

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chair), Cllr David Pollitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute), Cllr Peter Evans (Substitute), Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Bob Jones MBE and Cllr Graham Wright

51 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Smale (who was substituted by Cllr Peter Evans) and Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE (who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman).

52 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 July 2016.

53 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

54 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced with pleasure that the Human Resources Team had been shortlisted for the Guardian Recruitment Award in the social recruitment category.

55 **Public Participation**

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

56 **Recording of Annual Leave**

Consideration was given to a report by the Associate Director, People & Business from which it was noted that in May 2016 the Committee had requested a short report setting out how annual leave was recorded and monitored at the Council. The report set out the current approach and also outlined the alternative recording methods which had been considered.

It was recalled that concern had previously been expressed about the ability of staff to take their annual leave and it was noted that it was the managers' responsibility to make sure that their staff booked and took their annual leave entitlement each year and to check that an employee was not using annual leave when another type of leave would be more appropriate such as carers' leave, family, emergency or compassionate leave. Managers were also advised to have an accessible team leave chart.

Members examined the various options that had been considered, such as SAP recording and HR monitoring of leave records. It was noted that when the Council adopted the SAP system in 2009 work had been undertaken to see if it would be beneficial to use this system to record annual leave. However, it was found that on investigation it transpired that there were more than 2000 different working patterns and that considerable administrative input would be required to build each of these working patterns into the SAP system which would not be cost effective.

Regarding the monitoring of leave records by HR, it was pointed out that the HR service was focused on being proactive and strategic rather than transactional and monitoring.

Resolved:

- (1) To note that central monitoring of annual leave would be a resource intensive process which is unlikely to add value.**

- (2) To support the approach outlined in this report which requires managers to be responsible for annual leave monitoring arrangements.
- (3) To agree that HR sends a communication via the Managers Wire in September 2016 to remind managers that, as the end of the leave year is approaching and because of the recent annual leave increases, they have a duty to ensure that their employees have taken or booked their annual leave entitlement for the 2016 leave year and not overtaken their entitlement.

57 Staff Survey 2016

The Committee received a report by the Associate Director, People & Business which outlined the arrangements for the 2016 staff survey, which was planned to take place from Monday 21 November to Friday 9 December.

The survey provided a valuable tool to measure the “temperature” of the Council and the results helped shape the priorities for both corporate and service area plans. It was noted that following the 2014 staff survey, the following two corporate objectives were cascaded to all managers:-

- Carry out action planning based on staff survey responses.
- Carry out appraisals, objectives setting and development planning with every employee.

The Committee noted that the 2016 survey would combine the previous staff and health surveys and that in future a combined survey would be held annually.

The Committee considered that these arrangements were good and that the additional and revised questions were excellent. However Members did make the following points:-

- (1) It was suggested that some teams were being moved fairly often which staff were finding disruptive and unsettling. It was noted that it was now common practice to move teams when necessary in order to facilitate the best possible use of accommodation and these moves were always well publicised. Officers agreed to look further into this and discuss with the Campus Team.
- (2) It was considered that Question 64 be reworded to read “What is your age?” rather than “How old are you?”

It was noted that 40% of staff had not taken part in the last survey and it was suggested that one of the principle reasons for this was that some staff did not

believe that their responses would remain anonymous. Members were informed that prizes, sponsored by Comenius (providers of the Council's grow system), were being introduced to encourage staff to respond to the survey.

Resolved:

- (1) To confirm support for the arrangements for the 2016 staff survey as outlined in the report.**
- (2) To note it was aimed that a report setting out the results of the staff survey would be presented to the meeting of this Committee due to be held on 1 March 2017.**
- (3) To request the officers to ascertain how much time was being spent in drafting the staff survey and subsequently analysing the responses.**

58 Delivering the Business Plan - June 2016

The Committee received a workforce report, excluding fire, police and school staff, for the quarter ended 30 June 2016, concerning:-

Staffing levels
Sickness absence
New health and safety RIDDOR related injuries
New disciplinary, grievance and absence cases
Voluntary staff turnover
Employee costs
Additional financial information
Employee diversity

It was noted that the headcount across Wiltshire had seen a decrease of 23 employees (-0.5%) since the last quarter, with the number of employees now being 4749.

The Committee was very pleased to note that sickness rates had decreased this quarter to 2.1 days lost per FTE (-0.4), this being 0.3 days lost per FTE below the benchmark for a local authority. However, there had been an increase in long term absences, with Legal & Governance continuing to have the highest proportion of long term absences at 71.3% (-3.0%).

The voluntary staff turnover rate had increased to 2.6% this quarter (+0.4%), this being 0.9% above the benchmark voluntary turnover rate for local government. This was due to seasonal variations but was lower than the previous year.

Members were pleased to note that recruitment campaigns to attract and recruit social workers was bearing fruit and the retention rate was good. However, there were continuing problems with the recruitment into certain qualified posts, for instance planning officers, and focus was being made on creating apprenticeship opportunities by attracting graduates to the Council to complete their professional qualifications and hopefully remain with the authority.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To request a verbal update at the next meeting on the recruitment of planning officers.**

59 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of this Committee was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 2 November 2016, in the Kennet Room, County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

60 Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.20 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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