

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Thursday, 30 November 2023 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Stuart Brown (in the chair)
Councillor Darren Sanders (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dave Ashmore
Councillor Simon Boshier
Councillor Cal Corkery

Officers Present

Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Chief Executive
Natasha Edmunds, Director Corporate Resources
Richard Lock, Assistant Director, Procurement
Rochelle Williams, Assistant Director HR
Karen Everitt, HR Business Partner
Jeremy Underdown, Head of Facilities

22. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Councillor Charlotte Gerada had offered her apologies for absence.
Councillor Asghar Shah had been due to attend the meeting as Councillor Gerada's standing deputy, but he was unable to be present.

23. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

None.

24. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 (AI 3)

The Chair noted that Councillor Boshier was listed as attending the last meeting, but he was not present. This was agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the amendment above.

25. Appointment Sub-Committee - Director Recruitment (AI 4)

Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Chief Executive, introduced the report, informing the Committee that the report sought authority from the Employment Committee

for the establishment of an Appointments Sub-Committee. The report set out recommendations for the Sub-Committee's composition for the appointment to the role of Director of Economy, Planning and Transport. The previous post holder held the title of Director of Regeneration.

The Chair, noted that the third recommendation asked the Committee to nominate membership of the Sub-Committee. He suggested that this is delegated to himself as Chair and the Chief Executive and that nominations are sought from all members of the council. Councillor Boshier commented that traditionally group leaders are asked to nominate members if group leaders are themselves unable to attend. This was agreed.

Members questions

In response to members questions, officers clarified that:

- The system of appointing senior officers including Directors was being looked at with a view to streamlining the process without losing democratic input from members.
- An appointment sub-committee of around 5 members would be appropriate for the appointment of the Director of Economy, Planning and Transport.
- That the diversity of the sub-committee will depend on the names group leaders put forward, but this aspect will be encouraged.
- It is expected that as the appointment of the Director of Economy, Planning and Transport is a like-for-like replacement for its predecessor, the salary range and grade for the role remain the same and reflect current market conditions.

Members' comments

Councillor Boshier noted that the composition of appointment sub-committees should be a matter for the Employment Committee.

RESOLVED that, in relation to the appointment to the role of Director of Economy, Planning and Transport, the Employment Committee:

- i) Noted the requirement to recruit to the post of Director of Economy, Planning and Transport following the resignation of the previous incumbent (former post title Director of Regeneration).**
- ii) Delegated the appointment of the role to an appointments sub-committee to act on behalf of the Employment Committee.**
- iii) Delegated the appointment of members of the appointments sub-committee to the Chair of the Employment Committee and the Chief Executive.**
- iv) Delegated the candidate search process and administrative matters to the Assistant Director of Human Resources in consultation with the Chief Executive.**
- v) Noted how the composition of the panel will take into account the importance of panel diversity.**

26. Annual Health and Safety report (AI 5)

Jeremy Underdown, Head of Facilities, introduced the report and informed members that they would normally receive the annual report at this meeting however following a recent review the Health and Safety function has moved to Facilities. As part of the review process, it is proposed that the timing of reports to the committee is also reviewed so that the information provided is more current and properly aligns to the periods being reported on.

The report presented today is therefore an interim report and a more detailed report encompassing proposed actions and priorities for the year ahead will be brought back to the Committee in March to cover April 2023 to March 2024 alongside an action plan for the year going forward.

The Head of Facilities highlighted some points from the report including that there had been some structural changes and responsibility for health and safety now sits within facilities management bringing benefits of synergy. The report provides members with assurance that that all areas are within normal standards. Going forward the team will be looking at digitising processes resulting in improved analysis, a focus on asserting responsibility for health and safety throughout the organisation which will enable and strengthen audit processes.

