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## **Employment Panel**

### **Report of the meeting held on 12th February 2014**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **17. ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Panel has undertaken the annual review of their terms of reference and constitution. Members have no specific changes that they wish to recommend to Council.

#### **18. STAFF COUNCIL**

Representatives of the Staff Council were invited to address the Panel to raise awareness of a number of issues currently being experienced by District Council employees -

Attention was drawn to the concerns of staff in the IMD and Legal Divisions with regard to arrangements and negotiations for any transfer of staff to Local Government Shared Services under the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations (TUPE). In response, Members received an update on the current position with regard to the preparation of the draft business cases for the potential transfer of these services and noted that support in the form of workshops on the new 2014 Regulations were being put in place for affected staff.

The Panel also were made aware of concerns arising from the reorganisation of senior management. These concerns relate, in part, to the consequential impact of the restructuring on other staff within the organisation. In response, the Managing Director has undertaken to issue further briefing notes to explain what the next steps will be after the implementation date of 1 April 2014.

The Panel was pleased to note that a training session had been organised for Staff Council representatives with the East of England Local Government Association to help them better understand their responsibilities and duties with the intention that further training could be arranged in the near future.

#### **19. LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS POLICY**

The Panel has reviewed and endorsed the contents of a new policy for leave arrangements for the organisation. The policy has been developed to formalise existing practices, to combine annual leave with other leave arrangements and to give managers and employees clarity when dealing with requests for leave. It provides a framework

for managing the provision of leave fairly and in line with service needs.

## **20. DISABILITY AT WORK POLICY**

Following a review of staff car parking arrangements by the Management Team, the Panel has endorsed a proposal to amend the Council's Dignity at Work Policy in relation to car parking. Whilst the Authority will continue to support employees with a disability or mobility issue to park near to the work base, these staff will now be required to pay for parking at work in line with all other Council employees.

## **21. WORKFORCE REPORT (QUARTER 3)**

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;
- ◆ salary costs;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

Having noted that the new format of the report included the age profile of the Council's workforce, Members have asked whether this reflects the industry norm.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel was pleased to note that the average days sickness per FTE employee has reduced again in the last quarter to 7.9 days per annum and that this was also lower than the corresponding period in the previous year. Although the number of days lost per person in the last quarter had increased, this was still consistently lower than the same quarter in the preceding two years.

In an effort to streamline the options for reporting sickness and simplify the existing process and following a review of the categories used to record and classify sickness absence by LGSS, the Panel has endorsed a new set of categories for recording sickness absence with effect from 1 April 2014. These will continue to be reviewed over the next 12 months to ensure they meet the needs of the Authority.

Finally, the Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for the excellent contributions made by Mr B Louth, Planning Division during his employment in the local government service and has conveyed its best wishes to him for a long and happy retirement.

## **22. 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. LGSS performance is measured in four areas namely:

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

The Panel has welcomed the new format of this report and have noted that the majority of service standards have either been delivered or exceeded. Having noted that strategic HR advice continued to be underutilised, it was anticipated that this resource might be in greater demand during the senior management reorganisation. Members have also noted that the number of requests for advice on case work have also declined within the last quarter which is a positive trend for the Authority.

In terms of LGSS' priorities for the next financial year, the Panel has noted, with the agreement of the Management Team, that the following HR Policies will be reviewed in 2014/15:-

- ◆ Subsistence and Travel;
- ◆ Appraisal / Performance Development;
- ◆ Use of Social Media;
- ◆ Recruitment;
- ◆ Flexible Working.

A comprehensive review of the use of variable hour contracts has also been requested.

To assist the Panel in monitoring 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.

The Panel has discussed the ongoing issues with the recruitment element of the contract (there had been 63 complaints since the start of the contract, on a variety of matters). Members have been reassured that LGSS are confident that, following the implementation of the e-recruitment system in December, a number of these issues will be resolved. However in view of the continuing issues in this area, Members have requested a report to their next meeting on the recruitment element of the contract and the progress which has been made. The Panel will continue to monitor the other service areas and the issues raised by staff.

## **23. PAY POLICY**

The Localism Act (Section 38 and 39) requires the Authority to approve a pay policy statement for the forthcoming financial year by 31st March each year. In previous years this has been presented to the Employment Panel for their comments, prior to it being adopted by the Council.

In recognition of the changes which will impact on the pay model following the implementation of the pay review this year and the need to ensure that the published information reflects the new arrangements, the Panel has requested the Council to authorise the Head of Paid Service, after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman and the relevant Executive Councillor to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15 for publication by 1 April 2014. This item appears elsewhere on the Council Agenda.

#### **24. PAY REVIEW PROJECT**

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made on the Council's Pay Review Project since their last meeting. Members were informed that the project had moved into the final stage of implementation and that individual letters had now been issued to all staff detailing the outcome of the job evaluation process and information regarding the appeals procedure. Appeals are scheduled to start in the week commencing 24th February, with the implementation date for the new model fixed at 1st April 2014.

During a very full discussion on the subject, Staff Council representatives and a Member raised a series of issues which included the scale of the impact of the pay review on a large number of staff, matters associated with the appeals process and the potential for a reassessment of the protection package to affected employees. The Staff Council also highlighted the difficulties which they were facing in providing support to affected staff at this time. These and other points were responded to by the Executive Leader and the Managing Director. The Panel has thanked Staff Council representatives for their assistance during this difficult process.

#### **25. PAY POLICY**

Following the introduction of a new pay and grading framework and to ensure that the Council meets its obligations under the Localism Act, Equal Pay and other relevant employment legislation the Panel has endorsed, (subject to any substantive comments from a Member who felt that they were not in a position to comment fully at the meeting), the contents of a proposed new Pay Policy for the Authority. The policy which applies to all employees, sets out the key principles that must be adhered to in establishing employee pay levels and in approving pay related allowances. It also provides managers with guidance on the application of salaries and salary related payments.

Having been endorsed by the Panel, in accordance with the Localism Act and Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency, a copy of the policy will be published on the Council's website.

S Cawley  
Chairman