

Employment Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the **Employment Committee** held in the **Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Monday, 19 December 2016** at 10.00am

Present:

Employer's Side:

Councillors J Peterson (Chair), M Chartier, S Gauntlett and E Merry

Employees' Side:

Mr G Purdye

Also Present:

Ms B Cooke, Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
 Ms Z Downton, Committee Officer
 Ms M Jackson, HR Business Partner
 Ms S McGreal, Regional Organiser, Unison
 Ms J Yeates, Health and Safety Officer

Minutes

20 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor P Franklin (Employer's Side), Ms S Harvey and Mrs L Plant (Employees' Side).

22 Change Management Policy

The Committee considered Report No 171/16 which sought its approval to implement a new policy regarding change management.

The Change Management Policy, as set out in the Appendix to the Report, would provide clarity for both staff and managers alike at Lewes District and

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Eastbourne Borough Councils regarding the procedure that should be followed during a period of change, the support that was available and the considerations that should be made.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that, in drafting the new policy, research had been undertaken into other organisational change policies and Eastbourne and Lewes Unison branches had provided helpful and constructive input. She informed the Committee that the Policy had been agreed by members of its equivalent committee body at Eastbourne Borough Council on 30 November 2016.

Ms McGreal, Regional Organiser, Unison informed the Committee that having developed a matrix of the differences between Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils had been important in the drafting of the Policy. She highlighted that the pay protection related policies were set out and accessible elsewhere and therefore should not be lost within the Policy itself. She suggested that the cross-referencing against other policies within the Change Management Policy would be important to highlight in the training to managers.

Ms McGreal raised that Unison would wish to keep the Policy under review, to which the Committee agreed would be useful.

The Committee brought the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development's attention to the duplication of paragraph 8.4, on page 13 of the Policy, which needed to be deleted.

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In response to a councillor's question, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the Policy, once approved, would be launched jointly across both Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils. The Committee responded that this would be helpful for staff from both organisations to come together to hear the same message.

The Committee queried why the Legal Services department had not been asked for comments on the Change Management Policy, as shown under paragraph 6 of the Report. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that it was a standard statement for the type of report and that the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services had seen the drafted Policy. She advised the Committee that she would ensure that the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services was satisfied with the drafted Policy.

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The Committee expressed its appreciation of the work from all parties that had gone into the drafting of the Change Management Policy.

Resolved:

- 22.1** That the Employment Committee agrees to the implementation of the Change Management Policy within Lewes District Council, as set out in the Appendix of Report No 171/16.

23 Sickness Report

The Committee received Report No 172/16 which provided an update regarding the Council's sickness figures for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016 (Quarter 2 of 2016/2017).

The Committee noted the positive reduction in sickness absence during the reporting period, which had fallen for the third consecutive quarter. The Committee also commented on the clear presentation of the statistics within the graphs.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the sickness statistics would be closely monitored during the continuation of the Joint Transformation Programme, especially in areas such as stress and anxiety.

Ms McGreal informed the Committee that Unison had picked up levels of concern and anxiety from its members and raised the importance of monitoring stress levels and the symptoms of stress amongst staff.

Resolved:

23.1 That Report No 172/16 be noted.

24 Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy

The Committee received Report No 173/16 which provided an update on the work that was being undertaken to set up a new Health & Wellbeing Staff Forum. The Forum would discuss and ultimately agree the implementation of a Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy across both Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that this was not a new initiative, but that the implementation of a Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy across Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils would support and inform the development of an improved, co-ordinated and more visible wellbeing offer to staff. She explained further that once finalised, the Strategy would be properly launched across both Councils and its progress monitored.

The Draft Strategy, shown under the Appendix to the Report, had been sent out to members of the eCMT (extended Corporate Management Team meeting attended by Heads of Service) with a request for nominations from their teams for staff representatives to join the Forum. The first meeting of the Forum was scheduled to take place on 20 December 2016.

The Employees' Side felt it had been a useful exercise and was helpful to have the current health and wellbeing offerings set out within the Strategy to make staff aware of the range of initiatives available.

Ms McGreal explained that staff wellbeing was at the heart of the Lewes Unison branch. She explained that Unison wished to explore joint initiatives, and funding to support those initiatives, with the Council's management. Ms McGreal highlighted that the areas of the Strategy on mental health issues

were important as the wellbeing message could help people seek intervention at an early stage.

The Committee welcomed the Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy as a way of supporting staff to help their own health and wellbeing, not only at work but also at home.