Members questions

As a result of questions, the following points were clarified:

- The Health and Safety function is not always aware of visits from the Health and Safety Executive but if they have visited, they had not raised any points of concern.
- Further information on fire safety training will be reported in March 2024.
- There are no issues relating to training compliance though further information on this matter will be reported in March 2024 as a matrix is being developed to give clarity to managers on requirements for mandatory training.
- The learning management system is being replaced and the new system should be embedded when officers report back in March.
- New classroom based COSHH training has been put in place since the pandemic and this is why there is no earlier data in the report for comparison.
- In most cases where the council uses contractors the contractual position puts responsibility for appropriate health and safety training on contractors, through where necessary operatives are trained by PCC to the extent that they need to be.

The Committee noted the report which was for information.

27. Workforce Profile 2022 (AI 6)

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report noting that this was the third year Workforce Profile has been produced. She highlighted that having workforce data profiled against protected characteristics provides an evidence base to inform the setting of equality objectives, decision making relating to employment policies and practices and regular monitoring enables assessment of the impact of any decision taken or changes made. She reported that gender and ethnicity profiles are largely unchanged, but that staff turnover is higher, and this is a concern. The number of staff working full time has increased and reflects the current economic situation while the number of staff living within the city boundaries has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Members questions

Following members questions, the following points were clarified:

- There has been higher turnover in planning and children's social care teams for some time reflecting national skills shortages. However, shortages are now spreading to communications specialists, lawyers, engineering, transport and finance teams across the council.
- To address this the council is promoting Portsmouth as great place to work. The significant barrier to recruitment and retention is that the council's pay rates are not competitive with local market or other local authorities.
- Employee benefits packages can help and there is evidence that some groups, notably younger staff are attracted by policies on social value; for older staff pay is the main driver.
- Posts are advertised on PCC's own platform, job boards go on other platforms and social media is used when appropriate. Directors and Assistant Directors are encouraged to build relationships with local and/ or relevant universities and the council offers placements.
- Apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships are actively promoted and the council is monitoring T Levels in relation to how these may offer opportunities to engage with younger people.
- A replacement for the current recruitment platform is being planned for 2024.
- At the other end of the age spectrum there is an issue for some departments where a significant number of the workforce is in the 45-64 age group. The Chief Executive has tasked Directors with promoting succession planning and developing the careers of younger staff to address this.

Members' comments

Members commented that it would be useful to have more information on what is being done to address staff turnover and the loss of experienced staff including what other authorities are doing to address these. It was agreed that a report setting out a more detailed workforce analysis on turnover, actions arising, age profile and succession planning will be prepared for the March 2024 Committee meeting.

The Committee noted the report which was for information.

28. Real Living Wage (AI 7)

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report which followed the resolution by full Council at its meeting on 14 November 2023. The resolution asked the Committee to consider re-establishing the Living Wage Working Group. She reported that since full Council met on 14 November 2023, the government had announced that the National Living Wage (NLW) for 2024 will be £11.44 per hour which itself will add pressure to budgets. The Director of Corporate Services also reported that the Real Living Wage (RLW) rate will be £12.00 in 2024.

Richard Lock, Assistant Director Procurement explained that the Council already pays its staff RLW rates. Accreditation would apply RLW to the pay rates of staff employed by relevant third party contracted services. He highlighted the pressures on Adult Social Care budgets set out in the report should the council require Adult Social Care providers to pay the Real Living Wage.

Members questions

In response to members' questions, officers clarified:

- Since the Cross Party Member Working Group reported its findings to the Employment Committee in November 2022 ([Real Living Wage Accreditation report, November 2022](#)) there had been no significant changes to the process for achieving RLW accreditation.
- There is ongoing engagement with suppliers and pressures on Adult Social Care have potentially worsened with a reduction in the number of operators in the market.

Members comments

- Members were not minded to re-establish the Cross Party Member Working Group.
- It was suggested that the November 2022 report be updated with current data for presentation to the Committee at its scheduled meeting in January 2024, which is before the council's budget setting process.
- Staff pay increases have already been linked to the RLW which has added pressure to the budget.

Councillor Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness, noted that RWL affected the general fund and housing revenue account, and he would ask for further information about how many housing contactors pay the RLW.

RESOLVED to update the Real Living Wage working group report dated November 2022 with current figures for consideration by the Employment Committee at its meeting on 25 January 2024.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

Councillor Stuart Brown
Chair