Staffing Policy Committee

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 JANUARY 2021

ON-LINE MEETING

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Tony Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Hayley Illman, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr John Smale and Cllr Philip Whitehead

Also Present:

Jo Pitt - Director – HR & OD, Paula Marsh - HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager, Michael Taylor – Workforce Insight Analyst, HR, Mike Osment – Branch Secretary, UNISON and Kevin Fielding - Democratic Services Officer

42   Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

43   Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

- **To confirm and sign the minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 4 November 2020**

44   Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

45   Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's Announcements made at the meeting.

46   **Public Participation**

No statements or questions were received.

47   **Health and Safety Policy**

Paula Marsh outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack.

Points made included:

- That the local authority was required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to set out its policy on health and safety.

- That the policy statement should set out a statement of intent from the most senior person(s); should set out the organisation that exists to carry out the policy; and make reference to the detailed arrangements for specific risks.

- That it was the responsibility of the Head of OH&S to keep this policy under review and to revise wherever necessary.

- That the paper outlined the latest revisions to the policy for consideration and agreement by Staffing Policy Committee.

- The changes in this revision were principally to reflect changes to the senior management structure. Wording had been amended to refer to the new Chief Executive post and to the Corporate Leadership Team, as the respective parties with primary responsibility for the health and safety of employees and others affected by the work undertakings of the local authority.

- In addition, the opportunity had been taken to streamline the responsibilities set out for each of the roles of:

    - Cabinet and Portfolio holder
    - Chief Executive
    - Directors and the Director of Public Health specifically
    - Heads of Service and the Head of Occupational Health and Safety specifically

- The detailed arrangements for the management of risk in regard to specific work tasks and settings were set out in policy/guidance documents that could be found on HR Direct. Each of these sections was kept under review by the H&S team and they were updated as and when necessary due to changes in legislation or HSE guidance, or because of any internal accident or liability history.

- At this stage there were no significant changes to these parts of the corporate policy.

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy Committee noted the changes outlined in the report and agreed the revised Health and Safety Policy**

- **That following agreement at the Staffing Policy Committee the updated policy would be brought to the attention of all managers and employees**

Note: Following comments from Cllr Clewer it was agreed that the wording in the updated Health and Safety policy should say:

"Members of the Cabinet and the portfolio holder for Public Health and Public Protection will"

The Chairman thanked Paula Marsh for her report.

48   **Pay Policy Statement**

Paula Marsh outlined the report that was contained in the agenda pack.

Points made included:

- The pay policy statement set out the council's approach to pay and reward for senior managers and the lowest paid employees for the financial year 2021-22.

- Its purpose was to provide a clear and transparent policy, which demonstrated accountability and value for money. The policy also met the council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011 and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

- The pay policy was applicable to council staff and did not include schools support staff or teachers.

- The pay policy statement was first published in February 2012 and was updated on an annual basis. It had now been updated for the financial year 2021/22.

- The pay policy statement set out the pay policies which apply to both the lowest paid and highest paid employees within the council.

  Note; Cllr Clewer asked whether it was standard practice to exclude apprenticeship rates from ratios? It was confirmed this was standard

practice in local government where apprentices were paid on spot salaries.

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy agreed and noted the report**

The Chairman thanked Paula Marsh for her report

49 **Quarterly Workforce report (Q2 July - Sept)**

Michael Taylor outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack including information relating to the attached staff wellbeing survey corporate results (Oct 2020).

Points made included:

- That the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact how and where the council and its staff delivered services. During the July – September quarter, nationally we saw the first lockdown ease as numbers testing positive reduced over the summer months, although uncertainty around further restrictions remained.

- During this quarter the council moved from response to recovery phase and commenced planning and implementation of an Organisational Recovery Programme whilst allowing more staff to return to the office for specific business requirements or for wellbeing reasons. However for a large proportion of staff working from home continued during this quarter, evidenced by 82% of staff who responded to the wellbeing survey (conducted at the end of September 2020) identifying that they had been working from home for most or all of their time. As the pandemic continued to require different ways of working, it was critical to continue to monitor the affect on the workforce.

- Records showed that the coronavirus illness had very little impact on sickness absence this quarter, contributing only 1 absence spanning 3 working days (0.1% of the total absence days lost in the quarter). However during this time new absence codes were introduced to monitor staff who were self-isolating (but where this was not counted as "sickness" absence). Throughout the quarter there were a further 39 staff self-isolating where it impacted their ability to do their job and were therefore unable to work. A further 21 in the quarter were required to self-isolate however were still able to work from home.

- These figures compared to 253 days lost in the previous quarter (April – June) - however this previous figure encompassed all of the different absence reasons covered above.

- Through the response phase of the pandemic Wiltshire Council were monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on team capacity on a daily basis, and in the July – September quarter only 1% of the workforce were impacted to the point that they weren't able to perform the duties of their role, and therefore it had had little direct impact.

Points and comments made by the Committee included:

- That it was important that office equipment which staff needed to work from home was available, and that some may not have the space to work from home.

- That the Q3 report should be circulated to Staffing Policy Committee members when it became available.

Decision

- **The Staffing Policy Committee noted the report**

50   **Organisational Recovery Programme**

Jo Pitt and Paula Marsh gave a verbal update.

A power point presentation was shown, this presentation was circulated to the Staffing Policy Committee members for their information.

Points made included:

- In March, as part of Covid response Wiltshire Council had set up an organisational resilience cell.

- As Wiltshire Council moved into recovery it had set up an internal organisational recovery programme – which looks at its workplaces, workforce and the way it works.

- This was a large internal programme but it was important that the council align work happening in OR with work in external recovery themes and also with other major programmes of work happening internally.

- That there are good links across these programmes, both through HR business partners and also through the programme office / systems thinking team who support across all these programmes of work.

- The programme feeds up through the board (chaired by the senior responsible officers – Jo Pitt and Andy Brown) to CLT and messages are cascaded out from CTL through ELT and via forums such as the managers forum, through SMTs to staff.

- In the New Year the programme would have a page on the new intranet which would make regular communication and information sharing with staff and managers easier.

- Wiltshire Council were also using staff engagement groups such as its EPIC group and Digital Champions to communicate key messages and get feedback

- Wiltshire Council provided monthly updates to the unions and they had been involved in relevant task groups.

- The aim of the programme was to learn from the response to Covid and to use what had been learned to emerge leaner and stronger. It was a wide ranging programme and had got input from across the council.

Other points made included:

- That HR were working with staff who may need to be re-deployed over the coming weeks.

- That, amongst other things, Wiltshire Council staff could help to provide transport for people struggling to be vaccinated if required

- That some furloughing of Wiltshire Council staff might need to happen once options for redeployment had been exhausted.

- That staff had been advised not come into hubs unless really needed – director approval was required.

- That HR would be issuing guidance to managers of staff who were working at home whilst looking after children regarding the need to be flexible.

The Chairman thanked Jo Pitt and Paula Marsh for their updates.

51   **Close**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.20 am)