

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 1.00 pm at the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (in the chair)
Councillor Simon Bosher (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Cal Corkery
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Scott Payter-Harris
Councillor Jeanette Smith

Officers Present

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services
Alison Forfar, Interim Assistant Director HR
Lynda Martin, Health & Safety Manager
Susan Page, Finance Manager
David Williams, Chief Executive

4. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Lewis Gosling. Councillor Scott Payter-Harris was in attendance as Standing Deputy.

5. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Cal Corkery declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in all items as he was a member and paid official of a union.

Councillor Jeanette Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in all items as a paid official of Unison and a union.

6. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 and the special meeting held on 20 January 2021 (AI 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 September 2021 and the special meeting held on 20 January 2022 were confirmed and signed as accurate records.

7. Health & Safety Update Progress Report on 2021/22 Action Plan (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Lynda Martin, Health & Safety Manager, introduced the report which sought to provide assurance to the Employment Committee that Portsmouth City Council was complying with health and safety legislation and was ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of those affected by the council's activities.

In response to questions the Health & Safety Manager confirmed that proportionate measures were being implemented to ensure a safe return to work post pandemic and that the actions detailed in the Health & Safety Action Plan 2021/22 were on target for completion by 31 March 2022.

The committee commended the comprehensive action plan and wished to record its gratitude to the Corporate Health & Safety Team.

RESOLVED that the committee noted the report.

8. Pay Policy Statement (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report and explained that the Council was required by section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (openness and accountability in local pay) to prepare a Pay Policy Statement.

In response to questions the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that she would report back to the committee on whether the ratio of 1:8.45 pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees differed from the previous year, along with how the council compared with other comparator councils such as Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee approves the Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1, to go forward for approval by the Full Council prior to 31 March 2022.

9. Quarterly Sickness Absence Report (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Alison Forfar, Interim Assistant Director HR, introduced the report which updated the committee on the levels of sickness absence across the council and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote employee wellbeing.

She advised the committee that the level of sickness had increased from an average 9.03 to 10.11 average days per person per year, with long term sickness increasing from 6.04 to 6.20 days per person per year and short term sickness increasing from 1.70 to 2.16 days per person to year.

The committee was reminded that these figures covered the winter months.

Three areas had realised a decrease in sickness absence and it was believed that flexible working arrangements had a positive impact on these statistics.

The three most common reasons for sickness absence were:

Psychological;
Coronavirus; and
Muscular Skeletal

In response to questions the committee was advised that Health & Safety training was mandatory for all staff every three years and that DSE assessments of their workplace at home had been undertaken for all staff working from home. Equipment such as office chairs had been supplied where needed to ensure a safe workplace.

It was confirmed that future reports could contain a comparison with the previous quarter in addition to the previous 12 months to further assist the committee in identifying any trends.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that the 'Fusion' HR system gave managers an overview of sickness within their team which could be used alongside guidance and advice from HR and Health & Safety to address and local issues within teams.

RESOLVED that the committee NOTED:

- (i) the change in absence levels across the organisation; and**
- (ii) the wellbeing activities undertaken to support attendance and in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

10. Gender Pay Gap Report 2021/22 (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Alison Forfar, Interim Assistant Director HR introduced the report which ensured that the Council fulfilled its statutory obligations in respect of the Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations.

In comparison with 2019 the gender pay gap had reduced significantly from 15.5% to 9.21% and was predicted to continue to decrease in the coming year.

The committee felt the trajectory to be very positive and in response to a question about the differences reflected in the mean and median figures was advised that the information which needed to be published was set by statute. The Director of Corporate Services advised that additional information could be circulated to the committee.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee NOTED:

- (i) the key findings of the Gender Pay Gap report 2021/22; and**
- (ii) the action plan as set out as item 8 in the Gender Pay Gap Report 2021/22**

11. Senior Management Structure - Regeneration (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

David Williams, Chief Executive, introduced the report which advised the committee of the intention to review the structure of the Regeneration Directorate in the light of the resignation of two Assistant Directors (Assistant Director for Transport and the Assistant Director for Strategic Development), and the peer review of the Transport function.

He clarified that the report sought approval to undertake a review of the senior management structure in the Regeneration Directorate and for the necessary consultation to take place. The decision to implement any changes would be the subject of a further report to the Employment Committee.

The committee discussed the report and in response to questions was advised that the review would focus solely on the Regeneration Directorate rather than a wider review of senior management.

Some members queried the predicted cost savings of £100k if consideration was being given to creating an additional new post of Director of Transport. Some members also believed that the creation of such a post would both require, and present a good opportunity to, review the existing senior management posts within the Regeneration Directorate to reflect any changes to role responsibilities.

The committee was advised that any review would be undertaken by an external organisation and whilst the review would look across the whole directorate the committee's remit was in respect of director level staff.

Proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Vernon-Jackson, and seconded by Cllr Darren Sanders it was RESOLVED that the Employment Committee:

- (i) agreed to a review of the senior management structure in the Regeneration Directorate and, in such a review, give consideration to the creation of a new post of Director of Transport; and**
- (ii) On conclusion of the review a report be brought back to the Employment Committee for members to give due consideration to any recommendations arising; and such report to include recommendations on the relevant policies, procedures and processes relevant and necessary to progress the Committee's preferred option.**

The meeting concluded at 2.16 pm.

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Chair

