

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 23 May 2024.

PRESENT

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

Mrs. L. Broadley CC  
Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC  
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC  
Mrs. P. Posnett MBE CC  
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

1. Appointment of Chairman.

It was moved by Mr. D. Harrison CC and seconded by Mrs. P. Posnett MBE CC 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 2025.

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 2025.

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

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

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 2025.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 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 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).

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Equal Pay Audit.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the findings of an Equal Pay Audit which was conducted in April 2024. The report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The audit had excluded data where information was incomplete, or where errors in data had made it impossible to analyse the data without significant further investigation. Members noted that this would include instances where a member of staff had left mid-year or had not disclosed information relating to their protected characteristics. The Council was committed to ensuring that data was reliable to ensure compliance with the recommendations outlined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Members noted that staff continued to be requested to provide information relating to protected characteristics, which would allow the Council to improve its HR offer, but it was not mandatory for them to do so.
- ii. Members noted that in circumstances when a business case was proposed relating to additional payments for a particular role, such as market premia, a benchmarking exercise would be conducted against other Local Authorities, where possible.

The Director also provided the Committee with an update on the 2024/25 pay claims. It was reported that:

- iii. The National Joint Council (NJC) claim included an increase of at least £3,000 or 10%, whichever was greater, on all spinal column points. In addition to this, an additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes, a two-hour reduction in the working week with no detriment, and a phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 per hour within a maximum of two years. National Employers for Local Government Services had responded with an offer which included an increase of £1,290, which would be adjusted pro rata for part-time employees, to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive, and an increase of 2.5% on all allowances. National Employers for Local Government Services rejected the remaining elements of the pay claim.
- iv. The JNC claim included an increase that is no less favourable to Chief Officers than the NJC claim, as a step towards pay restoration. The National Employers responded with an increase of 2.5% on basic salary.

- v. The National Employers were committed to a redesigned of the national pay spine, as agreed in the 2023 NJC agreement. It was noted that a prompt settlement of both pay claims was recommended by all parties so that these negotiations could begin.
- vi. The three trade unions would consult with their members on the 2024/25 pay claims.

RESOLVED:

- a) That 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, be noted.
- b) That additional payments such as honoraria and premia payments would continue to be reviewed regularly to ensure that such payments were still justified and did not discriminate.
- c) That comparator data in respect of the Gender Pay Gap, be noted.
- d) That the update provided on the 2024-25 pay claims, be noted.

9. Staff Survey Action Plan.

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

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The report planned for the meeting of Employment Committee in quarter 1 of 2025/26 would include progress as a result of the work which had been undertaken to address concerns such as bullying and harassment, and other areas where improvement was required.
- ii. Members noted that the results of the survey, and the associated action plan, would be well communicated with members of staff to ensure that the Council's strategy for addressing concerns identified from the survey was clear.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the update provided on key actions identified from the 2023 staff survey, be noted.
- b) That the approach being taken to address the findings of the survey, be supported.

10. Update on the People Strategy.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the draft People Strategy (2024-28). A copy of the report, and the draft strategy, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Performance relating to the four themes within the Strategy would be measured against key performance indicators which had been specifically designed to enable the delivery of strategic outcomes. Performance indicators would be evaluated over the four-year period, but would also be reviewed as part of annual delivery plans.
- ii. Work had taken place to embed workforce planning within the strategy. This work included a focus on an ageing workforce, offering support to later life careers, supporting people to work for longer, and to promote the Council as a positive employer in order to appeal to a younger demographic also.
- iii. The People Strategy and associated plans would be communicated with staff to ensure that the measures in place to support them in all aspects of their employment were understood.

RESOLVED:

That the draft People Strategy 2024 – 2028, be approved.

11. Performance and Productivity.

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an overview of how performance and productivity is managed within the context of the employment relationship across the Council. The report marked 'Agenda item 12' is filed with these minutes.

It was acknowledged that there were different views on the effectiveness of the hybrid working model which had been adopted by the Council. The Council would recognise both positive and negative feedback on the Ways of Working programme. In addition, Services would continue to receive support and advice on ways of working to ensure that they were able to deliver good quality services for residents alongside a positive working environment for staff. Managers would continue to be encouraged to exercise an appropriate level of engagement with staff in order to understand their individual needs and to ensure that the expectations of their role were clear.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of how performance and productivity is managed within the context of the employment relationship across the Council, be noted.

12. 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.

13. 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 March 2024 (quarter 4, 2023/24). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, the Director provided an update of the Council's overall position of sickness absence, as at April 2024. Members were pleased to note that the end of year figure for the total FTE days lost for Leicestershire County Council was 8.8.

Members requested that a comparison of the end of year data relating to the Council's sickness absence position, against comparator local authorities, be included in the Attendance Management report to be presented at the meeting on 26 September 2024.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Director be requested to include a comparison of the end of year data relating to the Council's sickness absence position, against comparator local authorities, be included in the Attendance Management report to be presented at the meeting on 26 September 2024.
- b) That the Council's overall position on sickness absence, as at the end of March 2024 (quarter 4, 2023/24), and the updated position as at the end of April 2024, be noted.

14. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 26 September 2024.

Meetings of the Committee in 2025 would be held at 10:00am on the following dates:

- 6 February 2024
- 22 May 2024
- 18 September 2024
- 4 December 2024

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 26 September 2024.

Meetings of the Committee in 2025 would be held at 10:00am on the following dates:

- 6 February 2024
- 22 May 2024
- 18 September 2024
- 4 December 2024

15. Chairman's Announcement.

The Chairman reported that this would be the final meeting for Mr Gordon McFarlane, the Council's Assistant Director for People, Property and Transformation, as he would be leaving the Authority at the end of June. The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee thanked Gordon for his invaluable support and advice over the years and wished him well for the future.

16. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the remaining item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

17. Attendance Management - Focus on Environment and Transport.

The Committee considered an exempt report of the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the sickness absence position in the Environment and Transport Department, as at the end of March 2024, following a request made by the Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2024. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 18' is filed with these minutes.

The report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Director responded to questions regarding the sickness absence position in the Environment and Transport Department, and the work which had been undertaken to mitigate the level of sickness absence within the Department. It was noted that a range of interventions had been introduced, and that sickness absence within the Department had reduced, as at the end of April 2024. The Department would continue to focus on sickness absence alongside colleagues in HR.

RESOLVED:

That the overall sickness position for the Environment and Transport Department, as at the end of March 2024, and the updated sickness absence position, be noted.

10.00 am - 12.25 pm  
23 May 2024

CHAIRMAN