

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Thursday, 17 November 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 Matthew Atkins  
Councillor Darren Sanders  
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE

### **Officers Present**

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services  
Lynda Martin, Health & Safety Manager  
Sue Page, Finance Manager  
James Harris, Senior Local Democracy Officer

#### **22. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **23. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Cal Corkery declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he was a member of Unison.

#### **24. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 and the extraordinary meeting held on 26 August 2022 (AI 3)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 and the special meeting held on 26 August 2022 were confirmed and signed as accurate records.

#### **25. Deputations from the Public under Standing Order No 24 (AI )**

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Jon Woods gave his deputation on behalf of Unison to minute 28, Real Living Wage Accreditation.

#### **26. Health and Safety Annual Report (for period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022) (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.

She explained that progress was going well in all areas and that there were no concerns that she wished to bring the committee's attention.

In response to concerns from the committee about the reduction in the completion figures of Health & Safety Training post pandemic it was explained that during the pandemic the training had moved online and some officers who could not undertake all of their usual duties had used the opportunity to catch up on e-learning courses. With the return to more normal duties this figure had fallen. In respect of the capacity challenge presented by the pandemic the Director of Corporate Services agreed to investigate and report back.

The committee was keen to look into the matter further to understand whether officers had not completed mandatory health and safety training appropriate to their roles. If they hadn't, the reasons why the training had not been completed, whether the new ways of hybrid working had been a factor and how the council would address any such issues.

The Health & Safety Manager confirmed that compliance with mandatory Health & Safety training was being proactively looked into. She explained that data existed in terms of compliance with mandatory Health & Safety training and this information had been shared with the directorates which, where applicable, had been tasked to improve compliance.

In addition, the Director of Corporate Services explained that directorates had been asked to review what should be mandatory for their services. Currently there was a blanket rather than a focussed approach towards mandatory training.

In respect of the 2020/21 Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan at Appendix 1, the committee requested clarification of the term 'on-going' in respect of the second item 'To continue to review the overarching Health & Safety Policy to change the emphasis to a more pro-active approach towards Health & Safety and base it on the HSE's Leading Health and Safety at work document.'

The Director of Corporate Services explained the context that the previous framework had been a range of different policies and a large amount of guidance. Much work had been undertaken to improve the practical guidance documents so that all services had the right guidance to work to. This was a much more involved task than simply writing a policy. The ongoing element referred to consolidating all of the guidance and making it available to staff in appropriate formats.

The committee requested that further details into the immediate issues raised about the decrease in attendance for health and safety training be forwarded to the committee and that a more in depth look into the matter be considered

by the committee as part of the next health & safety update at the March 2023 meeting. The Health & Safety Action Plan appended to the report should also include realistic target dates for the items currently labelled as 'ongoing'.

In addition, the committee also requested a report into the wider training offer to include how it would be changing to become more role specific and how successful completion of the training would be monitored

**RESOLVED that the report and the comments of the committee be NOTED.**

**27. Workforce Profile (AI 5)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Director of Corporate Services introduced the report which presented the workforce profile for 2021 and incorporated a summary of key highlights.

In response to a question it was confirmed that all staff postcode data transferred over from EBS to the Fusion system, however non compulsory fields containing information on ethnicity, whether staff were veterans or whether they had a disability needed to be entered manually by staff.

In response to further questions, the Director of Corporate Services explained that the higher level of staff turnover and lower percentage of staff who lived within the city boundaries reflected the national recruitment challenge, and that the council was having to recruit people from further afield. This had expanded into a broader range of roles than had historically been the case.

In terms of turnover, the highest recorded specific reason for staff leaving the council was career progression into higher paid roles. It was confirmed that market supplements could be applied to specific roles for recruitment or retention.

The committee requested that data on how many market supplements were currently being paid by the council be circulated to the committee.

**RESOLVED that the committee noted the contents of the report and the attached workforce profile.**

**28. Real Living Wage Accreditation (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The committee considered the report, which detailed the recommendations of the task and finish group in accordance with the resolution made by the committee on 7 July 2022 that a task and finish group be formed to investigate how Living Wage accreditation could be taken forward through the governance cycle and budget setting process.

As an update since the report had been published, the Chair announced that the national living wage had been confirmed as increasing to £10.42. The differential used in the cost analysis had been based upon a 40p difference between the national living wage and the real living wage, but this differential now stood at 48p.

As a consequence, the £2m funding gap quoted previously now stood at nearer £2.5m

It was believed that all parties felt that paying the real living wage was the right thing to do, however there was doubt about how easy it would be to find the funding. The importance of sustainable funding was highlighted, as if the commitment was made it could not be made only for one year.

The Leader of the council confirmed that he welcomed ideas from all councillors in respect of funding the real living wage and the Chair hoped that there was an opportunity for all parties to work together in this regard as part of the budget setting process.

**RESOLVED that the Employment Committee:**

- (i) Asks the Cabinet to consider including Real Living Wage accreditation in the upcoming budget setting process to seek sustainable funding; and**
- (ii) Asks Cabinet that in the budget setting process the financial impact is assessed using data previously provided to the committee on which to base its assumptions subject to the announcement of the revised Real Living Wage rate for 2023 which is expected to be announced in November by the Living Wage Foundation.**

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm.

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Chair