

DRAFT

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Tuesday, 3 March 2015 at 12.15 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Present

Councillor Donna Jones (in the chair)
Councillor Luke Stubbs (Vice-Chair)
Councillor John Ferrett
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Lynne Stagg
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson

Officers Present

David Williams, Chief Executive
Michael Lawther, City Solicitor
Peter Baulf, Legal Team Manager
Jon Bell, Head of HR, Legal & Performance

12. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

13. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

14. Minutes of Meetings held on 6 January and 19 February 2015 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Employment Committee held on 6 January and 19 February 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as correct records.

15. Performance Development Review and Mandatory Training Requirements (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report which was to update members following the Employment Committee of 6 January 2015 on the work being undertaken to increase the uptake of Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) and

provide further details of the new suite of training courses for managers. The report also provides guidance on key principles for inclusion in the process for the Chief Executive Officer's PDR. Appendix 1 of the report showed the percentage of staff in each service who had had a PDR in the last 12 months and the percentage who found it meaningful.

During discussion the following matters were raised:-

- Members noted that 5.3 of the report referred to a meeting that had taken place with trade union colleagues to talk through the process and rationale behind PDRs to further support uptake. Mr Richard White of UNITE said that members often regarded the PDR as a tick box exercise and felt that nothing changes as a result of it. He said he felt that the template looked better than the previous one but did not feel that members of staff should take full responsibility for their training needs. He also said that some staff do not have PCs which is a problem.

Members discussed whether there were any incentives that could be offered to help improve the perceived value of PDRs for example a certificate of recognition. The Chair advised that she had written to people who had not been off sick all year and to those with long service or who had otherwise performed exceptionally - for example in examinations.

It was also suggested that perhaps the Lord Mayor could be involved more in recognising staff for their achievements.

- It was noted that just under half of those who completed the recent employee opinion survey did not find PDRs meaningful. Members were advised that attempts were being made to tailor PDRs to staff needs as some parts of the business required simpler PDRs than in others. Members were also advised that the completion of PDRs in this authority was low by comparison with other local authorities but this could be explained by other local authorities putting greater emphasis on the mandatory aspect of PDR completion. Higher compliance did not necessarily mean that the PDR was more meaningful. This was illustrated in the statistics in Appendix 1 in that although Revenues and Benefits PDR take-up was 89.6%, only 32.6% found their PDR to be meaningful.
- A query was raised about whether it was always the same 33% who did not complete PDRs but this had not been analysed service by service so an answer could not be provided.
- The Chair commented that in relation to item 6 of the report - Chief Executive Officer's PDR - this had now been done and had involved input from all the political group leaders.
- Members discussed whether or not the Chief Executive's PDR should be externally facilitated. Members felt that this would be a decision for whoever was running the administration at the time but it was noted that it could be quite expensive and may not represent the best use of money at the current time. However, this could be revisited as appropriate.

- With regard to management training, details of the newly developed suite of management courses are attached at Appendix 2 to the report. Members were advised that further updates would be provided in due course to advise about the take up and effectiveness of this training.

RESOLVED that Members

(1) Note the work being undertaken to support services to increase the uptake and meaningfulness of PDRs;

(2) Note the new suite of management training courses (Appendix 2 of the report); and

(3) Note the recommendations for the PDR process for the Chief Executive Officer and Directors.

16. Sickness Absence Update (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Chair invited Mr Richard White of UNITE to make his deputation which he then gave. Although largely in support of the recommendations, he raised some specific concerns that were dealt with during the meeting.

- Concerns about corporate sickness absence targets becoming trigger points.
- The increase in ill health capability dismissals.
- The Fit for Work scheme.

The Chair thanked Mr White for his deputation.

Mr Jon Bell introduced the report advising that its purpose was to update and inform Employment Committee on actions being taken that have an effect on the levels of sickness absence across services.

Many services are below the current corporate sickness absence target of 8 days per employee per year and his preferred approach was to keep the 8 days as a benchmark but continue to work with those services where sickness absence was high with a view to bringing it down.

With regard to the Fit for Work scheme, he said this was a government scheme and was aimed more at smaller organisations. He said it was not intended to replace PCC's Occupational Health provision.

