

EMPLOYMENT PANEL

TUESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Eileen Quick (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Lynne Jones, Christine Bateson, Simon Dudley and Edward Wilson

Officers: Alison Alexander, Terry Baldwin, Vanessa Faulkner and Karen Shepherd

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bicknell, Targowska, Brimacombe, Carroll, Dr Evans, Saunders.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alison Alexander, Terry Baldwin, Vanessa Faulkner and Karen Shepherd declared interests in the item 'Pay Reward Scheme' as employees of the council.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2016 be approved.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING PLAN

Members considered the draft Employee Wellbeing plan which had been refined to more fully support the management of stress and mental health issues, following comments from Employment Panel.

The Head of HR explained that a number of revisions to the original draft had been made, as detailed in paragraphs 2.2 - 2.4 of the report, including:

- Rewriting of section 3, 'What we want to address', with a focus on developing an environment where staff are comfortable in raising mental health issues.
- Provision of personal resilience training for of staff.
- All staff to be positively encouraged to undertake the council's on line training modules annually in personal resilience, mental well being and stress awareness.
- Compulsory training for all managers in Mental Health First Aid from January 2017

Members noted that sickness absence was recorded on the HR system and the descriptions of the reasons for sickness absence had been reviewed and revised. Currently there was a single category for stress/depression/anxiety/mental health/fatigue. This would be replaced with three categories:

- Stress
- Depression/anxiety
- Mental health

The People Action Plan contained implementation dates and would continue to be updated from actions within the Wellbeing Plan and staff survey.

The Chairman commented that she was pleased to see the sickness absence category being separated out, as stress could be comparatively quickly addressed compared to depression. The Head of HR confirmed that trigger alerts resulted in managers meeting with individual employees to record details of a sickness absence. This could lead to a stress risk assessment and referral to occupational health where necessary. A stress risk assessment could look at reallocation of work if workload was a contributory factor. Staff would not be viewed in a detrimental way for raising concerns. HR Business Partners were copied into alerts so they could support managers.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Employment Panel:

i. Approve the Employee Wellbeing Plan

EXIT INTERVIEWS - ACTION PLAN FOR STAFF TURNOVER

Members considered four additional actions to be added to the People Action Plan, following analysis of feedback from exit interviews over the last 12 months. Moving to an online system had seen an increase in the response rate from 31% - 58 %.

Members were reminded that the upward trend in voluntary turnover as detailed in table 2 had been identified in previous reports to the Panel on 'hard to fill' roles.

The Head of HR explained that when leavers' appraisal scores were analysed, 56% were good or higher; 28% were outstanding or excellent. The reasons given by leavers aligned closely with the results of the staff survey. Five actions had been added to the People Action Plan following analysis of feedback.

Councillor Dudley commented that the categories from which leavers could choose from in the exit interviews were framed negatively. A key reason could be promotion and higher salary. The Head of HR explained that the package used for the pilot was off the shelf. Going forward the council would be able to amend the categories to include some positive reasons such as higher pay, travelling time, and work/life balance. The Managing Director commented that high achievers were often leaving to obtain a promotion; in a small authority the situation could arise where there were no opportunities for promotion within the council.

Councillor Dudley suggested that participation in a face to face exit interview should be required of all leavers. Councillor Jones commented that feedback she had received from staff (although not recent) had been that they felt uncomfortable participating in face to face interviews as they did not feel they could be absolutely truthful. The opportunity to complete an online or face to face interview would be ideal. She also commented that high achievers could also leave because they could easily find a job elsewhere. The Managing Director agreed it was a balance with the lack of opportunities because of the size of the authority.

It was noted that the induction process helped to identify the support an individual employee needed, with appraisals providing an ongoing review. Coaching was also available.

Councillor E. Wilson commented that exit interview data should be combined with induction and annual survey feedback. There was a need to dig down further into some of the categories, for example trust in senior leadership.

Officers were requested to ensure actual numbers, alongside percentages, were provided in future reports. It was noted that information on leavers by grade and area of the organisation was available and could be included in future reports.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Employment Panel:

- i. Approve the updated People Action Plan.**

LIST OF DELEGATIONS

Members received a briefing note that proposed changes to three delegations in the council constitution that related to payments up to £25,000. The recommendation was proposed to allow officers to respond quickly to settlement claims. The proposals were consistent with other financial rules in relation to virements. It was confirmed that the payments would be one-off payments only.

It was noted that the figures in Appendix B could relate to more than one settlement at an individual school. The process was undertaken by the authority on behalf of schools if they choose to purchase HR services. The decisions were normally taken to the school's governing body.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Employment Panel:

- i) Note the delegation of HR duties as set out in Appendix A.**
- ii) Agree the three recommendations in table 1, increasing the settlement figure for officer approval from £5,000 to £25,000 and employment panel approval for sums in excess of £25,000, and seek full Council approval for the required changes to the constitution.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 8-12 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.46 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....