

Staffing Policy Committee

MINUTES OF THE ON-LINE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2021

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Hayley Illman, Cllr Tony Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Carole King, Cllr John Smale, Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman) and Cllr Philip Whitehead

Also Present:

Jo Pitt - Director – HR & OD, Paula Marsh - HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager, Michael Taylor – Workforce Insight Analyst, HR & OD, Stuart Honeyball - ERP Programme Lead, HR & OD, Catherine Coombs - HR Consultant - Diversity & Inclusion, HR & OD, Tasmin Kielb - Head of Service Org Development & Change, OD & Change, Mike Osment – Branch Secretary, UNISON and Kevin Fielding - Democratic Services Officer

1 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence

2 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Decision

- **That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 January 2021 were confirmed as the correct record**

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements made at the meeting

5 **Public Participation**

No statements or questions were received

6 **Covid Response**

Jo Pitt – Director, HR & OD gave a short verbal update

Points made included:

- That some 400 Wiltshire Council staff had been formally re-deployed
- Many staff currently working supporting the Elections team at the moment
- That staff had been volunteering to be Covid champions
- That staff were supporting Covid testing in local secondary school
- That there had been a significant re-focussing of the Wiltshire Council workforce
- Up to end of April still no normal access to the hubs for Wiltshire Council staff
- May/June review and extension of access for staff
- July/Sept phased return for staff
- October onwards new normal working arrangements for all teams

Points made by the committee members:

- That good work being done by waste collection crews and Highways staff

The Chairman thanked Jo Pitt for her update

7 **Organisational Recovery Programme**

Paula Marsh – HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager presented an update on work undertaken through each of the Organisational Recovery Programme workstreams, and the priority actions for the next period.

Points made included:

High performance culture

- Extension of 360 appraisal roll out into next pilot area – likely to be Families and Children’s services
- Evolve (SAP replacement) ITT evaluation training, data cleansing and business readiness planning
- Development and implementation of new staff recognition scheme – EPIC stars
- Performance task group set up with focus on performance dashboard development, appraisal review and governance

Workplaces and Workspaces

Focus on preparations for the return to workplaces when it is safe to do so including:

- Communication of internal roadmap up to 21 June focused on staff who require access to workplaces to deliver services or for wellbeing reasons
- Development of detailed plans for a return to workplaces for all staff in a phased way between 21 June and September
- Member survey launched to capture views about virtual ways of working
- Proposals to be taken to OR board outlining potential changes to meeting spaces, layouts within hubs, options to enable staff to trial new ways of working and investment in new technology, equipment and furniture
- Digital workers – phase 3 telephony roll out, bring you own device policy, continued sharepoint migration

Commercial

- Development and piloting of commercial awareness course
- Trial of commercial innovation interventions around key contracts
- Completion of process mapping work and identification of areas for review

Wellbeing and Engagement

- Staff Wellbeing Q&A session arranged for 12 March with a focus on vaccinations
- Recruitment of mental health advocates and launch of scheme
- Development and roll out of third staff wellbeing survey

Inclusion

- Workforce Inclusion Strategy and priority action plan finalised and communicated
- Launch of refreshed EDI steering group meetings chaired by ELT sponsor
- Development and roll out of reverse mentoring scheme pilot

Agile

- Review of unsocial hours, call out and standby payments to support with future service design
- Specific work with services to support review of service delivery and embed new ways of working developed during pandemic
- Review of council policies to align with “Our Identity” – development of early resolution process for grievances
- Development of supporting guidance and processes around staff return to workplaces

Customer experience

- Development and agreement of Customer Experience vision & strategy
- Online payments – finalise agreement to Civica upgrade and confirm scope for compliance audit
- Process automation tender documentation development

The following focussed presentations were given:

Career step roles (agile workstream) - Paula Marsh - HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager

Points made included:

- A tool to support more agile development and deployment of staff
- Designed to support services with vacancies that were hard to recruit but where no apprenticeship standards existed to enable a “grow your own” approach
- Enabled internal staff, who did not fully meet the person specification, to be considered for roles
- The recruiting manager created a “portfolio” of knowledge, skills and experience that needed to be gained before moving fully into the role, this may include a formal qualification where required for the role
- Normally the career step post would be one grade lower than the target post or two grades lower if a formal qualification was required
- Staff move into the role as a secondment and, once the portfolio had been successfully completed could then be confirmed into post permanently
- Two pilots were currently in progress for a network coordinator role in highways and plumber roles in the housing repairs service – feedback would be used to review and confirm guidance and policy changes which would be brought to SPC for review in the Summer and then rolled out more widely across the council