Resolved:

24.1 That Report No 173/16 be noted.

25 Accidents to staff from April 2016 to November 2016

The Committee received Report No 174/16 which presented the statistics on accidents and near misses reported by staff at the Council between 1 April 2016 and 30 November 2016.

The Committee noted the reduction of the number of accidents in comparison with the same reporting period in 2015 from 45 to 29, as shown under paragraph 2.6 of the Report. The Health and Safety Officer explained that she hoped this reflected a real reduction in accidents and not just a reduction in the reporting by staff. She informed the Committee that staff were asked to discuss health and safety matters at team meetings, were encouraged to report accidents and that general awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace had greatly increased across the Council.

Ms McGreal explained that Unison staff representatives had been encouraging the reporting of accidents and near misses, particularly within the Waste and Recycling department. The Health and Safety Officer added for clarity that the reporting of near misses was not chased up so much as with accidents as it had become apparent that, for varying reasons, it was difficult for staff to accurately record near misses.

Resolved:

25.1 That Report No 174/16 be noted.

26 Joint Health and Safety Forum activities from November 2015 to November 2016

The Committee received Report No 175/16 which detailed the main activities of the Joint Health and Safety Forum from November 2015 to November 2016.

The Health and Safety Officer took the Committee through the key points of the Report, including the following:

- The Forum had agreed to meet on a quarterly basis in 2017, as opposed to bi-monthly previously. Meetings would be convened in between the set meetings if it was necessary to do so.
- The accident and near miss reports presented to the Employment Committee were also considered at every Forum meeting, and were examined for any trends and their possible causes.

- The annual Corporate Health and Safety Work Plan was reviewed by the Forum at each meeting.
- The health and safety training carried out during the year and planned training, as discussed at the Forum, was detailed under paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 of the Report.

A discussion followed regarding the Drug and Alcohol Policy and Procedure Review Working Group, arising from the Forum, that was considering all the issues involved of drugs and alcohol use affecting staff at work. The Health and Safety Officer explained that the Forum had discussed whether testing staff that drove Council vehicles as part of their jobs was an option. The Forum had recognised that this was more complex to set up than expected and raised more issues. The Health and Safety Officer explained she was undertaking further research to aid the Working Group, including how other local authorities dealt with drug and alcohol issues in the workplace.

Ms McGreal advised that Unison's suggested approach would be on education and increasing awareness of the issues first before resorting to punitive and potentially expensive measures such as the random testing of staff. She advised that there were courses available on the awareness of health issues that should be explored, alongside a policy.

Following a query by Ms McGreal, the Committee noted that the Council did not currently provide alcohol awareness training to staff. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that it was something the Council should be doing and would look into this further.

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The Health and Safety Officer brought to the Committee's attention her congratulations to Officers who, through their recent work, had enabled the Council to resume its litter-picking duties on the A27 road.

The Committee commended the Health and Safety Officer on raising the awareness of health and safety matters within the Council over the years and on the high level of detail and professional presentation of reporting to the Committee on health and safety issues and the Forum's activities.

Resolved:

- 26.1** That Report No 175/16 be noted.

27 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

- 27.1** That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) 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 on the Agenda 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.

28 Consideration of Matters Raised by the Employees' Side

Ms McGreal explained that Unison wished to continue its discussions with the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development on the matrix of differences between Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils.

Ms McGreal wished to raise again the concerns expressed by staff on the implementation of Phase One of the Joint Transformation Programme (JTP). She added that organisational changes would need to be carried out in accordance with the new Change Management Policy.

Ms McGreal brought the Committee's attention to the pressures that had arisen due to the Lewes Branch Secretary's extended absence. She asked that she and local representatives be allowed the additional time necessary to support staff and also advised that a replacement for the Secretary was being sought.

Ms McGreal queried the role of the Employment Committee and how it would operate in future after the implementation of the JTP. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services was considering this, bearing in mind that by the time of the Committee's next meeting in March 2017 all Lewes District Council staff would have had their employment transferred to Eastbourne Borough Council (who it had been agreed would be acting as the host authority from 1 February 2017).

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

Ms McGreal advised that Unison always worked closely with the Health and Safety Officer in respect of health and safety matters. She explained that the number of health and safety branch representatives had reduced over time and that Unison would be looking to rebuild those numbers.

Ms McGreal informed the Committee that the Lewes and Eastbourne branches of Unison were looking to merge in the future, although she acknowledged it would be a complex process.

30 Date of Next MeetingResolved:

- 30.1** That it be noted that the next meeting of the Employment Committee was scheduled to be held on Monday, 6 March 2017 in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes commencing at 10:00am.

All to note

The meeting ended at 10:53am.