

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday 1 October 2013 at 12.15 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, floor 3, the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda and reports for the meeting which can be found at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk).)

### **Present**

Councillor Steve Wylie (Chair)  
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Hugh Mason (deputising for  
Councillor Leo Madden)  
Councillor Rob Wood  
Councillor Luke Stubbs

### **Officers Present**

David Williams, Chief Executive  
Jon Bell, Head of HR, Legal & Performance  
Gemma Limburn, Senior Manager HR  
Fiona Morrison, Organisational Development & Employee  
Engagement Manager

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Donna Jones and from Councillor Leo Madden.

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

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **40 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2013 (and Exempt Appendix) (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 18 June 2013 (and exempt appendix) be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

#### **41 Hampshire Pension Fund Panel Appointment (AI 4)**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson be appointed to serve on the Hampshire Pension Fund Panel for the period 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2015 subject to his remaining an elected member of Portsmouth City Council.

#### **42 Christmas Closure - Sandwich Day (AI 5)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report stating that the implications of closing on Friday 27 December 2013 affected services differently. He said that historically PCC has given staff an additional day's leave (pro rata'd for part time staff). Those staff that are required to work on 27 December providing essential services to the residents are given time off in lieu.

Members asked the Chief Executive to check the estimated cost of the sandwich day which he agreed to do.

**RESOLVED (1) that Employment Committee agree for Christmas Closure to be implemented for 27 December 2013, for the Civic Offices and non-essential services out stations;**

**(2) that all employees are given additional leave to take account of the Christmas Closure (pro rata'd for part time workers);**

**(3) that those staff required to work are given time off in lieu at a later date;**

**(4) for Heads of Service to determine which staff will be required to work, based on essential service delivery requirements.**

#### **43 Sickness Absence Update (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and said that the current sickness absence is 9.5 days on average per employee per year which represents a decrease since the start of the financial year when the figure was 9.76 days. A breakdown of absence levels by services is attached at Appendix A of the report. Jon Bell said that there was strong evidence that where HR staff have worked with those services where there has traditionally been high levels of sickness absence, an improvement has been seen.

Members discussed the sickness absence working group and felt that it was worthwhile to maintain the group, and the Chair of the Employment Committee, Councillor Wylie said that he intended to join the group.

Jon Bell stressed that the arrival of Public Health colleagues at PCC was useful to promote the wellbeing of staff. The Public Health employees brought additional expertise and future reports would be brought to the committee on matters concerning wellbeing.

In response to questions the following matters were clarified:

- With regard to the Port, it was noted that the long term sickness absence was out of line with the rest of PCC services. Jon Bell said that a relatively small number of employees worked at the Port so the figures were easily distorted when just a small number of people were on long term sick leave. He said that in his view more HR support would be helpful to the Port. However the Port has a degree of independence from PCC.
- With regard to sickness absence in Children's and Adult Social Care, sickness was mostly stress related. Mr Bell said that work was being done to look at the reasons behind that.
- Jon Bell said that the occupational health contract had been re-let and there was now a much quicker process in place for referrals to Occupational Health. There was also much more resilience in the service and early indications showed that managers are happier with the Occupational Health service under the new contract.

**RESOLVED that Members note the current levels of sickness absence across the council and the on-going efforts of members and officers to reduce sickness absence.**

#### **44 PCC Apprenticeships - Update(AI 7)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and said that Fiona Morrison would be able to answer any in-depth queries that members have. He said that a review of apprenticeships provision is currently being carried out to understand the current and future needs in relation to apprenticeships across the city. In addition, the council's Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel is undertaking a review into pathways into work for young people in Portsmouth. The review is focussing on how to help young people into employment and training for employment (such as through apprenticeships). Currently PCC has 29 employees working towards an apprenticeship, 22 of these apprentices are existing staff and seven have been newly recruited. Mr Bell said that PCC should probably look at bringing more people in from outside and that they should be targeted more at young people.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Members felt that the council had a particular responsibility as a corporate parent to target youngsters leaving care and felt that a report back on that particular aspect would be useful.
- With regard to apprenticeships in aspiring management, Fiona Morrison confirmed that these were often taken up by newly appointed managers as there was an NVQ in management so on the job training could be given. There were also technical certificates that could be worked towards.

- It was confirmed that of 44 people who started apprenticeships, 29 remained in the scheme at Portsmouth City Council.
- Additional information was requested about how many of the apprentices that have completed their programme are still working for the council. This would be provided and circulated to the members of the Committee. (see footnote\* below)

Members commented that greater publicity should be given concerning PCC providing apprenticeships.

Members commented that this was a useful and positive report.

**RESOLVED that the committee**

- (1) notes the continued success of the Apprenticeship Programme within PCC; and**
- (2) maintains support for the programme.**

**45 Date of Next Employment Committee Meeting (AI 8)**

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the committee is 3 December 2013.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm.

Chair

\*The following information was provided following the meeting.

**Retention - how many of our apprentices are still working for the Council?**

The answer is 11. A full breakdown of the figures up to September 2013 are:

Number of Apprentices	= 44
Total completed	= 14 (of those 11 still working for council)
Total still in training	= 23
Total left before completion	= 7 (of those 2 still working for council)