

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chair), Cllr David Pollitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute), Cllr Peter Evans (Substitute), Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Bill Moss (Substitute) and Cllr Bob Jones MBE

52 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE (who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman), Cllr John Smale (who was substituted by Cllr Peter Evans), Cllr Stuart Wheeler (who was substituted by Cllr Bill Moss) and Cllr Graham Wright.

53 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 September 2015 as a true record.

54 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

55 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

56 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present or councillors' questions.

57 **New Careers Website**

Consideration was given to a report by the Associate Director, People & Business, which provided:

- Details of the performance of the new careers website which was launched on 11 May 2015.
- An outline of the improvements that would be made as a result of the analysis of the performance.
- Details of initiatives being taken to ensure that Wiltshire Council continued to be an employer of choice.

Members were informed that the vision for the new website was to showcase the Council as an innovative, modern workplace and to improve the candidate experience.

Alongside the development of the website, the use of social media as a promotion and attraction tool to encourage searchers to the careers webpages and specific job adverts had been increased. This was in line with national research that showed that 18 to 34 year old people increasingly used social media as a way of sourcing and applying for job vacancies.

The Committee noted that in September 2015 the Council upgraded its Glassdoor account which was a jobs, recruiting and employer review website. The Council's account page included content from the careers website, live social media feeds and current job listings which provided a further avenue for potential candidates to comment, review and explore the working environment of this Council, in addition to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

A set of key performance indicators (KPI's) had been developed which would help the Council:

- Understand the customer journey
- Understand conversion rates (clicks through job adverts to apply)
- Monitor the effectiveness and reach of targeted recruitment campaigns (e.g. for social care, procurement/commissioning)

Members were interested to note that the majority of the visits to the website were from people who lived locally with just over 10% from those who lived in London.

During discussion Members enquired how starters made use of the workplace, was the page on the Website accurate in content.

Resolved:

(1) To note the contents of the report.

(2) To request a further update on the performance of the website in six months.

58 Planned Revisions to the Smoking Policy

The Committee received a report by the Associate Director, People & Business, which updated Members on the planned revisions to the current smoking policy.

The Committee was informed that the current smoking policy and procedure had been implemented in 2011 as a result of harmonising the County Council and ex-district council policies following the move to one council.

It was noted that the current policy provided smoking areas together with cigarette bins at each of the main hubs and depots. It also allowed managers to use their discretion when permitting smoking breaks outside of lunch times provided the time was made up.

The Public Health team had expressed concerns for some time about allowing staff to smoke on site considering the Council's policy to promote healthy living both across Wiltshire and within the workforce. Subsequently, Public Health had produced a report outlining a policy to implement smoke free sites across Wiltshire Council and this was agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on 24 August 2015. This would mean that all designated smoking areas at the Council's hubs, other sites, depots and campuses would be removed. A new smoke-free policy was being developed which would also include the removal of smoking breaks.

Whilst sympathising with the general principles as set out in the report, Members did consider that there could well be practical problems encountered in implementing the suggested planned revisions to the existing smoking policy as follows:-

- If Council grounds were smoke-free, smokers would most likely adopt the habit of smoking off-site in public places as had previously happened prior to the implementation of the current policy. This had created a negative image of the Council and had resulted in complaints from local residents.
- Enforcement of the new smoke-free arrangements might prove difficult, especially as customers would also be expected to take note of the signage and refrain from smoking on site.
- Removal of the litter bins would likely lead to an increase in litter. There were no plans for the Council's facilities management team to remove cigarette litter and it was expected that the Council's enforcement team would issue fixed penalty notices where possible should littering occur.

- The removal of designated smoking areas and smoking breaks was likely to have a negative impact on morale and motivation of those members of staff affected.
- The Council's partners, such as Police colleagues, would be expected to comply with a new policy and refrain from smoking on site.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To support in principle the development of a new smoking policy that incorporates the changes as outlined in the report but to register some concerns about the practicality of implementing and enforcing the policy especially on shared sites with partners.**
- (3) To support a deferred start by giving three months notice of the intention to introduce a new policy.**
- (4) To note that a further report would be made to the January 2016 meeting of the Committee when the new smoking policy would be presented for formal approval.**

59 Public Sector Exit Payment Cap - Response to Consultation

The Committee considered a report by the Associate Director, People & Business which provided an update on the result of the consultation that had recently taken place on the government proposal to place a cap on redundancy or compensation payments to certain public sector employees when their employment ended.

The consultation invited responses to a number of key questions, including whether limiting payments to £95,000 was appropriate, and also what payments should be included in this figure. The government proposed that the following payments should be included: redundancy pay or any other compensation payment as a result of a voluntary exit, any payment in lieu of unworked notice, untaken annual leave or other outstanding allowances and the costs associated with early access to an unreduced pension.

It was noted that the following were excluded from the government's proposal: Ill health payments, compensation payments in respect of death or injury attributable to the employment, and any payments following litigation from unfair dismissal or breach of contract.

The consultation closed on 27 August 2015 during which the government received over 4,000 responses. The government admitted that the proposals did not receive overwhelming support but considered that in the absence of any

more acceptable proposals to limit the six figure pay outs they would be going ahead with the legislation.

The timescale for the introduction of this legislation was currently unclear. However, it was known that the government would take forward these proposals by taking powers in primary legislation as part of the Enterprise Bill.

The Committee was informed that the exit cap would have significant implications for the Council's redundancy pay policy and the current voluntary redundancy procedure would also need to be reviewed. It was also expected that nationally the Local Government Pension Scheme would need to be reviewed and the early retirement regulations amended.

During discussion, Members expressed concern that the service cap would have a detrimental affect mostly on lower graded staff with long service. However, Members were informed that the Council's current cap was 40 weeks for redundancy pay and it was likely that the proposed legislation would have more impact on the top tiers of the organisation.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To express concern at the potential impact of the legislation and cost to the Wiltshire Pension Fund of the proposals and to lobby the Wiltshire MPs if necessary as the Enterprise Bill proceeds.**
- (3) To request that a further report be presented to this Committee once the timescales for the introduction of this legislation and implementation procedures were confirmed.**

60 **Delivering the Business Plan - September 2015**

The Committee received a quarterly workforce report, excluding fire, police and school staff, for the quarter ended 30 September 2015, concerning:-

Staffing levels
Sickness absence
New health and safety RIDDOR related injuries
New disciplinary, grievance and absence cases
Voluntary staff turnover
Employee costs
Additional financial information
Employee diversity

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

61 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 6 January 2016, in the Kennet Room at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

62 **Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business.

63 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

To agree that in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute No. 64 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

64 **Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employment Discretions - Payment of Deferred Benefits**

Consideration was given to a confidential report from the Associate Director, People & Business in which the Committee was asked to consider a request from a former employee for release of deferred pension benefits held in the Local Government Pension Scheme and waiving the actuarial reduction.

After discussion,

Resolved:

To not agree to the early release of the former employee's deferred pension benefits waiving the actuarial reduction, as set out in the report, as the Committee felt the evidence provided insufficient grounds for hardship and compassionate considerations noting that the applicant was now in employment.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.15 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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