

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 5 December 2019.

PRESENT

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC (in the Chair)

Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mr. I. D. Ould OBE CC

13. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed, subject to the following amendment:

Declarations of Interest – (Minute 58 refers). The final paragraph should be amended to read:

“Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC declared a personal interest in Item 10 as he was in receipt of a *pension from the Teachers’ Pension Scheme.*”

14. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

15. 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).

16. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

17. 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.

18. Staff Survey 2019.

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided a summary of the outcomes and actions identified from the 2019 Staff Survey. A copy of the report marked “Agenda Item 6” is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that this survey had the highest response rate of staff surveys undertaken to date.

In response to questions, members were informed that:

- i. It was recognised that Managers had many demands on their time; a great deal of work had been undertaken corporately to support them in managing the wellbeing of their staff, including where staff had disabilities. The appraisal process was now conducted through a year-round discussion, encouraging managers to support their staff and enable issues to be addressed. There was also a range of options in place to support staff wellbeing, for example, the establishment of 400 Mental Health First Aiders, and the signposting of people to alternative support, including charities and other organisations, depending on their needs.
- ii. External inspection which had been underway at the time of the Staff Survey, for example by OFSTED in the Children and Family Services Department, was taken into account when considering the results and determining actions to address the findings. The Director praised the Children and Family Services Department for maintaining its results in the survey during an inspection.
- iii. Members expressed concern about the results related to bullying and harassment and were informed that, as the survey was anonymous, the specific circumstances could not be identified. Officers were considering alternative methods to address the issues raised, including workshops to raise awareness.
- iv. The Dashboard was available to managers and staff to encourage exploration, within teams, of the issues raised; Departments were now working with Business Partners to respond to the results.

RESOLVED:

That

- a. the summary of the outcomes and actions identified from the 2019 staff survey, and the approach being taken to address the findings, be noted;
- b. a report would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2020 to provide further detail of the actions being taken to address the findings of the Staff Survey 2019.

19. 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 September 2019. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 7" is filed with these minutes.

The Director explained that attendance levels had shown an improvement on the previous quarter's report, especially in the Children and Family Services Department. There had been, however, a general increase in absence due to mental health and stress across the council which reflected the national trend. Work had been completed with the

Children and Family Services and Adults and Communities Departments to address the levels of absence due to stress.

In response to questions, members were informed that:

- i. A range of initiatives to address stress and mental health had been introduced across the council, including Mental Health First Aiders and an attendance management course for managers, of which 30% had attended; it was hoped that more managers would attend and that this attendance rate would increase.
- ii. A survey had been completed in April 2019 with the Children and Family Services and Adults and Communities Departments to identify the causes of increased absence due to stress and mental health issues and to explore whether work-related, departmental issues were a contributory factor. Officers were now working on actions identified.
- iii. Feedback from the Attendance Management Intensive Support Project had been positive; funding had been agreed to continue the project beyond July 2020.
- iv. The peer review undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council had given the reassurance that the Council was largely taking the right actions to address absence. An effective wellbeing offer was in place and more promotion to staff would be undertaken. The review findings showed that there was a need for managers to be clear with staff about expectations around attendance.
- v. The Attendance Management policy would include a 'Statement of Intent' and would be discussed with the Trade Unions. Members asked for details of this to be included in the report to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) the update on the County Council's position on sickness absence as at the end of September 2019 be noted; and
- b) that the report to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2020 will include additional information on the 'Statement of Intent'.

20. Health and Safety Annual Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report for 2018-19. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 8" is filed with these minutes.

Members were concerned that the level of injuries caused by physical assault had increased and were informed that Health and Safety Audits, which encouraged managers to report both physical and verbal incidents, may have contributed to the increase. Officers were working with managers to better understand the issues. Corporate policies, for example on remote working, would include the need for risk assessments so that staff were deployed safely.

It was moved by Mrs. Newton and seconded by Mr. Ould that:

“The Cabinet Lead Member would receive information on Health and Safety incidents within the Department, on action required or that had been taken and Directors would be asked to discuss this at meetings with the Lead Member.”

The motion was put and carried.

The Director welcomed the support of members with developing a better understanding of the health and safety issues.

Regarding Key Performance Indicator 2 which required the audit report/action plan to be developed within 5 working days from completion of the audit, members were assured that all audits were completed within this timescale. In some cases, production of the final report could not be completed until documents were received from the manager concerned.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The Health and Safety Annual report be noted and the extensive work undertaken by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service be endorsed; and
- b) Details of Health and Safety incidents within Departments, and of action taken to address them, be provided to the relevant Cabinet Lead Member and Directors be asked to discuss this at Lead Member meetings.

21. Recruitment and Retention Incentives.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the introduction of a range of new recruitment and retention incentives for hard-to-fill posts. A copy of the report marked “Agenda Item 9” is filed with these minutes.

Members were assured that a robust business case with strong evidence was needed and was applicable to hard-to-fill posts only.

In response to questions, members were informed that:

- i. The market supplement payments referred to in the Policy could be applied to the retention of existing staff as well as the recruitment of new staff, in order to avoid a two-tier system. A robust business case would be needed to put this arrangement in place.
- ii. The market supplement payments would be paid for an agreed period of up to three years, at which point a thorough review would be undertaken to consider whether the payment should continue.
- iii. Potentially the award of a market supplement payment could erode the differential between grades, particularly at the middle grades, and result in a team member being paid more than a supervisor. Alternative incentives, rather than monetary, would be considered as part of the business case, such as an increased annual leave allowance.

- iv. The Hay Evaluation Scheme related to the post and the grade for the job; market premia payments would be awarded in addition to that.

RESOLVED:

That the Recruitment and Retention Policy for Hard-to-Fill Posts be noted.

22. 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 with their implementation. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 10" 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.

23. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Employment Committee is scheduled to be held on Thursday 6 February 2020.

10.00 - 11.29 am
05 December 2019

CHAIRMAN