

Staffing Policy Committee

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2023 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Ricky Rogers and Cllr Tamara Reay

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Helen Belcher
- Councillor Richard Clewer
- Councillor Ashley O'Neill

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 29 September 2022 were presented for consideration and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

5 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

6 Tusker

Francesca Hyde, Strategic Projects and Policy Officer, presented a report on the Tusker green car salary sacrifice scheme.

The officer explained that through the scheme employees could sacrifice a fixed amount of their monthly salary in exchange for an electric or hybrid vehicle. The sacrificed amount would be taken from their salary prior to income tax and National Insurance; therefore employees and the council would benefit from paying lower contributions. The scheme was seen as a staff benefit which would help to support recruitment. Full details could be seen in the agenda report.

In response to questions, it was explained that take up of the scheme in neighbouring local authorities was 1.5% in Dorset and 1% in BANES. If 1% of Wiltshire Council employees took part in the scheme that would equate to 45 employees.

Regarding take up of the similar Cycle to Work scheme, exact figures were not known but could be given to Members at a later date.

Members questioned whether they would be eligible for the Tuskar scheme. It was thought that as they were not salaried employees that they would be unlikely to be able to participate in the scheme, however further clarity would be sought and fed back to the Committee.

In response to further questions, it was explained that the National Minimum Wage checks were part of the council's corporate responsibility to staff and were recommended by Tusker in order to protect lower earning employees. There was a range in costs of the cars available, and it was thought that the scheme was affordable for anyone earning over £23,000 per annum. The contract length for employees would be up to 4 years. Employees could choose a shorter term, which would result in higher monthly payments. If an employee left the Council during the term, then they would need to hand the car back. If this was during the first 3 months of the contract an early termination fee would apply.

It was confirmed that Tusker was a private company which operated nationally in many different sectors, including with many Local Authorities.

It was also confirmed that the Council did not operate a car lease scheme, but that there were pool cars that staff could use for work reasons. The pool scheme would continue.

At the end of the discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the report.

7 **Corporate Driving at work Policy**

Gemma Morrison, HR&OD Strategic Delivery Manager, presented the revised Corporate Driving at Work policy. The policy had been updated to ensure that it

met statutory requirements and was HMRC compliant. Some of the key changes were highlighted, as listed in part 3 of the report, this included changes to trigger points as detailed at points 56 to 59 of the policy. It was hoped that the increase in points allowed at recruitment stage would broaden the application pool.

Members discussed the report and updated policy, with some expressing concern in the slight relaxation regarding trigger points. Others stated that they felt the policy was quite complex and wondered how it would be received by staff. Officers explained that whilst it was a complex policy it was necessary to ensure that the council was compliant with legislation. Managers would have the responsibility to ensure that their teams understood and complied with the policy.

In response to questions officers confirmed that was a large variety of roles where employees needed to drive on council business and that grey fleet drivers were those who drove their own cars. At the end of the discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That the Staffing Policy Committee supported the revised Corporate Driving at Work Policy.

8 **Workforce Strategy**

Tamsin Kielb, Assistant Director HR&OD, presented the updated Workforce Strategy which was being presented to the Committee for information. The strategy had been through the Extended Leadership Team (ELT), the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and would go on to Cabinet for approval.

It was explained that a strategy had already been in place but due to the introduction of Our Identity and the new Business Plan the Workforce Strategy had been updated. Language had been simplified to make it more readable and the team had worked with Heads of Service and staff to make sure that the strategy resonated with them. It was important that the document was not just owned by HR&OD but was adopted across the organisation.

A corporate action plan would be developed to implement the policy and Directors would cascade down through their teams. A Managers Charter was also being developed to ensure consistency across the organisation.

Members questioned calling the workforce public servants and officers explained that there had been a conscious choice to use this phraseology, as the role of staff was to serve the public.

Members also highlighted that the acronym USP used in the report may not be known to all and officers confirmed that this would be expanded to Unique Selling Point in the final version. It was,

Resolved:

To note the updated Workforce Strategy.

