

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 25 July 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:	Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chairman Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton – Vice-Chairman	
Councillors:	Sarah Cheung Johnson Mark Howell John Williams	Clare Delderfield Peter Topping
Officers:	Patrick Adams Susan Gardner Craig Trevor Nicoll	Senior Democratic Services Officer Interim Director of Corporate Services Interim Assistant Director for Waste Resources & Special Projects

Councillor Neil Gough was in attendance, by invitation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Dawn Percival and Councillor Clare Delderfield acted as her substitute.

The Chairman appointed Councillor Claire Daunton as Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4. MATERNITY POLICY

The Interim Director of Corporate Services presented this report on the updates made to the Council's maternity policy. This included the incorporation of a new policy relating to neo-natal and sick new-born babies.

It was noted that under the terms of the Council's policy, if the baby arrived before maternity leave has started, the first day will be recorded as sickness absence. The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that this sickness absence would be pregnancy related, and therefore not counted under the terms of the sickness absence policy for the purpose of sickness absence warnings.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. FEEDBACK FROM THE DISABILITY CONFIDENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson explained that the Disability Confident Task and Finish Group had held its first meeting and confirmed that:

- The Council had achieved Disability Confident Level 1
- The Group were confident of achieving Level 2

- The aim was to eventually achieve Level 3

The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that the Council needed to complete a self-assessment template to identify actions required to achieve Level 2. She explained that the Department of Work and Pensions had been contacted to explore how they could assist the Council in looking actively to recruit disabled people.

It was noted that charities were actively supporting the Council in this endeavour and providing expertise and advice. After a brief discussion the Committee **RECOMMENDED** to the Executive that these charities be paid a fee for their work for the Council. It was noted that was the only financial cost to be identified so far in terms of the Council working towards Level 2.

6. **FEEDBACK FROM THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Claire Daunton updated the Committee on the work of the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group, which had met on 10 May and 9 July. The Group had:

- Agreed its Terms of Reference
- Discussed different approaches to recruitment and selection
- Discussed branding and marketing
- Discussed the recent staff survey

Assisting line managers in staff recruitment

The Task and Finish Group understood that some managers were not allocating sufficient time and resources to recruiting staff, this was leading to poor candidate experience. The HR team were working to assist new managers by providing them with a revised handbook which included recruitment and providing them with a mentoring service to ensure a more uniform approach to recruitment throughout the Council.

Branding and marketing

The Group was recommending that the Council's job page be improved to advertise the benefits of working for the Council and emphasise the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme. It was recognised that this would have a cost implication.

Manager apprenticeships

Interim Director of Corporate Services announced that the Council had set up a manager apprenticeship scheme for existing staff.

Travel expenses

The Committee requested that the Council consider paying the travel expenses for those who attend job interviews, providing that the applicants were travelling from within the UK. It was noted that the Council could provide a loan to its existing staff for a season ticket for public transport.

Provision of temporary housing

The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that the Council were considering working with Ermine Street Housing Limited to provide temporary accommodation to help new staff to relocate to the District. It was noted that there could be tax implications for providing such a benefit.

Provision of IT

It was noted that exit interviews from staff had indicated that problems with IT had been a factor in them leaving the authority. The Head of ICT had given an impressive

presentation at a recent meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and it was hoped that these IT issues would be resolved.

It was noted that the Task and Finish Group will continue to progress work and formally present their findings and recommendations in due course.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. FEEDBACK FROM STAFF SURVEY

The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained to the Committee that 261 members of staff had completed the recent staff survey, which was a 46% return rate. Returns had been received from all service areas and all lengths of contract. 5.4% of responders considered themselves disabled. This was an encouraging return from this group as 3.5% of the total workforce considered themselves to be disabled.

The Committee noted that the large amount of data now needed to be analysed and a report would be brought to its next meeting

Future surveys

The Committee discussed whether the survey should be taken annually, or less frequently. The Interim Director of Corporate Services suggested that surveys could be undertaken annually but no less frequently than 3 yearly. She also agreed to ask the company that carried out the survey whether they had experience of comparing results and benchmarking against different organisations.

