

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 7 December 2023.

PRESENT

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

Mr. P. Bedford CC
Mrs. L. Broadley CC
Mr. B. Champion CC

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

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

29. Question Time.

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

30. 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).

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 35.

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

34. Pay Awards 2023/24.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval from the Employment Committee for the implementation of the 2023/24 Pay

Awards for staff on National Joint Council (NJC) terms and conditions and for Chief Executives. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Director provided a verbal update on the 2024/25 pay awards, and on a recent rise in the National Living Wage. Members were informed that:

- i. The National Living Wage had increased from £10.42 to £11.44 per hour. This rise was larger than unexpected and would have an impact on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position. The Trade Unions Congress had a long-standing objective of achieving a £15 National Living Wage as soon as was possible.
- ii. The National Employers had an objective that local government should not be a minimum wage employer and retained a long-held position of maintaining headroom between the National Living Wage and NJC pay spine. There were three pay points at the bottom of the pay spine which all paid £11.59 per hour. It was suggested that these would need to be reviewed in the 2024/25 pay round in order to maintain headroom with the National Living Wage.
- iii. Trade Unions were expected to submit a pay claim for the 2024/25 pay round in early 2024. The National Employers would then hold regional pay briefings where they would consider the claim and then respond accordingly. It was hoped that the pay deal would be agreed quicker than in 2023/24, which had taken a prolonged period of time to agree.
- iv. It was anticipated that the pay bill in 2024/25 could be higher than had been expected. In addition, various factors would influence pay negotiations post-2024, such as further increases to the National Living Wage, cost of living pressures and inflation, as well as both Local and General Elections. Increasing pay bills were expected to continue to place additional pressure onto the Council's MTFS position.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the implementation of the 2023/24 pay awards for National Joint Council staff and Chief Executives be approved.
- b) That the update provided on the pay award for 2024/25 and on the raise in the National Living Wage, be noted.

35. 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 September 2023 (Quarter 2, 2023/24). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Concern was raised that the Council's total number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days lost was at 9.80, which was above the target of 7.5. Members were assured that a communication campaign had been launched in November 2023 which was focussed on a call to action for managers on attendance management and

wellbeing. The Director agreed to provide Members with a link to the Managers' Digest special which included a video communication. It was hoped that the campaign would reduce sickness absence across the organisation.

- ii. A survey on sickness absence, conducted by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD), which engaged with around 1000 organisations, had found that for all sectors, the pre-Covid average FTE days lost was 5.8, and that this had risen to 7.8 post-Covid. The report was detailed, with a breakdown of reasons, similar to the Council's reporting style, and concluded that sickness absence had risen across all sectors despite preventative and wellbeing strategies.
- iii. It was reported that 42.5% of absences in Children and Family Services sat within the Stress/Depression/Mental health category. The Director explained that the Department continued to face challenges with demand, recruitment and retention, and increasing complexity within caseloads. The pressures on frontline services such as Social Work, continued to be high. However, the Department was well supported by its management team and specific support had been put into place by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team to develop an action plan to further support individuals who had indicated work related stress. Members noted that there was a national piece of work to review areas such as Social Care, which it was anticipated would reduce the pressure on services and individuals.
- iv. The main reason for sickness absence in Environment and Transport had traditionally been Musculoskeletal. However, Stress/Depression/ Mental Health had since risen to become the main reason for absence. An HR Business Partner was working with the Department on identifying the causes of Stress/Depression/Mental Health and implementing targeted work which would assist managers to support individuals. This would replicate similar work which was being done in Children and Family Services. The Transformation Unit was working with a particular service in Environment and Transport, which had reported a large number of absences, on delivering a service improvement programme.
- v. Members were pleased with information which presented a comparison of absence reasons across all of the Council's departments. It was suggested that a long-term trend analysis of the data would be useful to track changes across all departments over time. The Director agreed to provide this analysis in the next Attendance Management report.
- vi. The Council had procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Attendance Management Policy. HR Business Partners presented monthly reports to Departmental Management Teams to discuss absence performance and worked with managers directly. Training was also offered to managers on supporting individuals. There were absence triggers within the performance management process which managers were asked to follow. Long-term cases were followed up by HR colleagues, with the involvement of Trade Unions and Occupational Health, where necessary. Work had also been conducted to reinforce the quality of recruitment, to ensure that only individuals best suited to roles would be recruited.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the update provided on the Council's overall position on sickness absence, as at the end of September 2023 (Quarter 2, 2023/24), be noted.
- b) That the Director be requested to provide Members of the Employment Committee with a link to the Managers' Digest special on Attendance Management.
- c) That The Director of Corporate Resources be requested to include a long-trend analysis showing direct comparison of reasons for absence broken down by department within the next Attendance Management report.

36. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2022-2023.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report for 2022-23. The report detailed the Council's overall position on Health, Safety and Wellbeing and provided an update on the performance of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. In response to concern relating to the percentage of individuals who had not completed mandatory Health and Safety training, it was members noted that there was a clear expectation for staff to complete the training. Audits continued to be completed to identify nonconformity, and action plans were developed and provided to management teams in order to resolve issues. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team would continue to escalate and follow up on non-conformity within services to ensure improvements were made. In addition, work had been done on developing both corporate and local induction programmes, to ensure that mandatory training was a key focus. It was suggested that some nonconformity could be due to capacity and workload issues within some service areas. However, it was highlighted that completion of mandatory training was essential to protect individuals from harm, to ensure that the Council was compliant with legislation, and to reduce the Council's risk of liability.
- ii. Work was ongoing to address a range of major and minor nonconformities which had been identified within Health and Safety audits, undertaken in 2022/23. A project was being developed with Property Services to centralise the PAT testing system, whereby contractors would review PAT testing on a rotating basis. It was hoped that this method, and others being worked on, would improve compliance going forward.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2022-23, be noted.
- b) That the work, undertaken in partnership with departments, by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service to keep the Council compliant in this area, be endorsed.

37. 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.

38. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Employment Committee would be held on 1 February 2024.

10.00 - 11.13 am
07 December 2023

CHAIRMAN