

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 3 December 2020.

PRESENT

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC (in the Chair)

Ms. L. Broadley CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mr. I. D. Ould OBE CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

14. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

15. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

16. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

17. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

18. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr. R. J. Shepherd declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – ‘Government Proposals to reform Local Government Exit Pay’ as a member of the Leicestershire County Council Local Pension Board.

19. People Strategy 2020-24.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources seeking approval for the County Council’s new People Strategy 2020-24. A copy of the report, marked ‘Agenda Item 6’ is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the Strategy had been developed following a thorough evaluation of the current Strategy and was based on the outcome of this evaluation. Officers had also ensured that issues that Departments were experiencing with their workforce were also addressed.

Following some discussion, members supported the new Strategy although were keen to receive further detail of the outcome of the evaluation completed on the previous Strategy and how this had informed development of the new Strategy. They also requested that the new Strategy include smart targets against each of the deliverables for year 1.

Members welcomed detail in the Strategy on the management of performance by outcomes, which was measurable, as opposed to managing the input of hours worked and detail of how productivity was managed balanced with the importance of giving wellbeing support to the workforce.

The recommendation detailed in the report was amended to include the additional information requested by the Committee.

It was moved by Mr. Rhodes and seconded by Mr Shepherd that the draft People Strategy 2020-24 be provisionally approved subject to the Employment Committee receiving a report at its next meeting which will detail the outcomes achieved by the previous Strategy, the outcomes of the evaluation undertaken on the previous Strategy which informed development of the new Strategy and Smart targets against each of the deliverables for year 1 detailed in the new Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the draft People Strategy 2020-24 be provisionally approved subject to the Employment Committee receiving a report at its next meeting which will detail the outcomes achieved by the previous Strategy, the outcomes of the evaluation undertaken on the previous Strategy which informed development of the new Strategy and Smart targets against each of the deliverables for year 1 detailed in the new Strategy.

20. Wellbeing Survey - Results and Action Plan.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the outcomes of the second Staff Wellbeing Survey undertaken in October 2020 and presenting a comparison with the findings of the first Survey undertaken in May 2020. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that staff had adjusted very quickly to alternative ways of working, including working from home, presented by the pandemic.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. No single approach to working arrangements had been adopted; a variety of ways had been used to enable those staff who did not use technology for their role to remain connected to their colleagues;
- ii. The outcomes of the Survey showed that the measures and working practices in place were working for staff;
- iii. Further surveys would be undertaken, although the timing of these would be carefully considered to ensure that they remained valuable and worthwhile;
- iv. Different methods were being employed to address social isolation, with many staff not seeing other people within the working day;

- v. Managers would continually check-in with new starters as they had not had the opportunity to form bonds with colleagues before working from home;
- vi. Plans were being made for working life beyond Covid-19, which included how the Council's buildings would be used to enable a flexible model of working.

Members commended the report and the work of the Information Technology Team which had enabled so many staff to work from home so quickly.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome of the Staff Wellbeing Surveys and the future next steps outlined in the report to further support staff wellbeing, be noted.

21. Attendance Management.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of June 2020. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The majority of departments had seen an improvement in the level of sickness. However, improvements were needed across the County Council to achieve the corporate target of 7.5 days per FTE.
- ii. Illness due to stress/mental health was still the highest cause for absence. Absence due to cancer had increased, and the trend was continuing. HR Advisers were speaking with managers to ensure that the appropriate support was in place for those staff affected. Sickness due to Covid-19 was, for the first time, included in the top 10 reasons for sickness absence;
- iii. The level of sickness in the 'not disclosed' category had started to increase; officers would address this with individual departments, to ensure that actions to address were properly targeted;

Members were assured that officers would continue to monitor the trends in sickness absence and would continue to manage absence in a robust way. Managers were aware of their role and responsibilities and had the skills to manage absence robustly.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of September 2020 be noted.

22. Government Proposals to Reform Local Government Exit Pay.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning Government proposals to reform exit pay, anticipated timescales, together with the likely impact on staff aged over 55 who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that there was currently no date specified for implementation of the proposals. The Leicestershire Pension Fund was working with the Local Government Association on the implications of the proposals for staff.

Members expressed concern about the Government's proposals, which they said went beyond the original intention to address the large payments made to senior Government officials, and now affected staff at quite a low pay grade.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the Government proposals to reform Local Government exit pay and the likely impact on staff aged over 55 who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, recognising that there is no implementation timetable as yet, be noted;
- b) it be noted that a response to the consultation exercise has been submitted by the County Council and also separately from the Leicestershire Pension Fund.

23. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2019-20.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Annual Health, Safety and wellbeing Report for 2019-20. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. People were being encouraged to report incidents following a slight reduction in the number of near misses to ensure that all incidents were reported;
- ii. Referrals to the Council's wellbeing service had risen by 5% and the number of sessions delivered had increased by 41% compared to the previous year;
- iii. Managers were being supported with the completion of Covid-19 risk assessments and, as part of the workplace recovery programme, were being supported with ensuring that buildings were Covid-secure;

Members commended the report received.

RESOLVED:

That the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2019-2020 be noted and the extensive work undertaken by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service be supported.

24. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented an update on the current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress with their implementation. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 11", is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy, and details of progress in their implementation, be noted.

25. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held via Microsoft Teams on 4 February 2021 at 10:00am.

10.00 - 11.18 am
03 December 2020

CHAIRMAN