

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2017 AT SALISBURY ROOM, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr Hayley Spencer, Cllr David Halik (Substitute) and Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute)

Also Present:

34 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Cllr Tony Jackson, who was substituted by Cllr David Halik

Cllr Andy Phillips

Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Mike Osment, UNISON Branch Secretary and also Helen Strong, Development Officer, Strategic Delivery on their first attendance at a meeting of this Committee.

35 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 July 2017.

36 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

37 Chairman's Announcements

The following announcements were made:-

- **Engage Award** The Committee was delighted to hear that the EPIC team comprising of staff from across the Council had been shortlisted as a finalist in the Engage Awards 2017 in the category of Innovation in Staff Engagement. The team would be attending an awards ceremony in London shortly when the winner would be announced.
- **South West Challenge 2017** It was reported that two teams from Wiltshire Council had recently taken part in the South West Challenge 2017 event in Taunton. This SW Challenge offered a rare opportunity for aspiring managers across the South West to gain exposure to issues outside of their normal working lives and gave them a taste of what senior management was like.

Working as a team of six people from any area of work, delegates spent the day as the management team of a fictional local authority, encountering many of the tasks that a real corporate team would deal with. They had to work as a team, with neighbouring councils and with partner organisations to deliver a new strategy for the council. They learnt how to keep calm and focussed whilst choosing which areas to prioritise; dealing with politically sensitive issues and still keeping their focus on how to give the public the best services with limited budgets. Although neither team from Wiltshire won, the participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learnt a fair amount about the running of a local authority.

38 **Public Participation**

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

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

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development which drew attention to the current draft Trade Union (Deduction of Union Subscriptions from Wages in the Public Sector) Regulations 2017 which was due to be implemented on 10 March 2018.

It was pointed out that the new regulations would mean that the Council would only be able to deduct trade union subscriptions from employees where:

- The employees were given the option to pay their subscription by other means; and
- The union made reasonable payments to the Council which represented the total cost to public funds of making the deductions.

UNISON had asked the Council to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) once the regulations come into force in March 2018 and the Council was currently considering the implications of this request, which might result in having to produce a monthly reconciliation report to UNISON on actual deductions for union subscriptions compared with expected union subscription deductions.

Resolved:

- (1) To continue to investigate an appropriate calculation for each union so that the regulations were complied with.**
- (2) To report back to this Committee once this work had been carried out.**

40 **Staff Car Parking near County Hall**

The Committee received a report by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development which stated that staff car parking in the near vicinity of County Hall was likely to be reduced from 2018.

The east wing site at County Hall had the potential to be developed and outline planning permission was being sought, the outcome of which would most likely be known at the end of October 2017. Should planning permission be granted, work was likely to begin at the start of August 2018 with a loss of about 315 of the current 938 staff car parking spaces, leaving a balance of 623.

It was noted that a survey was being designed in order to gather information on which staff currently drive to work at County Hall and whether the reduction in car parking spaces would cause staff to change their travel arrangements. An initial assessment of car parking spaces in Trowbridge town centre showed that there were plenty of spaces available but there would be a cost involved in parking in the majority of the car parks.

A staff car parking group had been established from across the whole Council, which included union representation, to consider car parking issues. The group would be considering the effect of any decisions made for Trowbridge staff car parking on the provision of parking at the other hubs in Chippenham and Salisbury.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report and that information on proposals from the car parking group would be brought back to this Committee when it becomes available.

41 **Apprenticeship Policy and Progress on the Recruitment of Apprentices**

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development which presented an updated apprenticeship policy, together with a progress report on the recruitment of apprentices and the use of the Council's apprenticeship levy.

The report explained that an apprenticeship was a work-based programme which led to a nationally recognised qualification or set of competencies. The new regulations were launched in April 2017 which now allowed apprentices to gain technical experience and wider skills needed for immediate job and future career.

It was noted that an apprenticeship was required to run for at least one year, but depending upon the type and level of the programme could last up to five years. There was a government target for the Council to employ 2.3% of its workforce as apprentices which currently equated to approximately 266 apprentices per year.

As part of the new regulations, apprenticeship standards had now replaced the old apprentice frameworks. However, Wiltshire Council was limited to offering the standards that had so far been developed but there was a commitment nationally to develop more standards, with new ones becoming available each month.

Currently, there were 13 apprenticeships at Wiltshire Council, which included business administration, accountancy and customer services up to a level 6 or 7 apprentice which was equivalent to a degree qualification in a professional service area. Two further apprentices were waiting to start. However, there were plans to increase the range significantly as more standards became available in 2018.

Members welcomed these developments enthusiastically but it was suggested that the apprenticeships should be spread evenly across the organisation.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the apprenticeship policy, managers' guidance document and frequently asked questions which were designed to support managers when recruiting an apprentice.**
- (2) To receive a further report on the impact of the apprenticeship levy at the end of 2017/18 financial year and an overview on the number, type and level of apprenticeships in place across the Council.**

42 **Quarterly Workforce Report: April - June 2017**

The Committee received a workforce report, excluding fire, police and school staff, for the quarter ended 30 June 2017.

Following the introduction of a new report format which was welcomed and agreed at the last meeting, the first section of the report provided key observations from the data which had been analysed for the quarter. This was followed by a themed commentary which provided a deeper analysis and insight into a specific topic that was current for the Council. The topic chosen for the current report was the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme as discussed in the previous minute.

Reference was made to the number of lost days due to sickness and Cllr Richard Clewer reported that a sickness absence UK average of 4.3 days per worker was significantly lower than the average for Wiltshire. The officers were asked to look into sickness in a bit more detail in order to obtain a clearer picture across the Council of where potential problem areas arose as the figures regularly reported to this Committee were overview figures at a corporate level. The Committee was informed that Wiltshire's sickness statistics had been fairly static for several years but there were certain categories of staff, such as social workers and depot staff, where the level of sickness was somewhat higher than the Wiltshire average. Managers and also business partners were regularly provided with information and training was provided where appropriate, such as manual handling and also ways of dealing with mental stress.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To request the officers to investigate the level of sickness in Wiltshire and report back to Members when information is available.**

43 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was due to be held on Wednesday 10 January 2018 at County Hall, Trowbridge at 10.30am, to be preceded by a further training session on staff engagement and workforce development starting at 9.00am for all Members and substitute Members of the Committee.

44 **Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business.

(Duration of meeting: 11.00 - 11.50 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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115