

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2018 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Tony Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Andy Phillips, Cllr Hayley Spencer and Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr David Halik

12 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ricky Rogers and Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman.

13 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 January 2018.

14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

15 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- **Time off for fostering policy – update** The time off for fostering policy was presented at the last meeting of this Committee on the 10 January 2018. When the paper was presented to committee for approval for this policy it was done partly on the basis that it would enable the Council to become part of the fostering friendly network. However, the fostering

friendly network have since informed the Council that to be part of the network we would need to broaden out our policy to include all staff who were also foster carers, not just those who were foster carers in Wiltshire (as currently specified). This would mean extending the policy to include staff also fostering in other counties and with foster agencies. The conclusion from the fostering service was that they did not wish to open up the policy to include other agencies in this way and therefore the policy would remain unchanged in this respect. Members were asked to note that the Council would therefore not be part of the fostering friendly network but would still offer paid time off in line with the policy to Wiltshire foster carers.

- **EPIC Lecture** The meeting was informed that the Council was launching an exciting new series of free public lectures called #Epic Talks. The first of the #Epic Talks, 'The impact and influence of social media', was due to be held on 26 March 2018 from 5.30pm to 7.00pm at County Hall, Trowbridge and would be free for everyone to attend. The talk would be delivered by Dr. Charles Kriel specialist advisor to the DCMS (Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) Select Committee on fake news at the House of Commons. Dr. Kriel was from the Corsham Institute, whose work focused on education and research to promote lifelong learning in the digital age. Those who wished to attend would need to register on line at Event Brite.

16 **Public Participation**

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

17 **Equality & Diversity Monitoring Report**

The Committee received a report by the Director, HR & Organisational Development which presented the updated annual Equality and Diversity Employment Monitoring Report. It was noted that the Council was required to produce this information annually as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty in line with the Equality Act 2010.

In January 2017 the Council published its Equality and Diversity Employment Monitoring Report 2015/16 on its website. However, this year the Council would be required to publish its updated monitoring report for 2016/17 by 30 March 2018 in order to bring the publishing date into line with the new requirement for gender pay gap reporting which was introduced by the Government last year.

During discussion members noted the reluctance of some staff to complete an equalities monitoring questionnaire. Whilst this reluctance was appreciated, there was some concern that in some instances staff might be fearful of some perceived prejudice should the questionnaire be completed. It was noted that ongoing work was being carried out to explain to staff why this information was

required. Members suggested that the questionnaire be examined to see if the questions about bullying might be clarified and possibly made more user friendly.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To request the officers to refer the draft equalities monitoring questionnaire to this Committee for approval prior to its next distribution.**

18 Gender and Pay Gap Reporting

Consideration was given to a report by the Director, HR & Organisational Development which presented the gender pay gap data and report, which was required to be published on behalf of Wiltshire Council for the reference date of 31st March 2017.

It was noted that gender pay gap reporting came into effect from April 2017 and required organisations with 250 or more employees to publish and report specific figures about their gender pay gap - the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. These figures were also required to be published on the Council's website for a period of three years from the publication date to ensure accessibility to employees and the public.

Members noted with pleasure that the Wiltshire mean (average) gap between male and female staff was 7.81% compared with the national mean of 17.4%. They considered that the work being carried out was a great move towards equality and welcomed the ongoing work being undertaken which included the upskilling of apprenticeships and recruitment training.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the gender pay gap report and the obligations placed on the Council with regards to the publishing of gender pay gap data.

19 Updated Discretions Policy for Wiltshire Council

The Committee received a report by the Director, HR & Organisational Development about the updated Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Discretions Policy for Wiltshire Council.

The LGPS regulations 2014 required Wiltshire Council to regularly review its existing pensions discretions policy and to publish a new policy as appropriate.

The discretions policy stated how the Council would apply its discretionary powers in relation to specific provisions of the pension scheme.

The LGPS regulations provided a set of 12 discretions for employers to review and agree. Eight of these discretions were the same as stated in Wiltshire Council's existing discretions policy, with the addition of three new discretions and a minor amendment to one discretion.

The proposed changes were explained to members of the Committee.

Resolved:

To approve the recommendations concerning the discretions policy as stated in paragraphs 5 & 6 of the submitted report, namely:

- **Discretion 3 – flexible retirement (revised discretion);**
- **Discretion 7 – waiving actuarial reductions on compassionate grounds for rule of 85 (new discretion)**
- **Discretion 11 – extending the 30-day deadline for members to elect for a shared cost APC (new discretion)**
- **Discretion 12 – permitting arrangements for additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) of shared costs additional voluntary contributions arrangements (SCAVCs) (new discretion)**

20 **Trade Union Deduction of Contributions at Source (DOCAS)**

A report by the Director, HR & Organisational Development was received which provided an update on the Council's proposals regarding an appropriate calculation for each union so that deduction of contributions at source (DOCAS) regulations were complied with. The report presented the current draft "Service Level Agreement" (SLA) on DOCAS that would need to be signed by payroll and each trade union by 10 March 2018.

During discussion, Mike Osment, UNISON Branch Secretary confirmed that UNISON accepted the proposal to charge a 2.5% administration fee to process the monthly membership fee with effect from April 2018.

Resolved:

To agree that a 2.5% charge is applied and that the Council and the trade unions sign the service level agreement as attached at appendix A to the report, subject to legal advice.

21 **Quarterly Workforce Report: October to December 2017**

The Committee received a workforce report, excluding fire, police and school staff, for the quarter ended 31 December 2017.

The Committee noted that the report was being provided in a new format which aimed to raise awareness of the size and makeup of the workforce and of the issues that affected it. The first section of the report gave the key observations from the data analysed for the quarter. This was followed by a themed commentary which provided a deeper analysis and insight into a specific current topic for the Council. Indicators were provided at the end of the report which gave an instant view of selected trends over the last year in order to understand the wider picture of what was changing in the workforce.

During discussion, it was noted that the headcount had slightly increased (by 13), this being due to new employees and also to contractual arrangements for some existing staff. Members were also pleased to note that the level of sickness had decreased this quarter.

The use of agency staff had changed during this quarter, whereby the monetary cost had increased but the FTE number had slightly reduced. This was due to a higher than usual use of interim staff at a senior management level at tiers 1 and 2 of the organisation.

Given these results and the current focus on engagement, the current Quarterly Workforce report provided a detailed analysis of the Council's recent and planned engagement activities and their impacts.

Members noted that more use was being made of apprenticeship schemes at all levels. Apprenticeships were becoming increasingly popular and modules were being developed to provide new leadership and management apprenticeship schemes and in-house programmes. It was suggested that in future reports apprenticeship statistics should include grade and age. In particular it would be interesting to note the number of employees starting under the age of 25 years.

Resolved

To note the Quarterly Workforce Report.

22 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was due to be held on Thursday 10 May 2018 at County Hall, Trowbridge at 10.30am.

23 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.40 am - 12.00 pm)

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