

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Friday, 29 June 2018.

PRESENT

(in the Chair)

Mr. T. Gillard CC  
Mr. J. Kaufman CC  
Ms. Betty Newton CC

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

1. Election of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC be elected Chairman of the Employment Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019.

(Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC - 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 date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2018 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. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. 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.

8. Trade Union Recognition and Procedural Agreement.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the progress being made in agreeing a revised corporate Trade Union Recognition and Procedural Agreement. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Members supported the proposal that the recognised Trade Unions engage with the Management Side in the format of a Joint Trade Union Side for the purposes of collective bargaining, consultation and negotiation. It was recognised that the alternative, a system of proportionate representation with voting to reach agreement, would be significantly more challenging.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in agreeing a revised corporate Trade Union Recognition and Procedural Agreement be noted.

9. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of April 2018. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) It was acknowledged that the actions taken to improve sickness absence had thus far resulted in marginal improvements to performance, rather than a step change. If the current pattern continued, consideration would be given to taking a more hard-edged approach to absence management. This would need to be discussed with the Trade Unions. The Committee asked to see options for further actions that could be taken in the next report on this matter.
- (ii) A comparison of the County Council's performance against sickness rates in the private sector had not been undertaken due to the fact that there were no comparable private sector organisations. However, the County Council did not compare particularly favourably to other County Councils. Some examples of good practice from other local authorities had already been implemented but officers undertook to see if there were any further lessons to be learnt.
- (iii) All managers were required to complete a return to work interview within five working days. Completion rates were monitored by Departmental Management Teams but the detail of the interviews remained confidential. Guidance for managers, including a wellbeing resource pack, was available to support them in making return to work interviews effective and ensure that staff felt supported to stay in work.

- (iv) There was a legal requirement for 'not disclosed' to be a category of absence. It was expected that this would be updated to the correct category by managers once the return to work interview had taken place. Use of the category was reducing through good practice; however it was acknowledged that further engagement and training for managers was needed. It was important to ensure that use of the category did not mean that employees were choosing not to engage with their manager.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the position on sickness absence as at the end of April 2018 be noted;

(b) That an update be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, including options for further actions that could be taken to reduce sickness absence.

10. Wellbeing Strategy 2018 - 2023.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Public Health which set out the Wellbeing Strategy and sought support for its implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

It was confirmed that Vision Express had been chosen to provide free eye tests for employees who regularly used a computer or visual display unit following a tender process.

Wellbeing help and advice was available for staff on the intranet and was regularly updated.

RESOLVED:

That the Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2023 be noted.

11. Pay Awards 2018-2020.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which informed it of the action taken by the Chief Executive to implement a pay award for employees on grades 2 – 17 inclusive and sought agreement to apply the nationally agreed Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) pay award for Chief Executives. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The implementation of the national living wage had resulted in pay points at the bottom of the Council's grade structure being very close to each other; pay points three and four were now identical. Given that there would be further increases in the national living wage over the next couple of years, it was proposed that the grade structure be remodelled to allow for incremental progression and a clear difference between pay grades. Work would be undertaken in preparation for the implementing the new structure at the beginning of the next financial year. The review would be informed by the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme and it was intended to keep disruption to staff to a minimum.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the action taken in respect of the implementation of the pay award for employees on grades 2 – 17 for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 be noted;
- (b) That the implementation of the two year pay award for Chief Executives for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020 be approved;
- (c) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee setting out details of how the pay award covering the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 will be implemented.

## 12. Random Alcohol and Drug Testing.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which set out work currently underway to introduce random alcohol and drug testing arrangements within a number of areas in the Council. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

It was confirmed that the policy would apply to County Council staff and agency staff used by the Council. Discussions with commissioned services to determine how the policy should apply to them were ongoing and the Committee would be updated on their outcome.

An external testing provider would be used as this would ensure independence and a robust process, and would remove any risk of bias which could be a criticism if in-house testing was undertaken. Managers with reasonable grounds to suspect that a member of staff was under the influence of drugs or alcohol could already address their concerns through the existing Substance Misuse Policy, which allowed them to act immediately. The sanctions which could be put in place under either policy would take individual circumstances into account.

RESOLVED:

That the work that is currently underway to introduce random alcohol and drug testing arrangements within a number of areas in the Council be supported.

## 13. Trans Equality Policy.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval of the draft Trans Equality Policy. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Members welcomed the policy, which reflected the Council's organisational values and demonstrated that it was a progressive and inclusive organisation. It would be publicised through workers groups and communication to managers. Staff from Strategic Human Resources would be able to provide further advice and guidance on individual cases.

It was noted that elements of the policy were currently aspirational, for example County Hall did not have any gender-neutral facilities. However, it was important for managers to be able to have a sensible conversation with a trans employee about the use of facilities, to ensure that the employee felt comfortable with whatever arrangements were made. The policy facilitated this.

RESOLVED:

That the Trans Equality Strategy be approved.

14. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on the current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress with their implementation be noted.

15. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday 13 September 2018 at 10.00am.

10.00 - 11.20 am  
29 June 2018

CHAIRMAN