

Staffing Policy Committee

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2022 AT WEST WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Jacqui Lay and Cllr Antonio Piazza and Cllr Tamara Reay (observer)

Also Present:

Tamsin Kielb – Director, HR&OD
Gemma Morrison – Strategic and Delivery Manager, HR&OD
Mike Osment - UNISON

44 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ashley O'Neill and Cllr Ricky Rogers.

45 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Decision

- **That the minutes of the Staffing Policy Committee meeting held on Wednesday 9 March 2022 were confirmed as the correct record.**

It was noted that the proposed SPC Sub-Committees agreed at the March 2022 Staffing Policy Committee meeting should have read as:

Senior Officers Employment Sub Committee

Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Helen Belcher

Substitutes: Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Ricky Rogers

Appeals Sub-Committee

Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Carole King

Substitutes: Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Ricky Rogers

Grievance Appeals Sub- Committee

Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Carole King

Substitutes: Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Ricky Rogers

46 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

47 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

48 **Public Participation**

There was no Public Participation.

49 **Overtime Policy**

Tamsin Kielb - Assistant Director, HR & OD outlined the report.

Points made included:

That the purpose of the report was to update Staffing Policy Committee on the policy updates for the Overtime Policy.

That Since December 2021 the council had been in negotiations with its recognised Trade Unions (UNISON, Unite the Union and GMB) on proposed changes to terms and conditions.

That the changes aimed to deliver savings of £2.1m as part of an overall savings target of £10.1m that needed to be found from staffing budgets over the next 2 years.

That the proposed changes to the overtime policy had recently been approved following Trade Union negotiations and subsequent consultation with members. The proposals had now been included in an updated overtime policy.

That there would be savings to the councils' wage bill in relation to overtime and additional hours.

That overtime and additional hours were primarily claimed by frontline related services.

That the council would monitor time being taken off as “Time in Lieu” to ensure the services were covered effectively.

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy Committee confirm their agreement to the update to the overtime policy with a proposed implementation date of 1 June 2022.**

50 **Quarterly Workforce Report January – March 2022**

Tamsin Kielb - Assistant Director, HR & OD outlined the report.

Points made included:

That during this quarter the ‘living with COVID-19’ guidance was introduced, which detailed the government’s plan for removing the remaining legal restrictions. Wiltshire Council buildings were also fully re-opened to all staff, however operating in line with our new ways of working. Utilising the new desk booking app integrated in Microsoft Teams, staff were able to book a desk in their allocated area with additional functionality to view which colleagues were in on the same day and on which desks, to enable interaction and collaboration and support wellbeing.

The impact of the Omicron variant was outlined in the previous October – December report with cases steadily increasing towards the end of the quarter; resulting in all adults being offered a booster jab to help mitigate the risks.

The spread of Omicron, and this increasing trend, continued into the January – March 22 quarter, with cases peaking in early January and experiencing another increasing trend in March, this trend broadly followed the national trend during the same period.

As mentioned in the report, cases of the Omicron variant continued to increase during the January – March 22 quarter, in line with a national trend. This resulted in absences related to COVID-19 increasing by 87% during the quarter and contributing the second highest number of absence days corporately (21% of all absence days lost). However despite this, COVID-19 never affected more than 1.7% of the workforce at any one time in the quarter.

During the same period, the ONS reported estimates of a high of 7.6% of the population testing positive for COVID-19 (an average of 5.3% during the period), meaning the council rates were significantly lower than national rates

during the period and suggested the continued efforts to safeguard council staff had made an impact.

Over this quarter, employee costs (both permanent and casual) had increased, despite a reduction in headcount. This was due to the national pay award of 1.75% (and 2.75% for those on spinal point 1 of grade B) across all NJC (grades B – O) and HAY grades and backdated to April 2021. The council were likely to experience a slight reduction in salary costs next quarter (April – June 22) as the costs in this quarter were inflated by the additional cost to backdate to April 2021.

The pay award had also impacted casual costs. However casual costs were also driven by demand, which also appeared to have influenced casual costs this quarter, particularly in Leisure. Casuals were used effectively in this service to cover lost capacity through things like sickness, self isolation, leavers and annual leave and had likely led to this slight increase.

Significantly, agency costs had reduced, predominantly due to making a senior role covered through agency in Finance, permanent.

Disciplinary cases had increased corporately by 9 this quarter, predominantly due to six new cases in Families and Children's Services, this was split across the directorate and not from one discernible team. This would be something to monitor in the next quarter to ascertain whether there were any underlying trends or reasons.

Points raised by the Staffing Policy Committee included:

- The importance of making sure that Wiltshire Council had a good recruitment pipeline in place.
- The pressures of employees nearing retirement age – the need to look at succession planning.
- Was Wiltshire Council attracting the people that it wanted - focussing on making Wiltshire Council an employer that people wanted to work for.
- The importance of Wiltshire Council growing its own talent.
- The need to inform young people just what Wiltshire Council could offer as an employer.

Tamsin Kielb asked the Staffing Policy Committee if they would prefer the quarterly Workforce Report to remain quarterly or be taken at future Staffing Policy Committee meetings as a six monthly report.

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy Committee agreed to receive the Workforce Report on a six monthly basis with any important information flagged up as bullet points. It was also felt that Wiltshire Council's Top three areas of hard to fill vacancies could be covered in the report.**

The Staffing Policy Committee felt the Workforce Report was a worthwhile report.

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy Committee noted the Quarterly Workforce Report January – March 2022.**

It was agreed that a new HR organizational chart would be provided for circulation to the Staffing Policy Committee members.

Cllr Carole King requested a breakdown of figures of which directorates currently had vacancies – it was agreed that this information would be brought back to Staffing Policy Committee.

51 **Future Meeting Dates - 2022**

The future meeting dates for 2022 were noted:

- Wednesday 13 July 2022 – 10:30am, Kennet Room, County Hall
- Wednesday 14 September 2022 – 10:30am, Kennet Room, County Hall
- Wednesday 9 November 2022 – 10:30am, Kennet Room, County Hall

52 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

53 **Close**

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 2.50 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kevin Fielding of Democratic Services, direct line 01249 706612, e-mail kevin.fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk

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