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## **Employment Panel**

**Report of the meeting held on 1st July 2014**

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### **Matters for Determination**

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#### **1. PENSIONS POLICY AND LOCAL DISCRETIONS**

The Panel has considered the content of a revised Pensions Policy and Local Discretions Policy for the Authority (a copy of which is reproduced as an Appendix hereto). It has been necessary to review the policies following recent changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme in 2014 and it is proposed to consider the Policy and the local discretions on an annual basis as part of the budget preparation process so that the most affordable policy is approved prior to the new financial year.

As the Local Government Pension Scheme requires formal approval by the Council of its Pensions and Local Discretions Policies, the Panel

#### **RECOMMEND**

- (a) that the draft Pension Policy and local discretions be approved; and**
- (b) that the Policy be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its continued affordability.**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **2. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY**

The Panel has reviewed and endorsed the contents of a new Recruitment and Selection Policy for the organisation. The Policy has been developed to give managers greater flexibility to manage recruitment and selection in a way that meets their service needs and does not constrain managers with a one size fits all approach. The Policy will be supplemented by a Recruitment Toolkit which will provide a practical guide to support managers in recruitment activities. Training will also be provided.

#### **3. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Panel has endorsed the suggested approach to development of a Workforce Development Strategy for the District Council and a detailed project plan for its preparation. The Strategy will set out how managing and developing the workforce can achieve corporate objectives and

ambitions and help to drive forward the authority's strategic aims and business plan.

Having noted that the development of the Strategy is included within the contract offer to the District Council and is likely to take three months to complete, Members are of the view that work should commence in September 2014 and that the views of the Staff Council should be sought as part of the focus group arrangements. The Panel has requested an update on progress to their November meeting.

#### **4. WORKFORCE REPORT (QUARTER 4)**

The Panel has received the quarterly report on Human Resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation during the period 1st January to 31st March 2014. 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.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel have been pleased to note that the average days sickness per FTE had reduced again in the last quarter to 7.6 days per annum and that this was now lower than the CIPD Public Sector Average and the EELGA Authority Average. HR Advisors will continue to work closely with Managers to identify and tackle emerging issues particularly in services where there were high levels of absence. 'Stress, depression, mental health and fatigue' continued to be the highest cause of sickness absence within the quarter, although this had fallen in comparison to the same period last year.

Having noted that the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) posts has continued to decrease over the last quarter, the Panel has sought clarification as to whether the corresponding reduction in salary costs is in line with the reduction in posts.

Finally, the Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for the excellent contributions made by Mr D Hinks, Ms J Parsons, Ms M Reeve, Mr M Roberts and Mr R Bays during their employment in the local government service and has conveyed its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement.

#### **5. 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 January to 31st March 2014 and over the course of the year. LGSS performance is measured in four areas namely:

- ◆ General Service Standards;
- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory;

- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll; and
- ◆ Organisational workforce development.

Members have been pleased to note that the majority of service standards have either been delivered or exceeded in 2014, which is particularly pleasing given that the last quarter had been a challenging time for human resources and payroll services during the pay review process. Members have discussed the two areas where performance targets had not been achieved and have been informed that work was ongoing to develop a more appropriate measure for the delivery of training courses.

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 services areas also has been provided.

With regard to the recruitment element of the contract, Members have been informed that the e-recruitment system had gone live in December 2013 and LGSS have undertaken a number of system improvements to address the issues which have been raised subsequently. In addition, user guides and checklists have now all been updated, together with an online training package to guide managers through each step of the recruitment process.

In more general terms, Members have welcomed the introduction of a new feedback form to enable District Council officers to formally submit their issues with the service to the appropriate LGSS Managers and receive a direct response. Work is also underway to improve the quality of the quarterly performance reports. The Panel has been pleased to note that the District Council's relationship with LGSS was now operating significantly better for both parties and will continue to monitor the service issues raised by staff at their future meetings.

## **6. EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

At the request of the Corporate Governance Panel, the Panel has reviewed the contents of a proposed Employee Handbook for the District Council. The Handbook had been designed to replace and strengthen the existing Employees' Code of Conduct. In commenting upon the Handbook, the Panel has reiterated its desire to play an active role in its future development.

## **7. POOL CAR REVIEW**

The Panel has noted the outcome of a review of the Council's policy of providing pool vehicles for use by District Council employees when conducting their duties on behalf of the Council. This indicates that running costs should be fully met from charges to service users and that at current usage levels, for the number of vehicles provided, it was financially worthwhile for the Council to continue to run the pool vehicle scheme.

## **8. USE OF CONSULTANTS, HIRED AND TEMPORARY STAFF**

The Panel has been provided with details of the Council's expenditure on consultants, hired and temporary staff during the period 2013/14, in comparison with the previous year. Members noted that expenditure on consultants and temporary staff has reduced, but that expenditure on hired staff had increased by £71,000 compared to the previous year.

The Panel has welcomed the preparation of a guide for managers on the use of consultancy, hired and temporary staff which will assist Managers to identify and use the correct type of additional support. The Panel has approved the guidance for issue to all Managers.

S Cawley  
Chairman