

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 29 June 2017.

PRESENT

Ms. L. Broadley CC
Mr. D. Jennings CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC as Chairman of the Employment Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2018 be noted.

Mr. J. B. Rhodes – in the Chair.

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC be elected Deputy Chairman of the Employment Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2018.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

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

5. 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).

6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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.

8. Employee Volunteering.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources concerning Employee Volunteering. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) The new arrangements were in addition to the existing arrangements in place for employee volunteering and would be operated on an 18 month trial period. Once implemented, a cap of 10% (based on average salaries across the Council) on the number of employees taking up the scheme each year would be introduced. This would help to mitigate cost in terms of "lost productivity" to roles. It was yet to be decided how this cap would be applied – whether by individual team or as a whole across the Council.
- ii) A variety of voluntary opportunities would be available which supported the aims of the Communities Strategy; so supporting the case for investment in the new arrangements and supporting delivery of the aims of the Communities Strategy.
- iii) Line managers would monitor the level of activity undertaken by individual members of staff, and it would be for them to decide whether the opportunity was supported.
- iv) The Communities Board, a cross-corporate board consisting of the Senior Management Team, would consider how the new arrangements were implemented and which of the models of delivery, set out in Appendix B of the report, were adopted.

RESOLVED:

That the Employee Volunteering Policy be approved.

9. People Strategy.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the People Strategy. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) The Strategy had been structured into four key themes: Performance Management; Leadership; Skilled Flexible and Resilient Workforce; and Enablers. There would be corporate sponsorship in place for each theme; which demonstrated cross organisational support for the new Strategy;
- ii) Organisational development work would be implemented first, so that the foundations were in place to embed the performance and productivity culture;
- iii) Each Department would be asked to produce a departmental workforce strategy to detail the workforce issues for the next 2-3 years, addressing issues such as

recruitment, retention, succession planning and the skills base needed to deliver. An analysis would be completed to ensure that the Council's processes and policies enabled the work required;

- iv) Each Department would consider its workforce requirements, the work required and explore how demands and priorities would be delivered with reduced resources. Members were informed that officers would seek to bring in smarter working practices, including cross Departmental working, which would lead to more efficient service delivery. Members were assured that managers would engage with all employees, to encourage them to contribute to the discussions and decisions made;
- v) The staff survey had been completed recently and, with a 50% response rate, this was higher than the last survey carried out. Officers agreed to present the high level results from the survey to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the draft People Strategy (2017 – 2020) and related year one delivery plan be approved.

10. Apprenticeships.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning Apprenticeships. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 10" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- i) The revised Apprenticeship Strategy presented an opportunity to promote continual professional development to existing staff who may wish to retrain, as well as new starters, as there were no age restrictions within the scheme;
- ii) The Council's maintained schools were included in the scheme, as they were included in the assessment for the levy funding arrangements. Several providers would be commissioned to provide the training, including the County Council's Adult Learning Team, to ensure that the best level of support was given to staff. Additionally, the Council's Get Set mentoring project would be involved to support young people to become work ready;
- iii) It was acknowledged that the target to achieve 360 apprentices was ambitious. Performance would be reported to Government, although there would be no penalty for not meeting the Government's target of having 2.3% of the headcount as apprentices. The only implication was that, if not drawn down within 24 months, the funding would expire and be returned to Government;
- iv) The Scheme would be used to help address retention and retraining of existing staff and would help to address specific issues within particular Departments and services e.g. Highways within Environment and Transport, where some older staff could seek opportunities to retrain, due to the physical nature of the work undertaken over a number of years. Members were informed that, as a large complex employer, the County Council needed a flexible workforce to deliver services. As such, managers would be encouraged to think creatively about how people were retained, including the possibility of retraining;

- v) Members were concerned about resources lost should newly trained staff move to other employers. It was acknowledged that this was part of the operation of the new scheme; the organisation would benefit from the skills of staff while they worked at the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Apprenticeship Strategy be endorsed.

11. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning Attendance Management. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 11" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- i) Members were updated on the total number of days of absence per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee; which had continued to decrease to 9.80 in the year to the end of May 2017;
- ii) Regarding the levels of sickness due to stress, depression and mental health within the report, Members were informed that, it was technically possible to differentiate between sickness absence levels for each of these illnesses within the absence reporting system. However, it would be difficult for managers to distinguish between them based on the information supplied by Doctors, which usually categorised them together;
- iii) A deep dive analysis into specific long-term absence cases was undertaken on an annual basis to review specific cases. Members were informed that this showed that not one case was caused by purely work related stress; it tended to be a combination of work and personal issues, leading to the conclusion that the issue was how to support people to remain resilient in all aspects of their life;
- iv) It was emphasised that some managers were addressing sickness absence within their teams effectively and were having open and honest conversations with their staff; however other managers needed more support. A 12 month 'Intensive Support' project had been put in place to support managers to improve skills, knowledge and confidence in addressing attendance management issues. It was highlighted that the triage service provided by First Care, where staff spoke with a nurse, would ask those medical questions that managers felt unable to do so;
- v) Members recognised that there were differences in the absence levels of Departments. The Chief Executive's Department was the only Council department currently with a sickness absence level within the corporate target of 7.5 days. It was highlighted that different factors could distort the data, including the size and culture of the department, the type of workforce and jobs carried out; some of which were physical; the quality of management and the breadth of departmental responsibilities. It was highlighted that the data needed to be analysed in different ways to prioritise resource and support levels for managers;

- vi) The key aim of the attendance management policy was to bring people back to work as quickly as possible. It was recognised that leaving people in an isolated position at home was not beneficial for those staff with mental health issues. It was part of the manager's role to explore a variety of return to work options;
- vii) Members found it beneficial to receive a breakdown of long and short term absence. It was noted, however, that additional data in terms of specific numbers was required to fully understand the level of sickness across departments and the number of staff involved;
- viii) There was a range of support for staff with mental ill health, including the in-house wellbeing welfare service, as well as self-help resources on the intranet. Additionally, staff had been trained as mental health first aiders;
- ix) Members raised the issue of the Increments Policy; it was noted that this would be discussed at the Committee meeting in December.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on Attendance Management at the end of April 2017 be noted;
- b) That the data detailing levels of sickness by Department would, in future, include the specific number of staff concerned; and
- c) That the Increments Policy be considered by the Committee at their meeting on 7 December 2017.

12. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure Summary of Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Summary of Action Plans. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 12" is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 19 October 2017 at 10am.