

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 4 February 2015.

PRESENT

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

Mr. D. Jennings CC  
Mrs. H. E. Loydall CC  
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

Mr. E. D. Snartt CC  
Mr. G. Welsh CC

26. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

27. Question Time.

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

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

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

29. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

30. 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.

31. Pay Award 2014 - 2016.

The Committee considered a report on the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive to implement a pay award for employees on grades 2 – 17. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). Following agreement at national level in November 2014, on a fifteen month pay award of 2.2%, effective from January 2015 to March 2016, it was agreed to implement this and the non-consolidated lump sum for employees up to grade 14, in January 2015;

- (ii). Since the writing of the report, senior officers on less than £100,000 per annum had been informed that they would be receiving a 2% award. Members requested further information on why there had been a delay to agreeing an award for senior officers. A decision had yet to be made regarding any pay award for Chief Executives.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report on the action taken by the Chief Executive to implement a pay award for employees on grades 2 – 17.

32. Report on Sickness Absence.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Directors of Corporate Resources and Public Health which outlined the further work that had been undertaken on the County Council's approach to management of sickness absence. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). There had been a small increase in sickness absence rates between quarter one and quarter two with the highest levels of sickness absence being in the Adults and Communities Department. However, sickness absence rates across the Council had since shown a decline. The Director reported that, although the decrease was slight, it would continue with current management practises in order so that this would hopefully continue toward the aspirational target of 7.5 FTE. Members requested that further information on to the work being done to achieve this target, together with an indication of when it would be reached, be brought to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (ii). There had been an increase in the days taken off sick due to mental health related issues such as stress and fatigue. Officers reported that after establishing the mental health first aid training course, some staff could be sent on a national training programme for mental health first aid. Officers would be launching a communications campaign about the need to tackle the stigma of talking about stress;
- (iii). HR continued to support managers to ensure that right support was in place for those who had taken long-term sickness leave;
- (iv). Departments were being asked to create wellbeing groups to implement the Workplace Wellbeing Charter as agreed at the previous meeting;
- (v). Members expressed concern over the number of absences taken with the reason given as "not known" and the potential reputational risk for the Council if it could not account for all sick leave taken. Officers responded that the issue was related to how managers and employees were recording sickness, and/or if they were having discussions around the reasons for sickness when an employee returned from sickness leave. Members requested that officers considered removing "not known" as an option on sickness absence forms.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on sickness absence be noted;
- b) That officers be asked to consider the removal of “not known” as a reason for absence as an option for staff;
- c) That further information regarding how and when the Council intends on meeting its sickness absence rates target be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

33. 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 9’ is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of current action plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation be noted.

34. Organisation Design Principles and Framework.

Members considered a report introducing the revised organisation design principles policy and the associated framework and managers’ guidance. A copy of the report, marked ‘agenda item 10’, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i). The principles outlined in the document had been in place since 2006 and it had been felt timely for these to be reviewed. The output of this review had resulted in significant changes being made in to how the Council operated, particularly with regard to the increased amount of commissioning undertaken by the Council;
- (ii). Concern was expressed over the proposed arrangements and it was queried whether or not it would be a return to DSOs which could duplicate management roles. It was explained that the changes were a measure to drive efficiency and value for money, and there was no intention to solely focus on performance targets - it was important to manage for outcomes;
- (iii). It was clarified that the phrase 'cost effective and flatter structures' meant fewer layers of management in order that departments could work in a more cost-effective manner. It would be important that there were clearly defined roles within structures to ensure accountability;
- (iv). Members expressed concern about the potential that the numbers of managers required to implement the new framework may actually increase. Accordingly, it was noted that this was not the intention, and would not be possible due to an unavailability of financial resources to do so;
- (v). There would be a commissioning and procurement strategy put in place to set clear direction;

- (vi). Members expressed that the proposed changes could present an opportunity to positively change the work and management ethos across the Council;
- (vii). Members were informed that they would continue to hold Directors to account as they did currently. Under the new proposals, they would also be enabled to hold officers with a commissioning responsibility to account in the same way;
- (viii). Members expressed an interest in the forthcoming changes in the management structure of the Environment and Transport department, which were based on a commissioning and provider split.

RESOLVED:

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Mr Shepherd:-

‘That the Committee approve the introduction of the revised organisation design principles and frameworks.’

The motion was put and carried, four members voting for the motion and two against.

35. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 5 March at 10.00am.

10.00 - 11.00 am  
04 February 2015

CHAIRMAN