

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 4 February 2021.

PRESENT

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

Ms. L. Broadley CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mr. I. D. Ould OBE CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

26. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

27. Question Time.

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

28. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

29. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

30. 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.

31. People Strategy 2020-2024.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources seeking approval for the County Council's People Strategy 2020-24. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 6', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the further analysis requested by the Committee at the previous meeting on 3 December 2020 was included in the report, namely:

- i. The outcomes achieved by the previous People Strategy (2017–2020);
- ii. The outcomes of the evaluation exercise undertaken on the People Strategy for 2017-2020 which informed development of the Strategy for 2020-24; and

- iii. The smart targets that have been set for each of the key deliverables for Year 1 of the new People Strategy (2020-2024).

In presenting the report the Director said that the review of the previous Strategy had been undertaken independently by the County Council's Data and Business Intelligence Team. Each theme in the People Strategy had a set of key deliverables and these were set out in the report.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The Learning and Development for the Future project developed new methods of delivery to ensure that training could be delivered on a remote basis. It was imperative going forward that a variety of methods of delivery were utilised, and all had been thoroughly tested through the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process to ensure that there were no barriers to training for any individual.
- ii. People working from home had been supplied with appropriate equipment and facilities to enable them to do so. An allowance had also been made available to staff to enable them to purchase additional equipment to enable them to work from home effectively.
- iii. Senior managers of grade 15 and above were classified as 'leaders'; 'managers' were typically at grade 13 and 14 although there were management roles at other levels too.
- iv. There were no plans to change the grading structure used by the Council as the structure had been in place and working effectively for some time and was also subject to change as a result of the major national pay review completed a couple of years ago. The Director assured members that he felt that the Council had the right grade structure in place and that the job evaluation scheme had been equality proofed and was fair. External market forces were also a factor, and in some cases, market premia payments were in place to ensure that the Council remained competitive and attracted and retained the best people available.

RESOLVED:

That the People Strategy 2020-24 be approved.

32. 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 November 2020. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. All departments had made reductions or had stayed below the corporate target of 7.5 days per FTE. The Chief Executive's, Corporate Resources and Public Health departments had met the corporate target.

- ii. There had been significant reductions in the level of absence due to back and neck injury and musculo-skeletal since last year, potentially due to reduced activity and time for people to rest current ailments. Absence due to viral infection and cough/cold/flu was also greatly reduced, potentially due to the social distancing measures currently in place. Absence due to Covid-19 was increasing and would be monitored. Managers had reported a reduction in the level of illness with their staff, potentially due to the reduced level of social interaction.
- iii. It was suspected that home working had had a positive impact on sickness absence as some staff continued to work from home despite being unwell, whereas they may have taken time off sick had they been working in the office.
- iv. It was suspected that the level of days lost due to short term absence was high in the Corporate Resources section due to the high number of school food staff and the need for them to remain absent from work if affected by a stomach bug due to food hygiene regulations.
- v. It was unknown what impact a return to 'normality' with no social distancing would have on sickness absence. This would continue to be monitored.

Members said that they were pleased with the reduced level of sickness absence and recognised the positive impact of Covid-19. The Director said that it was expected that staff would continue to work remotely to some degree, which would help with absence levels in the future.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of November 2020, be noted.

33. Gender Pay Gap.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the initial results of the Gender Pay Gap reporting for the County Council. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that an increase in the proportion of females in the higher grades had positively influenced the Gender Pay Gap report, which demonstrated the success of the positive action programmes undertaken by the Council to encourage women into the leadership roles. It was recognised that there was more improvement to be made, and the Council was aiming for equality of pay across all grades.

RESOLVED:

That the publication of the results of the Gender Pay Gap analysis by 30 March 2021 be supported.

34. Equal Pay Audit.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the findings of an equal pay audit conducted in October 2020. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The data for staff identifying as transgender had not been included in the audit as the numbers were so small that they could have potentially been identified.
- ii. The significant gender gap evident in the report for standby payments was due to the roles affected being mainly occupied by males, for example gritting teams. The effectiveness of the new Policy developed regarding standby payments would be reviewed during the next equal pay audit.
- iii. Market premia payments focused on the market available and the need to attract the best staff and were not determined by gender. The Director recognised that such payments could be divisive in some cases and assured members that a robust business case was required before the addition of a market premia payment to a vacancy. Members acknowledged the importance of attracting the best people and in getting the right person in the job to maintain service delivery.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that:

- a) the findings of the Equal Pay Audit, particularly that the current job evaluation system (HAY) continues to ensure that pay is determined on an equal basis;
- b) additional payments such as honoraria and premia payments will continue to be reviewed regularly to ensure that such payments are still justified and do not discriminate; and
- c) a further report on equal pay be presented to the Employment Committee within 3 years.

35. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented the current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress made with their implementation. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

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

36. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held on Thursday 13 May 2021 at 10:00am.