



**Lewes District Council**

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## **Employment Committee**

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Employment Committee** held in the **Warren Room, Lewes House, 32 High Street, Lewes** on **Monday, 07 June 2010** at 10.00am

### **Present:**

#### **Employer's Side:**

Councillors T M Hawthorne (Chair), J H Freeman, J M Harrison-Hicks, D O Rogers

#### **Employees' Side:**

Mr N Cannan, Ms S Harvey, Mrs L Plant and Mr G Purdye

#### **Also Present:**

Mr J Clark, Head of Business Services

Ms Z Downton, Committee Officer

Mr T Hayward, Committee Officer

#### **Apologies received:**

Councillor H J F Sheppard (Employer's Side), Mr M Connolly and Mr P Demetriou (Employees' Side)

## **Minutes**

## **Action**

### **1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed new Committee Officer, Zoe Downton, to her first meeting of the Employment Committee.

### **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **3 Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor H J F Sheppard (Employer's Side), Mr M Connolly and Mr P Demetriou (Employees' Side).

### **4 Staff Survey 2010**

The Committee considered Report No 120/10 relating to the overall comparisons between 2010 and previous years' results, in respect of the Staff Survey; details of which were set out at Appendix A.

The last meeting considered the results of the 2010 survey, but the planned comparison information was unavailable. Overall the comparative results

demonstrated a year on year improvement with some areas expected to improve further.

The Employees' Side raised the following points in response to the comparative results:

- Concern was expressed regarding the decline in the position relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination and requested that those issues be monitored;
- The total number of responses received to the survey was disappointingly low. UNISON had therefore conducted its own sample survey to establish the reasons for the low response which, itself, received an equally low response level; and
- In response to staff concerns expressed through the UNISON survey, assurance was sought from the Head of Business Services that Health and Safety Risk Assessments would be carried out/followed up, specifically at 4, Fisher Street, Lewes.

The Committee commented that the results were clearly presented. The continual improvement in results was noted, specifically the increase in job satisfaction (question 48) and performance of senior managers (question 44).

Resolved:

- 4.1** That Report No 120/10 relating to overall comparisons between 2010 and previous years' results in respect of the Staff Survey 2010 be noted; and
- 4.2** That the Head of Business Services be requested to look further into Health and Safety Risk Assessments in place at 4, Fisher Street, Lewes, and provide a Report thereon to the next meeting.

HBS

**5 Adoption Pay**

The Committee considered Report No 121/10 relating to the proposal that occupational adoption pay should be introduced at the same rate as occupational maternity pay as from 1 July 2010, and that the Council's adoption policies and procedures be amended accordingly.

Whilst all new parents were entitled to 52 weeks leave, whether that be adoption leave or maternity leave, currently parents of adopted children only received the statutory adoption pay. Parents who were on maternity leave received not only Statutory Maternity Pay but also Occupational Maternity Pay.

The Employees' Side welcomed the proposal.

Resolved:

**5.1** That occupational adoption pay should be introduced at the same rate as occupational maternity pay as from 1 July 2010; and HBS

**5.2** That the Head of Business Services be authorised to amend the Council's adoption policies and procedures as required in order to add occupational adoption pay to the Council's staff benefits. HBS

## **6 HR Policies**

The Committee considered Report No 122/10 relating to the HR Policy Summary, a copy of which was set out at Appendix A.

The Head of Business Services explained to the Committee there was a need for an easily accessible summary which covered current key policies and workforce matters, which was not currently in existence.

### Resolved:

**6.1** That the HR Policy Summary at Appendix A to Report No 122/10, be agreed. HBS

## **7 Sickness Procedure**

The Committee considered Report No 123/10 relating to a number of proposed changes to the Council's sickness absence procedure.

The Committee was requested to approve the guidance in the procedure regarding welfare visits to employees be changed so that references to "four weeks" be replaced by "three weeks" and that the text at paragraph 6, as set out in Report No 123/10, be added to the procedure.

In response to issues raised by the Employees' Side, the Head of Business Services made the following points:

- Return to work arrangements were made on an individual basis and treated sensitively depending on the employee's reasons for absence;
- With reference to paragraph 5, an individual would be contacted regarding any adaptations to the 'fit note' and changes discussed with the employee and Unison (if a member of the union); and
- The additional text at paragraph 6 allowed for discretion to be applied on an individual basis regarding temporary phased returns.

The Committee commented that the new system of 'fit notes' would benefit both the employer's and employees' interests by encouraging employees back to work. The Employees' Side commented that the discretionary nature of this policy in relation to phased returns and pay arrangements would need to be monitored to ensure it was being applied fairly across the

Council.

Resolved:

- 7.1** That the guidance in the Council's Sickness Absence Procedure regarding welfare visits to employees be changed so that references to "four weeks" are replaced by "three weeks"; and HBS
- 7.2** That the additional text set out at paragraph 6 of Report No 123/10 be added to the Council's Sickness Absence Procedure. HBS

**8 Equal Pay Audit Progress**

The Committee received Report No 124/10 relating to progress made regarding the Equal Pay Audit action plan.

The Employer's Side commented it was disappointing to see an increase in the difference in pay between male and female employees, the reasons for which were outlined in the Report.

The Employees' Side asked how the gap compared with similar authorities to which the Head of Business Services replied that the detail was not known but the existence of a gap was not unusual.

Resolved:

- 8.1** That Report No 124/10 relating to the Equal Pay Audit Progress be received and noted.

**9 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved:

- 9.1** That, in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following item as there was likely to be disclosures of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**10 Consideration of Matters Raised by the Employees' Side**

There were no additional matters raised by the Employees' Side over and above those which had been recorded in the Minutes of this meeting of the Employment Committee.

**11 Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

- 11.1** That it be noted that the next meeting of the Employment Committee is scheduled to be held on Monday, 11 October 2010 in the Warren Room, Lewes House, 32 High Street, Lewes

ALL TO  
NOTE

commencing at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 10.35am

T M Hawthorne  
Chair