

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held in Conference Room A, Civic Offices, Portsmouth on Tuesday 4 October 2011 at 12.15 pm.

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

### **Present**

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Chair)  
Councillor Leo Madden (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Hugh Mason (deputising for  
Councillor Lynne Stagg)  
Councillor Rob Wood  
Councillor Jim Fleming  
Councillor Donna Jones (deputising for  
Councillor Simon Boshier)

### **Officers**

David Williams, Chief Executive  
Michael Lawther, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer  
Kay White, Head of Human Resources  
Stephen Todd, Senior Manager, Pay & Policy  
Shaun Tetley, Payroll & Pensions Manager  
Jeanette Smith, HR Programme & Contracts Officer

### **34 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lynne Stagg and Councillor Hugh Mason attended as her deputy, and from Councillor Simon Boshier and Councillor Donna Jones attended as his deputy.

### **35 Declaration of Interests**

A personal, non-prejudicial code of conduct interest was declared by Councillor Rob Wood in that his son-in-law works for Harbour School.

### **36 Minutes of the Meetings held on 27 June 2011, 26 July 2011 and 13 September 2011**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Employment Committee held on 27 June 2011 (and exempt appendix), 26 July 2011 and 13 September 2011 (and exempt appendix) be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 37 Performance and Engagement

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report. She explained that an engaged workforce leads to improved performance and efficiencies and such improvement will be maintained and enhanced by focusing on four areas: leadership, engaging managers, integrity and voice as detailed in the report at 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5. The Head of Human Resources went on to say that Strategic Directors Board believe that services need flexibility in performance management and that although there needs to be corporate standards and principles across PCC, there should be some discretion allowed within that. She went on to explain that the options listed in 3.5 have all been agreed by Strategic Directors Board as suitable procedures and systems to adopt to ensure the quality of performance management is improved across PCC.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Training in the new systems would be part of the leadership and management programme but specific training courses would also be available in the various performance management tools.
- The Head of Human Resources confirmed that strategic directors would have overall responsibility for ensuring that performance management was carried out in whatever form chosen and this would be done on a cascade basis.
- The Chief Executive said that the suggested revised system differed from the current system in that it was much less rigid. Members were concerned that simply shifting responsibility from heads of service as is currently the case to strategic directors under the new system would be unlikely to make any difference in ensuring that performance management was carried out.

Members felt that a fundamental part of the performance management process is that it is a two way process. Members raised the following specific concerns:

- The proposed system would mean that there was less consistency which they felt would lead to confusion.
- There seemed to be little accountability in the proposed system for example there was no mention of any sanctions if a part of the organisation does not engage in performance management of any kind.

The Chief Executive said that if part of the organisation fails to carry out any kind of performance management, heads of service and strategic directors would ultimately be responsible. He said that the current system was perhaps too prescriptive and it had been a struggle to ensure that it was being properly implemented. He said that a system could be introduced that confirmed certain actions took place and this would be the responsibility of managers.

Members made the following points:

- Councillor Donna Jones said that she had volunteered to be involved in developing a new performance development system but that this had not been taken up. She said that this may have been because her views were well known to those developing a new system.
- The new proposals appear to be formalising inconsistency which members felt fragmented the process and introduced complexities into a system which ought to be simple.
- Members felt that there should be a draft performance management policy to be agreed across the whole of PCC and that heads of service should be responsible for ensuring that this was carried out in a consistent way within their service.
- Members felt that there was a lack of member involvement in the process.
- Members felt that everyone should have to have an annual performance development review and that it should not be left to an individual to ask for a PDR.
- Members felt that 3.1 and 3.2 of the report gave far too much flexibility.

The chair of the Employment Committee concluded that the committee did not support the recommendations in the report and summarised the views of the committee as follows:

- A performance management system should be a corporate system applying to all PCC staff including temporary staff if here for a year or more.
- There should be a specific process to be adhered to by everyone.
- The process should be on a two way communication basis.
- A revised report should be brought back to Employment Committee on the basis outlined above.

**RESOLVED that a revised report be brought back to Employment Committee to include**

- (1) a corporate performance management system that applies to all PCC staff including temporary staff if here for a year or more**
- (2) a common process to be adhered to by everyone and which includes an annual performance development review for all staff**
- (3) a specific performance management process and**
- (4) a two way communication basis.**

## 38 Sickness Scorecard for Members

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report which provides an overall analysis of sickness absence within each service and Portsmouth City Council overall. She explained that the report excludes schools, internal agency and all casuals. She said that overall the sickness absence has reduced but that the top reason for absence had changed and was now psychological stress, anxiety and depression.

The Head of Human Resources said that the area where the highest percentage of sickness lost was Legal, Licensing & Registrars losing 6.1% of working time to sickness absence. The lowest was Customer, Community & Democratic Services losing 0.6% of working time to sickness absence.

The Head of Human Resources drew members' attention to 8.3 of the report which states that as a result of positive feedback Occupational Health plans to introduce an interactive training day on key areas to line managers within their service areas.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- The low sickness absence rate in Customer, Community & Democratic Services seems to have been achieved by greater understanding of the impact in the service on colleagues if not at work and the development of a more committed and engaged workforce embedded through the culture of the service.
- Members were pleased that there had been an overall reduction in sickness absence.
- With regard to the very high sickness absence in Housing, it was confirmed that the Leader had met with Housing Service to discuss this particular issue and that it had mainly been caused by bringing in the Clean and Green staff to that service but that there was a need to do more to reduce sickness absence levels. The Chief Executive commented that the top reason for sickness absence in the Housing Service had changed from muscular skeletal (lower limb) to psychological – stress, anxiety and depression.
- A comment was made by a councillor that the category “psychological – stress, anxiety and depression” was a very broad heading and asked that this be further broken down to add clarity.
- A member of the committee asked for the figures in future to show the median as well as the mean.
- Members drew a correlation between Housing being the service that had not undertaken performance development reviews and Housing also having the worst sickness absence record. Members requested that the Head of Housing should be invited to address the Employment Committee on that service's sickness absence record.

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

**39 Invitation Letter to Leaders and Elected Mayors from Local Government Group to attend Regional Pay Briefings**

Councillor Jim Fleming expressed an interest in attending one of the regional pay briefings which the committee agreed.

**40 Date of next Employment Committee Meeting**

It was confirmed that the next scheduled meeting is Friday 2 December 2011 at 12.45 pm. However members were asked to note that a special meeting of the committee was very likely to be convened before that date.

**41 Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson and seconded by Councillor Leo Madden that under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985, the press and public be excluded for the consideration of the remaining item on the agenda on the grounds that the verbal report contain information defined as exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972. This was carried.

**42 Oral Update on Terms and Conditions**

The Chief Executive advised the committee of the dates that the unions had met with management. He advised that a formal notice was sent out on 20 September which advised staff that the formal consultation had begun. The Chief Executive said that a message had been placed on the intranet and that dialogue was taking place on Marketplace on the intranet. He advised members of the date when he was next meeting with the trade unions. The Leader said that if trade unions had suggestions for making savings, these would be welcomed but they needed to provide detailed costings.

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm.

Chair

VJP/DMF  
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