

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 26 September 2024.

PRESENT

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

Mrs. L. Broadley CC
Mr. B. Champion CC
Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC

Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC
Mr J. Poland CC
Mrs B. Seaton CC

18. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

19. Question Time.

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

20. 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).

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

24. Employment Committee Work Programme.

The Committee considered a presentation of the Director of Corporate Resources which outlined a refresh of the Employment Committee Work Programme. The report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The Committee were pleased with the proposal for a draft rolling work programme which would include reports on the workforce profile, employee turnover and stability, resource management, legislative impacts on policy and procedures, equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as themes, projects and initiatives relating to the People Strategy.
- ii. Members noted that annual reports relating to the Council's Gender Pay Gap were a statutory requirement. The new Government had proposed to expand pay gap reporting to include race and disability, in addition to gender. It was therefore expected that additional pay gap reporting would be presented to the Committee at future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation on the Employment Committee Work Programme, be noted.

25. 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 2024 (quarter 1, 2024/25). A copy of the report filed 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Members were pleased with the level of data included within the report but requested further information relating to the root cause of absence relating to mental health, in order to determine the absence was related to an issue at home or in the workplace. The Director agreed to analyse data relating to the cause of absence and consider whether the information could be provided at a future meeting of the Committee. Members noted that in mental health cases, there was often a variety of issues which had led to the absence.
- ii. Some departments had reported lower than usual absence data relating to the period 2020-21. The Director explained that this was understood to be a result of restrictions in the COVID-19 pandemic which meant that a large number of staff were either working at home or carrying out duties in a socially distanced way. Flexible working continued to have a positive impact on sickness absence, but it was acknowledged that levels had increased. It was expected that a lack of access to healthcare during the pandemic period continued to have an impact on waiting lists for treatment.
- iii. The Director explained that cases recorded within the non-disclosed category often related to instances where a manager did not have sufficient information in order to record the correct details, or where the member of staff did not wish to disclose the reason for absence. HR officers would continue to remind managers of the importance of recoding reasons for absence.
- iv. In response to a question relating to the impact of hybrid working on recruitment and retention, the Director explained that a survey was being undertaken

regarding working practices, and that the results would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Council's Overall position on sickness absence, as at the end of June 2024 (quarter 1, 2024/25), be noted.
- b) That the Director agreed to analyse data relating to the root cause of absence relating to mental health and consider whether data could be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.
- c) That the Director agreed to present the results of a survey undertaken regarding working practices at a future meeting of the Committee.

26. Pay Policy Statement.

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 2025/26 to the County Council for approval on 4 December 2024. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director provided the Committee with an update on the 2024/25 NJC pay negotiations. It was reported that the National Employers had made a flat rate offer of £1290, or 2.5% for employees above the pay spine but below the threshold for chief officer pay. GMB had voted to accept the offer but both Unison and Unite were in the process of balloting their members regarding industrial action. A report to update on progress of pay negotiations would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2024.

Members noted that it was unlikely that changes in Government policy relating to public sector pay was unlikely to impact ongoing pay negotiations. However, expected policy changes relating to working terms and conditions could have recourse implications for the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 be approved, for submission to the County Council at its meeting on 4 December 2024, be approved.

27. JNC Chief Officer Pay Award 2024-25.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval to implement the national negotiated (JNC) pay award for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 for all employees on Grades 18 – 21 inclusive, which includes Chief Officers. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken in respect of the implementation of the pay award for employees on grades 18 – 21 for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, be noted.

28. Review of Employer Discretions - Pension Regulations.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought agreement of the policy decisions afforded to the County Council as a scheme employer under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the review undertaken with regard to pension discretions, be noted.
- b) That the mandatory discretion under LGPS regulations, be approved.
- c) That the non-mandatory discretion under LGPS regulations, be approved.
- d) That the County Council's operational approach to pensions regulations, be noted.

29. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2023-24.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report for 2023 – 24, including the Council's overall position on health, safety and wellbeing, and an update on the performance of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. In response to concern relating to an increase in the number of reported violent incidents reported, members were assured that a robust reporting system was in place and that all incidents were consistently followed up. It was acknowledged that some staff were more exposed to risk than others due to the nature of the service being delivered. Specific staff were supported with training on dealing with difficult situations. In some areas, such as waste sites, staff had been issued with body cameras which had resulted in a reduction in the number of incidents which had been reported. The Council had also introduced a lone working protection app which allowed staff to raise an alarm and to receive support.
- ii. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team continued to have support from senior management where there were concerns relating to the safety of staff or service users. The Service had the authority to withdraw services or close sites in serious cases, although this was extremely rare.
- iii. Members noted that managers were routinely reminded of the importance for all staff to have completed mandatory health and safety training, as well as additional training required to support their role.
- iv. In cases where a staff member had indicated that they had experienced suicidal thoughts, the Wellbeing Service would refer the individual to their GP and signpost them to other support services.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report for 2023 – 24, including the Council's overall position on Health, Safety and wellbeing, and an update on the performance of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service, be noted.

30. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an update of the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress on their implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' 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.

31. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 5 December 2024 at 10:00am.

10.00 - 11.01 am
26 September 2024

CHAIRMAN