

## 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 Thursday, 29 November 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.  
Councillors Mrs P A Jordan, 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 A Dickinson and D Terry.

### **18. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th September 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **19. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were received.

### **20. ICARE VALUES**

The Committee received an introduction to two of the Council's ICARE values, Inspiring and Collaborative. Mr J Taylor, Assistant Director – (Transformation), referred to Members' interests in having an involvement in ICARE and to the Council's aim of incorporating their views and experiences into its values and culture. K Hans, Lead HR Manager, identified the challenges in introducing a values system and the links to World Values Day. The Council's ICARE video was then presented with the Committee. The video would be used as part of the Council's recruitment process. It was important that there was no disparity between it and conditions within the Council.

Members were asked to consider what the Council would look like if it practised the ICARE values, what customers would expect to see and what improvements were necessary. Having considered the questions posed, Members referred to the importance of interpersonal skills, demonstrating commitment to "owning" customers' requests whether or not they fell within an individual's remit, good communication and being able to challenge the way things were done. Officers would analyse the all comments made and incorporate them into on-going work on the values. Particular emphasis was placed on Councillors' ability to provide intelligence on the views and experiences of members of the public.

### **21. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 2)**

The Committee received a report on Human Resources matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period July to

September 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.

Members were advised that two employees retired in the quarter, having a total of over 44 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 £1.5m less than the previous year's budget. In addition, 77% of the workforce had no instances of sickness absence during the quarter but 33 employees had experienced long-term sickness. Comment was made on the impact of sickness on the demands placed on other Officers. With regard to the decrease in spend on pay, Members were informed that this included provisions to meet variations, which had not yet been agreed through the salary negotiation process.

The Committee discussed the decrease in the number of days lost through sickness. This was partly the result of the introduction of a new Occupational Health service and partly through work between HR and the Operations section on measures to manage sickness. In response to a question by a Member, the Committee was informed that information had been requested on ways of encouraging the uptake by employees of flu jabs either through direct provision or a voucher scheme.

With regard to the HR caseload, Members were informed that the loss of an employee from the HR Team had been partly compensated for by the Lead HR Manager increasing her hours. The Team was able to manage its caseload by prioritising its work. Having noted the accidents / incidents 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 service and conveyed their best wishes to them for long and happy retirements.

## **22. 2018/19 STAFF SURVEY ACTION PLAN - THE APPROACH TO DELIVER SOLUTIONS**

Pursuant to Minute No. 18/7, the Committee gave consideration to a report by the Human Resources Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a proposed approach to identifying and delivering solutions to the issues raised in the 2018 Staff Survey. Following the successful approach adopted to developing the Council's values, the People Group of Officers had been asked to review the results of the Staff Survey and to develop a series of themes and a range of actions.

Mr K Simpson, Customer Service Team Leader, reported that the People Group had begun by identifying five key areas and potential actions to address them. The latter then had been referred back to teams, which had the advantage of involving individuals who were hard to incorporate into the organisational development process. Examples of identified actions were provided. The next stage would be to receive feedback on the actions. Some quick wins would be introduced to demonstrate their effectiveness.

During their deliberations on the report, Members endorsed the proposed overall approach. They also supported the proposed actions; however, the observation was made that some of them should be standard workplace practices. Having commended Officers on their contribution to the Action Plan, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be received and noted.

**23. TIME TO CHANGE PLEDGE - SUPPORTING STAFF MENTAL HEALTH WELLBEING**

By means of a report by the Learning and Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was acquainted with the potential benefits for the Council of signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge in terms of thinking and acting about mental health in the workplace. 930 employers had already signed the Pledge and there was no cost involved.

In response to a question by Staff Council, it was reported that the cost of training would be met from existing budgets. Furthermore, given the current high level of absence through stress, it could be considered to be an investment. Following a further question, it was confirmed that sickness and stress related policies would be updated. The impact of the changes would be monitored through the quarterly reporting process.

Members expressed their support for signing the Pledge and received an assurance that individuals who were already absent through stress would benefit from the new arrangements. They also expressed their appreciation of the activities of Officers to promote World Mental Health Day. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that signing of the #timetochange Pledge be endorsed.

**24. 2017/18 GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING - THE APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE GAP**

Consideration was given to a report by the HR and Payroll Systems Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the Council's Gender Pay Gap Report 2018. The report identified options for tackling gender pay inequalities within the Council.

Members' attention was drawn to the trends in the figures compared

with the Report for 2017. The Committee was informed that the changes were attributed to recruitment within the Senior Leadership team and the ICT section. With regard to the former, the fact that the Team comprised a small number of individuals meant that a single change had produced a large effect in percentage terms. In respect of the latter, market conditions had meant that payment of a supplement had been necessary to recruit employees into what was a field that tended to have more male employees. It was likely that the figures would fluctuate over time.

Members' views were sought on the options for addressing the gap. Given the expected trends, it was suggested that the Council should continue closely to monitor the position. Of the other options, it was recommended that the Council should review its recruitment processes. In particular, it should be ensured that the wording of materials did not deter individuals with any of the protected characteristics from applying for posts. In addition, the terms of recruitment should be designed to attract a wider range of candidates; for example, by making available employment only during term-time.

#### RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be received and noted.

### **25. STAFF COUNCIL**

Staff Council representatives delivered a statement on behalf of the Staff Council expressing their dissatisfaction at the lack of progress being made in reaching decisions on the pay award and on annual appraisal increments. The statement summarised the negotiation process to date and Staff Council's expectations for a resolution and for arrangements to be established for future years.

In response, Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital and Customer, expressed regret that this matter had not yet been resolved. He intended to meet with the Managing Director and Executive Leader the following week to try to secure the necessary decisions. The Council needed to do further financial modelling on their impact on the forthcoming budget, which meant that decisions could not be guaranteed. He would update Staff Council afterwards. It was important that a conclusion was reached and a process for future years was established as there were other matters on which he needed to work with Staff Council.

Members were disappointed that the decisions had not been taken and referred to their significance under the Council's values. They understood the frustration being experienced by Staff Council but requested that further action be suspended pending the outcome of the meeting the following week. Staff Council agreed to do this.

Councillor Tysoe expressed his gratitude for the commitment shown by Staff Council during the negotiations and stated that he looked forward to working with the Representatives in the future.

Chairman