

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 4 December 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 Yahiya Chowdhury
Councillor Hugh Mason
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Luke Stubbs

Officers Present

David Williams, Chief Executive
Peter Baulf, Deputy City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Jon Bell, Director HR, Legal and Performance
Helen Kane, Assistant Director of HR
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager
Sue Page, Finance Manager

24. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made round the table.

Councillor Donna Jones apologised for lateness.

25. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

26. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2018 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

27. Gender pay reporting (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report. He said that the gender pay gap in the Council has reduced from 11.34% to 9.55%. PCC's gender pay gap is lower than the national average for all employees, full time and part time.

Item 3.5 of the report sets out what has to be reported. Jon Bell drew members' attention in particular to the mean gender pay gap. He said that actions agreed in 2017 and progress made are contained on pages 27 and 28

of the report pack. Some of these actions are fairly long term and much is being done by PCC as a responsible employer - such as equality of opportunity. Jon Bell said that he believed PCC is making progress. He emphasised that this is not about equal pay - there is no evidence that PCC has any issues concerning giving equal pay to male and female employees doing the same job. This is about the gender pay gap which is a separate matter. There are things that can be done over time to address the gender pay gap and the Council cannot afford to be complacent about this issue so is pursuing the actions in the action plan.

During discussion the following matters were raised

- Members commented that controllables, such as bonuses have come down significantly and this has contributed to the welcome reduction in the gender pay gap
- In response to a query about longer term issues concerning the pay gap and whether anything can be done about this, Jon Bell said that the workforce is currently 75% female and many of these employees are low paid. This reflects what is found across society generally in that many of the lower paid and part-time jobs such as in care homes and schools tend to be performed predominantly by women. He said that the Council is trying to ensure that everyone is given opportunities regardless of gender and is making progress against the action plan.
- Members raised the issue of the Living Wage. The Living Wage Foundation had recently updated its instructions on what its wages are. The current Administration is committed to paying the living wage as directed by the Living Wage Foundation. Members asked that a report be brought to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to include details of the revised wage levels and also how and when PCC is going to implement the changes. In addition members asked that the report details the recent Local Government pay award and what effect that has. The report should also include steps to be taken to ensure PCC continues to be a Living Wage employer ideally from the date of the Living Wage Foundation update. Jon Bell agreed to provide a report and said that PCC is committed to paying the Living Wage Foundation rates - £9.00 per hour from 1 April 2019. He said that the Local Government settlement was more generous than in previous years and was weighted to the lower end of the pay scale. There had been a deliberate policy shift nationally to ensure some headroom between the bottom end of the scale and the national Living Wage.
ACTION: A report on the Living Wage to be brought to the next scheduled meeting.
- Members noted that the current report did not include information about pay at the different age ranges which had been included last time. Members wanted this information as it might show that at the younger age range, women are paid more than men. There was nothing in the recommendations or in the action plan about how that was to be addressed. Jon Bell said that the report in its current form fulfilled the

legal obligations but that he could arrange for the additional information to be included.

It was proposed and agreed that an updated gender pay gap report should be brought back to the next scheduled meeting and an additional recommendation 2.4 was added to give effect to that.

RESOLVED that Employment Committee

(1) Noted the key findings of the Gender Pay Gap Report 2018 (see section 3.5).

(2) Noted the progress made on the 2017 action plan.

(3) Agreed the action plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the Gender Pay Gap report

(4) Requested an updated report to come to the next scheduled meeting to include an age breakdown.

28. Pay Policy (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report advising that there was nothing of particular significance to draw to members' attention. 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 and this fulfilled that obligation..

In response to a query about when the 2019/2020 pay policy would be brought to the Committee, Jon Bell said it would have to be after 1 April 2019 as it was retrospective.

The Chair asked that it be made clear that on page 43, reference in section 2.1 to the Foundation Living Wage is the amount set by the independent Living Wage Foundation. Jon Bell agreed to make that clear.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee approved the Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1, to go forward for approval by the Full Council prior to 31 March 2019.

29. Quarterly Sickness Absence Report (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and advised that unfortunately sickness absence has crept up again. He said that there are 2 directorates that may be of concern to members - the Port and Adult Services.

