

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 15 March 2016 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 Linda Symes  
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson

### **Officers Present**

David Williams, Chief Executive  
Peter Baulf, Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Jon Bell, Director of HR, Legal & Procurement  
Delyth Horsley, VCS Project Officer  
Morven Banks, Commissioning Project Manager

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2015 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 15 December 2015 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.**

An update was provided on Apprenticeships (minute 45 of the previous meeting). It was confirmed that no extra money would be provided to meet the cost of the levy that was expected to begin in 2017. The chair of the committee said she may raise this at the key issues board meeting that she would be attending shortly. It was also confirmed that responsibility for the apprenticeships levy through the schools would reduce as more became academies.

The chair advised that Innes Richens had been appointed in a joint role as Chief Operating Officer NHS Portsmouth CCG and Director of Adult Services, Portsmouth City Council. She also confirmed that Rob Watt's retirement date had been agreed.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson asked that his thanks be recorded that the appointment was made following an interview process.

#### **4. Pay Policy Statement (AI 4)**

##### **(TAKE IN REPORT AND STATEMENT)**

Jon Bell introduced the report explaining that this fulfils the requirement in section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (Openness and Accountability in Local Pay). A 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. The statement relates to the financial year 2015/16 and so is in effect retrospective. He explained that the pay policy statement includes data on senior salaries and how they relate to the rest of the workforce (pay multiple). The multiple for the financial year ending 31 March 2015 was 6.4 which was slightly higher than the majority of district councils but lower than the county council.

During discussion the following matters were clarified:

- Although this pay policy statement was effectively retrospective, Mr Bell confirmed there were no significant changes going forward.
- It was confirmed that currently where there were proposed severance payments in excess of £100,000, these are referred to full council for approval. It was confirmed that there was a possibility that in October 2016 new legislation may be brought in to cap severance payments at £95,000 for those leaving the organisation and that this would include pension strain. This change would be covered when the pay policy statement came before council in March 2017.

During discussion members considered that the pay policy statement should be published earlier in the year so that members of the public could challenge the provisions of the statement which would not be possible retrospectively. The chair suggested that the pay policy statement for 2016/17 could be brought to the committee at its June meeting and asked Jon Bell to look into this.

**RESOLVED that the Employment Committee approved the draft Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1 to go forward for approval by the Full Council on 22 March 2016.**

#### **5. Sickness Absence Quarterly Report (AI 5)**

##### **(TAKE IN REPORT)**

Jon Bell introduced the report saying that the headline figure of sickness absence continues to reduce but that there are variations across the organisation. Of the 14 directorates, seven (excluding schools) are over the corporate target of an average seven days per person per year. Four directorates are over an average ten days per person per year. This is

unchanged from the previous quarter. During discussion the following matters were raised:

- The chair said she was pleased that there had been a reduction in overall absence.
- Members noted that the appendix showed that the same directorates were showing high absence rates. Members were concerned about the increase in absence in the Customer and Communication directorate. Mr Bell advised that Revenues & Benefits (where absence had consistently been high) had been transferred into that service. Louise Wilders was looking into this and was taking steps to reduce sickness absence levels. Jon Bell said that the sickness absence figures per service changed when different groups of people moved into different directorates. This could be seen in particular in relation to Customer & Communication as this used to be much lower prior to Revenues & Benefits being moved into that service.
- With regard to the flu vaccine members said that they were concerned about the low take-up rate in Adult Services. They felt this was surprising given the nature of their work and wondered whether the fact that they were often not based in the Civic Offices meant that they were not receiving publicity about the availability of the vaccine. Mr Bell said that the availability of flu vaccines was publicised in care homes and that there were several different means of accessing the flu vaccine such as via a clinic, from their GP, by using a voucher at a participating pharmacy or supermarket, or via Occupational Health daily drop-in sessions at QA Hospital.

**RESOLVED that**

- (1) sickness absence continues to be monitored on a quarterly basis, and to ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism;**
- (2) A range of interventions continues to be offered around the three main reasons for sickness absence to assist employees to manage their attendance at work.**

**6. Corporate Covenant and MoD Employer Recognition Scheme (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report explaining that its purpose was to apprise members of work being undertaken by the council as an employer to support the armed forces community and to seek members' approval to apply for the MoD Employer Recognition "Silver Award" and then "Gold Award" as set out in Appendix 2 of the report. The chair of the committee, Councillor Donna Jones explained that she had met with Morven Banks and invited her to talk through what had already been done in this area. Morven Banks explained that the council already provides considerable support to the armed forces through its employment policies as listed in 3.4 of the report.

During discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members felt there was a need to promote its support to the armed forces on the city council's website.
- Members felt that given the city's obvious connections to the armed forces, it was important to strive to achieve the gold award as quickly as possible.
- It was confirmed that this covers schools and that the city council would like all its suppliers to adopt the same principles as the city council in this regard.

Member were interested in paragraph 3.6 of the report concerning the availability of funding for clusters of councils to submit bids of between £20,000 and £500,000 to share best practice and implement practical support for the local armed forces community through the training of front line staff and improved website information and presence and to embed those improvements into their mainstream services.

The chair of the committee, Councillor Donna Jones said that she was attending a meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership that evening and if there was an opportunity she would seek to raise this at the meeting.

Members were very supportive of the recommendations in the report.

**RESOLVED that Members**

- (i) Noted the support already provided to the Armed Forces through the Council's employment policies and practices;**
- (ii) Committed to the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant (attached at Appendix 1), and requested the Leader of the Council to sign the covenant on the Council's behalf**
- (iii) Instructed officers to apply for the MoD Employer Recognition Silver and Gold awards, and implement any changes necessary to meet the criteria for receiving those awards, subject to such changes not having financial implications that are not contained within existing agreed portfolio budgets;**
- (iv) Instructed officers to explore, in conjunction with other councils in the region, opportunities to bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of this report.**

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

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Councillor Donna Jones  
Chair