9 **Apprenticeship Policy**

Gemma Morrison, HR&OD Strategic Delivery Manager, presented the revised Apprenticeship Policy which had been updated and was now more focused and streamlined. The Council had 58 new members of staff on the apprenticeship programme and 385 had started apprenticeships as upskillers. Around 60 different apprenticeships were currently offered. The updated policy had been through an Equality Impact Assessment panel and the Joint Consultative Committee.

Members asked a question regarding the percentage of care leavers and looked after children which applied for apprenticeships. Whilst the exact figure was not known, apprenticeships were heavily promoted to them.

Further questions were asked regarding the costs to the council of apprenticeships. It was confirmed that the levy paid in each month was greater than the levy paid out.

Numbers undertaking apprenticeships were quite steady over the years, however there were now a lot of apprenticeships which had not previously been available, for example apprenticeships in Planning and Legal.

Members expressed positive views regarding the apprenticeship programme. It was,

Resolved:

That the Staffing Policy Committee supported the revised Apprenticeship Policy.

10 **Pay Policy Statement 2023**

Tamsin Kielb, Assistant Director HR&OD presented the updated draft Pay Policy Statement 2023/24. Updating the Pay Policy Statement was an annual requirement. The main updates to the policy were outlined in the report. A couple were highlighted, these included that candidates could be appointed into roles at the next increment above their salary to take account of their skills and experience and that bonuses could now be paid in exceptional circumstances.

The draft policy would be updated following the release of the Budget Proposals for 2023/24 and would go to Full Council for approval in February 2023.

In response to questions the officer confirmed that the incremental progression, which was frozen for 2023/24, was separate to the NJC pay award. It was,

Resolved:

- 1. That the Staffing Policy Committee approve the updated pay policy statement for 2023/2024 to be presented at Full Council for approval on 21st February 2023.**
- 2. That the Staffing Policy Committee delegate authority to the Assistant Director HR&OD to approve any amendments required to the pay policy statement prior to Full Council as a result of the Trade Union negotiations on changes to unsocial hours and standby and callout allowances. If agreement on changes to these policies was not reached prior to Full Council, the changes would be made to the pay policy statement for the following year for April 2024.**

11 Workforce Report - July to September 2022

Michael Taylor, Workforce Insight Analyst, presented the latest workforce report. The report had previously been circulated to the Committee for their perusal as the November 2022 meeting was cancelled. Key themes were highlighted by the officer.

Sickness absence had returned to 'normal' pre-COVID levels; however Public Health were suggesting that due to increased rates of flu and COVID over the winter period, sickness absence may increase quicker than was usual.

Employee turnover was discussed. The job market was currently candidate driven as jobs were abundant and there was high competition. There had been increased turnover in the last few years. In some recent cases, pay rates were having an impact which could be a result of the cost of living crisis.

Members were interested in how many leavers went to work for other local authorities rather than the private sector. Whilst the exact figure was not known it was thought that most leavers went to go and work for the private sector.

Agency costs were discussed. These were high in certain services such as social care as there were a lot of vacancies and this was a statutory service which had to be provided. Nationally recruitment was difficult in social care. Agency costs had gone up recently, but prior to that they had previously reduced quite a lot. It was something teams worked hard to reduce.

Members highlighted that people leaving was an issue. However, staff received good training at Wiltshire Council and they would take that training and our ethos with them when they left, benefiting all of society, so that could be seen as a positive. It was,

Resolved:

To note the report.

12 **Urgent Items**

Tamsin Kielb, Assistant Director HR&OD gave a verbal update to the meeting regarding the union's consideration of the changes to terms and conditions such as unsocial hours. Unions had balloted their members with Unite and Unison accepting the changes. However, the GMB did not accept the changes and as a result Wiltshire Council were having talks with GMB and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). Conversations were ongoing and further updates would be given to the Committee if required.

On a separate matter it was noted that the breakdown of vacancies by directorate provided to Members should be presented at a future meeting.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.20 am)

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