

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 26 February 2019 at 1.00 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

Michael Lawther, City Solicitor
Peter Baulf, Deputy City Solicitor
Jon Bell, Director of HR, Legal and Procurement
Mike Sellers, Port Director
Angela Dryer, Director Adult Services

5. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out the evacuation procedure. Introductions were made round the table.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Chief Executive, Mr David Williams.

6. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

7. Minutes of the Meetings held on 4 December 2018 and 13 February 2019 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 4 December 2018 and 13 February 2019 each be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

8. Pay Policy (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell explained that a Pay Policy Statement must be prepared for each financial year. It should be approved by Full Council no later than 31 March of each year, prior to the financial year to which it relates and be published on the council's website.

Members have previously approved a draft of this statement which has now been updated and must now approve it before final approval by Full Council.

He advised Members that the policy does not take account of the current senior management restructuring proposals.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee

(1) Approved the Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1, to go forward for approval by the Full Council prior to 31 March 2019.

(2) Noted the following revisions to the statement contained in Appendix 1

- reporting dates which have been amended from 2018/19 to 2019/20**
- revision to section 2.1 to clearly define the living wage rate as set by the Living Wage Foundation**
- the annual salaries have been updated to reflect the 2019 pay award. However the data used for the pay multiples is based on 31 March 2018 so remains the same as the pay multiple contained in the previous report submitted in December 2018.**

9. Quarterly Sickness Absence Report (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report stating that there had been a slight reduction in sickness absence overall. He explained that at the last meeting, Members had asked that the Port Director, Mike Sellers and the Director Adult Services, Angela Dryer should both be invited to attend this meeting to explain the reasons for their directorate's sickness absence figures and what was being done to try to address the situation.

Mike Sellers explained that absence figures at the Port over the last 12 months had gone up from 6.85 to 16.6 days absence. Top reasons for absences were muscular skeletal, then psychological and mental health issues, then cancer and tumours. He explained that the Port has a relatively low number of employees so that relatively small changes make a big difference statistically. There have been a number of long term absences because of cancer and muscular skeletal absences. These have skewed the statistics. If the long term illness was taken out, the medium and short term absences were around average as compared with other directorates across PCC. He explained that the Port has now changed to using PCC's HR services rather than its own and managers have received training including on the EBS system. He said that the Port also benchmarks sickness absence against other ports and that this showed that short and medium term sickness was around average, but that long term sickness absence is higher than the average.

Angela Dryer said there had been an increase in sickness absence and the top reasons for absence were psychological and mental health issues followed by cancer. She explained that 50 % of the workforce are aged 50 and older when cancer is more likely to occur. Also with many employees working in Care Homes, muscular skeletal issues were more prevalent. Also gastro intestinal disorders was the 5th highest reason for sickness absence but employees who work in older people's units are advised not to return to work until 48 hours after they are symptom free to avoid the risk of infecting

others. Ms Dryer said that much work is being done to try to improve sickness absence including looking into the psychological wellbeing element and facilitating flexible returns to work such as coming back to different duties to start with. She advised that 20 of 51 managers had either booked on or have done the management health and wellbeing course.

Ms Dryer further advised that she meets with HR on a monthly basis to discuss employees who have had 100 days absence or more to devise a plan. Many initiatives are in place to try to reduce sickness absence.

During discussion, it was confirmed that

- Adult Social Care have directly employed a part-time back care specialist who will provide individual support. The emphasis is on preventing people from hurting their backs.
- The Port is looking to reduce muscular skeletal issues by introducing automatic release hooks which has already been done in one berth and which will be done in the new berth also.
- 59% of the Port's work force is over age 50 and succession planning is underway.
- The number of days lost recorded in the report is the number of days lost per person whether full or part time. Consequently the percentages are not based on the full time equivalent so may be misleading.

Members noted that there has been an increase of 46 staff in housing neighbourhood and building as compared with one year ago and asked whether James Hill could email members of the Employment Committee to advise where these employees were transferred from and why.

The Chair was pleased that there has been a slight decrease in the absence figures overall and thanked Mike Sellers and Angela Dryer for their attendance.

RESOLVED that Members

- (1) Continue to monitor sickness absence**
(2) Ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism.

10. Gender Pay Reporting (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report advising that at Employment Committee on 4 December 2018, Members requested that additional data on the age breakdown be included in the Gender Pay Gap Report 2018. This report has been produced in response to that. The Gender Pay Gap report now includes a breakdown of the workforce profile by age, gender and whether full time or part time. Appendix 1 has been updated and now includes this additional information, as well as the statutory data that the Council is required to publish in accordance with the Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations.

