

nSouth Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 10 November 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor William Jackson-Wood – Chair

Councillors: Anna Bradnam
Richard Stobart
Peter Fane

Mark Howell
John Williams

Officers: Jonathan Corbett
Laurence Damary-Homan
Clare Lomer Hill
Jeff Membery
Donya Taylor
Liz Watts

HR Advisor
Democratic Services Officer
HR Advisor
Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate
Services
HR Business Partner
Chief Executive

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Sally Ann Hart sent Apologies for Absence and Councillor Peter Fane was present as a substitute. With the Vice-Chair's absence, the Chair proposed that Councillor Anna Bradnam assume the role of Vice-Chair for the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Mark Howell and agreed by affirmation.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee approved an amendment to the text prior to Minute 1. The Committee agreed that it should read:

“The meeting on 8 September commenced at 10:00 but shortly afterwards the Chair briefly adjourned the meeting. The meeting resumed but at 10:40 the Chair adjourned the meeting to a later date.

The committee meeting resumed on 29 September 2022 at 2.00pm.”

With the amendment, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the adjourned meeting held on 08 September 2022 and resumed on 29 September 2022 as a correct record.

4. Update on progress planning for Four Day week (4DW) trial

The Chief Executive presented the report and responded to the Committee's questions. Members enquired as to what measures staff were envisioning implementing to improve their productivity and ensure that they could manage their workloads in the 4 Day Week. The Committee was informed that wide discussion on this was taking place across the organisation and that there had been a wide range of ideas on how staff could improve their productivity. The impact of the trial on shared services was discussed and the Chief Executive stated that HR colleagues at Cambridge City Council and the Unison representative for the Councils were being updated regularly and that dialogue was ongoing- the Committee noted that the Chief Executive was to bring a report to the Cambridge City Council's Strategy and Resources Committee. The Committee also noted that staff at the Depot were to be included in the second trial.

Data and feedback were discussed by Members. The data in Appendix 1 of the report was discussed and Members stated that they were pleased to see that live data was being gathered through the pulse surveys. The Chief Executive stated that responses were likely to continue to become more positive as staff developed further productivity strategies and further guidance was released. The empowerment of staff in managing their own time and the democratic nature of the trial was highlighted. A question was raised on the impact on recruitment and the Committee was informed that early signs were positive but data was limited as the trial was not yet in effect; Members were assured that the impact on recruitment would be monitored. Communication with the public and Parish Councils was discussed. Members stated that it was imperative to ensure that communication around the reasons for the trial was clear. The Chief Executive stated that information was being shared through the South Cambs Magazine and that a public survey was live on the Council's website. Parish Council feedback was encouraged and the Committee was assured that the quality of service delivered to customers was to be continuously monitored throughout the trial.

The Committee **noted** the report.

5. Retention and Turnover: Q2 (1 July - 30 September 2022)

The HR Advisor, Jonathan Corbett, presented the report and responded to Member queries with support from the Chief Executive and the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services. Members asked some questions of clarity regarding specific sections of the report. The Committee noted that recruitment challenges at the Council were not dissimilar to national recruitment trends and that the uptick in retirement rates were also in line with national trends. Members noted that the 4 Day Week trial would have an impact on a range of recruitment and retention challenges. Comparative data was discussed and the Committee acknowledged the challenges of the retrospective nature of the data due to the timings of its publication. Members requested that officers look to include data from other organisations within the public sector for comparison and officers agreed to explore the possibility of including it in future reports.

Further discussion was held around the loss of staff to the private sector and the reasons behind this. The Committee noted that pay was a significant factor and officers stated that increased flexibility in the private sector was a challenge to recruitment and retention within the organisation. Officers acknowledged the need to be innovative in recruitment and retention measures. The Committee was informed that consultations regarding improving the communication of the totality of the benefits the Council offers its staff was being undertaken, and that there was a desire to communicate these benefits more effectively in job advertisements. Retirement was discussed and Members enquired as to what could be done to increase retention rates of those at or nearing retirement age and retain staff with extensive experience and knowledge. Officers stated

that the impact to pensions as a result of staying on past retirement age was a significant factor and agreed to provide a written response outside of the meeting with further details.

The Committee **noted** the report.

6. Sickness Absence: Q2

The HR Advisor, Clare Lomer-Hill, presented the report and the HR Business Partner was present to assist with the answering of Members' questions. The Committee discussed the stress mitigation measures and support available to staff and commended the open-minded approach and variety of options made available to staff. Further discussion explored the monitoring of the impact of working from home on mental health and officers detailed some of the measures in place- the Committee noted that data from the organisation-wide wellbeing survey would be brought to a future meeting. The Committee enquired as to what support Councillors would be given regarding mental health and were informed that it was part of the Member development programme.

Members also discussed data sources. Some individual points of clarity were raised. The use of national data for comparison was raised and the Committee discussed the challenges of providing this data with officers. A request to include some anecdotal evidence to support the technical information was raised by Members and officers agreed to take the request away and assess the viability.

The Committee **noted** the report.

The Meeting ended at 11.25 a.m.