Evolve programme update (high performance workstream) - Stuart Honeyball - ERP Programme Lead, HR & OD

Points made included:

- That Evolve was a corporate programme of work through which the council would design, specify and procure a new solution and associated business processes for HR, Payroll, Finance and Procurement to replace its existing Enterprise Resource Planning system, SAP, which had been in place since 2009
- This would enable organisational insight to support evidence-based decision making and policy development

- This would be achieved by transforming our business processes, systems, and the use of digital technology
- It would support the organisation to develop a flexible, high performance culture, enabling the workforce to deliver the best outcomes for our residents

Inclusion strategy and action plan (inclusion workstream) - Tamsin Kielb – Head of Service Org Development & Change, OD & Change

Points made included:

- The Vision – That Wiltshire Council was an inclusive organisation that reflected the diverse backgrounds of the communities it served, where everyone was valued as an individual and where fairness and respect run through everything that it does
- The Aims – To ensure that the workforce was representative of the community and that everyone in the organisation felt a sense of inclusion and belonging

Develop new initiatives and processes as part of organisational recovery, to educate, promote and embed Inclusion and Diversity practices and ways of working into all areas of the organisation

Ensure that we build skills, awareness, capability and knowledge through sponsorship, training and communications campaigns to deliver this vision

The Chairman thanked everybody for their presentations

8 **Gender Pay Gap**

Catherine Coombs – HR Consultant, Diversity and Inclusion outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack

Points made included:

- The purpose of the report was to present the gender pay gap data and report required to be published on behalf of Wiltshire Council for the reference date of 31 March 2020
- That the 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

- That these obligations had been introduced alongside the public-sector equality duty's (PSED) existing publishing requirements for public bodies
- That Public Sector organisations must publish a set of figures via the government's online reporting service each year. For Wiltshire Council, the figures must be based on the reference date of the 31 March to be published by 30 March the following year. Due to the impact of the covid pandemic, the EHRC recently announced a six month extension to the deadline for employers to report their gender pay gap data this year
- That Wiltshire Council would aim to report its gender pay gap figures by 30 March as usual

Decision

- **That the Staffing Policy Committee noted the contents of the gender pay gap infographic report and action plan and the obligations placed on the council with regards to the publication of gender pay gap data**

The Chairman thanked Catherine Coombes for her report

9 Diversity and Inclusion

Catherine Coombs – HR Consultant, Diversity and Inclusion outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack

Points made included:

- That the report presented the updated annual inclusion and diversity employment monitoring report. The council was required to produce this information annually as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in line with the Equality Act 2010
- That in March 2020 Wiltshire Council had published its [inclusion and diversity employment monitoring report 2018/19](#) on the Wiltshire Council website
- That Wiltshire Council was required to publish the updated inclusion and diversity employment monitoring report for 2019/2020 by the 31 March 2021
- That the headcount figures in the report had been based on workforce data as at 1 October

- This year the format for the report had been revised and included a new info-graphic style format for presenting the data. It was hoped that the shorter and more visual style of the report would make it more accessible and engaging
- The report contained whole council workforce data and then a breakdown of this information by each of the protected characteristics where information was available. The headcount figures in the report were collected from the equality monitoring exercises which had been carried out annually over the last few years

Decision

- **That the Committee noted the contents of the report and that this information would be used to support the development of an action plan linked to the new Inclusion strategy**

The Chairman thanked Catherine Coombes for her report

10 **Amendments to Eyecare Policy**

Paula Marsh - HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack

Points made included:

- To seek approval on proposed changes to the corporate eyecare policy, with the intention to implement this with effect from 1 April 2021
- That in accordance with relevant health and safety regulations, employers must pay for an eye test for DSE users, if requested, and provide suitable eyewear if an employee needed them only for DSE use. If an ordinary prescription was suitable, employers did not have to pay for eyewear
- The corporate eyecare policy explained how and when employees could claim reimbursement for eyecare expenses. In the current policy, employees were entitled to claim reimbursement for eye test expenses up to £19.95 and up to £55 for eyewear, once every two years. In 2019, Wiltshire Council received 219 claims: 162 for eye tests costing £2,845 and 158 for eyewear costing £8,550. The total claims under this policy in 2019 were £11,394

