



Lewes District Council

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Employment Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Employment Committee** held in the **Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Monday, 14 October 2013** at 10.00am.

Present:

Employer's Side:

Councillors E E J Russell (Chair), R Blackman and S J Gauntlett

Employees' Side:

Mr N Cannan, Ms S Harvey and Mr G Purdye

Also Present:

Ms B Cooke, Head of Organisational Development

Ms Z Downton, Committee Officer

Mr S Jump, Head of Finance

Mrs H Knight, HR Manager

Ms L Tiller, Equalities Officer

Minutes

16 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17 Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members

An apology for absence had been received from Mr M Connolly (Employees' Side).

18 Equalities Update

The Committee received Report No 168/13 which set out the equalities profile of the workforce.

Action

The HR Manager explained that this was the annual equalities update, although more frequent updates could be presented to the Committee, if requested.

The Employees' Side commented that in previous equality updates, statistics had been included on the profile of staff in relation to disciplinary issues, grievances and tribunal cases. The HR Manager apologised for the omission and responded that this information would be included in future update reports.

HR
Manager

In response to a question from the Employees' Side, the Equalities Officer explained that the collated data related to the whole workforce and was taken from Trent, the Council's personal information system. The Committee noted that the disclosure of personal details on the system was up to the individual and therefore the information was used where available. The Equalities Officer also advised that she was awaiting new guidance from the Equality & Human Rights Commission, following a government review of the Public Sector Equality Duty, on what information the Council was required to report in relation to its staff.

Resolved:

- 18.1** That Report No 168/13 be noted.

19 Wellbeing Statistics

The Committee considered Report No 169/13 which detailed the use of the PPC Wellbeing Online service by staff during the last year.

The HR Manager explained that, although the number of staff accessing the service had been relatively low, those who had used it and given feedback had found it very helpful. The service was confidential and by self-referral, meaning the Council was only provided with the numbers of those who had accessed the service and the general areas of the reasons why, as detailed in the Report.

The Employees' Side expressed support in renewing the Council's subscription with the service provider.

Resolved:

- 19.1** That it be agreed that the Council renews its contract with the PPC Wellbeing Online service for a further year; and

- 19.2** That Report No 169/13 be noted.

HR &
Safety
Officer

20 Joint Health and Safety Forum

The Committee received Report No 170/13 which provided information on the inauguration of the Council's Joint Health and Safety Forum.

The HR Manager explained that Unison staff representatives had requested for the Forum, which had been set up and had two meetings in 2011, to be reconvened. The Forum held its inaugural meeting on 26 September 2013 and was chaired by the Director of Planning and Environmental Services.

The Forum would be an active group within the Council promoting a health and safety-conscious culture and environment, and reporting to each meeting of the Employment Committee in line with the areas specified within the Remit of the Committee in the Council's Constitution, namely Part 11, Section 5, paragraphs 2.5 (a) and (g) to (m).

The Employees' Side welcomed the return of the Forum and expressed thanks to the HR and Safety Officer for her work in setting it up. The Employees' Side reported that the Forum had already proved to be a place for positive and constructive discussion.

Resolved:

20.1 That Report No 170/13 be noted.

21 Accidents Reported

The Committee received Report No 171/13 which presented the statistics on accidents reported at the Council between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, and the Council's Health and Safety Forum's comments on those figures.

The HR Manager explained that the Report had been reinstated as a standing item on the agenda for the Employment Committee, as requested by the Committee and Unison staff representatives.

The Employees' Side advised that at the meeting of the Health and Safety Forum on 26 September 2013, it was acknowledged that depot staff were more likely to have accidents at work than other staff due to the nature of their work duties. Unison hoped to encourage individuals from those departments to come forward to act as staff representatives on behalf of their colleagues in terms of issues in the workplace, including health and safety matters.

Resolved:

21.1 That Report No 171/13 be noted.

22 Sickness Report

The Committee received Report No 172/13 which presented the staff sickness statistics from 1 April 2013 until 30 September 2013, and also the Health and Safety Forum's comments on those figures.

A total of 2,279 days had been taken off as a result of sickness and disorders during the reporting period. The HR Manager highlighted that, out of the total figure, 789 days (34%) were for musculo-skeletal and

back/spinal disorders, mostly in District Services and Housing Services, and 482 (21%) were for stress, again mostly from staff in the District Services and Housing Services departments.

The Committee questioned whether the high figure for musculo-skeletal and back/spinal disorders indicated that the Council's manual handling procedures were not being carried out. The HR Manager responded that there was no indication that this was the case. The Employees' Side added that they had also raised concerns with managers on whether refresher training in manual handling was given, and were not sure of how frequently it was undertaken. The HR Manager advised that manual handling training and refresher training was compulsory for staff.

The Employees' Side agreed that it was helpful to have the sickness statistics and thanked the HR Manager for providing them. In response to a request from the Employees' Side, the HR Manager advised that she would include a breakdown to show the split of short-term and long-term (over 3 months) sickness absences in future reports to the Committee.

HR
Manager

The Head of Organisational Development noted that the higher percentage of staff absence days relating to stress did not correlate with the low uptake of the counselling service provided by PCC Wellbeing Online. The Employees' Side commented that the Health and Safety Forum had also noticed the high number of stress related absences. In response to this, Unison was planning a 'well-being week' to take place from 30 October 2013. This would include a varied programme of fun activities, workshops and promotion of the counselling service, with the purpose of raising the profile of well-being related issues in the workplace. All staff and councillors were welcome to get involved and more details would be circulated shortly. Unison would be setting up measures to involve depot staff who might not otherwise be able to attend some of the events or readily access the information due to the nature and location of their work away from Southover House.

The Committee noted that, due to the future restructuring of departments within the Council, statistics and data within reports would need to be adjusted and presented in a way that represented the new working structures, once they were in place.

HR
Manager
(to note)

Resolved:

- 22.1** That Report No 172/13 be noted.

23 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

- 23.1** 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 items 11 and 12 as there was likely to be disclosures of exempt information as defined in

paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

24 Consideration of Matters Raised by the Employees' Side

The Employees' Side asked the HR Manager whether there was any update on the Cabinet Report entitled 'Programme Nexus: The Next Steps', which was presented to the Employment Committee at its meeting in June 2013. The HR Manager responded that each of the staff focus groups, following discussions on the restructuring of the organisation, would be reporting back to the Council's Corporate Management Team in the coming weeks. It was anticipated that further announcements on plans for the new structure would be made towards the end of the year.

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

25 Consideration of Health and Safety 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 the meeting of the Employment Committee.

26 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 26.1** That the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on Monday, 13 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Lewes be noted.

All to note

The meeting ended at 10.30am.

E E J Russell
Chair