

# Personnel and Development Committee Minutes

Date: 30 November 2015

Time: 7.00 - 8.15 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Harris (in the Chair)

Councillors: G C Hall, Mrs W J Mallen, G Peart and S K Raja,

## **46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L Wood.

## **47 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 6 July be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## **48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

## **49 WORKFORCE REPORT 2014/15**

A report was submitted which sought comment and feedback on the Workforce Report 2014-15. The report produced and published annually, provided Members and senior managers with information relating to the Council's workforce to assist in identifying the key equality issues for the organisation, thereby informing the development and maintenance of human resource policies and practices to support the achievement of strategic priorities. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix A of the report.

The main findings of the Workforce report and challenges to be met for the future were summarised in paragraph 4. Members were informed that the findings from this report would form part of a wider review to be undertaken in the spring of 2016 of the Workforce Strategy. A copy of the report would be submitted for consideration to a future meeting of this Committee.

Members were informed that the Joint Staff Committee had also considered this report in some depth at its meeting on 4 November and had fed back its views and comments. A number of matters were discussed, including:

Turnover was within the target range (top end). We were typically able to fill advertised vacancies. We did have some hard to fill jobs e.g. Planning Lawyers.

Absence rate continued to be lower than the national average. Stress depression and mental health was the top reason for absence which was consistent with national statistics, followed by viral infections and operations.

Workforce was balanced against the wider community. Black and Ethnic Minority staff were over represented in the lower grades and were less proportionate in the more senior grades, which mirrored the national picture of those Councils who completed the recent LGA survey.

Officers continued to have access to a wide range of quality training. We were good at training people in job skills, but needed improvement in career development training.

50% of officers were at the top of the grade. There had been a significant reduction in the number of officers/ posts over the last 10 years and as a result there were fewer development opportunities. We lost more people than we recruited

At the previous meeting of this Committee, Members had requested that individual Heads of Service attend the meetings to address the issue of key workforce challenges in their service areas. As a starting point the Chief Executive was in attendance in her capacity as Head of Paid Service responsible for the day to day management arrangements.

Members were informed that staff numbers had reduced from 650 in 2006 to approximately 300 today. There had also been a 66% reduction in the Senior Management Team. Despite this reduction, performance had continued to improve which demonstrated the efficiency and talent of the staff on board.

It was explained that the senior management structure had been reviewed to better support the three priority areas in the new Corporate Plan, with a refocus of the Corporate Director post on growth and regeneration and realignment of some of the Heads of Service reporting arrangements.

The Chief Executive further explained that since the implementation of austerity measures over the last 5 or so years, the direction taken by Senior Management Board had changed. All requests for new staff now required SMB approval in order to keep staffing numbers under review and in order to closely monitor staffing spend.

The Chief Executive stated that there were 3 significant areas of work that the Council was focussed on. Firstly, in the Planning Service which had necessitated the recruitment of additional staff but the Council had done well to secure external funding for these through, for instance, Policy Performance Agreements. Secondly, the Regeneration Programme. Staffing capacity was under review to ensure challenges could be met for the upcoming programme over the next 2 years, and exploring the opportunities and possibilities for carrying out more work in house. Thirdly, the Council had commissioned the Planning Advisory Service to carry out a review of our Planning service and compare it with other Local Authorities in the country.

The Chief Executive went on to state that the Council would be looking at future capacity building in light of its challenges; talent and succession planning, addressing skills shortages and developing more of a commercial approach. Members were informed that there was a planned workshop next week to start this piece of work and to develop the skills and behaviours of managers through the Learning and Management Development Programme.

A Member asked how many full-time and part-time Planners the Council employed and how many were from an ethnic minority group.

Another Member enquired as to whether it was intended to further reduce staff in the future. She was informed that it was very unlikely that staffing levels could be significantly cut as the Council would be unable to deliver the same high quality of service as it had been and was providing at the current time. It was highlighted that between 2015- 2019 the emphasis would be upon growth of the District this included projects such as the development at Handycross, the Desborough Road area and the Hughenden Quarter.

It was also requested information be provided about stress management levels by service area.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

## **50 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17**

A report was submitted which sought comments and feedback on the revision to the Pay Policy Statement.

The report stated that it had been the Localism Act 2011 which had introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to publish an Annual Pay Policy Statement commencing in 2012/13.

The Pay Policy Statement was a summary of the Council's current policies practices and relevant contractual national and local terms. There was a statutory duty to include within it the remuneration of its Chief Officers, and that of its lowest paid employees.

The report also stated that the Statement contained the same detailed information as that within the previous year but with rates information having been updated where appropriate. The Pay Policy Statement was attached at Appendix A to the report.

Members of the Joint Staff Committee had also considered this report at the previous meeting, and had made no amendments, but had requested that in future comparative ratios from the previous years be included in the covering report.

A Member questioned the reason as to why it was thought that there was a difference between male and female average salaries as set within the policy. It was explained that a possible explanation could be that there were a greater

number of females working on a part time basis. However it was felt that further work to review the figures was required.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 be approved.

## **51 EMPLOYEES` CODE OF CONDUCT**

A report was submitted which sought comments and feedback on the revisions to the Employees` Code of Conduct.

The report stated that the Code, which was last reviewed in 2012 took account of the Audit Commission`s recommendations to the Council to incorporate the Council`s values within the Code and to ensure that staff were made aware of the process for declaring interests together with the requirement to confirm compliance on an annual basis.

The main revisions to the code were highlighted at paragraph 9 of the report, and detailed within Appendix A to the report. Underscoring indicated amendments to be made and wording in Section 14 that had been blocked out indicated further amendment following discussion at the Joint Staff Committee.

The Presenting Officer informed Members that the code had been discussed in some detail by Members of the Joint Staff Committee. A main area of concern highlighted by Unison had been in relation to the use of social media (under section 14 of the code) in that conduct out of work could not be reasonably judged on the same footing as conduct at work. Further discussions with Unison and the Chairman had taken place following the Joint Staff Committee meeting at which Unison had made further proposed changes to the policy. An addendum was tabled setting out the sections in question with red highlights of the changes. This included, section 2 (Standards) to include reference to social media and section 14 ICT (Security) to clarify that staff should be mindful in both a personal and professional capacity when using ICT systems.

It was noted that one member of Unison would have preferred the word "personal" to be removed. Members agreed that for transparency both personal and professional capacity should be retained in the policy.

**RECOMMENDED:** That subject to the inclusion of the addendum for Sections 2 and 14 of the Code, the Employees` Code of Conduct be approved.

## **52 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE/CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

A report was submitted which stated that the Council had commenced a review of its Constitution. As the first stage of this review all Committees were being asked to consider its Terms of Reference and propose any changes or amendments as appropriate. The proposed changes would then be referred to the Regulatory & Appeals Committee for further consideration in the spring of 2016, and then onto Full Council for its endorsement.

The report also stated that the Chairman of the Committee in conjunction with the Head of HR having preliminarily reviewed the Terms of Reference had not proposed any amendments to the current version, attached at Appendix A to the report.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (i) the Head of Planning & Sustainability be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee
- (ii) no amendments be made to the Terms of Reference for the Personnel and Development Committee

### **53 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

In considering the date of the next meeting of the Committee, it was agreed that the previously scheduled date of 18 January 2016 would be cancelled. The next meeting would now take place on 21 March 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the next meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee be held on Monday 21 March 2016 at 7pm.

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Chairman

#### **The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

John McMillan	- Head of HR, ICT & Customer Services
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive
Iram Malik	- Democratic Services Officer
Jo Whiteley	- Human Resources Manager (Operations)