

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on Friday, 7 September 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chairman
 Councillor Dawn Percival – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Sarah Cheung Johnson Dr. Claire Daunton
 Philippa Hart Mark Howell

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
 Susan Gardner Craig Head of People and Organisational Development

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter Topping.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

4. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee agreed to exclude the press and public from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, exempt information as defined in paragraph 2 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act.

5. TO DEFINE AND AGREE A WORK PROGRAMME INCLUDING SCOPE AND TIME LINES

Councillor Henry Batchelor explained that the Committee was being asked to look at a number of employee related matters and make recommendations to the Executive.

It was noted that Councillor Philippa Hart held an ex officio position on the Committee, as the Cabinet member responsible for staffing. Councillor Mark Howell questioned whether a member of the Committee could make recommendations to Cabinet whilst being a member of both bodies. The Senior Democratic Services Officer agreed to provide clarification on this matter.

Recruitment and retention

It was noted that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had set up a Task and Finish Group to look at staff recruitment and retention in Planning. It was acknowledged that recruitment and retention challenges were being experienced across a number of professional areas and therefore any review should be wider. The Committee agreed that the Chairman should speak to the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and recommend that its Task and Finish Group be disbanded to avoid any duplication of effort between the two Committees.

Questionnaire to staff

The Committee expressed a desire to seek employee views on their employment experience at the Council. The Head of People and Organisational Development explained that full staff surveys had been carried out in 2009, 2012 and 2015. The Council then moved to mini themed surveys (6 per annum).

It was noted that the Council had tried using an external website (Glassdoor) to allow current former staff to make comments, but there had been little take-up. It was therefore agreed that a questionnaire should be sent out to staff to establish an up to date view of staff satisfaction. It was also agreed that employing an external organisation to compile and send out a questionnaire was preferable to doing it in-house, although the cost of this could prove prohibitive.

Councillors Henry Batchelor, Sarah Cheung-Johnson and Dawn Percival agreed to serve on a Task and Finish Group to investigate how to ascertain the views of staff.

Staff turnover

The Head of People and Organisational Development explained that all staff leaving the organisation were given the option of an exit interview with a member of HR, as an alternative to their line manager. In addition to this, staff were invited to meet with the CEO prior to leaving. In terms of performance monitoring and personal development staff received an annual appraisal with a six month review and regular one-to-ones. The Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that the Council had a team of Coaches which could be accessed by all staff. It was noted that, according to exit interviews and feedback that there was no correlation between a lack of mentoring and staff turnover.

Sickness absence

Members of the Committee made the following suggestions:

- Sickness days in the appendix to the report should be expressed as a percentage of the number of staff employed in that section.
- It would be useful to have benchmark data to compare our performance with other similar organisations.

The Committee noted the difficulties in finding a similar sized authority, which carried out similar duties for comparative data and so agreed that it would be useful to have a public sector average figure for staff sickness. It was understood that stress was usually not just work related.

Motion agreed at Council

It was noted that on 19 July 2018, Council had passed a motion requesting that the Committee “review the Council’s activity to promote equality and diversity amongst its workforce and, in particular, actively seeks ways to make South Cambridgeshire District Council an Employer of Choice for people with disabilities.”

The Head of People and Organisation Development offered to carry out work on this subject, which would include anonymous data on staff declaring a disability and the actions that the Council had taken to support individuals. It was suggested that the aim should be to help disabled people to find and remain in work. It was noted that this matter was part of a wider equality, diversity and inclusion issue. Councillor Mark Howell volunteered to liaise with officers on this subject.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer agreed to find a mutually convenient date for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.
