

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 28 September 2023.

PRESENT

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

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC
Mrs. L. Broadley CC
Mr. B. Champion CC

Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023.

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

17. Question Time.

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

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. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

20. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

22. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the Council's overall position on sickness absence, as at the end

of June 2023 (Quarter 1, 2023/24). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The NHS had reviewed its guidance on testing for COVID to recommend that adults would try to stay home and avoid contact with other people for, but there was no legal requirement to do so. Following a period of self-isolation, managers would work with individuals to help them to return to their usual work pattern but a particular method of working, such as working in the office, would not be enforced. Managers would continue to have conversations as appropriate with individuals to ascertain whether they were able to work remotely while unwell or whether they were too ill to work at all.
- ii. The reasons for stress/depression/mental health absence had been analysed and in the majority of cases this had been due to a combination of factors. Where there was a work element there would be a greater level of opportunity for managers to implement interventions and offer a range of support to prevent individuals from requiring time off sick. Where the reason for stress/depression/mental health was personal, individuals would still be offered wellbeing support.
- iii. Managers continued to work with individuals and teams to ensure that hybrid working arrangements were affecting and teams were encouraged to work together on a regular basis. The Council's Ways of Working programme was being developed to find the most suitable balance for working locations and aimed to contribute to good mental health. A communication campaign was being developed which included a reference on the importance of attendance.
- iv. The non-disclosed category for sickness remained a concern and the Director would encourage managers to ensure that sickness absence data was entered into the system, which would reduce this figure. However, members noted that some of this data related to individuals not declaring a reason for sickness during the self-certification period, which they had a right not to do so. The Director agreed to provide members with more information regarding individuals not declaring reasons for sickness within the self-certification period.
- v. Delays experienced in the health service had affected sickness levels as individuals were waiting for treatment for significant periods of time, but this had recently improved to an acceptable level. The delays had also affected ill health retirement cases, where there had been an increase in applications. In these cases, a set process had to be followed, including consideration of medical evidence from NHS professionals.
- vi. In response to a question regarding whether reasons for sickness absence were compared between department's, the Director explained that they were, and that data was regularly discussed at departmental management team meetings to address sickness absence levels. The Director agreed to present a comparison of reasons for absence broken down by department, within the next Attendance Management report.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The update provided on the Council's overall position on sickness absence, as at the end of June 2023 (Quarter 1, 2023/24), be noted.
- b) The Director of Corporate Resources be requested to provide members of the Employment Committee with further details regarding non-disclosed reasons for sickness within the self-certification period.
- c) A direct comparison of reasons for absence broken down by department would be included within the next Attendance Management report.

23. Pay Policy Statement 2024-25.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval for the submission of the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 to the County Council for approval on 6 December 2023. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

In response to a question regarding the percentage of individuals who voted in the Unison ballot for industrial action, the Director explained that 25% of those eligible voted.

Members noted that once an agreement on the 2023/24 pay deal had been reached, staff would receive back payments as soon as practicable, and that the revised pay structure 2023/24 incorporating the NJC 2023/24 pay award would be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The Pay Policy Statement 2024/25, for submission to the County Council for approval at its meeting on 6 December 2023, be approved.
- b) Following agreement of the 2023/24 pay offer at national level, the 2023/24 pay structure incorporating the NJC 2023/24 pay award be circulated to the Committee.

24. Staff Survey 2023.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources which provided a summary of the outcomes and actions identified from the 2023 staff survey. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director reported that the results of the staff survey had been analysed and that Business Intelligence had begun to engage with key stakeholders. The results had also been made available to all staff. A corporate Action Plan would be developed to address the findings of the survey, and this would be presented to the Committee in Spring 2024. In addition to this, each department would also form its own individual action plan, which would not be presented to the Committee.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The survey indicated that 3.7% of respondents reported that they had experienced bullying and harassment because of elected members. It was the first time that the question had asked individuals to express the source of bullying and harassment. Members acknowledged that the figure was concerning but noted that the majority of individuals who had experienced bullying and harassment because of elected members had indicated that this had happened 'not very much'. However, the Director emphasised the importance for all forms of bullying and harassment to be addressed and assured that this would be built into the Action Plan. Members noted that the Council had robust policies concerning bullying and harassment. In addition to this, staff would be reminded of the reporting mechanisms and support available, and that guidance would be circulated to managers.
- ii. The overall response rate had improved but it was acknowledged that more would need to be done to increase it further. It was suggested that staff should be reminded that the survey was anonymous so that they would feel comfortable to be honest with their responses. The Director explained that many staff were delivering frontline services and it was often a challenge to engage with this group. Members noted that the anonymity of surveys would be highlighted to ensure that staff understand the confidentiality of surveys.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The summary of the outcomes and actions identified from the 2023 staff survey, be noted.
- b) That an Action Plan to address the findings of the survey be presented to the Employment Committee in Spring 2024.

25. Trans and Non-Binary Policy.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided overview of the Council's recently adopted policy and staff guidance on working with trans and non-binary people who use Council services. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's recently adopted Policy and staff guidance on working with trans and non-binary people who use Council services, be noted.

26. 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 11' 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.

27. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Employment Committee would be held on Thursday 7 December at 10:00.

10.00 - 11.09 am
28 September 2023

CHAIRMAN