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 6th February 2013

Matters for Information

20. REVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES

As part of LGSS' commitment to review five policies and procedures per year, the Panel has reviewed and adopted the contents of a number of new HR policies for the organisation.

In response to Members' concerns about the level of sickness absence across the Authority, the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure has been streamlined to produce a clear process for managing sickness. Specifically, steps have been taken to simplify the triggers for management action, make the formal process more efficient and set down more clearly the parameters for employees who return to work on a phased return.

To enable managers to monitor and support the progress of new starters in the initial stages of their appointment, the Panel has adopted a Probation Policy to deal promptly and fairly with any concerns regarding a probationers' performance or conduct at work. This will apply to all Officers within the organisation and set outs the responsibilities of managers and employees during the 6 month probationary period.

In the event that an employee is absent from work without authorised leave, a policy setting out the process for managers to follow has been endorsed. The Policy will apply if an employee fails to comply with the sickness absence reporting arrangements or is absent without permission, will ensure that there is a fair and consistent approach to unauthorised absence across the Council and that managers discharge their duty of care to their employees.

During the course of reviewing the Council's HR Policies, it has become apparent that there is a need to establish a single process for any appeals against dismissal. With this in mind and where existing policies have the potential to end in the dismissal of an employee, the Panel has endorsed a procedure for dealing with these appeals. This will provide a framework to ensure that appeals against dismissal are handled in a fair and consistent manner.

Training will now be organised for all managers across the organisation to explain the new policies and procedures before they come into effect on 1st April 2013. Members will be able to monitor

the impact of these new policies in the employment report, which is presented to the Panel on a quarterly basis.

In the forthcoming quarter, LGSS will undertake work to review the Council's Employee Capability Policy and develop a policy for time off for reasons other than sickness absence.

21. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION PROPOSALS

Further to Item No.16 of the Report to the meeting held on 22nd February 2012, the Panel has received an update on the progress made with proposals to streamline the process for the consideration of employment matters currently dealt with by the Employee Liaison Advisory Group and Employment Panel.

It is the role of the Corporate Governance Panel to consider proposals to vary the Council's Constitution and make any subsequent recommendations to the Council. Although the Corporate Governance Panel had welcomed the proposals in principle, Members had expressed some unease at the proposed delegation of employment issues to the Head of Paid Service and sought further clarification on those decisions which would be delegated. In this respect, the Panel has considered a set of proposed parameters within which the Head of Paid Service will operate prior to their submission to the Corporate Governance Panel. Members also have concurred with the view of the Corporate Governance Panel that to avoid confusion with the current overview and scrutiny arrangements, there was no sound reason to change the name of the existing Employment Panel.

22. EMPLOYMENT REPORT – QUARTER 3

The Panel has 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.

Members have noted that during the next quarter, LGSS will continue to develop and build on the positive work that has been undertaken thus far on employment policies. As a result, a number of policies will be introduced which will help managers to handle the difficulties that arise in their teams and make the employment process more efficient and effective.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, Members have noted that the annual average days sickness per FTE employee has reduced from 8.5 to 8.4 days in the year to 31st December 2012. Although the

level of sickness absence remained below the local government average, the Panel was made aware that the trend line for absenteeism was rising year on year at a time when sickness appeared to be reducing in other public sector organisations. The Chairman suggested that it would be a useful exercise to benchmark the Council's performance against other organisations.

23. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HR, PAYROLL AND ORGANISATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Panel has considered a report outlining the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services across the key service measures put in place at the start of the contract during the period 1st October to 31st December 2012. LGSS performance is measured in three areas namely:

- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory
- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll
- ◆ Organisational Workforce Development.

Having noted that performance standards have largely been achieved, the Panel has noted that key areas of activity for the next quarter will include support for the Pay Review and the completion of the review of employee relations and consultation. Work will also be undertaken to review the Council's policies on employee capability and time off for reasons other than sickness absence. A Strategy for Workforce Development is also expected to be completed by April 2013.

In considering the information which has been presented, the Panel commented on a range of issues including the low level of attendance by staff at the recent presentation on local government pensions. Members also noted that discussions were ongoing between the Information Management Division and LGSS to determine the future delivery of e-learning.

In terms of the performance standards achieved, the Panel has noted that it is the intention to agree specific performance targets at the conclusion of the first year of the LGSS contract.

24. 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
Mrs P Prior	Environmental Management	10 years
Mr M Marshall	Operations	15 years

25. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

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

With the assistance of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (the report is reproduced as Item No.6 on the Council Agenda) the Panel has endorsed for submission to the Council, the content of a proposed Statement of Pay Policy for 2013/14. The Pay Policy Statement provides information about the Council's policies relating to the pay and reward of Chief Officers and other employees, as required by Sections 38 – 43 of the Localism Act 2011. The Statement will be published on the Council's website together with data on senior salaries required by the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

During their consideration of the proposed statement, the Panel has asked for clarification on the Open Contact Allowance which is paid to a number of employees and the allowances which are paid to the Managing Directors in addition to their basic salary. In terms of the salary proposals for the new Head of Paid Service, the Panel has noted that this is a matter for consideration by the Senior Officers' Panel.

As there are a number of pieces of work underway including the review of the Pay and Grading Framework and the restructuring of the senior management team, the Panel noted that a revised Policy Statement will be issued later in the year.

26. 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 were informed that Phase 3 of the Job Evaluation work stream had now begun and was expected to be completed by the end of April 2013. Work to establish 'Job Families' for business support staff is also nearing completion. LGSS will commence work on the modelling of a new District Council pay structure shortly, once 80% of the posts within the organisation had been evaluated.

During their consideration of the paper, the Panel has discussed the significant milestones which form part of the project and the potential for issues raised during the consultation and negotiation stage to delay the project timetable.

In terms of communications with employees on the pay review project, the Panel has sought assurances from the Chairman of the ELAG Staff Side that communication was satisfactory and have noted that a number of methods have been used to disseminate information to staff. Having noted that communications will become more

significant as the project progresses into the next phase, the Panel has been informed that a detailed communications plan will be developed to address these issues.

R B Howe
Vice-Chairman