

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 16 September 2021.

PRESENT

Mr. L. Breckon JP CC (in the Chair)

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC

Mr. P. Bedford CC

Ms. L. Broadley CC

Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC

Mrs B. Seaton CC

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

1. Appointment of Chairman.

At the County Council meeting on 19 May 2021, Mr. L. Breckon JP CC was nominated as Chairman elect of the Employment Committee.

It was moved by Mr Shepherd and seconded by Mr. Bedford that Mr. L. Breckon JP CC be elected Chairman of the Employment Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

**RESOLVED:**

That Mr. L. Breckon JP CC be elected Chairman of the Employment Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

Mr. L. Breckon JP CC - in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

Nominations for the position of Deputy Chairman were sought. Mr. P. Bedford CC was nominated by Mr. Shepherd and seconded by Mr. Breckon.

**RESOLVED:**

That Mr. P. Bedford 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 2022.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

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

5. Questions asked by members.

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. Breckon, Mr Bannister, Mrs Broadley and Mrs Seaton each declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Pay Policy Statement 2021 as relatives were employed by the County Council.

8. Pay Policy Statement 2021.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources seeking approval for the submission of the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 to the County Council for approval in December 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that

- i. the pay offer in respect of Chief Officers and Chief Executives detailed in paragraph 12 should read 1.5%.
- ii. Trade Unions would hold a national ballot in September. If the pay offer was accepted, the County Council would be required to review the lowest points of its locally agreed pay spines to accommodate the increase.

In response to questions, the Director explained that in 2019 the County Council's Pay Spines were reviewed and this had resulted in an increase in the lowest pay spine.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Dr Feltham that:

- a. the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be approved for submission to the County Council for approval at its meeting on 1 December 2021; and that
- b. following agreement of the 2021/22 pay offer at national level, it be noted that the 2021/22 pay structure incorporating the NJC 2021/22 pay award will be circulated to the Committee.

The Motion was put and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That

- a. the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be approved for submission to the County Council for approval at its meeting on 1 December 2021; and that
- b. following agreement of the 2021/22 pay offer at national level, it be noted that the 2021/22 pay structure incorporating the NJC 2021/22 pay award will be circulated to the Committee.

9. Wellbeing Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Staff Wellbeing Survey undertaken in May 2021 and the establishment of the Corporate Wellbeing Board. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman highlighted that the wellbeing offer to staff was comprehensive.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. A higher response rate to the Survey would have been welcomed. A shorter snap survey (such as Quest) may have generated a higher response rate than the Council's survey, but would not have presented such detailed feedback. The Director added that he was not surprised that the response rate had fallen with Survey 3 due to the frequency of the surveys held over the last 18 months and also due to the complexity of the Council with several thousand staff who were not regular email users.
- ii. Alternative methods of collecting data were being explored. For example, an individual departmental survey had been held by the Environment and Transport Department, which was tailored to the department. The approach would be reviewed, including an analysis of the response rate.
- iii. It was recognised that other surveys were promoted at the same time e.g. Stonewall survey, which may have created 'survey fatigue'. Officers would explore why the response rate had reduced, potentially asking a question in the next Wellbeing Survey.
- iv. It was acknowledged that staff may have been reluctant to respond to the Survey due to concerns about the potential impact on their employment. The Director agreed to ensure that reassurances regarding anonymity were included with future Surveys.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Mr Bedford that the continued focus on staff wellbeing and resilience across the Council, the results of the third Wellbeing Survey, the establishment of the Corporate Wellbeing Board and the Wellbeing Action Plan be noted.

The Motion was put and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That the continued focus on staff wellbeing and resilience across the Council, the results of the third Wellbeing Survey, the establishment of the Corporate Wellbeing Board and the Wellbeing Action Plan be noted.

10. 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 March 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that sickness levels were lower overall as people were not becoming ill due to social distancing.

