

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 9 May 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

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

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

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
Susan Gardner Craig Head of People and Organisational Development
Rory McKenna Deputy Head of Legal Practice

Councillors Neil Gough, Philippa Hart and Heather Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Peter Topping.

It was noted that Councillor John Williams had replaced Councillor Philippa Hart on the Committee. Councillor John Williams was the Lead Cabinet Member responsible for staffing issues.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dawn Percival declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 Employee Survey update, as she had worked with the consultant carrying out the staff survey in the past.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2019, as a correct record.

It was reported that the membership of the Appointments Panel, referred to in minute 5, would be: Councillors Henry Batchelor, Sarah Cheung-Johnson, Claire Daunton, Bridget Smith, Peter Topping and John Williams. The reserves will be Councillors Philippa Hart, Mark Howell and Dawn Percival.

4. SICKNESS ABSENCE 1 JANUARY 2019 TO 31 MARCH 2019

The Head of People and Organisational Development presented this report on sickness absence for the period 1 January to 31 March 2019. It was noted that paragraph 4 should have stated that there had been a 1.87% increase on the previous quarter's figure, not decrease.

The Committee welcomed the fact that the sickness absence year end figure for 2018/19 was lower than both 2017/18 and 2016/17.

It was noted that the two largest causes of sickness absence were muscular skeletal conditions and stress, depression and mental health. Due to the physical nature of the work, the waste section had a higher percentage of sickness absence compared to other

authorities. It was noted that the fastest way for waste operatives to carry out their work, was not the safest. The Head of People and Organisational Development explained that there had been a number of health and safety improvements made in the Waste Service and this had arguably saved lives. The age of staff in the waste section varied, but it was noted that the strain of 30 years as a waste operative could often lead to muscular-skeletal issues. The average age of employees by section was requested.

In response to questioning, the Head of People and Organisational Development explained that workstations could be tailored to the needs of staff, in order to reduce absence caused by back and neck pain. Rising/Standing desks and alternative chairs had been provided to staff to minimise back and neck issues.

Comparing with other Local Authorities

The Head of People and Organisational Development explained that local authorities that had a waste service were likely to have a higher sickness absence rate than an authority which had contracted out the work. This made comparisons with other authorities difficult. It was estimated that most authorities had a range of 7-12 days absence per full time equivalent member of staff. The Head of People and Organisation Development stated that staff sickness levels were still too high and HR would aim to continue to reduce sickness absence at the Council by working with line managers and attempt to achieve council-wide consistency with regard to return to work interviews.

The Council would be going out to tender on the service provided by Occupational Health, when the current contract expired.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. STAFF SURVEY - ORAL UPDATE

The Head of People and Organisational Development explained that the staff survey had been passed to the consultants and their only concern was regarding two open-ended questions on what employees liked about working for the Council, which appeared to be too similar. The Committee agreed that the purpose of the two questions were to ascertain what attracted an employee to the Council in the first place and what encouraged them to stay. It was also agreed that the questions should have specific options and not be open-ended.

It was noted that the cost of the survey would be less than £4,000.

Staff who work at the Depot will have the option of completing a paper version of the questionnaire, which would also be confidential.

It was suggested that staff could be offered an inducement to complete the survey, via the consultants. However, this was discounted in the interests of maintaining confidentiality to ensure that the respondents remain anonymous.

It was agreed that the survey should include a preamble from the Chief Executive and Leader.

The Committee **AGREED** that the Staff Survey should be sent out, with the agreed changes.

6. DISABILITY CONFIDENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP - ORAL UPDATE

Councillor Sarah Cheung-Johnson explained that her and Councillor Alex Malyon had

agreed to serve on the Disability Confident Task and Finish Group. Councillor Mark Howell also volunteered to be on this Group. It was hoped that one more member could be found.

It was noted that the Council had attained Disability Confident Level 1 and the aim was to first achieve Level 2 and then Level 3.

The Task and Finish Group were due to have its first meeting in early May/late June and would report its progress back to the Committee.

7. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK AND FINISH GROUP - ORAL UPDATE

It was noted that Councillors Sarah Cheung-Johnson, Claire Daunton, Bill Handley and Eileen Wilson had agreed to serve on the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group. Its first meeting was due to be held on 20 May.

8. ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

The Committee agreed that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following agenda item in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Head of People and Organisational Development introduced this report, which updated the Committee on the progress being made on the organisational review and asked them to consider the next stage with regards restructuring Tiers 1 and 2.

It was noted that Cabinet had considered the organisational review at its meeting on 1 May.

The Committee

NOTED

- A)** The proposal to change the strategic management structure at Tiers 1 and 2;
- B)** The Council's policies and the legal requirement set out within the report.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL

The commencement of a formal consultation process with staff who are in scope for the proposal for Tier 2, and note the proposed areas of responsibility for Tiers 1 and 2.

There were five votes in favour, none against and one abstention.

The Meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.
