

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a Virtual meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on Tuesday, 10 November 2020, at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Councillors

Rachael Hogg (Chairman)
Janet Willis (Vice-Chairman)

Pat Bell
Roger Bingham

Philip Dixon
Brian Rendell

Matt Severn

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Khan and Mark Wilson.

Officers

Courage Aiguobasinmwin	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Laura Chapman	Case Management Officer
Kira King	HR Specialist
David Nicholson	HR Lead Specialist
Charles Officer	HR Specialist
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources

HR/1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Following confirmation that the live stream of the meeting had commenced, the Chairman referred to the new Government legislation allowing councils to conduct remote meetings and explained in detail to all taking part, and for the benefit of members of the public, the procedures for the meeting. She then invited Members of the Committee to introduce themselves, to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting. All Members present, including the Chairman, having indicated that this was the case, she referred to officers present at the meeting who would introduce themselves when asked to address the meeting.

HR/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 11 February 2020.

HR/3 MINUTES OF APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED - That the minute of the meeting of the Human Resources Sub-Committee held on 13 May 2020 be received and the Chairman of the appropriate Sub-Committee be authorised to sign as correct record.

HR/4 EMERGENCY NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

No members of the Human Resources Committee raised any concerns relating to the Non Emergency Executive Decisions.

RESOLVED - That the Non Emergency Executive decision made by Portfolio Holder and Officers were received.

HR/5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were raised.

HR/6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED - That the items in Part II of the Agenda be dealt with following the exclusion of the press and public.

HR/7 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY REVIEW

The Human Resources Specialist presented the Policy Review report to the Human Resources Committee and identified a number of updates incorporated into eleven of the Councils policies.

The updates were part of the policy review schedule and reflected structural management changes.

No changes had been made to the Acceptable Standard Appearance Policy.

The HR Specialist confirmed that the Access to Personnel Files had been reviewed and updated in accordance with the Data Protection Regulation Act 2018 which implements the General Data Protection Regulation.

The Adoption Leave policy incorporated a minor amendment to departmental names following the structural changes as a result of the Customer Connect Programme.

The Adverse Weather policy had been reviewed and updated to remove all references to the core times as these no longer existed following the previous changes adopted through the Working Arrangements and Flexi Time Policy in 2019.

The Career Break Policy had been reviewed and minor changes had been incorporated to reflect structural changes as a result of the Customer Connect Programme. The HR Lead Specialist confirmed that the policy had also been updated to reflect that it was no longer necessary for pension contributions to be paid within the first 30 days of a career break.

The guidelines for the Carry Forward of Annual Leave Policy had been amended to reflect the structural changes as a result of the Customer Connect Programme.

The Claim for Additional Hours Policy had been reviewed to reflect the changes that had occurred in the spinal points from SCP 28 to SCP 22.

The Disclosure and Barring Service Policy had additional wording included to provide clarity the fee payments for new checks and renewals and additional information included regarding the retention of details.

Finally the HR Specialist had reviewed the Disciplinary Policy to amend section 7.0 which detailed the levels of authority to take disciplinary action incorporating the new structural changes as a result of the Customer Connect Programme.

The HR Specialist responded to questions raised by members of the Committee providing clarity around the Acceptable Standard of Appearance at Work Policy. It was confirmed that the organisation recognised that employees were spending prolonged periods of time working from home and therefore wanted employees to wear comfortable clothing however the policy would remain in place to discourage inappropriate clothing.

The HR Specialist assured the Committee that the adoption leave policy followed best practise and reflected statutory guidelines. It was clarified that the timescales for adoption leave in comparison to maternity leave were different however this was in accordance with government legislation.

RESOLVED - That the amendments to the each of the policies be approved.

HR/8

ANNUAL REPORT ON EMPLOYEE SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Human Resources Specialist presented the Annual Report on Employee Sickness Absence which covered the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Committee was informed that the recommendation was that the report be noted and that target of 7.50 days for sickness absence for 2020/21 be approved.