Decision

That the Staffing Policy Committee confirmed their agreement to the proposed changes to the Council's Eyecare policy

The Chairman thanked Paula Marsh for her report

11 **Amendments to Purchase of Annual Leave Policy**

Paula Marsh - HR & OD Strategic Delivery Manager outlined the written report contained in the agenda pack

Points made included:

To seek approval of proposed changes to the scheme for Purchase of Annual Leave, which would extend the opportunities for employees to purchase additional annual leave throughout the year and increase the number of days that could be requested, with the intention to implement this with effect from 1 July 2021

That Purchase of Annual Leave (PAL) was implemented in May 2016. The introduction of the scheme was agreed as part of negotiations on terms and conditions of service between management and trades unions, to support work/life balance for staff

That in the period July 2016 to December 2020 1,362 applications for purchase of annual leave were approved. In 2020, as part of the council's response to the Covid pandemic an additional PAL window was communicated, to support staff with childcare responsibilities to cover the school summer holidays, due to a lack of other childcare options

In the period of operation (to December 2020), the scheme had returned savings of £906,132.66. This saving was taken by Finance from service budgets

Decision

That the Staffing Policy Committee approved the proposed amendments to the PAL Scheme and Policy to increase the number of opportunities to four for employees to purchase annual leave across the year and increase the maximum number of days available to purchase to twenty in any leave year

The Chairman thanked Paula Marsh for her report

12 **Quarterly Report Oct - Dec 2020**

Michael Taylor – Workforce Insight Analyst outlined the written report (October-December 2020) contained in the agenda pack

Points made included:

- That as COVID-19 cases rose during the October – December quarter, nationally we saw a tier system introduced and a second lockdown imposed. As a result, the changing COVID-19 situation continued to impact the council's workforce and service delivery throughout the autumn months
- The COVID-19 virus had a greater impact on sickness absence during this quarter in comparison to quarter 2, contributing 36 absences totalling 217 working days. This was a notable increase from the last quarter (July – September), which saw only 1 COVID-related sickness absence; this increase was aligned with a rise in cases seen nationally in the same period. It should be noted that COVID-19 related sickness absence amounts to just 3.3% of the total absence days lost in the quarter, and, in addition, the 31 members of staff affected by the virus during this quarter represent less than 0.7% of the workforce, which was well below a figure of around 2.1% nationally based on data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This indicated that the restrictions implemented in relation to staff accessing workplaces, as well as the social distancing measures in place for staff who did require access, were likely to have contributed positively
- Over the course of the pandemic, the council had also monitored the impact of COVID-19 on team capacity, and during this quarter only 2.4% of the workforce were impacted to the point that they were unable to perform the duties of their role, i.e. they were either unwell with the virus, or were self-isolating and unable to work. This was up from 1% in quarter 2, however was associated with the increase in spread experienced nationally during this period
- With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing into 2021, the direct impact of the COVID-19 virus on the workforce remains minimal. A significant impact on the workforce that was emerging was the need to remobilise the workforce to resource areas with an increase in demand or latent demand, requiring a more agile workforce. However, work on the Organisational Recovery programme continued to address this, and Wiltshire Council was dedicated to emerging from the pandemic leaner and stronger. Monitoring the impact on staff mental health and wellbeing remained critical, however the vaccination rollout, commencing in December 2020, had been a success so far, with the government aiming to offer all adults in the UK the first dose of the vaccination by July 2021, offering an end in sight

Decision

- **The Staffing Policy Committee noted the report**

The Chairman thanked Michael Taylor for his report

13 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items

14 **Any Other Business**

The Chairman advised that this was the last Staffing Policy Committee meeting before the local elections

The Chairman thanked all committee members and Jo Pitt and her staff for the excellent standard of reports that the committee had received

Cllr Mike Hewitt and Cllr John Smale advised that this was their last Staffing Policy Committee, and gave thanks for all the support that they'd received

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.00 pm)

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