During discussion the following matters were raised:-

- The Chair thanked HR for all the work that had been done on sickness absence and said that a massive improvement had been made since

2008. She said Mr Richard White's comments on flexibility in encouraging people to return to work was a sensible approach and should be rolled out across services. She felt that the sickness target should be reduced from 8 days to 7 days as this helped concentrate services' efforts to reduce sickness absence. She recognised that this was not a perfect formula but reducing the target in the past had produced results.

- Councillor John Ferrett felt that the target should remain as it was in his view as a formal reduction was likely to affect the trigger points for the formal process leading ultimately potentially to dismissal. He said that the sickness absence levels were reducing already.
- Councillor Sanders said that in the past financial penalties had been imposed on services where sickness absence targets were not met. He said that he was concerned to ensure that services realised that there was no longer a financial penalty.
- Councillor Stagg suggested that where higher sickness levels were noticed, perhaps staff themselves should be asked what could help mitigate the effects. For example rotating the type of work being done. Jon Bell said that he recognised that the working conditions for some employees was a contributory factor - for example those working outside, or in regular face to face contact with clients.
- With regard to Fit for Work, Mr Bell advised that Health Management Ltd has been appointed to deliver this programme in England and Wales on behalf of the UK Government. Fit for Work is a free service funded by the Government which is aimed to help employees stay in or return to work. It includes two elements - advice and referral. The new service is designed to complement not to replace existing Occupational Health provision.

With regard to a query about whether using Fit for Work instead of the current Occupational Health provision would save money, Mr Bell said the two services were not the same but there may be some instances in which a Fit for Work referral could be used instead of an Occupational Health referral. The City Solicitor said he would advise caution with that approach. He further advised that PCC was looking at other means of provision with its partners for example Solent.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson felt that PCC should look at how Fit for Work works for other authorities so that PCC could then benefit from their experience. In the meantime he suggested that no changes were made to PCC's Occupational Health provision.

- Concern was expressed about 4.10 of the report concerning ensuring that staff who work outside the Civic Offices are made aware of all the services provided to staff and managers and for them to have access to them. It was suggested that some services from staff could be provided from other locations away from the Civic Offices.

Members discussed the recommendations and wished to make clear that no financial penalty would be imposed on those services who did not achieve the sickness absence targets. Members also wished to explore and report back on specific strategies for out of office services.

It was proposed by Councillor Donna Jones seconded by Councillor Luke Stubbs that three new recommendations be introduced as follows:-

- To reduce the corporate sickness absence target to 7 days per employee per year, on the proviso that there are no financial penalties for services that do not achieve this.
- To continue focussing on maximising employee attendance.
- To explore and report back on specific strategies for "out of office" services.

Upon being put to the vote the revised recommendations were carried.

RESOLVED

(1) to continue to monitor sickness absence on a quarterly basis and to ensure appropriate management action is taken to encourage attendance;

(2) to reduce the corporate sickness absence target to 7 days per employee per year, on the proviso that there are no financial penalties for services that do not achieve this;

(3) to continue focussing on maximising employee attendance;

(4) to explore and report back on specific strategies for "out of office" services; and

(5) to note the introduction of the "Fit for Work" scheme.

17. Senior Management Restructure (AI 6)

The Chair said that at the last meeting the decisions around the Integrated Commissioning Unit had been deferred to this meeting to allow discussion with the Clinical Commissioning Group. The Chair advised that a meeting with Dr Jim Hogan and Innes Richens had taken place at the conclusion of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board. At this meeting the proposals were discussed and agreement had been reached. As a result of this the suggestion was that the ICU headed by Preeti Sheth remained as it was and becomes a director post. PFI moves to the procurement team and a new PFI team would be recruited. She advised that money

was already available for this. The scope of the Procurement Manager post could then be looked at in light of this decision.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson said that he did not disagree with this and thought that the relationship between Health and Social Care would develop and change in the future. He felt it was realistic for the moment though. He also suggested that the Director of Property title should be changed to the Director of Property and Housing. These changes were proposed by Councillor Donna Jones seconded by Councillor Vernon-Jackson.

RESOLVED that

- 1. Integrated Commissioning Unit remains as it is and is a director post.**
- 2. PFI to move into Procurement team (with a new PFI team to be recruited under Procurement)**
- 3. "Director of Property" to be re-named "Director of Property and Housing"**

Members were advised that there was now no need for the meeting that had been tentatively arranged for 10 March as the issue had been resolved today.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 pm.

Councillor Donna Jones
Chair