

## South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on  
Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Henry Batchelor – Chair  
Councillor Dawn Percival – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Sarah Cheung Johnson                      Dr. Claire Daunton  
Mark Howell    Heather Williams  
John Williams

Officers: Patrick Adams                                      Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Susan Gardner Craig                                      Head of HR and Corporate Services

### 1. Apologies for Absence

None.

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None.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

None.

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

### 4. Sickness Absence 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020

The Head of HR and Corporate Services presented this report on sickness absence for the period 1 July to 30 September 2020.

#### Home working – office space

It was noted that staff were allowed to collect equipment from the office to use at home, although a lack of space at home was an issue. The Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that the Council had launched a new DSE assessment tool to allow staff to assess their workspace at home. The onus was on line managers to check the working conditions of their staff. The HR team offered support and could arrange for Occupational Health to make assessments and suggest adaptations.

#### Home working – loneliness

The Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that HR had organised coffee mornings, quiz and competition, employee awards, mini-competitions, including virtual bake-offs gone wrong and guess the baby. Before the lockdown socially distanced walks had been organised. It was noted that officers had access to free confidential counselling.

**Long term sickness in departments**

It was requested that future reports display long-term sickness in departments, as few staff on long-term sickness would skew the statistics.

**Covid-19**

The Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that officers self-isolating due to Covid-19 were not counted in the sickness statistics. Those ill due to Covid-19 were recorded separately. It was noted that the number of staff off sick due to Covid-19 was very low, but it was agreed that this information should be provided to the Committee.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

**5. Retention and Turnover Report: Quarter 2 (Q2) 1 July to 30 September 2020**

The Head of HR and Corporate Services presented this report on staff retention and turnover for the period 1 July to 30 September 2020. It was noted that 2.71% turnover for this period was well within the limit set by the Council. There had been 16 voluntary leavers and 6 involuntary leavers.

**Exit interviews**

Disappointment was expressed at the fact that the return rate of exit interviews was only 25%. It was hoped that managers from all sections of the Council could ensure that the reasons why officers were leaving the authority could be recorded. The Head of HR and Corporate Services agreed to check whether the online exit interview form allows the officer to not answer the reason for leaving question.

**Recruitment**

It was noted that the Council was successfully recruiting to 88% of vacancies. In response to questioning, the Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that in some cases the decision had been taken not to recruit due to the calibre of candidates. Induction of new staff was continuing despite the Covid-19 virus. It was understood that the Council had an active apprenticeships programme.

**Council's bank of casual staff**

In response to concerns regarding the cost of external temporary staff, the Head of HR and Corporate Services explained that the Council had decided to set up its own bank of casual staff. She agreed to find out the number of consultants that had been employed by department.

**Ethnicity of staff**

The Head of HR and Corporate Services agreed to find out how the percentage of staff from different ethnic backgrounds compared to the ethnicity in the District.

**Disability of apprentices**

The Head of HR and Corporate Services agreed to find out why the bar chart for "Apprenticeship – disability (declared)" had categories for both "None" and "No".

**Disability Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson, the Chair of the Disability Task and Finish Group suggested that the work of this Group be paused, due to the demands of other priorities facing the Council. The Committee agreed to pause the work of this Group for three months. It was also agreed that this issue should be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

It was noted that Council had agreed a motion asking the Group to examine the British Deaf Association Charter. It was understood that the Council's HR section were investigating inequalities caused by disabilities.

**6. Date of the Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed that their next meeting would be held on Thursday 29 April at 10am.

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**The Meeting ended at 11.00 a.m.**

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