

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 6 January 2015 at 12.15 pm at The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall

### **Present**

Councillor Donna Jones (in the chair)  
Councillor Luke Stubbs (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor John Ferrett  
Councillor Darren Sanders  
Councillor Lynne Stagg  
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson

### **Officers Present**

David Williams, Chief Executive  
Michael Lawther, City Solicitor  
Jon Bell, Head of HR, Legal & Performance  
Peter Baulf, Legal Team Manager  
Mark Folkes, HR Business Partner  
Liz Aplin, Operational Training Manager

#### **1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

There were no apologies for absence. However Councillor John Ferrett said that he would have to leave the meeting at around 1.00 pm.

#### **2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

#### **3. Minutes of the Meetings held on 4 November and 16 December 2014 (AI 3)**

Peter Baulf advised that in relation to the structure chart attached to the minutes of the meeting of 16 December, this was subsequently amended with the agreement of all members of the Employment Committee and the amended version is the subject of the consultation.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Employment Committee held on 4 November and 16 December 2014 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.**

#### **4. Sickness Absence Quarterly Report (AI 4) (TAKE IN REPORT)**

Mr Bell introduced the report which was to update and inform the Employment Committee on actions being taken that have an effect on the levels of sickness absence across services. Some comparisons from other sectors had been included in the report for information.

Mr Bell advised members that Health Management Limited had been appointed to deliver Fit for Work in England and Wales on behalf of the UK government (referred to in the report).

Mr Bell also advised that Appendix 2 provided details of the levels of flu jobs uptake by service for 2014 compared with 2013.

In response to queries the following matters were clarified:

- With regard to the costs of the Fit for Work scheme, it was not yet known whether these were comparable to the previous scheme. However Fit for Work was not intended to replace the existing occupational health provision but to complement it and provide the gap in support where that currently exists.
- Mr Bell confirmed that heads of service take sickness absence very seriously and much work had been done to try to reduce the sickness absence levels with some significant success. Sickness absence levels at the Port for example were now much improved. He said that more work would be done with managers throughout PCC.

The chair said she was pleased with the reductions so far.

A discussion followed regarding the possibility of adding a recommendation to reduce the corporate target of an average eight days per person per year. During discussion, the following points were made:

- It was important not to dis-incentivise staff in those services where sickness absence was already below the corporate target.
- It was suggested that different targets for different services may be considered - for example as between office based or non-office based staff or for services where it was recognised that stress levels were likely to be higher than average for example in Adult Social Care.
- In view of the various ways in which a revised target could be introduced, members suggested that before making a decision on a reduced target today, a report back should be requested to provide additional information.

During further discussion members suggested that future reports should compare winter periods over several years to provide a better idea of trends. Members also felt that a reduction in sickness absence could produce a measurable cashable saving for example where the costs of providing cover for absent staff had to be found. Mr Bell confirmed that in the past, where a service's sickness absence was higher than eight days average, a reduction was made to that service's cash limits. He said that he had concerns about that as it did not allow for differentiation across services and could be seen to be unfair on some services in terms of the types of jobs carried out within them.

- In response to a query about long term sickness at the Port, Mr Mark Folkes said that although he was aware that some long term

sicknesses were about to cease to appear in the statistics, he was also aware that other cases were likely to emerge in the statistics leading to no overall change. However better processes were now in place to support the Port.

- Members were advised that it would be possible in future to provide analysis re schools' data as there was a closer correlation in schools between sickness and cost.
- With regard to the increase in average sickness absence in the Integrated Commissioning Unit from 2.39 to 7.49 average days per person per year, Mr Mark Folkes confirmed that the likely reason for this was the very small number of staff in ICU meaning that a small change has a disproportionately large effect on statistics.

The City Solicitor commented that in his view, imposing a lower sickness absence target may encourage managers to deal with issues more quickly.

Following discussion, members decided to add to the recommendation in the report.

### **RESOLVED**

**1. To continue to monitor sickness absence, on a quarterly basis, and to ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism.**

**2. To request a report be brought to this Committee to include**

**(i) Options on revised stretch corporate targets to reduce sickness absence**

**(ii) Options on how best to support those services, such as schools and social services, where specific costs are incurred in providing cover as a result of sickness absence.**

### **5. Personal Development Review and Mandatory Training Requirements (AI 5)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Mr Bell introduced the report which was to update members of the Employment Committee on a review of the personal development review (PDR) process and mandatory training requirements for employees of the city council. Mr Bell said that the conclusions listed in item 6 of the report followed a series of meetings with heads of service and senior managers as set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

The chair commented that she felt the proposal that mandatory training becomes a condition of passing probation was very sensible. She also asked whether it would be possible for Mr Bell to provide details of services where the PDR process was not 100% compliant so that the committee could do something about it. Mr Bell said that whilst it would never be possible to be 100% compliant owing to changes in staff, it would be possible to give details where the incidence of PDR compliance was low.

