

# Personnel and Development Committee Minutes

Date: 26 September 2018

Time: 6.05 - 7.05 pm

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

Councillors: Mrs S Adoh, M C Appleyard, G C Hall, M A Hashmi, Mrs W J Mallen and S Saddique

## 7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Teesdale.

## 8 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 20 June 2018 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

## 10 WORKFORCE REPORT 2017/18

A report was submitted which requested that the Workforce Report for 2017/18 be noted and which invited further comment and feedback from Members.

Members were informed that the report was produced and published annually and provided information regarding the workforce to assist in identifying the key trends and issues for the organisation and inform the development and maintenance of HR policies and practices to support the achievement of strategic priorities and service objectives. The information included such details as organisation structure, recruitment and turnover, training and development and pay and reward.

A summary of the main findings established that there was nothing significantly different from last year and that the situation had remained stable. In the current year, the workforce was still in balance with the community it served and the overwhelming majority of staff were successful in their jobs many exceeding the

expected standard of performance. The findings also revealed that 75% of senior managers were female and that the gender pay gap was narrowing.

It was brought to Members' attention however that amongst some of the challenges facing the authority was the need to attract, recruit and retain larger numbers of younger people in order to assist with succession planning in an authority with an increasingly ageing workforce. The Presenting Officer reported that she was pleased to be able to announce that WDC had now recruited a total of six new apprentices. In addition out of the three more recently recruited two of these had secured permanent posts within the authority.

Another challenge was the need to raise awareness of staff about their mental health and reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions. This was particularly significant given that stress, mental health and depression were amongst the top reasons for absence, with a slight increase from last year's rate. The overall absence rate however remained consistently below the sector average.

Members considered the report before them and made a number of comments.

All Members were keen to express their delight over the progress being made in engaging 6 apprentices since the introduction of the scheme last year, and they hoped that further opportunities could be sought to engage more apprentices. In relation to hard to fill posts, a Member highlighted that another Council offered key worker housing to assist with recruitment and that this could be a potential avenue that could be considered.

Another query was raised with regards to the steps that were being taken to assist those with mental health conditions within the organisation. It was confirmed that the Authority was shifting the focus on more preventative methods by raising awareness with managers through training, enabling them to recognise the signs of stress at an early stage. Members were also informed that the Authority would also be introducing Mental Health Allies who were designated people that staff could speak to about their concerns and who could signpost them to the appropriate resource.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted

## **11 REVIEW OF SMOKING POLICY AND FACILITIES ON QVR SITE - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

A report was submitted which set out the results of the recent consultation exercise on future options for smoking on the QVR site. The report recommended that the results be reviewed and an agreement be made as to which option to support, and to recommend this to Full Council accordingly.

Option A would make the whole of the QVR site smoke free. Option B would see the designated smoking area moved to the rear QVR car park barrier. Both options would become effective from 1 January 2019.

The report stated that both the Joint Staff and Personnel & Development Committees had considered the options regarding the smoking policy at their meetings on the 20 June 2018. Based on the decision taken by the Personnel & Development Committee, a 4 week consultation exercise had been conducted, which determined that 64.3% of respondents were in favour of making the whole of the QVR site smoke free.

The report also highlighted that whichever one of the two options was agreed it would require an amendment to the Council's current Smoking Policy. This was necessary in order to reflect that employees would be expected at work during core hours (9.30-12 noon and 2.30pm-4pm) and so breaks off the QVR site including smoking breaks would not normally be permitted. Members were informed that a copy of the proposed new Smoking Policy would be brought back to both the Joint Staff and Personnel & Development Committees at the next cycle of meetings in the autumn.

At the Joint Staff Committee meeting which had preceded this one, staff side members had not been in favour of option (a) which was to create a smoke free site. In particular staff side expressed concern about enforcement of the policy and for the necessity to be clear about breaks in general during core hours, so that it was not unfair to smokers.

Members debated the report before them in some considerable detail, with each expressing their individual view on the matter. It was recognised by all that there were strong views and arguments on both sides and that there was no single perfect solution which would satisfy all parties.

The Presenting Officer stated that although there were compelling arguments on both sides of the debate the consultation had shown a clear majority in favour of a smoke free site. In addition since 2013 the Council now had a duty of care in promoting health at work and in the local community, and that some would feel that expenditure of public funds to support the continuation of the smoking habit contradicted this. In relation to enforcement, it was indicated that a phased approach would be used, and disciplinary action would not be used as a first step. It was generally expected that the majority of people would act reasonably in the event of a rule change, just as behaviours had changed as a consequence of the Health Act 2006, which prohibited smoking indoors.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (i) The QVR site be made smoke free with effect from 1 January 2019 subject to a number of logistical and procedural clarifications to be presented to the next meeting.
- (ii) A draft new smoke free policy be prepared and brought back to the Joint Staff Committee and the

Personnel & Development Committee in November 2018.

**12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the next meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee be held on Wednesday 21 November 2018 at 6pm.

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Chairman

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

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