



Lewes District Council

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Employment Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Employment Committee** held in the **Warren Room, Lewes House, Lewes** on **Thursday, 13 June 2013** at 9.30am.

Present:

Employer's Side:

Councillors E E J Russell (Chair), P L Franklin, S J Gauntlett, A X Smith and J Stockdale.

Employees' Side:

Mr N Cannan, Mr M Connolly, Mr R Haigh, Ms S Harvey, Mr G Purdye and Mr T Watson

Also Present:

Ms J Amos-Davidson, Interim Head of HR
Ms A Blanshard, Committee Officer
Mr A Chequers, Corporate Head – Housing Services
Mr L Frost, Director of Planning and Environmental Services
Ms S McGreal, Regional Organiser, Unison
Ms J Rowlands, Chief Executive

Minutes

		Action
1	Minutes The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2013 and the meeting held on 3 April 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
2	Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members Councillor P Franklin declared that he was substituting for Councillor R Blackman who had sent an apology for absence. Councillor J Stockdale declared that he was substituting for Councillor C J Butler who had sent an apology for absence.	

3 Programme Nexus : The Next Steps

The Committee considered Report No 98/13 which outlined the proposals for a new organisational structure for the Council, with particular focus on delivering local services and developing the capacity to handle the continuing challenges and opportunities that the Council faced.

The Chief Executive introduced the report to the Committee and explained that Programme Nexus recognised the Council as a well performing authority in good shape, but aimed to develop this and ensure current successes improved. It also sought to ensure that the skills of the staff were utilised to their full potential. She informed the Committee that the Council sometimes prevented staff from doing the excellent job that they wanted to do. The programme aimed to remove the constraints of departmentalism and to provide the infrastructure and freedom for managers and staff to work differently and to create a more standardised approach to service provision.

The Chief Executive explained that there were important human factors to the project to be considered, largely around succession planning, and particularly in light of the forthcoming retirement of two members of the Corporate Management Team (CMT). She explained that CMT had worked with an independent advisor to establish how local authorities were changing their approach to organisational structures. The Council needed to ensure that the emphasis was on customer service, business support and futures thinking. The Committee was informed that the detail of the organisational structure would be decided once the new Directors were in post to enable them the opportunity to have input into the new design.

The Chief Executive emphasised how important staff would be during this period of change and how it was hoped that their skills and knowledge would be drawn on to inform the new shape of the organisation.

The Employees' side expressed their thanks for being given the opportunity to comment on the draft version of the report before publication. They were also pleased that some of their comments had been taken on board and reflected in the final report. They raised concerns that the report did not reference UNISON specifically, in particular Appendix E to the Report. They reminded the Committee that UNISON was the Council's only recognised trade union. The Interim Head of HR apologised that this had not been changed and assured the Committee that she would make this clear to Cabinet and amend the reference in Appendix E. The Interim Head of HR took the opportunity to say that she too was pleased that they were able to work closely with UNISON representatives.

The Employees' side then circulated a document containing the representations that they wanted to bring to the Committee, a copy of this is contained in the Minute Book.

The Employees' side explained to the Committee that they were concerned about the lack of information in the report on how consultation and

engagement with residents and service users, particularly those with protected characteristics, would be handled. There was a lack of public consultation data and there had been no staff survey in recent years. The Employees' side suggested that an Initial Equality Analysis should be undertaken to assess any potential impact. The Chief Executive explained that staff involvement would begin with a series of meetings to inform them of the basis of the report and of the planned changes so far. There would then be 'slice groups', formed from cross-sections of the organisation, who would discuss the changes and how the service that the Council provided could best be delivered under the new structure.

The Chief Executive assured the Employees' side that there would be a group dedicated to discussing the changes from an equalities point of view. The Employees' side requested that work begin on the Equalities group early and that UNISON be represented on it. The Chief Executive explained that although there had been no council-wide consultation, they had drawn on the results of regular customer service consultation from Planning and Housing Services. She informed the Committee that there would also be some customer data activities as part of the current customer service project, including tests and visits when the new one-stop reception area opened in September 2013. The Interim Head of HR explained that discussions were ongoing regarding whether to conduct a full scale staff survey or a series of mini surveys. It was anticipated that these would be conducted in the summer and autumn 2013. She also clarified that the 'slice groups' would use the data gathered from all surveys and consultations to inform their discussions. The Chair commented that it was important for all those involved to keep communicating with each other.