With regard to raising compliance with mandatory training requirements for employees, the City Solicitor was asked to communicate to all staff, in his capacity as Monitoring Officer, the requirement to complete mandatory training and that failure to do so is a disciplinary matter.

There followed a general discussion during which the following matters were raised:

- The PDR process for the Chief Executive and strategic directors would be looked at and member involvement was part of that process.
- The employee opinion survey appears to show that there is a disconnect between those who have in fact had a PDR and those who think they have had one.
- Members had concerns about putting the onus on PDR completion on the individual and would prefer this to be a responsibility for the individual's manager. The chair agreed that the PDR process should be owned and managed by the manager and that perhaps all mandatory training could be included in the PDR. In addition she felt that there was a need to ensure that line managers have the confidence and knowledge to manage people and that training along the LAMP lines should be considered.
- Members were concerned that the employee opinion survey showed that many people did not feel that PDRs were meaningful. Concern was expressed that the PDR should not be viewed as just going through the motions.
- Members felt that 360° feedback should be included at least as an option in PDRs and that this should form part of the recommendations.

Mr Bell said that with regard to mandatory training, the LAMP system had not been tailored to the needs of specific managers. He invited Liz Aplin, Operational Training Manager, to advise members of work that had been recently carried out. Ms Aplin said that a new suite of management programmes had just been launched and these had a much more practical approach and covered matters such as "how do I manage sickness?" The Chief Executive agreed to arrange to email all managers the link to these management programmes.

**RESOLVED that members agree to:**

- (1) Adopt the revised PDR and recording process enabling the HR Learning & Development team to improve the uptake and meaningfulness of PDRs as follows:**
  - i. Supporting Services to develop a proportionate PDR process that meets the needs of their staff and job roles within it using the proposed template as a guide, including the option for managers to access 360 degree feedback.**
  - ii. Supporting Services to link the PDR process more closely with the Workforce planning and Business planning process that they already carry out.**

- iii. **A requirement is applied to all staff to record their PDR on the HR self-serve system.**
- iv. **Members are further recommended to support a review of the PDR process for the Chief Executive Officer and Strategic Directors with a view to bringing a proposal to the next Employment Committee.**
- (2) **Adopt a three strand process to raise compliance, reduce risk and provide the necessary knowledge to the workforce around key areas as follows:**
  - i. **A one-day training course for all new starters that covers the key messages of mandatory training (in consultation with the Policy Holder) - including an assessment of learning**
  - ii. **Create explicit statements in the PDR form to inform staff that they have a responsibility to drive their own learning and apply the key information delivered in training (e.g. what do the Data Protection principles mean in my role)**
  - iii. **Mandate consequences for non-compliance (e.g. a condition of passing probation)**
  - iv. **Mandate that all staff are required to pass periodic knowledge checks of mandatory training areas (process to be supported by training, e-learning, policy hub etc.)**
- (3) **To request a further report be brought to this committee on the PDR process to include**
  - I. **Data from the Employee Opinion Survey to identify areas where PDR uptake is low and the work being undertaken to improve this**
  - II. **Details of the new suite of management training courses including the revised training for managers and staff on PDRs**

**6. Localism Act - Pay Policy Statement (AI 6)**  
(TAKE IN REPORT)

Mr Bell introduced the report and mentioned that there was a typing error on page 41 in that the heading should be Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 not 14/15. He advised that the purpose of the report was to comply with section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (Openness and Accountability in Local Pay) to prepare a pay policy statement. He advised that the pay policy statement must be prepared for each financial year, approved by full council no later than 31 March of each financial year and published on the council's website.

In response to queries, the following matters were clarified:

- With regard to section 3 Pay Relationships it was confirmed that the ratio of 11.8 : 1 takes into account the increase in the lowest pay to the living wage.

- Mr Bell said that he would find out and advise after the meeting what the median salary currently is.

**RESOLVED that Employment Committee**

- (1) approves the draft pay policy statement attached as Appendix 1 subject to the heading being amended to read for the financial year "2015/16" to go forward for approval by the full council on 17 March 2015;**
- (2) authorises the Head of HR, Legal & Performance to amend the pay policy statement to take account of changes resulting from the senior management review, where such changes are confirmed in advance of agreement of the statement by full council.**

**7. Date of Next Scheduled Meeting (AI 7)**

The date of the next scheduled meeting is 3 March 2015. A special meeting of the committee will take place on 19 February 2015 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 1.35 pm.

---

Councillor Donna Jones  
Chair