

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Wednesday, 18 March 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chairman
Councillor Mark Howell – Vice-Chairman (for this meeting)

Councillors: Peter McDonald Dawn Percival (via Skype)

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, Claire Daunton, Heather Williams and John Williams. Councillor Peter McDonald was substituting for Councillor Claire Daunton and Councillor Dawn Percival was present via Skype.

It was noted that the number of apologies for absence were the result of Government advice to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. It was agreed that due to the current situation, only the minimum number of Councillors to make the meeting quorate should be in attendance.

Councillor Mark Howell acted as Vice-Chairman for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

In response to points raised on the minutes, the Head of HR and Corporate Services reported that

- She had met with the Lead Cabinet Member of Planning to discuss the issue of planning salaries.
- She had the authority to approve travel expenses for a job applicant in exceptional circumstances.

4. QUARTER 3 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT (1 OCTOBER 2019 TO 31 DECEMBER 2019)

The Head of HR and Corporate Services presented this report on the sickness absence for the period of 1 October to 31 December 2019. She explained that whilst this was a slight increase on last year's Quarter 3 figure, the reporting and management of sickness processes at the Depot had been improved and a number of cases had been resolved. It was understood that the Council's performance in this area compared favourably to other public sector organisations.

It was noted that sickness increased in the winter months and this was reflected in the

data for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4. It was expected that the initial impact of the coronavirus would be shown in Quarter 4 2019/20 and Quarters 1 and 2 2020/21.

Coronavirus

The Head of HR and Corporate Services reported that the Council was maintaining separate lists of staff who were:

- Self-isolating due to their own sickness.
- Self-isolating because they were in a vulnerable group.
- Self-isolating because they were caring for vulnerable dependents.
- Working at home due to childcare responsibilities.

The Chairman thanked the Head of HR and Corporate Services and her team for their work during this challenging time. The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. RETENTION AND TURNOVER REPORT: QUARTER 3 (1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER)

The Head of HR and Corporate Services presented this report on the turnover of staff between 1 October and 31 December 2019. It was noted that the figure of 2.18% of voluntary leavers was well within the target of 3.25%.

Reasons for leaving

The Head of HR and Corporate Services agreed to investigate why, during the first three quarters of the year, 17 leavers did not report a reason for leaving the Council.

Retaining staff

The Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that the Council had agreed a contract for the provision of a benefits portal and this was in the process of being set up. The portal will allow employees to access all their benefits in one place. Market Factor Supplements(MFS) paid to staff could not be used in calculations for mortgage payments or loans. These issues were being investigated and advice being sought. Talks between management and the Trade Unions were due to commence on this year's pay deal.

It was understood that the coronavirus was creating uncertainty in the job market and that often in an economic downturn the public sector became an attractive choice of employer. This meant that it was likely that staff turnover figures would remain low.

The Chairman thanked the Head of HR and Corporate Services for this useful and informative report, which was **NOTED** by the Committee.

6. STAFF SURVEY 2020 - ORAL DISCUSSION

This item was deferred.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the Committee should only meet if it had urgent business and it was unnecessary to set a date for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Meeting ended at 10.20 a.m.
