

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 13 September 2018.

PRESENT

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

Ms. L. Broadley CC
Dr. T. Eynon CC

Mr. T. Gillard CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

16. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2018 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 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).

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. Re-engagement of Former Employees.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval for the introduction of a new policy on the re-engagement of former employees. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) It was clarified that the policy applied to people who took voluntary redundancy or who took compulsory redundancy with a settlement agreement. These people could return to work for the County Council within a 12 month period, but if they did so the redundancy payment they had received would be subject to clawback.

- (ii) It was noted that the Trade Unions had given their support to the policy. However, some concern was expressed that the policy suggested there was currently an issue regarding the Council offering people redundancy and then finding that they were still needed. It would be particularly important to have a robust approach to redeployment in the light of Brexit and shortages in the care market.

The Committee felt that further work was needed to clarify the position with regard to casual workers and requested a further report on the policy to its next meeting. This report would also provide more context on the national provision for redundancies and the County Council's approach to redeployment.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the introduction of the new Policy on the Re-engagement of Former Employees be approved, subject to a further report to the Employment Committee in December clarifying the position with regard to casual workers;
- (b) That the letter from the Trade Unions confirming support for the Policy be circulated to members of the Committee.

22. Pay Policy Statement 2019-2020.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval of the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that the Chief Digital and Information Officer was incorrectly listed as an officer of the Chief Executive's Department, this should be corrected to the Corporate Resources Department,

The Committee was advised there would be a complete revision of the bottom of the national payscales for 2019. The County Council was close to finalising similar revisions to its own payscale, which would respond to the requirements of the National Living Wage, allow for incremental progression and ensure that the payscales were future-proofed. Final proposals would be presented to a future meeting of the Employment Committee. This report would also include commentary on the ratio between the highest paid employee and the median average salary of the Council's workforce and set out the changes to this ratio over time.

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement 2019/20 be approved for submission to the meeting of the full County Council on 5 December 2018.

23. Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought agreement to the policy decisions afforded to the County Council as a scheme employer under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The discretions proposed in response to the LGPS (Amendment) Regulations 2018 were intended to align the rights of people who left the scheme prior to 2014 with those of current scheme members. These people, once they turned 55, would now be allowed to apply for their pension at a reduced rate. This was a benefit for former employees but would not cost the County Council any additional money.

The policy change affected 4741 people. They had all been written to and 600 people had already indicated that they were interested in applying for their pension at a reduced rate.

It was confirmed that the Trade Unions were aware of the policy changes at a national level, as they had been introduced by legislation. The local Trade Unions had not been consulted.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the policy decisions in Appendix 1 related to the following discretions be approved:
 - (i) Power of employer to award additional pension;
 - (ii) Funding of additional pension contributions (shared cost);
 - (iii) Flexible retirement;
 - (iv) Switching on rule of 85; and
 - (v) Waiving of actuarial reduction;
- b) That new policy decisions in Appendix 2 related to the following be approved:
 - (i) Former employees seeking to access unreduced pension on the grounds of compassion; and
 - (ii) Switching on the Rule of 85 – provisions covering former members who left after 1 April 1998 but before 31 March 2014;
- c) That employer policy related to Regulation (7), relating to dismissals on the grounds of business efficiency, be noted.

24. JNC Chief Officers' Pay Award 2018/20.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which detailed the action taken by the Chief Executive to implement a pay award for employees on grades 18 – 21 inclusive, in order to meet the requirements of the nationally-agreed Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Chief Officers' pay award which covered the period from April 2018 to March 2020. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken in respect of the implementation of the pay award for employees on grades 18 – 21 for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020 be noted.

25. 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 June 2018.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) There was a target in the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for departments to reduce sickness absence. The overall annual cost of absence to the Council was £4 million. Members did not feel that this was acceptable but recognised that it was difficult to change the culture of the organisation.
- (ii) Stress and depression were one of the main causes of sickness absence. To address this, the County Council had a wellbeing offer in place. A recent workshop with the Trade Unions had confirmed that the offer was comprehensive. It included a support package for managers to enable them to intervene early and support staff members with stress and depression to remain well and in work. The network of Mental Health First Aiders and its visibility was also being improved. The counselling service currently had an eight to ten week waiting list, although calls were triaged and urgent cases dealt with more quickly. Staff could be signposted to other services if the counselling service was not appropriate for them. Another full time trained counsellor had been employed to address the wait times and there were currently two trainee counsellors working with the service.
- (iii) The Occupational Health contract was due to be retendered in 2019. It would include the opportunity to procure an Employee Assistance Programme. This would be in addition to the Council's own counselling service and would include a 24/7 telephone support line. The Committee welcomed this opportunity.
- (iv) Musculo-skeletal problems were another major cause of sickness absence in the Council. The majority of these were short term injuries. A deep dive had been undertaken to determine if the Council should develop a physiotherapy offer; however this was not felt to be necessary as most long term absence cases related to breaks and operations where staff were already in receipt of physiotherapy. The HR Business Partner for the Environment and Transport Department was currently investigating measures which could help prevent staff from suffering from musculo-skeletal problems. The Committee welcomed this assurance.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of June 2018 be noted.

26. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Summary of Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented an update of 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 11' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:-

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

27. Date of Future Meetings.

The Committee noted that future meetings of the Employment Committee would take place at 10.00am on the following dates:-

6 December 2018;
31 January 2019;
27 June 2019;
26 September 2019;
5 December 2019.

10.00 - 11.08 am
13 September 2018

CHAIRMAN