
Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 20th November 2013

Matters for Information

12. EQUALITY MONITORING (EMPLOYEES)

Having noted that the 2010 Equality Act requires the Council to publish information relating to the characteristics of its employees, the Panel has considered the results of the equal opportunities monitoring of its employees during 2011/12 and 12/13. It is not compulsory for employees to provide this information but missing data could result in the Council being unable to identify and address equality issues.

In noting that the Council employs relatively few 16-24 year olds on full time and part-time contracts, the Panel has asked about the work which is being actively undertaken to address this. Members have been advised that the Council is keen to explore the use of apprenticeships and it was hoped to address this further through the development of the new Workforce Development Strategy.

In response to comments regarding the use of local newspapers to advertise vacancies within the Authority, the Panel has noted that the introduction of an e-recruitment solution would provide access to a wider range of free forums for advertising.

In concluding their discussions and to address the workforce issues which have been identified within the reports, the Panel has tasked -

- ◆ all Managers to make efforts to increase the self reporting of equality characteristics by Council employees;
- ◆ the Staff Council to encourage the self reporting of equality characteristics by Council employees;
- ◆ LGSS with advising the Council on the costs and benefits of advertising jobs more widely and raising the Council's profile among young jobseekers through job fairs; and
- ◆ LGSS with exploring apprenticeships and supporting the DWP's Youth Contract by registering the Council's interest in the work programme.

In addition, the Chief Officers Management Team has been asked to ensure that the new system for incremental progression is compliant with equalities legislation.

13. WORKFORCE INFORMATION (QUARTER 2)

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

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel has been pleased to note that the average day's sickness per FTE employee had reduced again in the last quarter to 8.3 and that this was also lower than the corresponding period in the previous year. The level of sickness due to stress, depression, mental health and fatigue had also decreased. As the winter months begin, this will continue to be a focus for the HR Team and Managers.

In an effort to streamline the options for reporting sickness and to simplify the existing process, the Panel has asked LGSS to look at the categories for recording sickness absence in neighbouring authorities. The outcome will be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

Finally, the Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for the excellent contributions made by Ms J Nicholls and Ms G Pooley during their employment in the local government service and has conveyed its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement. Following the death of a young man employed by One Leisure Huntingdon, the Panel has offered their condolences to his family, friends and colleagues and commended him for his service to the District Council.

14. LGSS PERFORMANCE

The Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services across the key service measures agreed under the current contract during the period 1st April to 30th June 2013. LGSS performance is measured in four areas namely:

- ◆ General Service Standards;
- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory;
- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll; and
- ◆ Organisational workforce development.

To assist the Panel in monitoring the performance levels and to create a balanced and impartial report, feedback from the LGSS Contract Manager and the views of District Council staff on each of these service areas also has been provided.

Whilst the majority of service standards had been met, the Panel discussed the issues which had been raised with the recruitment

team, the reasons for this and the measures which had been put in place to address these. A new e-recruitment system would further improve the situation when it is launched on 16th December 2013.

In considering the targets for Organisational & Workforce development, the Panel has also discussed the disappointing take-up of training courses (only 177 places had been delivered in the first six months of the year out of an annual target of 500). Having noted that proactive work had been undertaken by the Organisational & Workforce Development Team to promote and further advertise the courses which were available, the Panel enquired why, as a consequence training opportunities were not being taken up and the steps which could be taken to encourage employees to do so. It was noted that Management Development days had received the lowest take-up within the last quarter.

In terms of LGSS' priorities for the next quarter, Members have been informed that these will include support for the ongoing pay review, final testing and roll out of the E Recruitment solution, engagement with stakeholders in the development of a competency framework for the Authority and a review of the existing HR policies for Leave and Special Leave.

In general terms, the Panel has discussed the change in culture which the LGSS contract represented for Managers. Having been advised of the outcome of a recent audit of the Council's relationship with LGSS and the mechanisms which are being put in place to improve the monitoring of the contract, the Panel has requested further information on the performance of LGSS to ensure that the Council is receiving good value for money. Information has also been requested on the mutual benefits of the improved resources and the lessons learned to date.

15. REDUNDANCY POLICY

(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 considered the content of a revised Redundancy Policy for the Authority. It has been amended to address specific issues and to update a number of areas in line with current best practice and legislation. The opportunity had also been taken to make it easier for employees and managers to understand.

Having been advised of the main changes which have been proposed to the existing policy, the Panel has been made aware of the views of Employees Side' representatives, together with the current management position with respect to these issues. Clarification has also been provided with regard to the proposals for redundancy payments for affected staff.

In considering the contents of the draft Policy, Members have been reminded of the Council's current financial position and the need to develop a sustainable business model for the Authority going forward.

Members have asked a number of questions relating to changes in job roles and the operation of the 80/20 rule, the circumstances in which posts accepted for voluntary redundancy may be filled and the requirements of the Local Government pension scheme. Employees' Side representatives have also suggested that the potential to challenge and appeal a decision regarding a change in job role should be included within the policy document itself.

In recognition that there were a number of matters which were still subject to negotiation with the Staff Council, the Panel has authorised the Chairman and Vice Chairman in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader to endorse the contents of the final policy. The implementation date is yet to be determined and will be the subject of further discussion between the Managing Director and the Staff Council.

16. 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 Stage 2 of the Council's Pay Review Project. Members have been informed that consultation on a new pay and grading framework and the appeals process had now commenced and will conclude on 9th December 2013. There had been 81 responses received to date. The Panel has also been updated on the recent developments with regard to 'job families' and the decision subsequently, to evaluate every post within the Authority individually.

Having been advised by Employee Side's representatives of the issues and concerns being raised by staff, the Panel recognised that it was an uncertain time for all employees and as this had been ongoing for some time, Members noted that the Leadership was keen to bring the process to a close as quickly as possible.

Following the closure of the consultation, the outcome would be considered by the Cabinet before individual notifications were sent to staff. Members have requested copies of the information which is provided to staff and the responses to the questions raised as part of the consultation.

S Cawley
Chairman