

Staffing Policy Committee

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JULY 2023 AT KENNET ROOM, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman), Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ashley O'Neill and Cllr Ricky Rogers

31 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence have been received from:

- Cllr Helen Belcher OBE
- Cllr Tamara Reay

32 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 May 2023 were considered.

Members queried when an update would be provided with regard to Minute 27. In response, officers stated that further information needed to be gathered and as such, Members would be contacted outside of the meeting.

Following which, it was:

Resolved

The Committee approved and signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 May 2023 as a true and correct record.

33 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

34 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

35 Public Participation

There were no questions or statements submitted.

36 **Unwanted Behaviour Policy**

Paul Collyer, Head of Occupational Health & Safety, introduced the item and provided a brief summary on the aims of the policy. It was explained that the policy was developed due to the increased frequency in which public facing Council staff were experiencing episodes of unwanted behaviour from members of the public. Officers had identified that existing health and safety policies focussing on the prevention and management of risks to staff did not adequately cover this topic. Therefore, after further investigation into the level of inconsistent reporting of episodes and requests from managers for increased support, the new policy sought to provide a clear and concise framework for reporting and managing unwanted behaviour from members of the public to further safeguard staff.

It was confirmed that the policy had been developed and reviewed following consultation with managers from relevant departments, Heads of Services Forum, Joint Consultative Committee, Legal Services, and the Corporate Leadership Team. Officers explained that upon approval, high levels of bespoke training would be delivered to staff and volunteers on risk assessments, proportional reporting of incidents, and the escalation processes. It was emphasised that staff should be supported as much as possible post experiencing episodes of unwanted behaviour. Furthermore, the Council has a duty to comply with health and safety regulations by providing sufficient training and preventative measures to protect staff.

In response to a query, officers confirmed that the existing systems and policies in place for public facing departments were audited by Occupational Health and Safety officers, however it was emphasised that this new policy sought to bring attention to the issue and to mitigate the likelihood of different approaches by providing clear guidance on the application of remedial or responsive action. Furthermore, Members were informed that the Council utilised an intelligence network of nominated officers within each relevant department to share knowledge of particular perpetrators. Members discussed the intelligence network and highlighted that they were not privy to said information and emphasised the importance of communication and cross-sharing between departments to help draw attention to any particular situations and to inform further preventative work. Members were reassured that discussions between officers in the Occupational Health & Safety, Legal and Information Governance Teams were being undertaken with regard to the recording, retaining and reviewing of intelligence information and an internal governance document clarifying these processes was being developed. It was further stressed that in certain circumstances statutory services could not be withdrawn or restrictions put in place despite members of staff experiencing unwanted behaviour, social care being used as an example.

Officers noted that Councillors had access to the internal Employee Safety Database and could also utilise the corporate reporting route and its automatic escalation processes that flag incidents for further investigation and scrutiny. Members further queried the inclusion of Councillors within the policy and officers noted that they would review this alongside other similar policies

employed by neighbouring local authorities and could revisit it with Members outside of the meeting.

It was suggested that formally reported incidents could be recorded within the quarterly accidents' reports created by Occupational Health & Safety officers, thusly, triggering discussions and raising awareness of the issues which could be circulated across departments, volunteers, and Town and Parish Councils. If Members wished to have any further information on recent incidents or specific issues, then they were encouraged to contact officers who could share examples outside of the meeting. Members discussed if and how the policy would be advertised to members of the public to which officers noted that a message was available on the website and all promotional opportunities would be utilised to give the Council's approach to the topic a greater profile.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members stressed the seriousness of these challenges and risks, and that the importance of preventing harm to staff was imperative and noted that the wording of the policy needed to be as unambiguous and succinct as possible.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Committee approved the Unwanted Behaviour from Members of the Public Policy, subject to delegation to the Director of HR & OD and the Head of Occupational Health & Safety, in consultation with the Chairman, to make minor amendments to reflect points raised during the meeting.

37 **Changes to the Pay Policy Statement**

Tamsin Kielb, Director of HR & OD, provided an update on the upcoming changes to the Pay Policy Statement.

It was explained that in May 2022, statutory guidance on the making and disclosure of Special Severance Payments by local authorities in England was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The guidance stated that paying public sector workers additional, discretionary sums on top of other redundancy entitlements should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and where there was a clear justification for doing so, while ensuring all relevant internal policies and procedures and all alternative actions were fully followed, explored, and documented. Consequently, it set out the accountability and disclosure requirements of local authorities to ensure clear and transparent agreements and reporting on exit payments.

As such, officers highlighted to Members that Wiltshire Council's Pay Policy Statement had been updated accordingly. Additionally, it was noted that a further internal HR guidance document would be drafted to ensure that the provisions set out in the statutory guidance were being followed, and the

Finance Team were making changes to the disclosure and reporting of such payments in the Statement of Accounts.

38 **Update on Tusker**

Tamsin Kielb, Director of HR & OD, notified Members that the Tusker scheme would be implemented from 1 August 2023 following further scrutiny and discussions being undertaken post approval by the Committee in January 2023.

Members queried whether the scheme would be extended to include Councillors, however it was highlighted that at a meeting of the Committee on 6 November 2013, Committee Members had agreed that Councillors should not be eligible for any Council staff benefits. At the end of the discussion, Members reaffirmed this sentiment.

39 **Update on Provision of Workforce Analytics**

Tamsin Kielb, Director of HR & OD, informed Members that the officer responsible for analysing workforce data had left the Council. Therefore, as their replacement was not due to start until the end of September 2023, an update on the provision of workforce analytics could not be given at the next meeting of the Committee. However, officers reassured Members that this resourcing issue had been identified, would be rectified, and an update would be provided as soon as possible.

40 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Ellen Ghey - Democratic Services
Officer of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718259, e-mail
ellen.ghey@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line 01225 713114 or email
communications@wiltshire.gov.uk