

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 13 February 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, D N Keane,
Mrs J Tavener and D M Tysoe.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Chapman, Mrs P A Jordan and D Terry.

26. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

28. ICARE VALUES - ACCOUNTABLE / RESPECTFUL

Members received an update on the uses to which their input at the last meeting on two ICARE values had been put. These included sharing them with the Senior Leadership Team and with the Officer People Group and establishing links with the Customer Services and Learning and Development Strategies.

Having been acquainted with the definitions that had been devised for the Accountable and Respectful ICARE Values, Members deliberated on their practical implications, how they related to the customer experience and what employees might do to promote them. The resulting ideas would be collated for incorporation into the development of ICARE.

29. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 3)

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st October 2018 to 31st December 2018. The report included the latest position and trends relating to employee numbers, salary costs and sickness absence. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

The report indicated that two employees had retired in the quarter, having a total of over 58 years' service between them. Members recognised the employees' achievements and conveyed their congratulations to them.

The Committee was informed that the workforce headcount was slightly lower than at the end of the previous quarter and that the total spend on pay for employees in 2018/19 was forecast to be £1.7m less than the year's budget. In addition, 75% of the workforce had no instances of sickness absence during the quarter but 26 employees had experienced long-term sickness. The latter represented a reduction on the previous period. In response to a question by a Member, confirmation was received that when adverse sickness trends were experienced within departments, HR would work with managers to identify the causes and address them.

The Committee commented on the importance of work on mental health. A significant amount of conversations had taken place, including some that could otherwise have resulted in serious consequences. A presentation on the Mental Health First Aiders scheme was requested at the next meeting.

Having noted information on the accidents / incidents that had occurred in the quarter, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the contents of the report be noted, and
- b) that the Council place on record its recognition of and gratitude for the excellent contributions made by the two employees who had recently retired from their employment in the local government services and conveyed their best wishes to them for long and happy retirements.

30. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

With the assistance of a report by the HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee considered a proposed 2019/20 Pay Policy Statement. The Statement provided information about the Council's policies relating to the pay and reward of Chief Officers and other employees, as required by the Localism Act. It was noted that minor amendments to the Statement were required relating to the mean basic FTE salary paid by the Council and to the lowest pay point on the salary scales. The Statement would be published on the Council's website together with data on senior officers' salaries as required by the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the minor amendments referred to above, the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

31. PAY NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing proposed terms for a pay negotiation process. The purpose of the document was to ensure all parties were aware of and understood the process. Since the publication of the report, further

consultation had been undertaken with Staff Council. As some matters remained to be resolved, it was agreed that, following consultation with the Executive Councillor and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, the Managing Director should instigate a procedure thereby avoiding delaying the current negotiation and that a further report should be submitted to the next meeting containing agreed terms for the pay negotiation process going forward.

32. DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended an updated Drug and Alcohol Policy. The Policy had been amended following consultation with the company that undertook testing for the Council and with Staff Council.

Members discussed the introduction of testing of applicants for employment with the Council. All applicants would be informed in advance that testing would take place. While the external company would continue to undertake testing of Council employees, staff members would be trained to test prospective employees.

In response to a question by a Member, assurance was provided that the external testing company had in place adequate protocols to safeguard the privacy and dignity of employees during the testing process. Following a further question on a potential inconsistency between a reference to maintaining a zero tolerance approach and the fact that alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues would be dealt with outside of the disciplinary procedure, Officers agreed to undertake further work to clarify the policy position. Subject to the latter, it was

RESOLVED

that the Drug and Alcohol Policy appended to the report now submitted be endorsed.

33. STAFF COUNCIL

The Staff Council Representatives, C Wyles and R Abbot, provided an update on their work. There continued to be a very high workload. Particular reference was made to the progress that had been made on the pay negotiation process and the importance of continuing this work to ensure the process was sound. The input of Councillors in this respect was appreciated. Staff Council also was reviewing its Terms of Reference to reflect changes in the workplace. A report on the outcome would be submitted to the next meeting.

Having noted that Staff Council was looking at its role in the induction process for new employees, the Committee placed on record its appreciation of the contribution of Mrs Lesley Davies to the work of Staff Council and latterly as its Chairman.

Chairman