

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Sally Ann Hart– Chair
Councillor Anna Bradnam– Vice-Chair

Councillors: Sunita Hansraj Mark Howell
Richard Stobart John Williams

Officers: Laurence Damary-Homan Democratic Services Officer
Jeff Membery Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate
Services

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chair, Councillor William Jackson-Wood, sent Apologies for Absence. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Sally Ann Hart, assumed the role of Chair for the meeting and Councillor Anna Bradnam was appointed, by affirmation, as Vice-Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Mark Howell was not present at the start of the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minute 6 was amended to reflect that the meeting had been scheduled for 10am, not 2pm. With the amendment, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 as a correct record, by affirmation.

4. Review of Hybrid Working Policy

The HR Service Manager presented the report. Members stated that the CIPD report was useful but requested that it be listed as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development at least once in the report; officers confirmed that the Council did not take part in the CIPD research. It was also requested that a definition of hybrid working be provided at the beginning of future reports. Members discussed a number of topics:

IT provision

The Committee discussed IT provision and officers informed Members that IT products were updated on an ongoing basis and a rollout of new laptops was underway. In response to a question regarding staff with poor internet connection at home, officers advised that all equipment necessary for work was made available for all staff in the office.

Wellbeing monitoring for staff in a hybrid working environment

In response to Member questions and comments, officers informed the Committee that managers were being equipped with the skills they need to ensure the wellbeing of their staff. Training and guidance was being provided by HR and teams had been told to get together at least twice a month to ensure the sense of team was preserved in a hybrid environment. Officers advised that all staff had been moved to the first floor of the office which would help build a sense of community amongst those who came into the office for work.

Performance monitoring

Members were informed that training for managers to monitor team performance was provided. Opportunities to enrol in the leadership academy had been given to managers and team charters had been implemented to assist managers in ensuring their teams were on track. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were referenced, and the Committee was informed that Leadership Team were monitoring KPIs to try and recognise issues and address them pre-emptively. It was noted that the use of Microsoft Teams had helped teams stay in regular contact, especially those whose work required them to be mobile across the District. Officers informed the Committee that some departments had effective management information systems in place and that the Council aimed to rollout management information systems to all teams within the next 12-18 months.

Working with confidential documents

Members enquired as to how confidential documents were managed in a hybrid working environment. Officers advised that all staff were given GDPR training and confidentiality training was provided where appropriate, with staff working with awareness of their environments when handling confidential documents. It was noted that most confidential documents were held securely in electronic format which provided greater security. The Committee was advised that all work was undertaken on Council issued devices which could be remotely wiped in case of theft or loss. Members suggested that the use of computed privacy screens by those working with confidential documents be explored.

Hybrid working for Members

It was clarified that the Member survey was to gather data on both how Members found working themselves in a hybrid environment, as well as with officers. Officers advised that work was ongoing to give Members greater access to shared online resources. Members enquired as to how information on the hybrid policy was shared with the wider Membership and officers agreed to look into including information on hybrid working in future Weekly Bulletins.

Councillor Mark Howell joined the Committee during the discussion

Members expressed support for the policy, noted its importance and thanked officers for the review. The Council was commended for being a leader in adapting to hybrid work. The Committee **recommended** that the policy be reviewed again in a year's time, with any updates to be provided in the meantime, and **noted** the report.

5. HR Recruitment, Retention and Absence Data for May 2023

The HR Service Manager presented the report. Members stated that the use of white text in blue boxes was difficult to read requested that in future an alternate form of presentation be used. Clarity was sought over the timeframe that the report referred to and if the data was utilised by HR staff. Officers advised that the data came from standard reporting packages and agreed to look at alternative presentation. It was confirmed that the data related to the previous month, but HR staff had a wider set of data which was regularly monitored to determine if any areas of concern were arising

and if any interventions were required. It was noted that management also utilised the data.

Regarding retention, it was asked if it was possible to see what the effect of different policies, such as the hybrid policy or 4-day week (4DW) policy. Officers advised that a number of surveys with applicants to roles, discussions with new staff and exit interviews were all being undertaken to provide further data. It was noted that survey responses required honesty and were not 100% accurate, but they were a useful tool to generate an overview. Members commented that, whilst it was still early in the 4DW trial, recruitment had improved after years of difficulties recruiting. Officers advised that it was too early to effectively assess if this was a direct result of the 4DW trial but that the filling of previously difficult to fill roles seemed to be more than a coincidence.

The Committee **noted** the report.

The Meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.
