

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 25 September 2018 at 12.15 pm in The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall

Present

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

Officers Present

David Williams, Chief Executive
Michael Lawther, City Solicitor
Jon Bell, Director of HR, Legal and Procurement
Sandie Wilkie, Strategic Commissioning Team Leader,
Caroline Hopper, Armed Forces Covenant Programme
Sue Page, Finance Manager

16. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Luke Stubbs (for whom Councillor Robert New deputised) and on behalf of Councillor Yahiya Chowdhury.

17. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

18. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 June 2018 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

19. Senior Management Structure (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Prior to introducing the report, the Chief Executive commented about a news report in the local press today, reporting rumours that he is a candidate for the role of chief executive for one of the new unitary authorities being created in Dorset. He confirmed that he will not be taking up either one of those posts.

The Chief Executive then introduced the report explaining that when the last restructure had been carried out, the directorates could broadly be divided into Place and People. Since then, the number of Directors had reduced and it is the administration's wish that all ten Directors should now report to the

Chief Executive. He went on to explain that it was intended to informally consult with those affected prior to implementation subject to no material objections being raised.

Members agreed that this was a logical way forward.

Councillor Jones asked that sentence two of paragraph 3 of the report be amended to read

"That decision was made, in part, as a consequence of re-naming the Heads of Service to Directors for the purposes of recruitment and retention"

This was agreed.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed that

- (1) Informal consultation is undertaken with those staff directly affected by the proposed change to reporting arrangements; and**
- (2) Subject to no material objections to the proposal being received during the consultation, all of the Directors of the Council will report directly to the Chief Executive Officer and the Council's Standing Orders and Constitution will be amended accordingly.**

20. Armed Forces Covenant: Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold award sustainability plan (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Caroline Hopper introduced the report advising Employment Committee about Portsmouth's recent Gold Award within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) and to seek approval for the outlined sustainability plan. She said that Portsmouth City Council had been awarded the prestigious Gold Award and said that to obtain an ERS Gold Award the employer must be an exemplar within their market sector. Portsmouth City Council has put in a great deal of effort to achieve this status as outlined in section 3.3 of the report. She advised that renewal of the award takes place every five years through a combination of assessment and quality inspection. In order to ensure that PCC continues to hold the Gold Award, a high level sustainability plan has been developed identifying a number of key actions as set out in section 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of the report.

The chair thanked Ms Hopper for the report. During discussion the following points were raised.

- The number of active reservists in the city council currently was quite low and perhaps more could be done to advise that these opportunities exist.
- Members congratulated all those concerned in achieving the Gold Award and particularly thanked Caroline Hopper. Members said it was important to keep up the momentum.

RESOLVED that Employment Committee

- a) **noted that Portsmouth City Council was awarded the prestigious Gold Award within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme**
- b) **approved the outlined plan to ensure the sustainability of Portsmouth City Council's prestigious Gold Award within the ERS.**

21. Apprenticeships (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report advising that Sandy Wilkie was also present to answer any technical queries the committee may have. Mr Bell advised that the report provides a comparison on the city council's progress with apprenticeships against neighbouring local authorities and employers including an update on apprenticeship numbers and levy spend. The report updates members on the options open to the city council to share up to 10% of its levy with external organisations. He advised that Appendix 1 shows the number of apprentices in PCC (including schools) and the number of planned starts for September 2018.

Mr Bell drew members' attention to section 8 of the report which is a comparison of where PCC is in relation to other employers. Having compared the responses, officers are confident that PCC is in an excellent position with regard to its apprenticeships uptake (and target achievement), the breadth of apprenticeships available and its levy spend. As a result of PCC's success with apprenticeships PCC has been asked by South East Employers to deliver a presentation at a conference in London to share our experiences and practice with other local authorities.

Mr Bell advised that following a request by the Employment Committee at its meeting held on 26 June 2018, two options have been put forward in this report concerning how to share up to 10% of the council's levy with other employers. He said that the expectation is that ultimately the decision on allocation would rest with the portfolio holders for PRED or Resources providing that this meets with the approval of members of the Employment Committee.

During discussion the following matters were raised.

- In relation to 7.2 of the report that mentions that at present it is projected the council will not be required to return any of its levy to the government until December 2019, it was explained that that is the position on current projections. However the situation is changing all the time and the expectation is that no money would be handed back. However this is dependent on future uptake and progression.
- Members spoke in favour of option 2 in the report.

- Members suggested that in terms of democratic sign-off the recommendations should be amended to include consultation with the portfolio holders for PRED and Resources and this was agreed.

RESOLVED that Members

- **Endorsed option 2 as the preferred option in relation to the transfer of levy funds to external employers subject to any decision being taken after consultation and agreement with the Cabinet Members for PRED and Resources**
- **Noted the council's position on apprenticeships in relation to other levy paying employers.**
- **Noted the progress made with regards to the number of apprenticeships and levy spend.**

22. Dying to Work (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report which is to consider whether Portsmouth City Council (excluding schools) should sign up to the TUC 'Dying to Work' charter and what additional actions, if any, it would need to carry out to comply with the charter.

He drew members' attention to some particular issues as set out in paragraph 3.2. He said that he would be reluctant to say that PCC would never dismiss somebody with a terminal illness as sometimes this is advantageous to the employee. Basically he is concerned that wholesale adoption of the charter does not make anything worse for any individual.

During discussion the following matters were raised.

- It was confirmed that the charter does not require any formal designation of "terminal illness" definition. The policy is about treating employees fairly. Mr. Bell said that PCC's existing policies were adequate to protect people.
- Members wished to ensure that people in this position would be treated with respect and that there would be no discrimination against these employees.
- Members suggested that a more detailed equality impact assessment should be carried out.

Mr Adrian Baker, union representative, said that within the TUC's campaign the definition of terminal illness is basically a short period of time hence - ie expected within six months.

RESOLVED that

Employment Committee agreed that:

- (i) **PCC should sign up to the TUC charter since the charter largely reflects our current practices.**
- (ii) **In meeting our commitment to the charter, continue the current practice of investigating with an eligible employee which option under the pension scheme would be most financially beneficial. In some cases, this could mean retiring the employee on grounds of ill-health where this is the best option for them.**
- (iii) **As part of the charter, state that under an organisational change process a member of staff with a terminal illness could still be dismissed, if the reason for dismissal is redundancy. However, as with our current practice, redundancy dismissal will only be actioned once all other options have been exhausted.**

23. Sickness Absence (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced this item which updates Employment Committee about levels of sickness absence across the council and actions being taken to manage absence. He explained that in the period since the last update in June, the level of sickness absence has decreased marginally from 8.53 to 8.49 average days per person per year but that there are wide variations across services. He advised that absence levels by directorates for the period from 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018 are attached in Appendix 1. This shows that of the 12 directorates six (excluding schools) are over the corporate target of an average seven days per person per year and four directorates are over an average of ten days per person per year.

With regard to the Port, this is a relatively small cohort of employees and two or three significant cases are currently being managed through the sickness reports but are affecting the figures disproportionately.

Mr Bell also said that Appendix 2 shows a summary of reasons for sickness absence.

The chair thanked Mr Bell for his report.

RESOLVED that members continue to monitor sickness absence, and ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Chair