The Director explained that the level of absence due to stress/depression/ mental health was lower due in part to the Council's comprehensive wellbeing offer. Supporting staff had been a priority for managers. Likewise, the Council had increased the wellbeing offer to support people with a cancer diagnosis in light of the NHS challenges in providing timely support.

It was hoped that the gains made in managing attendance and in setting out clear expectations would be continued as the Council moved forward into new ways of working.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Officers were seeking to improve the number in the 'not disclosed' category. Focussed work had been undertaken with Departments to address this. Legally staff did not have to disclose the reason for sickness although they were encouraged to discuss this with their manager. Members were assured that the number of 'not disclosed' cases was usually due to administrative issues rather than a breakdown of the relationship between the manager and staff member.
- ii. Managers had been supported in managing staff remotely to ensure continued productivity and so any issues with attendance were resolved quickly. The Director added that the opportunity to work from home had reduced sickness levels as people felt more able to manage working while ill as they had not driven into the office. The impact on absence levels of the new ways of working with increased mixing of staff and the gradual 're-opening' of society was awaited.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Mr Shepherd that the update provided on the Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of March 2021, be noted.

The Motion was put and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update provided on the Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of March 2021, be noted.

11. Diversity and Inclusion update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Council's approach to staff diversity and inclusion. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, the Director highlighted that the Council had become a signatory to an external Race at Work Charter, created by Business in the Community, and demonstrated that the Council promoted equality across the workplace, regardless of an individual's ethnicity and race.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. Staff were encouraged to declare a disability, but some did not do so for a variety of reasons; potentially due to anxiety about how they would be treated or maybe because they did not believe that the illness affected them or their work sufficiently for them to declare. Members were concerned that there should be more awareness and understanding of hidden disabilities. The Director explained that officers would continue to encourage staff to declare a disability and would continue to promote the support in place and the confidentiality of such information.
- ii. Regarding the declaration of sexual orientation, and members' concern that declaration rates were low, the Director explained that it was believed that some people were reluctant to declare as this was such a personal issue. The LGBT+ workers' group in the Council was supportive and helpful to staff. However, the Director acknowledged that there was more to do.
- iii. It was challenging to produce data on the workforce's socio-economic background, and to classify which background people came from. It was recognised that this was a sensitive area to address, although some organisations did so. The Council would be seeking to do more in this area over the next couple of years. Officers explained that the Council could offer apprenticeships for care leavers to support them in work, alongside a number of programmes in place to address particular areas of the community, for example Work Plus and Kickstart.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Mr Bedford that

- a. the fact that diversity and inclusion is well managed within the Council, having received external accreditation for its actions, be noted; and
- b. the data collated on staff demographics detailed at paragraphs 9-12 and the next steps outlined at paragraphs 19-20 within the report, which aim to further support and promote staff diversity and inclusion, be noted.

The Motion was put and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That

- a. the fact that diversity and inclusion is well managed within the Council, having received external accreditation for its actions, be noted; and
- b. the data collated on staff demographics detailed at paragraphs 9-12 and the next steps outlined at paragraphs 19-20 within the report, which aim to further support and promote staff diversity and inclusion, be noted.

12. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2020-21.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing report 2020-21. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

The Director highlighted that details of the usage of the internal Wellbeing Service by department was included in the report. When the presenting issue was suicide, additional outside support from health services, GPs or the Samaritans, for example, was sought.

In response to questions, it was acknowledged that the number of staff attending health and safety courses was lower than expected during the pandemic. Officers would explore the reasoning for this

The Chairman commended officers for the comprehensive report.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Mr Bedford that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2020-21 be noted, and the extensive work, undertaken in partnership with departments by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service, be endorsed.

The Motion was put and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2020-21 be noted, and the extensive work, undertaken in partnership with departments by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service, be endorsed.

13. 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 13' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr Breckon and seconded by Mr Bedford that the update provided on the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy, and details of progress in their implementation, be noted.

The Motion was put and carried.

**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.

14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held on 2 December 2021 at 10:00am.

10.00 - 11.27 am  
16 September 2021

CHAIRMAN