



Lewes District Council

www.lewes.gov.uk

Employment Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Employment Committee** held in the **Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Monday, 13 January 2014** at 10.00am.

Present:

Employer's Side:

Councillors E E J Russell (Chair), R Blackman, S J Gauntlett, A X Smith and J Stockdale

Employees' Side:

Mr G Funnell, Ms S Harvey and Mr G Purdye

Also Present:

Ms B Cooke, Head of Organisational Development
Ms Z Downton, Committee Officer
Mrs H Knight, Human Resources Manager

Minutes

34 Minutes

The Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 16 December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35 Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor C Butler (Employer's Side), Mr M Connolly (Employees' Side) and Mr N Cannan (Employees' Side). Councillor Stockdale declared he was substituting for Councillor Butler. Mr Funnell declared he was substituting for Mr Cannan.

Action

36 Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure

The Committee considered Report No 16/14 which provided an update on the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.

The Council was currently reviewing a number of its existing Human Resources (HR) policies to ensure they were up to date, in line with current Employment Law and fit for purpose. The proposed revisions had been made with consideration to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service's (ACAS) best practice guidance, the needs of the organisation and comments received to date from Unison.

The HR Manager explained that the most notable changes to the policies were the inclusion of references to Agile Working, the inclusion of guidance notes for managers and standard forms to simplify the grievance procedure, as well as updating references to job titles.

The revised Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, Guidance Notes for Managers, a summary of the Grievance Procedure and examples of the staff grievance procedure forms were set out under Appendices 1 - 6 of the Report.

The Employees' Side welcomed the review of both procedures and the opportunity for early consultation. The Employees' Side brought to the attention of the Committee a number of questions, comments and suggestions in relation to the procedures, and it was agreed that these would be discussed further between the HR Manager and Unison.

The Committee commended both procedures and it was noted that final discussions between HR and Unison would take place before the procedures were implemented.

Resolved:

- 36.1** That, subject to any minor amendments which may be made by the Human Resources Manager in consultation with Unison, implementation of Lewes District Council's revised Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, as set out within Report No 16/14, be agreed; and
- 36.2** That Report No 16/14 be noted.

HR
Manager

37 Health and Safety Policy

The Committee considered Report No 17/14 which presented the Council's Draft Health and Safety Policy Statement and Policy Arrangements, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

The HR Manager explained that the Council's Health and Safety Forum had discussed the need for a new policy statement and policy arrangements document as the current ones had not been reviewed for two years.

The Employees' Side welcomed the review of the Policy and re-iterated its support of the new Health and Safety Forum, which was enabling positive and constructive dialogue as well as specific policy developments in relation to health and safety matters.

In response to a request from the Employees' Side, the HR Manager stated that the equality screening analysis carried out by the HR & Safety Officer would be circulated to the Employees' Side and members of the Committee for information.

HR Manager/
HR & Safety
Officer

The Employees' Side brought to the attention of the Committee its comments regarding the Draft Policy, which included the suggestion to insert the need for risk assessments and for those assessments to be carried out in a timely manner. The Head of Organisational Development stated that cross-references to the new defined set of competencies, as outlined in the Council's Core and Management Competency Framework, could also be inserted.

The Employees' Side made suggestions in relation to the Draft Policy Arrangements, which included the following;

- The Employment Committee to be referred to as the Council's Health and Safety Committee, instead of Joint Consultative Committee.
- For it to be clarified, under 'Health and Safety Representatives', that Unison acted as the staff representatives on collective health and safety issues.
- The section on Employee Consultation was welcomed, as was the value of reflecting the importance of day-to-day, informal consultation and communication with Unison representatives.

The Committee noted that the comments raised by the Employees' Side would be considered in further consultation between Unison, the HR Manager and Head of Organisational Development, and that any minor amendments would be incorporated into the Policy before being implemented.

Resolved:

- 37.1** That, subject to any minor amendments which may be made by the HR Manager in consultation with Unison, Lewes District Council's Draft Health and Safety Policy Statement and Policy Arrangements, as set out in Report No 17/14, be agreed.

HR
Manager

38 Sickiness Report

The Committee received Report No 18/14 which provided an update on the Council's sickness figures.

The HR Manager explained that sickness figures for the period from 1 October 2013 to 31 December 2013 would be presented at the next

scheduled meeting of the Employment Committee in April 2014.

The HR Manager explained further that the new computerised HR and Payroll System, to be used from 1 April 2014, would provide more detailed information regarding long term and short term absences and would allow for greater analysis for the reasons for sickness and any associated trends. Benchmarking data would also be incorporated in future reports, when available, which it was hoped would provide useful comparative information with other local authorities.

HR
Manager

Resolved:

20.1 That Report No 18/14 be noted.

39 Accidents Reported

The Committee received Report No 19/14 which presented the statistics on accidents reported at the Council between 1 April 2013 and 16 December 2013.

The HR Manager reminded those present that the Committee and Unison representatives had previously requested that this standing item be reinstated to the Employment Committee agenda.

A table for those accidents reported between 1 April 2013 and 16 December 2013 and which included comparisons for the previous two years was set out within the Report. The HR Manager explained that for future reporting, the table would contain more detailed information. Following feedback, she explained that benchmarking against the accident figures of other local authorities would be explored in order to provide useful comparative data when reporting in future.

The Employees' Side suggested that it would be useful to see data relating to accidents per full time equivalent staff as that might be useful if the Council was intending to benchmark that data.

In response to a question from the Employees' Side, the HR Manager confirmed that there had been no insurance or injury claims arising from accidents during the reporting period.

In response to a question from the Employees' Side, the HR Manager explained that she would look into whether information on near misses could be included in future reports, where such data was available.

HR Manager/
HR & Safety
Officer

Resolved:

39.1 That Report No 19/14 be noted.

40 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

- 40.1** 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 10 and 11 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.

41 Consideration of Matters Raised by the Employees' Side

The Employees' Side wished to inform the Committee that, in relation to Report No 208/13 presented at the meeting of the Employment Committee on 16 December 2013, Unison had since set up consultation meetings due to take place in the next few days in order to engage in active dialogue with its members concerning the proposals set out within the Report. The formal response of the Branch would be passed on to the Council's Chief Executive and Head of Organisational Development.

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.

42 Consideration of Health and Safety Matters Raised by the Employees' Side

A representative from the Employees' Side read out to the Committee the following;

'UNISON representatives requested, and it was agreed, that an update should be made to the next Employment Committee on the work of the Health & Safety Forum to date.

UNISON welcomed the new Forum which had met three times and which was working in a collaborative and constructive manner to bring about improvements in health and safety at the Council. UNISON welcomed the positive developments in recent months, not least of which was the appointment of a full-time Health & Safety Officer. UNISON was pleased to note the clear commitments set out in the new Health & Safety Policy but highlighted concerns regarding the capacity, resources and skills available to manage health and safety going forward. These concerns have been further heightened by the impending management restructure.

UNISON considered that the Council would benefit from drawing up a corporate Health & Safety Action Plan as a matter of urgency with clear timescales and resource requirements. This Plan should be the subject of consultation and review by the Health & Safety Forum and Employment Committee in due course'.

The Head of Organisational Development responded that she would follow up the matters raised by the Employees' Side with the Director of Service Delivery.

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

HR &
Safety
Officer

Head of Org.
Development

Employment Committee.

43 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 43.1** That the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on Monday, 14 April 2014 at 10.00am in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Lewes be noted. All to note

The meeting ended at 11.10am.

E E J Russell
Chair