

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 20 October 2016.

PRESENT

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

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mr. D. Jennings CC
Mrs. H. E. Loydall CC

Mr. R. Sharp CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

16. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

17. Question Time.

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

18. Questions asked by members.

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

19. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

20. 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.

21. 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 at the end of August 2016. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 6" is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions raised members were advised as follows:-

- (i) The figures for employees reporting stress/ depression/ mental health as reasons for absence were lower than those reported by comparable authorities, although they had increased in the past year despite wellbeing measures put in place by the Council. The Director advised that work was underway to increase the number of reasons for absence that could be reported to enable better understanding of the

data. He also undertook to analyse whether front-line workers or managers were more likely to report stress and depression as reasons for absence.

- (ii) With regard to infection control, it was noted that advice had been sought from an infection control nurse, who had advised that introduction of hand sanitisers did not kill viruses; hand washing was still the only effective way of doing this. The Committee was advised that the quality of displays of the twelve steps for good hand washing in washroom facilities were being improved to encourage best practice in this area;
- (iii) Work to progress the Absence Triage Service was underway. From January 2017, this would be trialled by the Environment and Transport Department and the Homecare Assessment and Reablement Team (HART), which was a provider service within Adults and Communities Department. The impact of the trial on absence rates would be monitored and it could be rolled out further if this was considered to be appropriate;
- (iv) There were a range of issues preventing some managers from taking appropriate actions to managing absence. These included managers being more stretched, having a lack of confidence or competence and unclear lines of accountability. The Director advised that action was being taken to equip managers with the appropriate skills to manage attendance and other aspects of employee performance. Further information relating to this would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee;
- (v) It was noted that sickness absence rates were variable across sections within each Department. The Committee was advised that section-level reports were produced to enable scrutiny of particular areas to take place;
- (vi) With regard to the report on the Staff Survey, Values and Behaviours considered at the previous meeting, the Director advised that work around learning good practice and setting feasible expectations for employees was underway;
- (vii) This year flu vaccinations were being provided at designated County Council sites for eligible members of staff, as a result of research undertaken by the Adults and Communities and Public Health Departments to find out what was most likely to encourage uptake of the vaccination. Eligible members of staff could also receive a voucher to get the vaccination at a Boots Pharmacy. The Committee welcomed this initiative, which had been promoted through the circulation of a leaflet, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. Uptake of the flu vaccination would be monitored, to ascertain whether the cost benefit arising through reduced sickness absence outweighed the increase in cost. The outcome of this would be reported to the Committee in the new year.

The Committee was of the view that the level of sickness absence at the Council was greater than for some comparable authorities. Though actions had been taken to reduce it, members felt that ongoing scrutiny of the absence management should remain in place, including presenting information on how practices and procedures from comparable county councils could be used.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and the information now provided with regard to the work underway towards achieving the corporate target of 7.5 days per FTE be noted;
- (b) That a report on progress of the initiatives put in place to reduce sickness absence be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee including the following:-
 - (i) An assessment of good attendance management practices from comparable local authorities;
 - (ii) An update on the trial of the Triage Service;
 - (iii) An update on the progress and effectiveness of the flu vaccination scheme;
 - (iv) Actions being taken to assist and equip managers to improve performance management generally.

22. 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 redundancies and details of progress in their implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

23. Dates of Future Meetings.

It was noted that the future meetings of the Committee would be held on the following dates:-

1 December 2016,
2 February 2017,
29 June 2017,
19 October 2017,
7 December 2017.

10.00 - 11.00 am
20 October 2016

CHAIRMAN