



Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 6 February 2020.

PRESENT

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mrs. J. Richards CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

24. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

25. Question Time.

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

26. 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).

27. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

28. 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.

No declarations were made.

29. Review of Delegated Powers to Heads of Departments.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which sought approval for the changes made to delegations previously granted to the Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Children and Family Services, following a review of Chief Officer delegations. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 6", is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the changes proposed, detailed in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report, would reflect the change in legislation and reflect current practice.

RESOLVED:

That the revised delegations set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report be approved.

30. Gender Pay Gap.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources regarding the Gender Pay Gap reporting for Leicestershire County Council for 2019. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 7", is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the mean gender pay gap showed the same figure as in 2018; the median had fallen by 2%. The progress made in narrowing of the gender pay gap was due to a variety of reasons, including an increase in the number of female staff, but also as a direct result of the support measures put in place, such as the Spring Board and Spring Forward programmes.

The County Council had been nominated for the National Personnel Today Award for its policy on supporting staff through the menopause; it was the only County Council in that category.

Members commended the progress made with narrowing the gender pay gap.

RESOLVED:

That the Gender Pay Gap reporting for 2019, the good progress being made in narrowing the gap and the fact that the analysis will be published by 30 March 2020, be noted.

31. Recruitment and Retention update.

The Committee received a report from the Director of Corporate Resources which gave an update on progress made on the action taken to improve recruitment and retention, and outlined next steps, following a report to the Committee in September 2019. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions, members were informed that:

- i. The offer of a health insurance scheme was part of a range of options being developed to retain and attract staff from the private sector where such benefits were in place. This option would be used only in areas that were experiencing serious recruitment and retention problems and a robust business case, with clear evidence in support, would be needed. Despite members concerns, they agreed that officers should use this in recruitment where vacancies were hard to fill.
- ii. Running the recent jobs fair, and using alternative methods of advertising, for example Facebook, had shown the positive impact of different approaches as more than 100 people had attended. Links would be formed with local universities, in addition to schools, to promote the breadth of jobs on offer at the County Council;
- iii. The variety of measures in place to fill vacancies included improvements to the annual appraisal process, which gave an opportunity for employees to talk with their manager about opportunities for progression.

- iv. The potential to attract applicants for positions in the public sector had been adversely affected by austerity. It was hoped that developments to the website and improved marketing activity would encourage people to apply for vacancies available, although it was acknowledged that it was inevitable that people would be cautious.
- v. There were a limited number of areas where the filling of posts remained a challenge, some due to a national shortage of qualified applicants. Whilst members recognised that the County Council could not compete on salary levels with the private sector, they suggested that the many benefits to working in the public sector should be better promoted.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken so far and the future next steps outlined in the report to address the challenge of recruitment and retention, be noted.

32. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of December 2019. A copy of which, marked "Agenda Item 9", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. 50% of employees had had no sickness absence during 2019, which was something to be acknowledged and celebrated;
- ii. The Environment and Transport Department showed that the main cause for sickness absence was stress, depression and mental health; which was now higher than that for musculoskeletal;
- iii. The draft Statement of Intent, attached at the appendix to the report, had been provided to the Trade Unions and negotiations would commence later in the month. Once agreement had been reached, the Plan would be implemented and messages communicated to staff from early March onwards.

Members expressed concern that the level of sickness absence was not reducing and was predicted to be double that of the private sector. They were informed that the recent peer review had showed that the Council activity in addressing sickness absence was appropriate and there was nothing further that could be recommended. It was acknowledged that the manager's role in managing performance was vital; measures, including training, were in place to achieve consistency in approach to management of performance across the organisation and key messages regarding expectations of managers would be communicated. It was acknowledged that the manager's approach needed to be sensitive especially in cases related to stress, depression and mental health.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the County Council's position on sickness absence as at the end of December 2019, particularly the Intensive Support Project, the Employee Assistance Programme and the work around communication, be noted.

33. Staff Survey 2019.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which gave further detail, following the report to the Committee in December 2019, on the departmental and corporate actions taken in response to the findings of the Staff Survey 2019. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 10", is filed with these minutes.

Members commended the detail provided in the report and were informed that individual departments were considering the results and prioritising those areas that needed to be addressed. There were some areas within the Council that needed a more focussed approach.

It was expected that the Work Place Strategy, which included smarter working, would impact positively on work life balance and stress related issues.

RESOLVED:

That the action being taken to address issues arising out of the 2019 Staff Survey, be noted.

34. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented an update on the current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress with their implementation. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 11", is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress in their implementation be noted.

35. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Employment Committee is scheduled to be held on 14 May 2020.

10.00 - 11.20 am
06 February 2020

CHAIRMAN