

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 22 October 2015.

PRESENT

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

Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC  
Dr. S. Hill CC  
Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. D. Jennings CC  
Mr. L. J. P. O'Shea CC  
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

14. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2015 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

15. Question Time.

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

16. 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).

17. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

18. 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.

19. Sickness Absence.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the Council's overall position on sickness absence as of 31 August 2015. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) Over the last five years the corporate target of 7.5 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) had not been met. Actions had been taken to work towards this target, including a recently introduced initiative 'Star Chamber sessions' to assess how

sickness absence was managed within departments.

- (ii) The Committee emphasised that absence levels should be taken seriously and suggested that examples of well managed absence practices should be shared within the Council to inform and educate those departments experiencing continuous high levels of absence. In addition intelligence on good practice could be sought from other public bodies, such as District Councils, the police, fire service and public health organisations.
- (iii) There was a reduction in reported absence through stress/ depression and mental health. Concern was expressed that the two highest reasons for absence, viral infections and stomach, liver, kidney or digestion problems could have underlying causes in stress/depression and more general mental health problems. The Director assured the Committee that, although some employees might not provide the underlying reason for their absence at the onset of a period of long absence, the reasons would hopefully be addressed during a review which was performed by managers on absences of four weeks or more.
- (iv) The Committee was assured that Mental Health First Aiders worked throughout the Council to raise awareness, and offer support in respect of, stress/depression and mental health wellbeing. The Director advised that a report on the impact was being prepared for a future committee meeting.
- (v) Members expressed concern that the pressures of being under an attendance action plan could be a reason behind employees attending work with an infection, thus posing the risk of further infection to other colleagues. The Director advised that infection control protocols were being rolled out as part of the new County Hall Master Plan. In addition increased access to home and other flexible working would be one way to avoid infection. A suggestion was put forward that of the free flu vaccination being made available to all employees;
- (vi) The Committee welcomed attempts to increase flexible working practices. The Director gave assurances that flexible working policies and procedures were being rolled out across the Council to encourage a better work–life balance for staff.

#### RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress being made to achieve the corporate target of 7.5 days per FTE be noted;
- (b) That the steps being taken to extend flexible working opportunities at the Council be supported;
- (c) That consideration be given to the extension of a flu vaccination offer to all employees;
- (d) That the Director of Adults and Communities be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to report on the ways in which sickness absence is being managed in the Department;
- (e) That the Director of Corporate Resources be asked to investigate further how sickness absence is being managed at District Councils, the police, the fire service

and health organisations, and that the findings be presented in the Committee's consideration of sickness absence at its next meetings on 3 December 2015.

- (f) That future reports on sickness absence should include a detailed breakdown of long and short-term absence rates across the Council.

20. Pay Update 2016-17.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on recent proposed changes to pay, particularly for lower paid staff, to be implemented from 2016-17 and for the following 4 years. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

The Director advised that a review of the entire pay structure would need to be conducted in the light of the National Living Wage policy.

The Committee raised concern that the implementation of the National Living Wage could impact the Council's ability to compete with the private sector. This was highlighted as an issue particularly in respect of the recruitment and retention of specialised staff, such as those in IT and social care. The Committee was advised that in order to ensure the staff with the necessary skills were attracted and retained by the Council, an emphasis would need to be placed on both pay and non-pay benefits, such as the Local Government Pension Scheme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the pay update for 2016-17 be noted;
- (b) That a report on the scope and timeline of the work being undertaken to review the Council's pay structure be presented to the Committee at its next meeting on 3 December 2015.

21. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: 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 8' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

22. Dates of Future Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 3 December 2015 at 10.00am.