The Employees' side explained that they felt the report was unclear and unspecific about the exact nature of and operation of 'service units/pods' and geographical teams. The Chief Executive clarified that there was no intention to create more office space around the District and that the geographic link related to service delivery rather than location.

The Employees' side then outlined some additional risks that it had identified, further to those specifically identified in the report. These were detailed on the list of representations that UNISON had presented to the Committee. Particular reference was made to the concern that specialist roles in the organisation would be devalued or lost. Alongside this they questioned the balance between specialist and generalist staff, and explained that some staff with professional backgrounds were concerned that there was particular focus on generalist staff. The Chief Executive explained that she felt specialisms had been lost under the current structure and that the planned restructure aimed to allow specialists and professionals to concentrate on their specialisms rather than more generic tasks. The Director of Planning and Environmental Services agreed that the intention was not to dilute professional roles but to allow officers to focus on their specialism and to continue their professional development.

The Employees' side explained that if staff were being encouraged to get involved in discussions and 'slice groups' there was a need to acknowledge

the balance between input into these discussions and their daily workload. The Chief Executive agreed that staff should be allowed time to take part and that CMT would ensure there was a clear message to all staff emphasising this.

The Employee's side sought assurance that proper policies and protections, in accordance with the National Joint Council 'Green Book' terms and conditions, would be put in place to ensure that staff who were required to relocate would not suffer any financial detriment or hardship. They clarified that they were referring to short term compensation for those staff whose base location had changed. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council would find a way to ensure that staff were not out of pocket.

The Employees' side emphasised that this major review and restructure of the organisation had implications for pay-grades, and sought assurance that this would be conducted in accordance with agreed process procedure. The Chief Executive confirmed that they intended to follow all relevant guidelines.

The Employees' side were concerned that mitigation plans only concerned the top tier of the organisation and that succession planning was not always happening throughout the Council. The Chief Executive agreed that succession planning was important and explained that they were concentrating on the top tier as this was the subject of the report. She explained that she believed it was important to focus on retaining staff knowledge and hoped that the restructure encouraged and allowed for more promotion within the organisation. The Committee advised that, in discussions with staff, they had heard that opportunities to move up within the Council were very important and that there was a concern that those opportunities were not currently there.

The Employees' side queried whether the Council intended for the pay policy statement to be broken for any other roles. The Interim Head of HR explained that they were not changing the pay policy statement for any other roles apart from the three new Directorships. The Chief Executive advised that there was no intention to change terms and conditions, that they were simply changing the policy for the top posts to remove the current salary restrictions.

The Employees' side asked what arrangements had been made for adequate Human Resources (HR) management during the proposed restructure. The Interim Head of HR explained that the HR management role had been evaluated and that the intention was to fill it using qualified staff and back-filling posts where necessary until such time as the incoming Director made any decision.

The Employees' side expressed concern that the report appeared to focus on office staff with no specific mention of manual staff. The Employees' side wanted to ensure that they were adequately involved in all aspects of the changes. The Chief Executive told the Committee that she made no differentiation between office staff and manual staff. She anticipated that

there may be different outcomes during discussions, but that all staff would play an equally full part in the process.

The Chair thanked the Employees' side for their representations and asked if the rest of the Committee would like to add any further comment. The Committee responded that the report provided a comprehensive starting point for the restructure of the organisation and that it was the logical next step following the Agile Working project. The Chair concluded that the Committee hoped that the process continued well and that the Council kept improving, with particular emphasis on the provision of customer service.

Resolved:

- 3.1** That the Committee supported the recommendations set out in Report No 98/13.

4 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 4.1** That the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on Monday, 8 July 2013 at 10.00am in the Warren Room, Lewes House, 32 High Street, Lewes be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.45am.

E E J Russell
Chair