

## **Employment Committee**

**Minutes of meeting held in Telscombe Room - Southover House, Lewes on 25 March 2019 at 10.00 am**

**Present:**

Councillor Elayne Merry (Chair)

Councillors Mike Chartier, Paul Franklin and Stephen Gauntlett

**Officers in attendance:**

Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Ed Hele (Functional Lead (Quality Environment)), Helen Knight (Head of Human Resources) and Sarah Lawrence (Senior Committee Officer)

**36 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018 were approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

**37 Apologies for absence/declaration of substitute members**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robertson, Graham Purdee (employee's side representative), and from Unison. It was noted that Unison had been unable to provide any representatives due to the timing of this meeting, as its AGM to appoint new representatives was next week.

**38 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

**39 Urgent items**

There were none.

**40 Written questions from Councillors**

There were none.

**41 Update on Joint Transformation Programme**

The Head of Human Resources provided a verbal update on the progress and completion of the Joint Transformation Programme (JTP). It was confirmed that the final phase of JTP had been completed in terms of structures and staff positions, subject to a few final information packs to be issued and final interviews to take place in the areas of finance and corporate property and facilities. Overall the target of £3.2m of savings across both Councils had been achieved; there had been significant channel shift due to online services, and technology changes.

Although the staffing structures had been completed, there were still areas of the programme that were still to be developed in terms of technology, new ways of working and cultural changes, and these changes would be a matter of focus in everyday work going forward.

The Programme Board would meet one final time, and would consider lessons which should be applied for future transformation programmes. The Head of Human Resources thanked members for their support through the programme.

The Committee asked that information on the reasons for JTP, the benefits and consequences had the Councils not embarked on the programme be included in the induction programme for new and returning Councillors after the May elections.

**Resolved –**

1. That the verbal update on the Joint Transformation Programme be noted.
2. That information on the reasons and outcomes of the Joint Transformation Programme be included in the induction programme for Councillors following the May elections.

## **42 Code of Conduct for Employees**

The Head of Human Resources presented to the Committee the Code of Conduct for employees that had been aligned and updated to apply to employees and workers (casual and agency staff and consultants) across Lewes and Eastbourne Councils, and was one of series of policies being updated in this way. It was noted that the actual changes to the policy were very minor. Unison had been consulted and had provided no comments or amendments to the policy. In addition, it had been presented to the Eastbourne Joint Staff Committee in February and approved.

**Resolved –** To note that the Councils' previously separate Code of Conduct policies have now been aligned and updated, and to endorse the updated Code of Conduct for employees.

## **43 Facilities Agreement**

The Head of Human Resources presented to the Committee the updated and aligned Facilities Agreement, which set out the union facilities time available for union representatives to carry out their duties effectively on behalf of union members. It was confirmed that this had been aligned across Lewes and Eastbourne Councils.

It was noted that there were no significant changes to the policy. The Committee was assured that unison had been consulted and had provided no comments or amendments to the policy. The policy had been presented to the Eastbourne Joint Staff Committee in February and approved. Although no union members were able to attend this meeting, they had been present at the Joint Staff Committee and had confirmed this in person.

Although Unison staff had struggled to attend this meeting, the Committee was assured that when key staff matters arise the human resources officers were in contact with Unison representatives, and they did provide support to staff, as and when required.

**Resolved** – To note that the Councils' previously separate Facilities Agreement policies have now been aligned and update, and to endorse the updated Facilities Agreement.

#### **44 Update on Health and Safety matters**

The Functional Lead of Quality and Environment (FLQE) provided a verbal update on the work of the health and safety service and gave a presentation on the health and safety matters across both Lewes and Eastbourne Councils.

The FLQE advised that the health and safety contractor had completed work on a comprehensive plan and health and safety policy across both Councils. A new suite of documents were available for audits and risk assessments, which used a common set parameters and RAG (red amber green) rating for standardised assessments. A joint health and safety audit had been completed in relation to pest control and one was being arranged for Southover House. New first aid training had been completed across all sites. The FLQE advised that a new Joint Corporate Health and Safety Advisor had been appointed and was due to start at the end of April, whose expertise included the management of large events.

The Functional Lead of Quality Environment gave a presentation on the reporting of accidents, which was now via a single email address for all employees. In total there had been 46 accidents across both authorities in the quarter, 18 related to non-employees, 28 employees and there were 10 near misses. Many of the incidents were minor in nature. However, Members were pleased to see the level of reporting, in particular in relation to the near misses which provided information to prevent future accidents.

It was highlighted that depot staff were reporting less incidents now that recycling boxes had been replaced with wheeled bins, and this had also resulted in a reduction in the number of muscular skeletal issues and injuries.

**Resolved** – To note the presentation and verbal update on health and safety matters.

#### 45 Exclusion of the public and press

**Resolved** – To exclude the public and press from the meeting during the discussion of Items 11, 12, and 13 on this agenda under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), as there was likely to be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### 46 Sickness Report - Quarter 3

The Committee received a report to update the Committee regarding the Council's sickness figures for the period Quarter 3 2018/19 (1 October to 31 December 2019).

The Committee was pleased to note that the average days' absence for each employee (across both Councils) for quarter 3 was 2.73. As the overall total for quarters 1 to 3 was 6.49 days lost, it was anticipated the overall target of 8 days would be exceeded slightly. However this continued the downward trajectory of days since 2012/13, when the position for Lewes Council was 12.52 days. It was confirmed that this was a result of a concerted programme to manage absence and to support employees to stay in employment where possible, through adjustments and agile working.

A number of health and wellbeing events were being promoted, and managers were being offered training in resilience and in managing mental health in the workplace, to provide additional support to staff reporting stress. It was noted that the level of absence due to reported stress was in line with that for other similar local authorities.

The Committee noted the honesty of employees to managers as to the nature of their absences. It was for this reason that this report was being discussed in exempt session due to the nature of the information disclosed, and the danger that individual staff members could be identified.

**Resolved** – To note the Quarter 3 figures alongside the sickness absence target for 2018/19 and the way in which the figures are being presented for both Councils.

#### 47 Consideration of matters raised by the employees' side

None had been received.

**48 Consideration of health and safety matters raised by the employees' side**

None had been received.

**49 Date of next meeting**

Prior to the close of the meeting, the Committee thanked the officers that had supported it and also thanked the Chair for her excellent work during the last four years, as she had indicated that this would be her last meeting of the Committee and that she was not intending to stand for election in May.

**Resolved** – To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Employment Committee was to be held on 17 June 2019 at 10 am in the Ditchling Room, Southover House.

The meeting ended at 10.39 am.

Councillor Elayne Merry (Chair)