With regard to the Port, he explained that there had been a relatively low number of significant absences but because there is also a relatively small number of employees this makes the figures look high in percentage terms. Of those identified, 4 employees were now back at work, 2 had left employment and the remaining 4 employees were being actively managed. However, because of the 12 month rolling programme, there is always a time-lag in terms of what shows in the statistics, but the numbers should now start to go down.

Absence in Adult Services had also gone up and Andy Biddle (Service Manager, Adult Services) was in attendance today to answer any questions members may have about absence in that directorate.

Mr Bell drew members' attention to the work being done to promote wellbeing. This was regarded as being very important and additional funding had been secured. There was particular focus on mental health and stress issues as both of these were often cited as reasons for absence.

The Chair said it would be useful to invite the Port Director, Mike Sellers and the Director of Adult Services, Innes Richens to come to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to allow members to put their questions about absence in their directorates. The Chair said it would be useful if the directors could explain what they have done or what they intend to do to try to address the issue. It was agreed that this would be arranged.

During discussion the following matters were raised

- Members noted the progress of wellbeing activities and the success of the lunchtime walking initiative.
- Members noted the progress of the Port in managing sickness absence.
- A query was raised about whether illness at the Port relating to muscular skeletal included any owing to accidents that may be of a safety concern, Mr Bell said he was not aware of any evidence to support that. Reasons for absence among those employees who work outside at the Port work include a range of reasons for absences including some linked to mental health issues.
- In response to a query about whether Occupational Health was working in terms of helping people to get back to work more quickly, Mr Biddle explained that it was helpful to consider a return to work on lighter or changed duties to encourage an earlier return to work.
- Jon Bell advised that PCC will soon be looking at re-letting the Occupational Health contract. Stakeholders have been consulted in what would be helpful from Occupational Health. Occupational Health did not exist as a pre-dismissal service, it is about understanding reasons for absence and how best to assist the person's return to work.
- A comment was made that the bottom line of the report ie excluding schools but including agency workers should not be the preferred measure as it is a little misleading as the agency workers figure is always going to be nil. The Chair said that as long as the reports appeared in the same format each time then each line could be compared on a like for like basis and Jon Bell confirmed that to be the case. In that case the Chair was happy for the report to be received in the same format as today.
- One Member expressed surprise that the total number of non school staff has risen during year and requested that a breakdown on where this comes from should be given to the Committee

- Members commented that MMD absence figures were not listed in the report and the Committee would be interested to know what those figures are if that information was open to them to receive.
- Councillor Jones said that absence figures for MMD were reported through the PRED portfolio. She said that much has improved at MMD and the Port.

ACTION agreed

- Jon Bell to invite the Port Director and Director of Adult Social Care to attend the next scheduled meeting on 26 February.
- Jon Bell to find out whether it was possible to report MMD absence figures to the Employment Committee as part of the regular report.

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

30. Exclusion of Press and Public (AI 7)

In view of the contents of the following item on the agenda the Chair proposed that the Committee adopted the following motion:

"That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985, the press and public be excluded for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that the report contains information defined as exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972"

This was agreed.

The meeting moved into exempt session at 12.50pm.

31. Senior Management Structure - Support Services. (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

This item was considered in exempt session.

The report advises the Employment Committee of the implications, options and process to meet the Administration's intention to secure £100,000 p.a. net savings from the senior management of the Council's support services.

Appendix 1 includes two options that illustrate to members how the alignments could work, utilising the post of Deputy Chief Executive as fulfilling a Director role.

Following discussion in exempt session, the Committee moved back into open session. The proposed resolution was read out and on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that Members

- I. Noted the rationale and implications set out in the report and its appendices and agreed the proposed senior management option set out at Appendix 1, (based on the deletion of two director posts) for formal consultation with staff affected and trades unions and advise the staff who will be placed 'at risk' as a consequence.**
- II. Agreed to consider responses to the proposed structure at a subsequent meeting, and following consideration of those responses, to implement a new structure in accordance with the guidance set out at section 5.**
- III. Agreed to adopt the proposed consultation and selection methods as set out in the report.**
- IV. Agreed that following this, a detailed report on the consequential working arrangements across the Senior Management be produced at that time**

The meeting concluded at 1.20 pm.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Chair