The Human Resources Specialist confirmed that the total number of days lost for the 2019/20 period had increased by 19%. This was attributable to an increase in the number of long term sickness absence cases. He went on to outline the variety of support mechanisms available for employees such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Health Care Cash Plan, Wellbeing at Work Policy and Occupational Health appointments.

It was highlighted that there had been a 51% decrease in ear, nose and mouth related absences, however there had been an increase in industrial related injuries although it was felt that this figures had increased due to a heavier emphasis on reporting.

The Human Resources Specialist reported that the Councils average for work related stress absences was lower than the national average. He also confirmed that there was a large amount of support for employee who reached sickness absence triggers. Through the Employee Assistance Programme the Council offered up to 6 free counselling sessions for employees.

The Committee recognised the impact on employees associated with working from home and were reassured that the organisation had encouraged techniques for employees to keep in touch such as virtual organisational wide support sessions.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) The Annual Report on Employee Sickness Absence be noted; and
- (2) the sickness absence target for 2020/21 of 7.50 days be approved.

HR/9

PUBLIC SECTOR EXIT PAY REFORMS

The Human Resources Operational Lead notified the Committee of the proposed changes that pose implications on Council employees through the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 and Local Government Pension Scheme.

He confirmed that the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments imposed a £95,000 cap on exit payments to employees in the public sector that came into force on 4 November 2020.

The Human Resources Operational Lead responded to questions from members and confirmed that the restriction excluded injury or death at work. The Council had no current employee cases that would be affected by the restrictions however cases would arise in the future. The Council had a duty to ensure its legal duties were followed and communicated the changes ensuring employees were made aware.

The Council had been made aware that governing authorities had challenged the decision and sought a judicial review.

HR/10 PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Act as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 by virtue of the paragraphs indicated.

HR/11 JOINT CONSULTATIVE PANEL

- *Paragraph 4 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority.*

RESOLVED – That the notes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 11 February 2020 be received.

HR/12 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

- *Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.*

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee held on 23 June 2020 and 15 September 2020 be received.

HR/13 ORGANISATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT UPDATE

- *Paragraph 1, 2 and 3*
- *Information relating to any individual.*
- *Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.*
- *Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

The Human Resources Specialist presented a report which outlined the updated Organisational Establishment Update and highlighted that the report was designed to give assurance that the Council was meeting the proposed vision through the Customer Connect Programme. He also confirmed that the salary budgets were based on a number of role appointments and would be considered at Cabinet and Council.

The Human Resources Specialist responded to questions raised by members and informed the Committee that the report reflected an increased number of fixed term editions for services areas who had experienced capacity issues.

RESOLVED - That

(1) the changes as detailed in the report and appendices be noted;

(2) the updated Establishment List at Appendix A to the report be received; and

(3) approval be given for the use of the Establishment List in preparation of the 2021/22 to 2024/25 salary budgets, for the consideration at Full Council and a summary of the Establishment be included in the budget setting report to enable Council to approve the overall staffing requirements.

HR/14

COVID AND STAFF WELLBEING

- *Paragraph 2 and 3*
- *Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.*
- *Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Operational Lead updated the Committee on the measures the Council had put in place to support the wellbeing of staff particularly during the Coronavirus pandemic.

He outlined that the Council had introduced a Mental Wellbeing at Work Policy, amended the Special Leave and Flexible Working Policies to provide a better work/ home life balance, undertaken stress risk assessments as well as encouraged employees to use the services available through the Employee Assistance Programme.

He highlighted to the Committee the works that had been undertaken to ensure employees were supported throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic. These support mechanisms included Personal Resilience Workshops, Staff Surveys and COVID-29 Risk Assessments.

The Human Resources Operational Lead confirmed that the Council had purchased a catalogue of E-Learning course which would be rolled out across the Authority.

The meeting ended at 15:30 p.m