

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 1 February 2018.

PRESENT

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

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

Mr. D. Slater CC

25. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2017 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

26. Question Time.

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

27. 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).

28. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

29. 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.

30. Staff Survey 2017.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Staff Survey 2017, which outlined the outcomes and actions identified from the survey and explained the proposed approach to address issues raised. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised: -

- i. The response rate to the 2017 Staff Survey had increased across all Departments compared to the previous survey in 2015. Questions used in the 2017 survey were consistent to those used in the previous surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015. The

survey had been completed by staff mainly online although hard copies were available; management support and encouragement had been integral to increasing the response rate. Members noted that some results were poorer for people working at other sites out of County Hall, especially related to communications and feeling involved;

- ii. Detail of the Survey responses was explained to Members using the tableau system, which showed dashboards so that comparisons across Departments could be made. The dashboards had been made available to staff for the first time this year and had been positively received;
- iii. It was explained that the survey was divided into three sub sections – My Council, My Manager and My Job, with questions grouped under each of these headings. It was highlighted that 91.5% of staff believed that the Council was committed to equality and diversity and that 89.2% felt that the Council was a good employer. Although the number of people who believed “that stress at work does not affect my job performance” had improved, this remained a concern for officers as it showed one of the lowest rated responses across the Council;
- iv. Areas that remained of concern were: the decrease in the level of staff who “feel that change is well managed” and the number of people who “feel able to speak up and challenge the way things are done”, although it was recognised that this latter indicator had increased by 3.2% since the Staff Survey 2015;
- v. Liaison with the Trade Unions on specific areas had been increased. It was acknowledged that current projects underway within the organisation such as the Leadership Framework, Values and Behaviours and the Recruitment and Retention Strategy would address issues raised within the survey;
- vi. The survey had shown that the factors which were important to staff were job satisfaction, work life balance, pay and benefits, and career development. Since the Staff Survey 2015, pay and benefits and work life balance were now of more importance to people. It was explained that, considering the size and complexity of the organisation, that it was expected that pay and benefits would be an area of concern for staff; the level of response to this area reflected the national picture;
- vii. Members were informed that the response to the survey by staff with disabilities was a concern with responses to all questions significantly worse than across the County Council overall. The Corporate Management Team would discuss and agree actions to address the responses in this area;
- viii. Recruitment and retention remained a priority, especially of social workers; officers monitored the jobs market locally and compared pay levels with neighbouring authorities. Members were informed that this was being addressed by the Director of Children and Family Services following the Ofsted Inspection last year;
- ix. A view was expressed that staff might still be concerned about the possibility of job losses, following austerity measures over recent years. It was believed that this was not the case as people were used to operating in a “new world”. However, it was recognised that staff subject to an Organisational Change Action Plan would be concerned about the possibility of redundancy, although relatively few compulsory redundancies had been made; most job losses had been managed through natural wastage.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the Staff Survey 2017 be noted.

31. Gender Pay Gap Reporting.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the results of the Gender Pay Gap reporting for Leicestershire County Council. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 7", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:-

- i. The Gender Pay Gap report was now a statutory requirement under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010, which required larger employers, of over 250 employees, to publish pay information to show whether there were differences in pay between male and female employees. This was an annual requirement, in March each year and the data would be published on the Council website;
- ii. Members were concerned that the initial results showed that the mean hourly rate for females was 18% lower than for males, and the median hourly rate for females was 20% lower than males. It was recognised that whilst this was comparable to national statistics, more progress needed to be made. It was explained that, of the staff employed by the Council, 74% were female and 26% were male;
- iii. Members were concerned that the published data gave the impression that the County Council paid female employees less than male employees. It was explained that this was not the case; there was a higher number of female employees in lower paid roles, which contributed to the Gender Pay Gap. The Chairman highlighted that the Council had a robust Equalities Policy and that this had been applied to the job evaluation scheme. It was recognised that recruitment of employees was governed by what was available in the jobs market and how and where the opportunities available were publicised and promoted. It was acknowledged that a variety of measures could be undertaken to address the Gender Pay Gap, including a change in recruitment strategy, such as consideration of apprenticeships and closer working with schools and colleges to promote opportunities to male and females, regardless of job type. Members recognised that improvements would be incremental and progress would be seen in the longer term;
- iv. The County Council compared well to other local authorities for whom data was currently available. Whilst this was currently for District and Borough Councils, as they had published their data early, further comparison with more similar authorities would be carried in April 2018, once data for all local authorities had been published;

RESOLVED:

That the report on the gender pay gap be noted.

32. Pay Policy Statement 2018/19.

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources outlining the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 which, subject to the Committee's endorsement, would be submitted to the County Council for approval at its meeting on 21 March 2018. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i. Professional fees were reimbursed to employees who were unable to practise their profession unless such fees were paid, for example social workers. In addition, the Council paid the annual subscription for Chief Officers to the Societies of Chief Officers and similar organisations. Members were concerned that this facility should be available for all staff, and the Assistant Director of Corporate Services agreed to investigate whether any other staff had professional fees reimbursed by the County Council;
- ii. The total pay detailed for senior management in the Pay Policy Statement was for 2016/17 and showed actual salary and any additional benefits paid. For some positions where the individual had been in post for part of the year only, the data reflected the salary paid. The pay scales published within the Pay Policy Statement related to 2017/18;
- iii. Regarding the re-engagement of employees who had been made redundant by the County Council, Members were informed that they could return to work at the Council following a break in employment of four weeks and a day. The Committee agreed that consideration should be given regarding the extension of this timeframe and the Assistant Director of Services agreed to present a draft policy to the Employment Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19.

33. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning attendance management at the end of November 2017. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i. Members recognised that there were differences in the absence levels of Council departments. The Chief Executive's Department remained the only Council department currently with a sickness absence level within the corporate target of 7.5 days. Members also recognised that sickness levels and type of illness directly related to the type of job completed by individuals.

- ii. Absence levels for “stress/depression, mental health”, “other musculo-skeletal” and “viral infection not cough/cold/flu” showed that these were in the top three illness categories for the period up to November 2017.
- iii. Members highlighted that it would be beneficial to include details of the actual number of employees within each Department, as well as the percentages, affected by sickness in each Department, so that an accurate comparison could be made year on year, by Department;
- iv. Following a review, it had been decided not to continue with the First Care Absence Triage Service beyond 31 March 2018, when the pilot was due to end;
- v. Consultation with the Trade Unions on the first draft of the Increments Policy had begun in September 2017 and they had expressed a range of concerns regarding the approach and potential impact on recruitment. It had been agreed with the Trade Unions that the consultation on the draft Increments Policy would be paused, to allow more time for the success of the intensive support project to be assessed.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Attendance Management at the end of November 2017 be noted.

34. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report if the Chief Executive concerning Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Summary of Action Plans. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 10”, is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

35. Date of Next Meeting.

It was AGREED to hold the next meeting of the Employment Committee on Thursday 28 June 2018 at 2pm.