

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 23 October 2013.

PRESENT

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. D. Jennings CC

Mrs. H. E. Loydall CC

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

18. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2013 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

19. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

20. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

21. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

22. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

23. Mental Health First Aid.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which advised of the implementation of the Mental Health First Aid Programme across the Council. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee was advised that, in future, reports providing feedback on the implementation of the programme would include an evaluation of the impact that it was having, including any effect on attendance.

It was noted that the majority of trained Mental Health First Aiders were based in the Adults and Communities Department. Further implementation of the programme would

seek to redress this balance and ensure that at least one person from each service area had been trained.

The training programme for Mental Health First Aid was careful not to encourage staff to attempt to support colleagues beyond a level which they were skilled or qualified to operate. The training focussed on how to recognise the symptoms of mental ill health, how to approach and speak to the person concerned and how to signpost them to appropriate support.

Feedback from those members of staff who had undertaken the training had been positive. Members requested that those members of staff who had not yet provided feedback be encouraged to do so and that further feedback reports also included any negative feedback. It was acknowledged that officers were not aware of any negative feedback to date.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the continued implementation of the Mental Health First Aid Programme be supported;
- (b) That further evaluation feedback based on the continued delivery and use of the Mental Health First Aid Programme be received at a future meeting of the Committee.

#### 24. Managing Attendance.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update in relation to absence management across the Council. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the current position in relation to reporting, together with the on-going actions to reduce sickness absence, be noted.

#### 25. Veteran's Interview Programme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which set out the background to the national Veteran's Interview Programme and relevant issues for members' consideration following from a question raised at the County Council meeting on 25 September. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) The Committee was of the view that, where possible, veterans should be supported. It was hoped that a way forward could be identified which would address the barriers identified in the report and enable the Council to support the Programme.
- (ii) It was noted that, in appropriate circumstances, such as where under-representation of particular groups protected under the Equalities Act 2010 was identified, the County Council could take positive action measures to encourage

people to apply for jobs. Whilst forces veterans were not a protected group under the Equality Act, it would be possible to undertake marketing and outreach work.

- (iii) It would be important to ensure that any scheme designed to support veterans into employment did not have an unintentional negative outcome. The programme as described in the report committed an organisation to offering an interview to any veteran who applied for a job, and who were broadly a 'match', but this did not necessarily mean a detailed assessment of the essential criteria at this stage. If the County Council was to implement this programme, it would be necessary to manage the process in a way that ensured that those who were interviewed were genuinely able to compete for jobs.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the issues which need to be taken into account relating to the possible adoption of a Veterans' Interview Programme, including those relating to the application of the Equalities Act 2010, as now reported, be noted;
- (b) That further consideration be given to this matter at the next meeting of this Committee to give time for additional information to be sought, in the light of the comments now made, and to give Mr L Spence CC the opportunity of presenting his views;
- (c) That the Committee expresses its wish in principle, working alongside the Cabinet and other bodies as appropriate, to provide support to service and ex-service personnel whenever possible in accordance with the Armed Forces Community Covenant made between the County Council and its Armed Forces community.

26. Staff Survey Action Plan 2012 - Action Plan Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the delivery of the Action Plan to address the issues raised in the 2012 Staff Survey. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) Changes to communications with employees who did not have access to a computer would not result in any significant costs to the County Council. The changes would ensure better use of resources to make it easier for managers to communicate messages to staff.
- (ii) The majority of respondents to the staff survey were based at County Hall and had completed the online survey. It was intended that strong encouragement would be given to teams working outside of County Hall to respond, either online or using a paper copy of the survey.
- (iii) The improvements to car parking at County Hall over the summer had reduced the number of complaints received from both internal and external sources. Staff were also being encouraged to explore environmentally-friendly options for travel.
- (iv) The 'You Said, We Did' campaign had been introduced following criticism of the Staff Survey's ability to bring about positive change. It was intended that this

campaign would soon be extended to include the impact of changes that had been made as a result of the survey.

- (v) Concern was expressed that a number of staff who had been subject to bullying and harassment had stated that it was a normal part of their job. Further analysis had indicated that these staff members were often in a customer facing environments, such as a library, dealing with difficult customers. In response to this, the Bullying and Harassment Policy was being revised to incorporate details of how to deal with bullying and harassment from third parties. Additionally, workshops had been held with library staff to help them identify what was and was not acceptable behaviour.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

27. Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Policy and Procedure - Amendment.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval to the amendment to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Policy and Procedure and a supplementary report which provided details of the resources implications of the amendment. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' and a copy of the supplementary report is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that there was no evidence to explain why the career grade review took place before the end of the supported year in employment. The County Council's current policy was also not in line with practice across the East Midlands.

The Trade Unions had indicated that they could not support the amendment to the policy and procedure because they felt social workers were expected to progress quickly and should be financially rewarded for this. However, the County Council had indicated that it would be willing to support the Trade Unions in ensuring that social workers were not asked to take on more complex cases until they had completed their supported year in employment.

The amendment to the policy and procedure would not affect existing employees.

RESOLVED:

That the amendment to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Policy and Procedure as set out in paragraph 8 of this report be approved.

28. Organisational Change Policy: Summary of Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented a summary of current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

29. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 5 December 2013 at 10.00am and that meetings had been scheduled to take place at 10.00am on the following dates in 2014:-

12 March  
26 June  
21 October  
4 December.

10.00 - 11.10 am  
23 October 2013

CHAIRMAN