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EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Thursday, 7 July 2022 at 2.00 pm at the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Cal Corkery (in the chair)
Councillor Simon Boshier (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dave Ashmore
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE

Officers Present

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services
Alison Forfar, Interim Assistant Director HR
Susan Page, Finance Manager

12. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

13. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Cal Corkery declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in all items as he was a member of Unison and Unite the Union.

14. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 (AI 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 March 2022 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

In response to a question in respect of minute 11 (Senior Management Structure - Regeneration) the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the Chief Executive was preparing a report for the committee, which would be considered at the earliest opportunity.

The committee requested that this report be considered as soon as possible at an extraordinary meeting, rather than the next scheduled meeting on 15 September 2022

15. Real Living Wage (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the report which provided members with an update on current market conditions, the impact on PCC pay structure and staff and the benefits and challenges of accreditation.

The committee was also asked to determine how it wished to progress towards becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer, given the current economic pressures faced by the Council.

The committee noted the importance of the topic in light of the current cost of living crisis and the effects of the significant changes in the way that adult social care would be funded from 2023.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson proposed an amendment to Recommendation 1, as below: (additional text in *italics*)

- (i) group leaders nominate members from their group to form a task and finish group to investigate how Living Wage accreditation can be taken forward, *with sustainable funding*, through the governance cycle and budget setting process and report back to the committee with recommendations at its next meeting in September.

This amendment was duly seconded by Cllr Darren Sanders and following a vote was declared CARRIED.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson proposed an amendment to Recommendation 3, as below: (additional text in *italics*)

- (iii) the Employment Committee reiterates its commitment to the policy of paying PCC employees the Real Living Wage, *congratulates the administration on making this happen*, and resolves to report annually on the impact of this policy

This amendment was duly seconded by Cllr Darren Sanders and following a vote was declared carried.

Councillor Darren Sanders proposed an additional recommendation, as below:

- (iv) in future the real Living Wage is automatically uplifted in line with the recommendations of the Living Wage Foundation for Portsmouth City Council staff.

This additional recommendation was duly seconded by Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson and following a vote was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) group leaders nominate members from their group to form a task and finish group to investigate how Living Wage accreditation can be taken forward, with sustainable funding, through the governance cycle and budget setting process and report back to the committee with recommendations at its next meeting in September;**
- (ii) PCC staff currently in receipt of pay below the 2022/23 Real Living Wage (RLW) rate, be paid an uplift to £9.90 to bring their rate in line with the current RLW rate pending the outcome of the national pay negotiations;**
- (iii) the Employment Committee reiterates its commitment to the policy of paying PCC employees the Real Living Wage, congratulates the administration on making this happen, and resolves to report annually on the impact of this policy; and**
- (iv) in future the real Living Wage is automatically uplifted in line with the recommendations of the Living Wage Foundation for Portsmouth City Council staff.**

16. Sickness Absence - Quarterly Report (AI 5)

(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

The committee discussed the top three causes of sickness absence, which were Coronavirus, psychological and musculoskeletal.

In respect of Coronavirus, the committee was advised that there had been very few work based outbreaks and that the majority of absences had been from service areas whose work involved close contact with people, such as adult social care.

A concern was raised in respect of musculoskeletal problems and whether home working arrangements had been a factor. It was felt that a breakdown of home based versus office based absences would be useful.

In response it was explained that musculoskeletal absences were predominantly in physical non desk based roles which involved manual handling. The development of new reporting systems as part of the Fusion software roll out for HR was underway and it remained an aspiration for more granular level analysis to be presented to the committee going forwards.

The committee was advised that stress and anxiety was more of an issue in respect of home or office based working, as some staff were anxious about returning, whilst others had felt lonely working from home.

Following the points raised during the discussion the committee felt that it would be useful to consider a report on Occupational Health at a future meeting.

The Chairman advised that he was minded to request that sickness absence reports be received twice a year rather than quarterly going forwards, as he believed that this would allow the committee to better monitor trends.

The committee agreed to this, subject to there being a mechanism for reporting back on any concerns raised at the subsequent meeting.

RESOLVED that the committee NOTED:

- (i) the levels and causes of sickness absence over the last quarter;**
- (ii) the activities and interventions undertaken to support attendance; and**
- (iii) the change in absence levels across the organisation.**

17. Trade Union Facilities Time 2021/22 (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Alison Forfar, Interim Assistant Director HR, introduced the report which presented the outcome of the Trade Union Facility Time Report 2022, thereby ensuring the Council could fulfil its statutory obligations in respect of the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) 2017.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the percentages used for the breakdown of time spent on facility time included within the report was a statutory requirement, however a more detailed breakdown could be provided to the committee.

The committee believed that the council worked well with current trade union facilities time arrangements and noted the positive working relationship between the unions and management.

The committee did however feel that it would be helpful to substantiate whether the facilities time paid saved the council money and requested that a report by the relevant council officer be included on the agenda for a future meeting.

The committee wished to place on record its gratitude to the trade unions for the help that they gave to the running of the council.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee Noted:

- (i) the data in Appendix 1 and the fact that the Appendix will be the report published on the PCC website, and the Government maintained website; and**
- (ii) that the data will be included in any relevant Annual Report and Accounts that are published by PCC.**

18. Appointment to the Hampshire Pension Fund Panel and Board (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

James Harris, Senior Local Democracy Officer, introduced the report which requested that the Employment Committee appoint a Portsmouth City Councillor to the Hampshire Pension Fund Panel and Board to serve as a full member with Southampton City Council's representative serving as the substitute member.

Councillor Cal Corkery proposed that Councillor Judith Smyth be the Council's representative for 2022/23.

This proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson.

RESOLVED that Councillor Judith Smyth be appointed to serve on the Hampshire Pension Fund Panel and Board for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year, subject to her remaining an elected member.

The meeting concluded at 3.16 pm.

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Councillor Cal Corkery
Chair

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