

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a meeting of the Human Resources Committee held in the Assembly Room, Kendal Town Hall, on Tuesday, 20 July 2021, at 3.00 p.m.

Present

Councillors

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

Pat Bell

Shirley-Anne Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Philip Dixon, Ali Jama and Matt Severn.

Officers

Kira King	HR Specialist
Julia Krier	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Courtney Langhorne	Case Management Officer (Support Services)
David Nicholson	HR Lead Specialist
Charles Officer	HR Specialist
Simon Rowley	Director of Customer and Commercial Services
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources

HR/1 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 10 November 2020.

HR/2 MINUTES OF APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Sub-Committee held on 2 March 2021 be received and the Chairman of that Sub-Committee be authorised to sign as correct record.

HR/3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were raised.

HR/4 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/5 ANNUAL SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT 2020-21

The HR Specialist presented the Annual Sickness Absence Report to the Human Resources Committee during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

It was recommended that the Joint Consultative Panel notes the report with any actions to be taken moving forward and note the target for sickness absence for 2021/22 of 7.50 days to be maintained.

During the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the Council had an average full time equivalent (FTE) of 398 employees. The Council lost 4040.5 working days through sickness absence, compared to 4572.4 in the previous year (a decrease of 11.6%, 531.9 days). This is equivalent to 10.15 days per FTE employee per annum. This represented a decrease of 0.73 days per FTE employee compared to last year (10.88) and an increase of 2.65 days over the target of 7.5 days per FTE employee agreed by the Human Resource Committee.

Of the total number of days lost, 3052.1 days were lost through long-term absence which equated to 75.5% of all sickness absence for the period. The average duration of long term absence was 53.7 days compared to 57.5 in the previous year.

The HR Specialist confirmed that the HR team regularly report on absence and managers are supported by HR to monitor these absences. Free confidential counselling has been provided to employees, as well as an updated wellbeing policy, HR initiatives and the Council's Employee Assistance Programme.

It was noted that the figures from COVID-19 absences in the past annum had not been included towards normal sickness absences, as agreed, and were recorded under a separate reporting method.

The Human Resources Specialist confirmed to the Committee that the Council was introducing pro-active measures and early interventions to address long term sickness days through stress, depression and fatigue. The Human Resources team are striving to improve the working environment for employees, including the most recent One Team social media on SharePoint, allowing colleagues to communicate and share positive stories.

The Committee discussed the impact on employees associated with working from home and the smart working policy, noting the positive response on individual circumstances and flexible working. It was confirmed that occupancy levels are no more than 25% currently and not all employees will return to the office full time.

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 maintained.

HR/6

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY UPDATES

The HR Specialist presented the updated HR Policy Review report to the Human Resources Committee, identifying a number of changes made and updated wording on multiple Council policies. It was noted that there had been grammatical changes made to the expenses policy, and role titles had been updated to reflect structural management changes following the implementation of a new organisational structure.

Amendments in the wording had been made to reflect the Council's internal communications processes, as part of an ongoing Human Resources policy review schedule. The Exceptional Effort/Merit payments guidelines and Purchase of Additional Leave Policy had also been revised to relate to associated policies.

The Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy had been proposed as a new policy to support the health, safety and wellbeing of SLDC employees. This policy had been created to provide employees and managers with the information needed on risks associated and symptoms of alcohol and substance abuse, providing guidance on potential issues that may arise.

The HR Specialist confirmed that having a clear policy ensured that the Council continued to work in line the Council plan by ensuring excellence and openness.

RESOLVED - That the following be approved:-

- (1) the Expenses policy, Exceptional Effort/ Merit Payments and Purchase of Additional leave Policy; and
- (2) the new alcohol and substance misuse policy.

HR/7 WELLBEING SURVEY

The Human Resources Lead Specialist presented the results of the staff wellbeing survey to the Human Resources Committee, sharing the statistics and survey response trends. It was confirmed that these results had been shared with employees and staff were engaged with the survey results.

It was confirmed that the next staff survey would take place in October and the Committee would be consulted prior to sharing with staff for consideration.

RESOLVED – That the verbal update be noted.

HR/8 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/9 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

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

During discussion, the Director of Strategy, Innovation and resources confirmed that in relation to local government reorganisation the Council would ensure support packages were in place for staff throughout any changes which may occur.

It was also requested that the Health and Wellbeing policy be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee held on 1 December 2020 and 2 March 2021 be received.

HR/10

ORGANISATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT UPDATE

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

The Human Resources Specialist presented a report which outlined the updated Organisational Establishment Update and highlighted the changes to the reporting lines within Customer and Commercial Services and two additional new roles in the Directorate.

The Human Resources Specialist and Director of Customer and Commercial Services responded to questions raised by members.

RESOLVED - That

(1) the following be noted:-

(a) changes to Customer and Commercial Service Directorate line management reporting lines; and

(b) the two additional new roles (Principal Specialist and Team Leader) in the Customer and Commercial Services Directorate; and

(2) the following be approved: -

(a) the disestablishment of the post of Performance Innovation and Commissioning Lead Specialist from the establishment;

(b) the establishment of a new post of Principal Specialist (Performance, Innovation and Commissioning);

(c) the revision to the Strategy function to incorporate the functions of Performance, Innovation and Commissioning Principal Specialist; and

(d) the Organisational Establishment update and changes to titles within the report; and

(3) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution to add the wording 'including changes to job titles' to delegation E(2) 2.1.

HR/11**FUTURE CHANGES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT**

- *Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual.*
- *Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*
- *Paragraph 5 - Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.*

The Human Resources Specialist presented to the Committee a verbal update regarding the future changes to the establishment.

RESOLVED – That in the event that Cabinet approves that the property services currently provided by an external provider be undertaken by the Council from 01 October 2021:-

(1) consideration and details of any changes to the establishment arising from the insourcing of the property services contract be delegated to the Director of Customer and Commercial and the Chair of the Human Resource committee; and

(2) consultation commence with all staff affected and with trade unions with a view to a timely transition back to the Council which ensures business continuity and manages risk, including consultation as required on Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.

The meeting ended at 4.15 p.m.