He referred to para 3.2.6 where the gender pay gap has been broken down by age and full-time/part-time hours. It can be determined that female employees earn more up to age 39 for full time employees and up to age 49 and over the age of 60 for part time employees. As male employees get older, over 40 years old, they tend to earn more than female employees within the same age bracket.

During discussion the following points were made

- Members were pleased to see the further breakdown as it shows that contrary to the perception that women are paid less than men; in fact this is not the case across all age ranges. Women in their twenties are paid more than men in their twenties according to these statistics. Basically it is not the case that women are paid less than men across the whole age ranges but only in some of them.
- In relation to the findings that women in PCC in the 22-29 age bracket earn more than men in the same age bracket, Jon Bell said he was unable to provide a reason why this should be the case. HR policies and recruitment policies applied equally. Members said it would be interesting to be provided with information in the future about whether this was general across all local authorities, across the whole city or across the whole region. Could it have anything to do with fewer men having degrees than women given that so many jobs require a degree?

RESOLVED that the Committee

(1) Noted the additional information requested by Employment Committee

(2) Agreed the revised Gender Pay Gap report for publication

11. Living Wage (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report which was provided in response to a request from employment committee to inform members of the Foundation Living Wage (FLW) rate increase from 1 April 2019, to £9.00 per hour and to advise members of the impact of the 2019/20 national pay award on the FLW rate.

He advised that the 2019/20 national "NJC" pay award has now been approved and will be applied on 1 April 2019. Since the report to Employment Committee in June 2018, the Living Wage Foundation has announced that the FLW rate will increase on 1 April 2019 from £8.75 to £9.00 per hour.

Jon Bell said that it is likely that the FLW rate will be further increased in future by more than the rate of inflation.

He also said that the Council's own temporary staffing agency has now also been brought under the remit of the FLW. It is therefore more expensive but directors have given a strong commitment to continue to use the agency.

During discussion it was confirmed that

- Members have taken a policy decision to pay the Foundation Living Wage so PCC's pay structure will always start at that level. If the

national pay level starts at a lower rate, PCC will nevertheless start at the FLW level.

- With regard to staff who have transferred under TUPE, their terms and conditions are frozen at that point so they will be paid a top up to bring their pay into line with the FLW but it will be a non-consolidated payment. In theory this could remain non-consolidated indefinitely but may become integrated over time.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note that the Foundation Living Wage for 2019 has been set at £9.00 per hour.
- (ii) The effect of the 2019/20 national pay award is that the lowest point of the pay scale is equal to the Foundation Living Wage
- (iii) Officers report to members, on an annual basis, the revised FLW rate and the implications of this on the council's pay structure
- (iv) Payment of the FLW is extended to temporary staff engaged as workers through the council's in-house temporary staffing agency

12. Employee Opinion Survey (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and explained that the appendix shows the headline results. He said that it was broadly positive given the extent of changes and the ongoing austerity agenda. He said there are still some areas of challenge and the second part of the report sets out what the council is doing to respond to some of the more major matters identified such as access to Learning and Development, health and wellbeing, quality of leadership and management and communication.

During discussion the following matters were raised

- With regard to line 28 of the table stating that over a quarter of employees responded that they do not have the resources to do their job effectively, members asked whether this had been looked at in more detail. It was confirmed that the responses differed depending on where employees worked - so for example employees working in Care Homes are always likely to require additional equipment and generally IT is commonly identified as needing to be updated. Directors had been given their own results so they could address matters specific to their directorate.
- Members were pleased that there continued to be flexibility around the Performance Development Review (PDR) process. There had been concerns in the past about the PDR process and members were referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report that provided more information about the process. It is clear from the survey that a decreasing number of staff have received what they consider to be a PDR, although increasing numbers of staff feel that their objectives are clear and that they have opportunity to discuss their development needs.

- Staff who were unhappy were unlikely to wait till their PDR to express their unhappiness. Other routes were available in these situations such as talking to their manager's manager or through the whistleblowing process.
- Members suggested that in future a question could be included in the survey that would tease out where there were localised problems such as in the IT department - perhaps along the lines of whether people are working effectively or not.
- With regard to mental health and wellbeing, members suggested that the number of managers attending training should be kept under review
- With regard to the numbers not understanding the budget setting process, members suggested that PCC should look at providing additional communication to address this.
- With regard to issues that are specific to certain directorates, it was confirmed that these matters were being considered at directorate and team level. There had also been discussion with portfolio holders and detailed action plans had been drawn up to respond to the survey results.

The Chair said this was the last scheduled meeting of the Committee for this Municipal Year and thanked Members and officers for their support.

RESOLVED that Members

- (1) Noted the results of the 2018 Employee Opinion Survey as set out in Appendix 1**
- (2) Noted and, where appropriate, agreed the actions set out in section 4**

The meeting concluded at 1.45 pm.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Chair