

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Thursday 2 December 2010 at 12.15 pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda and reports for the meeting.)

Present

Councillor Leo Madden (In the Chair)
Councillors Hugh Mason (Standing Deputy)
Lynne Stagg
Rob Wood

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Gerald Vernon-Jackson who was unwell (and was represented by Standing Deputy, Councillor Hugh Mason), Jim Fleming and Steve Wemyss due to the adverse weather conditions (and Standing Deputy Councillor Donna Jones) and also from Lindsay Williams of Unison who had intended to make a deputation on agenda item 4 regarding sickness absence.

27 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

28 Minutes – 5 October 2010 (AI 2 & 3)

(TAKE IN MINUTES OF EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE, 5 OCTOBER 2010)

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 5 October 2010 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

29 Sickness Scorecard for Members (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES)

Councillor Madden reported that Councillors Hugh Mason, Steve Wemyss and himself were represented on the working group and that Jeanette Smith had recently made a presentation to heads of service. It was noted that there were areas where there had been over-counting such as weekends not being deducted which was being addressed. Questions were asked by Councillor Stagg regarding whether there had been an increase in workload to other staff when people were not replaced and in response Jeanette Smith reported that it was too early to know the impact of this but the services were undertaking their reviews and would be monitoring this. It was also noted that other councils were calculating the sickness records differently and therefore could not provide exact comparisons.

RESOLVED that the sickness absence figures continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

30 National Pay Negotiations 2011 – Local Government Employers’ Consultation with Local Authorities (AI 5)

Kay White and Stephen Todd gave a verbal update on the national consultation with local authorities on terms and conditions prior to negotiations with trade unions. Stephen Todd would be attending a pay briefing the following day and would seek the informal comments of those members present although the committee members did feel that this was premature when the government settlement had not been announced. It was also reported by Roger Ching, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer that national insurance contributions were likely to increase up to 3% in April which would also affect employees’ pension funds and contributions.

31 Future Jobs Fund (FJF) Project Review (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING & REGENERATION)

Alan Cufley and Denise Vine presented the report and Denise reported that the local authority had been very pleased with how the project had worked. It had given an opportunity to unemployed young people to work for six months on a funded minimum wage and the city council had offered them a diverse range of jobs. She was now working with the YMCA for a further 50 places to be available from March to September next year. Locally there were 1,200 unemployed young people and so apprenticeship schemes were being considered for the future with discussions taking place with Procurement for opportunities to be recognised within these processes. Councillor Stagg asked how improvements could be made for the preparation for young people going into work and Denise responded that the Jobcentre Plus were responsible for this area of work and the Council worked in partnership with them to offer support where possible. The success of the city council’s Information, Advice & Guidance Centre in Arundel Street was highlighted as they helped with the writing of CVs and job searches etc. It was also noted that the rules were changing regarding voluntary work which could offer greater opportunities in the future.

Further reports would come back regarding the final evaluation of the delivery of the local Future Jobs Fund and also an update on the work programme which is expected to begin early summer 2011. Members wished to put on record their support for the Future Jobs Fund should there be future funding available. Committee members were keen for schools and business to be encouraged to give young people more preparation and awareness of the employment market.

RESOLVED that

- (1) It was noted the FJF has given Portsmouth City Council the opportunity to provide real jobs to 148 unemployed young people.**

- (2) It was noted that the programme had highlighted the great wealth of talent and ability available from our young people and how, when given the opportunity, they make a positive and productive contribution to society**
- (3) It was noted that without this opportunity it is likely that many young people would have remained unemployed, trapped in the endless cycle of 'no job no experience – no experience no job'**
- (4) It was noted that FJF has been a successful intervention model and although perceived by the Government as expensive to deliver we are confident that a full evaluation will demonstrate the initial investment will produce long-term savings to the public purse.**
- (5) A further report be presented to members once the full evaluation is completed.**

32 Review of Apprenticeship Scheme within PCC (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES)

Kay White, Head of Human Resources reported that although these had been small in number they offered a very positive experience and recruitment officers would look at suitable vacancies for more posts to be evaluated for the potential of offering an apprenticeship opportunity. In response to members' questions it was reported by Jan Paterson that there was a government skills paper published regarding the future of high level apprenticeship schemes; if this came to fruition this would need an allocated budget.

RESOLVED that the committee:

- (1) acknowledged the success of the apprenticeship scheme and the 5 apprentices currently in post**
- (2) approved the continued support to the design of apprenticeships provided the posts can be funded from within Service budgets;**
- (3) asked that a further report be brought back in 12 months time.**

33 Qualifications & Skills (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES)

Kay White presented her report which was based on a 44% response rate. There was a concentration on improving the basic skills in maths and English and the encouragement of staff learning and the union and non-union team representatives would be points of contact within departments. Services would be looking at the development of staff as part of their reviews. David Williams, the Chief Executive reported that there was more work taking place regarding aptitudes and there was work with other agencies.

Questions were then asked by members regarding increasing in house provision rather than buying in from colleges which were also less flexible with their provision. It was also queried whether existing staff language skills were used to help make savings on translation costs and it was reported that this would only be used appropriately as there could be impact on their service provision. Councillor Wood reported that there had been a major discussion regarding identifying skills at the recent Governance & Audit Committee.

RESOLVED (1) that the results of the qualifications audit be noted and the current practice of offering all new employees the opportunity to undergo assessment be continued

(2) that PCC continue to offer staff below Level 2 the opportunity to attend Skills for Life courses in both Maths and English

(3) that Head of Human Resources continue to support two staff in their work toward becoming tutors for Skills for Life.

(4) that the current practice of organising Skills for Life courses at the end of the work day be continued so that individuals can give an hour of their personal time and PCC can pay for an hour (at the end of normal work time) to allow attendance at the 2 hour tutorials.

(5) that all Services identify the skills needed by their workforce as they undertake reviews and work with HR to identify skills gaps and work to close those gaps.

34 Position Statement on School Placements (AI 9)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES)

Kay White reported that the children in school placements at the city council were of a small number but were successful and they were trying improve the process especially for the Looked After Children. Councillor Madden asked if this could be more widely advertised through the schools and the education and business partnership.

RESOLVED the Committee

- (1) Recognised the success of the placement scheme and agreed to its continuation**
- (2) Supported the work with Looked after Children and approved enhanced publicity to increase the number of placements in future years**

35 Employment Law Update (AI 10)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND
HEAD OF LEGAL, LICENSING & REGISTRARS)

Councillor Madden felt that the update was a useful briefing tool.

RESOLVED that the employment law update be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

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Chairman

JW/DMF
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