

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on  
Thursday, 22 October 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chair  
Councillor Dawn Percival – Vice-Chair

**Councillors:** Sarah Cheung Johnson      Dr. Claire Daunton  
Mark Howell      Heather Williams  
John Williams

**Officers:** Patrick Adams      Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Helen Cornwell      HR Business Partner  
Susan Gardner Craig      Head of HR and Corporate Services  
Chloe Smith      HR Advisor

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. Quarter 1 Sickness Absence Report (1 April to 30 June 2020)**

The Interim HR Business Partner presented this report on sickness absence for the period of 1 April to 20 June 2020. She made the following points:

- Sickness for this period was 1.27 per full-time employee, which was lower than the figures from the last two years.
- The figure for non waste staff was 0.84, whilst the figure for the waste service was 2.3.
- 12 members of staff had been on long-term sick. Four of these had returned to work and one had left the organisation.
- The number of waste services staff off sick due to Back, Neck and Other Skeletal Issues was partly due to the physical work and an ageing workforce.
- The only two teams that had seen an increase in sickness were Democratic Services, which had been 0 and was a small team, and Planning, where a number of staff were on long-term sick leave.

The Interim HR Business Partner explained that the Council offered its employees free confidential counselling through the organisation Vivup. In addition to this the Council employed Mental Health first-aiders to assist staff, a regular “tip of the day” was sent to employees, weekly wellbeing sessions were held and the Chief Executive did a twice-weekly Vlog, which advertised the support that was available.

### **Furlough**

The Interim HR Business Partner explained that due to the low numbers involved it was unlikely that any unreported sickness from staff who had been furloughed would have a meaningful impact on the overall data.

### **Long-term sickness**

The Interim HR Business Partner explained that in order to address long-term sickness, HR were ensuring that initial meetings were being held at an early stage, which allowed solutions to be implemented. This was an improvement, especially with regards to waste operatives on long-term sick leave.

### **Staff receiving counselling**

After a brief discussion, the Committee requested that officers provide data on the staff who had opted to receive counselling providing that the anonymity of those officers could be maintained.

### **Social events**

The Interim HR Business Partner explained that pub quiz events had been organised and an online version of the monthly coffee mornings were to be introduced. Officers regularly attended catch-up sessions within their teams.

### **Supporting home working**

The Interim HR Business Partner explained that all staff had carried out a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment and any issues that were identified had been followed up. Many staff were using equipment from the office at home, including those who had specialist equipment to mitigate a disability.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

## **5. Quarter 1: Retention and Turnover Report: Quarter 1 (Q1) 1 April - 30 June 2020**

The HR Business Partner presented this report on the turnover of staff between 1 April and 30 June 2020. She reported that 13 officers had left the Council during the first quarter, nine voluntarily and four involuntarily. The Council was under its target figure.

### **Exit interviews**

The HR Business Partner explained that the Council had introduced a new system for recording the data from exit interviews. Reasons for leaving in the first quarter included the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 and looking for a new position.

**Recruitment**

The Council had filled 88% of its vacancies. Induction had continued, including a virtual coffee morning with the Chief Executive. The HR Business Adviser explained that it might not be possible to ascertain whether the Council had recruited more staff from outside the local area due to home working.

The Head of HR and Corporate Services confirmed that there had been an increase in recruitment in the planning section since lockdown, partly due to downsizing in the private sector.

**Presentation of data**

The Committee unanimously supported the new way in which the data was presented in the report.

The HR Business Partner confirmed that the figures were for permanent staff and she would attempt to find the figures for temporary staff. She also agreed to find data on disabled and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) recruitment. It was requested that all acronyms be spelt out in full the first time it was used.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

**6. Staff Survey - Oral Update**

The Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that a survey had been sent out to all staff on Monday 19 October, with a closing date of 9 November. Paper copies were available for depot staff, to be returned in a confidential envelope. The survey was similar to the previous years, but with additional questions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and home working. The Head of HR and Corporate Services thanked Councillor Dawn Percival for her assistance in the compiling of the survey.

The Council had engaged the company Evisia, to ensure that staff's answers were confidential. Evisia would collate and evaluate the data, which would be compared with the answers provided last year.

The Head of HR and Corporate Services hoped for a return rate of 65%. It was expected that the results would be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting.

**7. Update on Task and Finish Groups****Disability Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson explained that the Group had met in September and discussed how the Council could move from Level 1 to Level 2 Disability Confident. Facilities Management had been approached regarding parking bays and signage. Councillor Mark Howell's motion on deafness had also been discussed. The next step was to agree an Action Plan.

**BAME Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson reminded the Committee that this Group had

been set up by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. She had attended the equality and diversity training provided to all staff and similar training was being arranged for councillors. The Group were planning to agree a timeline for its actions. The Chair offered the Committee's assistance to this Group, if required.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee **Noted** that its next meeting would be held on Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 10am.

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**The Meeting ended at 10.50 a.m.**

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