

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment and Staffing Committee held on
Friday, 14 January 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: Dr. Claire Daunton Sally Ann Hart
Mark Howell Heather Williams
John Williams

Officers: Lindsey Smith HR Business Partner
Donya Taylor HR Advisor
Jeff Membery Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate
Services
Laurence Damary-Homan Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no Apologies for Absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2021 as correct record

4. Pay Policy Statement

The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services presented the report. Members enquired as to whether the proportion of women in senior roles was obscuring the information on pay for women within the Council. The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services agreed to offer Members clarity on the question at a later date. The Committee asked on whether the levels of pay equality were part of a wider trend in Local Authorities and the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services stated that the gender pay gap was typically smaller in the public sector.

The Committee, by affirmation, **recommended** that Council approve the Pay Policy Statement.

5. Hybrid Working Policy

The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services presented the report. The Committee debated the policy and made a number of recommendations. Members

commended the flexibility that the policy would bring to staff working practices, but emphasised the need to ensure that no staff were disadvantaged by the policy; this applied to both those who worked at home and in the offices. Due to the fact that this was a new policy, the Committee agreed to recommend regular review of the policy, with the first suggested to be undertaken in 12 months time. Members also stated that they would like to see a monitoring strategy for the health and wellbeing of those working from home, with both physical and mental health assessed, in order to ensure that no staff were being disadvantaged in these respects by working from home. Members felt that staff needed to be given a working environment that suited their needs and suggested introduction of a strategy to ensure that progression could be monitored for all, regardless of their working environment.

Equality of access to technology was debated and the Committee raised the following points on Member IT provision:

- Inconsistent delivery of hardware- since the start of the pandemic, delivery of hardware to Members had not been uniform. It was noted that many Members used personal devices for Council business and that Member hardware had, prior to this year, not been included in budgets which should be rectified.
- WiFi connections- Members noted that, in the Chamber, WiFi provision was inadequate and often they had to use data roaming to use their devices in the Chamber which came with both financial and security concerns. Members asked that a solution be identified, it was noted that some Members had problems with their home broadband. It was stated that connectivity issues would hinder progress towards transitioning to paperless operations.
- Access to Microsoft Teams for Members would be beneficial
- Having a dedicated member of staff to deal with Member IT would be greatly welcomed

Members noted that, for those who wished to work from home, appropriate technology needed to be provided. Concerns over the security of IT and documents was flagged with more people working from home and the Committee felt that, with the introduction of the new policy, it was an excellent opportunity to review both the infrastructure and individual understandings that ensure Council business was conducted securely.

The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services and the HR Business Partner responded to the comments and suggestions raised by the Committee.

The Committee, by affirmation, **recommended** that Cabinet approve the Hybrid Working Policy subject to the comments made by Members.

6. Performance Development Policy

The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services presented the report. The Committee discussed ways in which to maintain a balance between a member of staff's contentment in a role and performance standards. Members highlighted the importance of communication and managing performances. Requests for clarity in some of the wording used in the policy were raised, alongside an inclination to implement tailored, individual performance review strategies and the need to provide training to successfully implement the policy. The Head of Transformation and the HR Business Partner offered responses to comments made by the Members, and the Committee commended the report and the policy.

By affirmation, the Committee **recommended** the implementation of the policy.

7. Retention and Turnover Report: Quarter 2 (Q2) 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021

The HR Advisor presented the report and detailed how requests from Members in previous meetings had been incorporated into the report. A request was made to include numbering on all charts. The HR Advisor provided clarification on a number of aspects of the report in response to Members' questions. It was suggested that details of the policies in place to ensure equal hiring were included in the report.

The Committee **noted** the report.

8. Sickness Absence 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021

The HR Advisor presented the report. The Committee discussed the impact of Covid-19 on sickness absence and examined the differing impact it had on different departments.

The Committee **noted** the report.

9. Update on the Disability Confident Task & Finish Group

The HR Business Partner gave a verbal update on the scheme and informed the Committee that Level 2 had been achieved by the Council, but stated that further work could be done to shore up the scheme. The Committee debated if the Council should work towards achieving Level 3 in the near future, or consolidate the Level 2 status. The HR Business partner detailed what had been to secure the Level 2 status and responded to a number of questions from Members. The Committee stated that an in-depth paper would be needed to effectively make a recommendation on moving towards Level 3; in the interim the Committee **recommended**, by affirmation, that work was done to consolidate the Council's Level 2 status.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair informed the Committee that the next meeting would be held on 9 June 2022. The Democratic Services Officer offered explanation of the gap between meetings, stating that a 'circuit breaker' was being done to allow the Turnover and Sickness reports presented to be from the previous quarter, rather than the quarter prior to that, and that the next meeting would review the reports of two quarters. A request was made that, given the gap between meetings which was deemed acceptable and appropriate, responses to the requests made in the meeting be given to Members as soon as possible.

The Meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.
