

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 26 September 2019.

PRESENT

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

Ms. L. Broadley CC
Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

1. Appointment 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 2020.

(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 2020.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2019 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.

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC declared a personal interest in item 10 as he was in receipt of a pension from the Local Government Pension Scheme as a former teacher.

8. Recruitment and Retention Update.

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation from the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the issues and challenges faced by the County Council in relation to recruitment and retention, and the progress made on the work undertaken to address this. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 8 and presentation, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The County Council's Employment Deal was in place, but further steps were needed to promote the Council as an "employer of choice"; it was recognised that the recruitment process was very traditional and an alternative approach was required;
- ii. Over the last 12 months, a pilot had been undertaken in the Environment and Transport Department with recruitment using CVs only. This had been made clear on the advert, leading to an increase in the pool of applicants;
- iii. A combination of recruitment methods had been explored, including an interview and a variety of testing, particularly for digital and IT skills, and practical tests related to performance in particular aspects of the role; Offering market premia payments for hard-to-fill posts, for example in the Children and Family Services Department, had had a positive impact on applicant levels;
- iv. 199 people had attended a recruitment open day for the Environment and Transport Department and 11 vacancies from a number of frontline services had been filled. Lessons learned from the running of the open day would be used in future campaigns of this nature. The Adults and Communities Department planned to run a similar event;
- v. There was a continued focus on hard-to fill posts, working closely with individual departments, to improve the offer to potential applicants. A strategic and focused approach would be undertaken with graduate recruitment, working jointly with local universities;
- vi. The Council's use of agency staff, for example Social Workers, had reduced from a spend of £9m last year down to currently just under £6m. There was always a place for some agency staff, although this needed to be managed closely, and a mix of approaches used in order to secure the best applicants to fill vacancies;
- vii. A new dedicated website had been developed internally, which was had been low cost and was easily adaptable should information change. A modern format and style had been adopted, for use on mobile device or tablet. The website was due

to be launched in December 2019 and would be promoted through the Council's website and used on all recruitment campaigns.

Members expressed concern that the use of market premia payments may have a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention and were informed that market premia payments were based on market forces. A robust business case was needed, with a clear rationale, for this option to be considered.

Members recognised that there was a perception problem with how vacancies in Local Government were viewed by potential recruits. Additional work would be undertaken with the branding of marketing and recruitment materials to encourage applicants.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the issues and challenges facing the County Council in relation to recruitment and retention, and the progress made with work undertaken to address this, be noted.

9. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report from 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 2019. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9, is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the average absence rate for all county and unitary authorities was 9.2 days; the County Council was currently at 9.26 days.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Absence data contained in the report would, in future, contain the number of people involved to enable Members to understand the levels of sickness absence per individual;
- ii. Referral to Occupational Health was discussed with the individual concerned; the focus being on support and on encouraging people to return to work. Occupational Health worked with individuals to build trust and transparency; the contact was confidential and the detail was not discussed with managers, only the issues themselves. The report of the Occupational Health support was discussed with the individual before submission to the Council and was handled carefully. It was recognised that people may feel threatened by contact with Occupational Health and that there was a need to promote absolute transparency;
- iii. HR Business Partners would be working with line managers to encourage people to return to work; there were many initiatives in place to manage attendance carefully. Managers needed to be clear with staff on expectations and the process that would be followed. It was acknowledged that managers needed to be clear with all staff about the cost and impact of sickness absence on the county council;
- iv. The report from the Peer Review completed by North Yorkshire County Council was awaited.

Mr. Rhodes added that absence management would be addressed with Directors during the Cabinet Star Chambers in November.

Members commended the work that had been completed to reduce levels of sickness absence across the County Council.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a. The update on the County Council's position on sickness absence as at the end of June 2019 be noted; and
- b. The report presented to the Committee concerning the levels of sickness absence at the County Council would be recirculated to Members with the addition of the numbers of staff involved, and future reports would continue to include this detail.

10. Pay Policy Statement 2020/21.

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval for the County Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 prior to forwarding to the County Council for approval in December 2019. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 10, is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the Trade Unions had made requests for additional annual leave, a reduced working week, a minimum increase in pay across all grades (under NJC Pay arrangements). Nationally, the response was awaited.

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 be approved for submission to the full County Council on 4 December 2019.

11. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure.

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which presented an update of the current Acton 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 on the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation be noted.

12. Dates of Future Meetings.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 5 December 2019 at 10.00am.

Future meetings of the Employment Committee would be held at 10.00am on the following dates:

- 6 February 2020
- 14 May 2020
- 17 September 2020
- 3 December 2020

10.00 - 11.15 am
26 September 2019

CHAIRMAN