

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on
Tuesday, 28 February 2017 at 12.15 pm at the The Executive Meeting Room
- Third Floor, The Guildhall

Present

Councillor Donna Jones (in the chair)
Councillor Luke Stubbs (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE

Officers Present

Michael Lawther, Deputy Chief Executive
Jon Bell, Director HR Legal and Procurement
Roland Bryant, HR Business Partner
Dave Adams, Lead Interventionist, Systems
Development Service

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Jim Fleming and Councillor John Ferrett.

Councillor Simon Boshier deputised for Councillor Fleming.

Apologies were also received on behalf of David Williams, Chief Executive and Chris Ward, S151 Officer.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 November 2016 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. Pay Policy Statement (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and advised the Committee that a Pay Policy Statement must be prepared for each financial year, approved by Full Council no later than 31st March of each financial year and published on the council's

website. The attached Pay Policy Statement was presented as a draft statement in June 2016 and now is confirmed as the final Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2016/17.

There followed a discussion about whether it was permissible to amend the Pay Policy Statement as some members of Employment Committee wanted to propose that the City Council pays the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation and not the lower National Living Wage as Employment Committee had previously resolved and which was included in the Pay Policy Statement.

At the request of the Committee, the City Solicitor ruled on this matter stating that an amendment to the amount of pay could not be made in this way. If the Committee wished to consider doing this, it would have to be at the meeting where the next Pay Policy Statement for the 2017/18 year was brought. He did however say that a small amendment for clarity could be made to section 2.1 so that it referred to "the Portsmouth City Council Living Wage" rather than to "the Portsmouth Living Wage".

Upon the recommendation in the report being put to the vote (including the amendment for clarity) this was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed the draft Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1 to go forward for approval by the Full Council by 31 March 2017, subject to changing the words in section 2.1 of the Policy from "Portsmouth Living Wage" to "Portsmouth City Council Living Wage".

5. Sickness Absence (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report which is to update the Committee about the levels of sickness absence across the council and actions being taken to manage absence. He explained that there had been a slight increase in sickness absence since the last update in November. He explained that the principal cause of this increase is an increase in the amount of absence in Adult Social Care and there were particular reasons for this as outlined in paragraph 3.7. Mr Bell also explained that paragraph 3.8.4 of the report lists the briefings to service management teams to ensure that managers are properly supported in managing absence. He also emphasised the importance of back to work interviews as outlined in paragraph 3.8.1.

In response to queries,

- Information about the split between the absence in Adult Social Care that was caused by incorrect information being entered into the Oracle system and that caused by outbreaks of norovirus was not known.
- It was confirmed that although appropriate action has been taken to address the absence field being recorded as "blank", this will take time to disappear from the reports

Jon Bell also drew members' attention to positive movement in the sickness absence levels of several Directorates and particularly at the Port and also in

Children's Social Care which had both been high in the past. In view of the Director of Children's Services having been asked to attend the last meeting about high levels of sickness absence in her area, the Committee wanted to add a recommendation that a letter be sent to her welcoming the progress that has been made in reducing sickness absence levels.

It was proposed by Councillor Donna Jones

Seconded by Councillor Luke Stubbs

That the recommendations in the report with the addition of an extra recommendation to send a letter to the Director of Children's Services in the terms mentioned above be approved.

Upon being put to the vote this was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that Members of the Committee:

(1) Continue to monitor sickness absence, and ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism

(2) Note the actions detailed in section 3 of the report.

(3) Agreed that the Chair would write to the Director of Children's Services welcoming the progress made in reducing sickness absence levels in her directorate and hoping that the improvement will continue.

6. Employee Assistance Programme (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report which was brought at the request of the Committee to provide additional information about the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). He said that he considered it useful to provide advice and support for employees but that the take-up in Portsmouth was below average. He explained that measures to promote and encourage usage were being undertaken as set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report. Mr Bell also advised that the contract had recently been re tendered as detailed in the report and that this was an important part of the Council's employment package to staff and also its traded services offer.

During discussion

- It was confirmed that the new contract was cheaper than the previous contract
- It was acknowledged that paragraph 4.5 set out a useful breakdown of the usage of the online service but there were no statistics on the breakdown of telephone usage. Members asked for a similar table to be drawn up to show telephone usage as mentioned in paragraph 4.6. It was agreed that this would be compiled and circulated to members outside the meeting.
- Members were advised that it was not possible to sell EAP services on - it is only available to those for whom PCC is providing HR services.
- It was confirmed that the fixed price per employee was £2.34. This was not just for the telephone service but also covered web content and self-help access
- It was confirmed that as EAP was a relatively low value contract, it had been awarded by the Director of HR Legal and Performance under delegated authority

Members were concerned that EAP may not be providing good value for money and wanted to monitor usage. The Committee asked for this to be a standing agenda item going forward.

