

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chairman
Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Clare Delderfield Heather Williams
Nick Wright

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
Susan Gardner Craig Interim Director of Corporate Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Sarah Cheung Johnson, Mark Howell, Peter McDonald, Dawn Percival, Peter Topping and John Williams.

Councillor Clare Delderfield acted as substitute for Councillor Peter McDonald, Councillor Heather Williams acted as substitute for Councillor Peter Topping and Councillor Nick Wright acted as substitute for Councillor Mark Howell.

The Chairman appointed Claire Daunton as Vice-Chairman for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4. UPDATES FROM THE DISABILITY CONFIDENT AND THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Disability Confident Task and Finish Group

The Committee noted that its recommendation had been accepted by the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, who had agreed to make a budget of £5,000 available to engage the expertise of local groups who were assisting the Council in achieving Disability Confident Level 2.

Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group

Councillor Claire Daunton reported that the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group would be meeting shortly to discuss the implications of the staff survey.

5. STAFF SURVEY FEEDBACK - REPORT TO FOLLOW

The Interim Corporate Director presented this report on the recent staff engagement survey and highlighted the main findings. It was noted that the survey was sent to all staff employed by the Council, but not those who worked on site but were employed by one of our partner authorities.

The Interim Corporate Director reported that the findings were not surprising and whilst

there were many positives it was clear that there were areas that needed attention.

Planning

The Committee noted that the planning service had undergone a period of change with the introduction of the shared service, which necessitated a move of location for many staff, and there were a number of vacancies, which increased the workload. It was suggested that a change of administration may bring challenges to officers.

It was noted that other authorities had seen similar challenges following the introduction of a shared service.

ICT

It was noted that the provision of ICT to staff had been identified by the survey as a major issue in the qualitative comments.

Depot staff

It was noted that only 18 officers who worked at Waterbeach Depot had completed the survey. The Interim Corporate Director recognised that it was difficult to base conclusions from such a return, but this represented an increase on previous efforts to engage these staff, who were obliged to complete paper copies of the form where in many cases literacy was an issue. It was understood that many of these employees were keen to return home after completing their shift. To mitigate this it was suggested that in future the survey should be broken down into smaller sections, which could be completed individually every week. Another suggestion was that a simplified version of the survey could be provided for depot staff. The possibility of offering entry into a prize draw to those who entered had been rejected as officers were completing the survey anonymously.

Management

The Committee expressed the view that managers needed to tackle poor performance, based on the average score of 3.19 out of 5 on whether "poor performance is effectively managed by managers". The Interim Corporate Director explained that whilst the perception could be from staff that poor performance was not being dealt with, managers' actions in private one-to-one sessions would not be noticed by many officers who completed the survey.

It was noted that coaching and mentoring was offered to all staff, including new managers.

Benchmarking

The Committee agreed that the results of the survey could not be reliably compared to the previous survey carried out in 2009, as so much had changed over the last 10 years. It was agreed that this year's survey would provide a useful benchmark for subsequent surveys. The Interim Corporate Director was asked to contact neighbouring authorities and ask them to share the results of their recent surveys, although it was noted that they would be under no obligation to share this information. It was suggested that the Local Government Association be approached to assist with this. It was agreed that a staff survey should be carried out next year to measure what progress that had been achieved.

Implementing change

It was stated that changes needed to be implemented to assure staff that their views had been listened to. The Interim Corporate Director explained that staff had expressed concerns about the state of the staff toilets and kitchen areas. In response the Facilities Manager had gone out to tender for the necessary renovation work.

The Committee agreed that the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group should analyse the data from the staff survey and draw up a list of actions.

Interpreting qualitative comments

The Interim Corporate Director explained that the survey had a free text option for each section and this had resulted in a large amount of data that still needed to be analysed. On the suggestion of Councillor Claire Daunton, the Committee agreed that the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group should assist officers in analysing the qualitative data resulting from the survey.

The Committee

NOTED the Staff Survey and the conclusions detailed in the report.

AGREED that

- A)** The Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group assist officers with the analysis of the qualitative comments in the survey.
- B)** The Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group analyse all the data from the survey and draw up a list of actions.
- C)** A staff survey should be carried out in 2020.

6. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Committee agreed the following meeting dates:

- Wednesday 20 November 2019 at 2pm
- Thursday 23 January 2020 at 10am
- Wednesday 18 March 2020 at 10am
- Thursday 21 May 2020 at 10am
- Thursday 23 July 2020 at 10am

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.
