

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 15 July 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chair

Councillors:	Dr. Claire Daunton	Sally Ann Hart
	Mark Howell	Heather Williams
	John Williams	

Officers:	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Jonathan Corbett	HR Advisor
	Donya Taylor	HR Advisor

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Dawn Percival.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Disciplinary Policy Review

Jonathan Corbett, HR Advisor, presented this report on the revised Disciplinary Policy, which was last reviewed in 2012.

Investigations

The HR Advisor explained that the proposed policy would allow the Council to investigate whether a breach of confidentiality or a failure to declare a gift or hospitality was deliberate or accidental. This would determine the severity of the offence. The Investigation manager would consider the case, based on the evidence presented by the senior manager.

Bullying and harassment

Councillor Heather Williams stated that bullying and harassment was a serious offence and so should be a level 3 not 2. The HR Advisor explained that each case would be judged on its merits and according to the Council's policies. A serious breach could lead to an officer being dismissed. Councillor John Williams opposed making all bullying and harassment cases a level 3 offence, as this would be too restrictive. He stated that every incident needed to be judged independently. It was agreed that this matter should be reconsidered after receiving feedback from both the Legal and HR sections.

Suspension

Jonathan Corbett, HR Advisor, explained that it was possible that the suspended officer

would not be provided with all the details surrounding the reasons for suspension, as the investigation would be ongoing. In response to questioning the HR Advisor explained that witnesses were offered support and guidance.

Donya Taylor, HR Advisor, explained that a conflict of interest could occur if two people involved in the investigation were close friends or family members.

Receipt of papers before hearing

The HR Advisor explained that it was sometimes only possible to provide information to all parties three working days before the hearing. Councillor Mark Howell suggested that it should be five working days. Donya Taylor, HR Advisor, explained that three days complied with ACAS guidance and was standard practice, which had been agreed with the unions. She added that alternative dates for the hearing could be provided if the officer or a witness was unable to attend. It was noted that this was currently part of the existing policy.

Recording of working hours

In response to questioning Jonathan Corbett, HR Advisor, explained that a new HR system had been set up to allow staff to record their working hours.

Minor issues and amendments

Councillor Claire Daunton suggested that the amendments to the existing policy should have been highlighted in the report. Councillor Sally Ann Hart requested that the policy consistently use the words “offense” and “offence”. It was agreed that all acronyms should be spelt out in reports when used for the first time.

The Committee **Agreed** that the signing off of the policy should be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

5. Retention and Turnover Report and Presentation: Quarter 3 (Q3) 1 October 2020 - 31 December 2020

Jonathan Corbett, HR Advisor, introduced this report on the turnover of staff between 1 October and 31 December 2020.

Return to work interviews

The HR Advisor, explained that 59% of leavers had completed a Return to Work. The form had been redesigned to ensure that an entry was made in the “reason for leaving” field.

Recruitment

The HR Advisor, reported that 91% of vacancies had been filled on their first attempt. The Council has set up its own bank of temporary staff and eight of these had been employed in this quarter. This reduced the need for more expensive agency staff.

Stability index

Councillor Heather Williams requested that the stability index could be shown by service.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

6. Retention and Turnover Report: Quarter 4 (Q4) 1 January 2021 - 31 March 2021

Donya Taylor, HR Advisor, introduced this report, which analysed the turnover of staff

between 1 January and 31 March 2021. She explained that the very low turnover of only seven leavers in this quarter was an anomaly. In response to questioning, she assured the Committee that the single redundancy was a one-off and not part of wider strategy.

Exit interviews

The HR Advisor, reported that the number of exit interviews completed continued to increase, as HR were actively contacting each leaver and encouraging them to have an interview, instead of passively just giving them a form.

Comparative data

The HR Advisor, agreed to try and find comparative data on the ethnicity of staff with the wider South Cambridgeshire population.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

7. Sickness Absence 1 January to 31 March (Q4)

Donya Taylor, HR Advisor, presented this report on the sickness absence for the period 1 January 2021 to 21 March 2021. She explained that the rapid drop in sickness during this quarter appeared to be an anomaly. The number of staff off sick due to the Covid-19 virus was very low.

Age profile

The HR Advisor agreed to consider providing the data by age, although it was noted that this could identify staff. It was suggested that the age profile did not need to be broken down by service.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

8. Update from the Disability Confident Task and Finish Group

There was no update from the Disability Confident Task and Finish Group. The Chair of the Group would be asked to provide an update for the next meeting.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on Friday 15 October at 10 am.

The Meeting ended at 3.20 p.m.