RESOLVED that Members

- (1) noted the information regarding the Employee Assistance Programme**
- (2) requested that an update report is brought to the next meeting of the Committee to enable members to monitor whether the programme is providing value for money**

7. Performance Development Reviews - Verbal Update (AI 7)

The Chair explained that this item had been included on the agenda as there had been a staff suggestion that the Performance Development Review (PDR) system as currently prescribed is inconsistent with the council's move towards a 'systems thinking approach, and that as such, it should be reviewed. At present, there are in effect two different approaches to performance management within the Council.

Dave Adams (Lead Interventionist, Systems Development Service) explained that "Systems Thinking" was being rolled out in many directorates across the Council and this contradicted the Performance Development Review (PDR) approach. PDRs tended to be an annual appraisal based on a standardised model, and there was also an attempt to use the PDRs to feed the training cycle. Systems Thinking was more of a continuous appraisal system - it was not geared to one appraisal meeting each year and it allowed a more flexible approach to be adopted. It had also been found to be less time-consuming. Mr Adams said that an annual appraisal did not really represent a good management model, as issues should be addressed as they arise, throughout the year. He said that he was not suggesting that PDRs should be abolished, but that in light of the Systems Thinking approach, that greater flexibility should be given to managers.

During discussion, the following matters were clarified:-

- Currently more directorates use the Systems Thinking approach to performance management than use the PDR system.
- Systems Thinking is more than simply an alternative to PDRs - the approach to performance management was just one aspect of Systems Thinking.
- Given that there are two approaches to performance management systems in use across the Council, Members agreed that a more flexible approach to PDRs should be looked at.
- Some of the aspects of Systems Thinking fall within the remit of Employment Committee, but others fall within the remit of Governance & Audit & Standards (G&A&S) Committee.
- Although PDRs are not enshrined in a Policy, they form part of the G&A&S Annual Governance Statement.
- Members wanted to ensure that some kind of assessment of performance took place for all employees and that managers could not choose to do nothing. Mr Adams said this could be covered in the corporate governance framework.

- Members said it would be useful for an informal meeting to be arranged to provide clarity on which aspects of performance management fall under Employment Committee and which fall under Governance & Audit & Standards Committee. Employment Committee asked for a report to be brought to the first meeting in the new Municipal Year to provide possible options and to look at overcoming barriers going forward.

RESOLVED that the Committee

- (1) Thanked officers for bringing this forward**
- (2) Requested a review of the ongoing use of Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) - as referred to in the Annual Governance Statement - in conjunction with the Governance & Audit & Standards Committee to take account of relevant governance considerations and consider possible changes to accommodate a more flexible approach**
- (3) Requested a report to be brought to the next scheduled meeting of the new Municipal Year providing possible options and to look at overcoming barriers going forward**

8. Apprenticeship Levy project plan (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell and Roland Bryant introduced the report which detailed the city council's plan for using its apprenticeship levy allocation. The apprenticeships report presented to the Committee on 29 November 2016 contained further detail on the levy, how it will work and the implications for the council. The Committee was advised that If an approximate average cost of £2,500 per apprenticeship per year is applied, the council would need to recruit around 305 apprentices each year in order to spend its current levy allocation. Mr Bell said that Appendix 2 sets out a Table showing the proposed four phases of the plan officers will follow to increase the uptake of apprenticeships and develop a wider breadth of opportunities to maximise the city council's levy allocation.

Members were advised that there are strict rules on how the apprenticeships levy can be used.

During discussion

- It was confirmed that there was already a cohort of apprentices in social care and efforts were being made to generate interest in them pursuing careers in this area with a view to using apprenticeships as a pathway into permanent jobs.
- It was explained that with regard to paragraph 3.2, flexibility had been introduced by making the target an average over 3 years so if the council over achieves in year 1, that would be taken off the target for the following year.
- Members were pleased that there would be a PCC Apprenticeships award ceremony to coincide with National Apprenticeships Week.
- Managers were confident that the target of 140 apprenticeships could be found in the first year but financial modelling was important. Members were concerned about the potential cost to the Council if any

levy money had to be paid back. Mr Bryant said the money had to be used within 24 months, but each month more money would be added. It was confirmed that some corporate provision had been made in respect of the apprenticeships levy by the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer in the budget.

- Members wanted to monitor the apprenticeship levy allocation and the number of apprenticeships and asked that regular updates are brought to Employment Committee.

RESOLVED that Members

- (1) noted and agreed the contents of the plan to maximise the use of the city council's apprenticeship levy allocation**
- (2) requested regular updates at future meetings.**

The meeting concluded at 1.42 pm.

Councillor Donna Jones
Chair