

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2013 AT THE PRATCHETT ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chair), Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr David Pollitt, Cllr John Smale (Vice Chairman) and Cllr Stuart Wheeler

Also Present:

Cllr Tony Deane

45 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jon Hubbard and Cllr Jane Scott OBE.

46 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 4 September 2013.

47 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

48 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

49 **Public Participation**

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

50 **Annual Health & Safety Performance**

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Occupational Health and Safety which set out details of the Council's health and safety performance during the period October 2012 to September 2013 and also the planned areas of work for the future reporting period.

It was noted that the report covered the health and safety of the Council's employees and also of the customers and members of the public to whom the Council provided services.

All the information relating to accidents contained within the report was based solely on that which had been properly reported and recorded. There would have been other accidents that had not been recorded or had been misreported. Efforts were continuing to reduce these to the minimum.

It was noted that the Health and Safety Service had experienced a successful year with:

- a reduction in the majority of trend patterns of accidents and, more significantly, incidence rates;
- an absence of any enforcement action from the Health and Safety Executive;
- a positive assessment from the South West Audit Partnership;
- very high customer satisfaction feedback.

Members of the Committee were interested to note that quarterly information reports had been introduced to give Associate Directors and Heads of Service greater detail regarding localised health and safety performance. Health and Safety performance had also been integrated into the corporate appraisal procedure.

The Committee was informed that the key areas of work based on risk assessment included:

- employee well-being
- musculo-skeletal hazards
- lone working
- increasing use of volunteers
- shared workplaces
- commissioned services, including adult care and ground maintenance

The Committee noted that the evidence presented indicated that health and safety was generally well managed at Wiltshire Council and that the Health and Safety team was providing a high-performing service. Performance indicators were positive and the corporate risk register showed that the ongoing direction of travel was towards green RAG rating. However, the issue of violence and aggression towards staff in the course of their duties remained a significant concern and was at the forefront of ongoing work with services and individuals.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) **To approve the report, thanking the Officers for all their work resulting in the positive outcomes as set out in the report.**
- (2) **To request an update report in due course on progress in securing a reduction of acts of violence and aggression towards staff.**

51 **Wiltshire Council - Commitment to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)**

The Committee received a report by the Associate Director, Finance, Revenues & Benefits and Pensions which updated Members on Wiltshire Council's legal obligations in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme. The report also highlighted the areas of which Wiltshire Council had discretion and the key considerations that needed to be taken into account when providing services.

The Committee heard further from Cllr Tony Deane, Chairman of the Wiltshire Pension Fund Committee and the Head of Pensions and noted that:-

1. Wiltshire Council had limited discretion in respect of their ability to offer LGPS membership. The Council had a legal obligation to provide LGPS membership to all Wiltshire Council employees, local authority schools and Academies. The only discretion Wiltshire Council had concerning LGPS admittance was to Foundation Schools. If LGPS access was denied to Foundation Schools, Wiltshire Council would be required to provide an alternative pension scheme of a similar value.
2. The organisation needed to be aware of its long term financial commitments arising from its membership, especially in terms of restructuring its services and any potential indirect pension risks arising from commercial arrangements with new providers.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

52 **Wiltshire Rewards Scheme**

The Committee received a report by the Associate Director, People & Business Services in response to a request made by this Committee at its July 2013 meeting for further information about the ability to extend the Wiltshire Rewards Scheme to volunteers and other groups within Wiltshire.

The report covered:

- A roll out to foster carers

- A roll out to school employees
- An extension of the scheme to other groups

Members were pleased to note that, since the scheme was launched to all non-schools council employees on Monday 30 September 2013, about 25% of eligible staff had signed up and that savings made through the scheme were currently around £9,300.

During the ensuing discussion Members expressed the view that whilst they were supportive of extending the scheme to schools, they considered that a careful marketing of the scheme was important in order to ensure this did not give an impression that it was available to everyone. Cllr Stuart Wheeler did confirm that the scheme would not be made available to Members of the Council.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) **To note that a roll out of the scheme to foster carers would take place by the end of November 2013.**
- (2) **To initially offer free access to Wiltshire Rewards to all Wiltshire schools, including academies, regardless of status on the understanding that if they didn't buy into the Council's payroll service they would have to provide a monthly data base of eligible employees. After one year an annual charge would be made in respect of those academies and non LA schools who wished to continue to use the scheme.**
- (3) **To note the intention to roll out the scheme to volunteers once the current volunteers project had been concluded.**
- (4) **To note that it was not feasible to extend the current Wiltshire Rewards Scheme to other groups but that the setting up of a framework agreement was being investigated to enable an alternative and more suitable scheme to be extended to other groups.**

53 Workforce Information - Update on Levels of Employee Engagement

The Committee considered a report by the Associate Director, People & Business Services which provided an update on current levels of employee engagement based on available information and data.

It was noted that recently some concerns about the current levels of employee engagement had been raised by some members and the branch office of UNISON, against a backdrop of significant change including a recent council

wide voluntary redundancy programme and increases to senior management pay.

At a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 8 October 2013, a review of staff engagement and moral levels using an external provider was proposed and discussed. That Committee agreed that instead the data available internally should be used to provide an update on current employee engagement levels to this Committee.

The Committee noted the number of initiatives that had been taking place to maintain employee engagement and also the challenges that the Council had been facing since it became a unitary authority in 2009. Each of these challenges had and would continue to shape initiatives aimed at reducing the impact on staff to ensure employee engagement could be maintained during unsettling periods.

Members were pleased to note that despite the lengthy periods of change that had been taking place, employee engagement had improved with the information suggesting that employees were more engaged with the Council now than when monitoring began in 2011.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To note that the analysis of all the available data showed that concerns about staff morale could not be substantiated.**
- (3) To conclude that all of the available data suggested that, despite the changes that had been taking place and the challenges being faced, employees were engaged.**

54 Update on Changes to the Senior Management Structure

On considering a report by the Associate Director, People & Business Services,

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report which provided an update on the implementation of the new senior management structure.

55 Senior Officers Employment Sub-Committee

Resolved:

To receive and note the minutes of the Senior Officers Employment Sub-Committee meeting held on 9 October 2013.

56 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of this Committee was due to be held on Wednesday 8 January 2014 at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

57 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.15 pm)

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