8. SICKNESS ABSENCE - QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Interim Director of Corporate Services presented this report on sickness absence from 1 April to 30 June 2019.

Waste Service

It was noted that the figure of 3.1 days off sick per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) member of staff represented the whole workforce (office and manual workforces). If the figures excluded the Waste service then would reduce to 1.96 days per FTE. Back and neck, other muscular skeletal disorders and, depression and mental health absences accounted for 66.8% of sickness. 93.4% of other muscular skeletal disorders and 99.1% of back and neck issues were attributed to staff from the Waste Service. The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that staff had access to advice from Occupational Therapists and the health and safety advisor was ensuring that manual handling training took place. A number of Waste Operatives were on long-term sick, including two crew members who were involved in a serious road traffic accident and this had a longstanding detrimental effect on the statistics.

Physical demands of waste collection

The Interim Assistant Director for Waste and Special Projects explained that the work of a Waste Operative was physically demanding, as it required walking 12 miles a day, constantly moving bins and this made sickness absence, due to physical injury, more likely in an aging workforce. It was suggested that if the weight in the wheeled bins were reduced, this could also reduce the physical strain on employees. The Interim Assistant Director Waste and Special Projects added that procedures existed for heavy waste bins, including leaving the bin and notifying residents. The Council supported staff in this.

In response to questioning the Interim Assistant Director for Waste and Special Projects

explained that he was liaising with the City Council to discuss alternative roles for Waste Operatives at the end of their careers, when they were unable to continue doing such physically demanding work. It was understood such an arrangement existed informally in the past.

Mental Health

Work was being carried out to encourage staff based at the depot to seek help for depression or any other mental health issues. It was noted that factors inside and outside of work were leading to staff going off sick for mental health reasons. It was also noted that the Council had volunteer mental health first aiders who could help to direct staff to professional agencies and if necessary book appointments.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that a cultural change was required to encourage depot staff to ask for help. In cases where financial pressures were contributing to stress, and where applicable, staff would be referred to our benefits section or Citizens Advice Bureau for assistance.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

9. STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Interim Director of Corporate Services introduced this report on the turnover of staff between 1 April and 30 June 2019. It was noted that exit interviews had identified ongoing ICT issues, a lack of leadership at a senior level and the level of work due to staff vacancies.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that 28 new staff had joined the Council in the last quarter. The Golden Hello policy had proved successful. It was noted that new employees that received a payment would have to pay back part of this if they left within the first two years of their employment. The Council was currently hosting a number of work experience students.

It was noted that the cost of housing made it difficult to recruit staff from outside the District. The Interim Director of Corporate Services explained that it was possible for staff to live in a different region and work from home. This would become easier with the full implementation of Council Anywhere. However, it was noted that there was a national shortage of planning officers. The Interim Director of Corporate Services agreed to find out the percentage of vacancies within the Planning Department.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

10. ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW - PROCESS FOR RESTRUCTURING TIERS 1 AND 2

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 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Deputy Leader (non statutory) updated the Committee on the progress being made regarding the Organisational Review and the feedback received during the consultation period which closed on 1 July 2019.

The Committee unanimously

A) Noted the feedback from stakeholders and directly affected staff and the key

themes arising.

- B)** Noted that the Council's new Chief Executive, Liz Watts, will join the council in late Summer 2019 and to engage the new Chief Executive in the organisational review including Tier 2 design and operating model.
- C)** Agreed to engage with Cambridge City Council in the review affecting any aspect of the role of Shared Director of Planning and Economic Development.
- D)** Agreed to advise stakeholders of the outcome from this stage of the organisational review and confirm that no formal decision on the structure will be made pending the arrival of the Chief Executive.

11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday 12 September at 2pm in Swansley Room A.

The Meeting ended at 3.45 p.m.
