

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2019 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Tony Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr John Smale and Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe MBE (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr David Halik

42 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Philip Whitehead, who was substituted by Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe.

43 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 November 2019.

44 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

45 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- **Amanda George, Head of HR & OD Strategy Delivery**
The Chairman reported that Amanda George had been seconded to Bath & North East Somerset Council where she had taken up the post of HR Director, covering maternity leave for a period of seven months.
- **Rebecca Corbin**

The Chairman welcomed Rebecca Corbin to the meeting. She had recently completed an apprenticeship and had been appointed Development Officer, Strategic Delivery.

46 **Public Participation**

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

47 **Removal of Homeworking Allowance**

Consideration was given to a report by the Director, HR & OD which updated the Committee on the decision made by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to remove the homeworking allowance from 1 April 2020 for employees who worked flexibly from home for part of their working week.

In 2010 an interim homeworking allowance had been introduced as a temporary arrangement for staff working at Bourne Hill, Salisbury, which was the first hub to be redeveloped. In 2012 this arrangement was extended to staff in the remaining two hubs in Chippenham and Trowbridge as part of a suite of flexible working policies to encourage staff to work flexibly and to change the culture of staff having fixed desks which they 'owned'.

The allowance was introduced as a temporary arrangement to support the change in working practices so would be removed once the change was embedded. This temporary arrangement had been agreed with the trade unions at the time.

It was pointed out that the homeworking allowance was no longer the key driver in encouraging employees to work flexibly, with the benefits that flexible working outweighing the allowance. For many staff the fact that they did not have to commute to work if they were working from home saved a considerable time and cost with the saving being greater than the homeworking allowance.

The recognised trade unions had been consulted and supported this proposal, agreeing that it was no longer the key driver for staff working at home. It was noted that the annual cost of the homeworking allowance would represent a saving to the Council of £155,746. CLT had therefore decided to remove the temporary allowance from 1 April 2020.

During discussion, Members expressed support for this proposal.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

48 **Quarterly Workforce Report: July to September 2019**

The Committee received a workforce report excluding fire, police, and school staff, for the quarter ended 30 September 2019.

The Committee noted that the number of starters under the age of 25 years had risen during this quarter with only a slight rise in the number of leavers. 58% starters in this age band began work during this quarter which represented 23% of all starters. Comparing this over the last three year period there was a trend for an increase in this quarter. However, there was a slight increase in under 25 leavers during this period but this was not uncommon at this time of year, with 16 year old people returning to full time education after spending their holidays working in libraries and the leisure industry.

Regarding agency staff, there had been an increase of agency staff employed over the last three quarters, with a corresponding increase in cost. It was noted that Families & Children's Services, Digital & Information and Adult Care remained the highest users of agency staff and were covering hard to recruit posts, vacancies pending and one off/extra workloads. It was pointed out that social care and ICT vacancies were being highlighted on the Council's careers site to promote these areas with the aim to fill posts permanently.

During discussion, it was requested that reports on sickness absence and an update on apprenticeships be presented to the next meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the Quarterly Workforce report.**
- (2) To request reports on sickness absence and apprenticeships at the next meeting.**

49 **Update on #Our Day**

The Committee received an update on #Our Day which was due to take place on 19 November 2019. This was an annual event run by the Local Government Association (LGA) in order to celebrate the work that local council officers undertake to improve the lives of their communities and make them thrive.

The event was due to run from midnight on 19 November on Twitter and Facebook with an aim to demonstrate the efforts of local council officers that often go unnoticed in the community.

In Wiltshire, special emphasis would be made on vulnerable children, housing especially for the homeless, street cleaners, highway maintenance and recycling.

Resolved:

To note the update.

50 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of the Committee was due to take place on Wednesday 8 January 2020 at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

51 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.20 am)

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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115