

Joint Staff Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held remotely (via Microsoft Teams) on 3 March 2021 at 2.30pm

Present:

Councillors: Councillor Stephen Holt (Chair); Councillors Chris Collier (Vice-Chair), Jane Lamb, Isabelle Linington, James MacCleary and Colin Swansborough

Staff side: Chris Earp, Adediran Kujore, Linda Farley and Hilary Mitchell

Officers in attendance:

Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources, ICT and Transformation)
Ed Hele (Functional Lead - Quality Environment)
Becky Holloway (Specialist Advisor for Health and Safety)
Helen Knight (Head of Human Resources)
Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

15 Introductions

The Chair introduced members of the Committee via roll call, and all those present during the remote meeting.

16 Apologies for absence/Declaration of substitute members

There were none.

17 Declarations of interest

There were none.

18 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2020 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

19 Urgent items

There were none.

20 Grievance Policy

The Committee received a report which detailed the alignment of the Grievance Policy at both Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council.

The Head of HR summarised the report and key details of the newly aligned Grievance Policy.

The Committee queried whether or not there were any challenges in aligning the policy. The Head of HR confirmed there were no challenges, highlighting that the significant changes were in the agreements surrounding the details of the appeal panels and whom they would comprise.

Resolved:

- 1) That the newly aligned policy be noted; and
- 2) That the Head of HR be recommended to approve and implement the newly aligned Grievance Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

21 Drugs and Alcohol Policy

The Committee received a report which detailed the alignment of the Drugs and Alcohol Policy at both Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council.

The Head of HR summarised the report and key details of the newly aligned Drugs and Alcohol Policy. She noted that HR had been in discussions with staff and UNISON regarding the inclusion of a routine monitoring program as part of the policy, which allowed support for staff who came forward that had dependency which could impact their work.

The Head of HR highlighted that the Council had taken the unusual step of publishing the draft policy internally in order for staff to have the opportunity to view the policy in advance of it being presented to the Committee for consideration. She further highlighted that there had been various questions from staff regarding the policy, and HR felt that the draft policy answered a number of those questions.

The Head of HR noted that UNISON was happy to support the policy, following a long period of informal and formal discussions with the Council. She further noted that the policy was already in place at South East Environmental Services Limited (SEESL), as those staff that had transferred from Kier were already under a similar program, giving the Council a helpful opportunity to see the program in action and how it worked. The proposal was to expand the policy to the rest of the Council for safety-critical and cause testing.

The Chair queried safety-critical roles as detailed in paragraph 8.1 and the possible disciplinary procedures for staff who used their personal vehicle for work purposes, but not when driving to and from work. The Head of HR noted the Chair's point and proposed the removal of the words 'not driving to and from work' from the policy, as it would depend on the circumstances. If a member of staff were under the influence and there was an accident that brought the Council into disrepute, then disciplinary action might be taken, but it would depend on the circumstances.

The Chair queried what steps were being taken in regard to rehabilitation options for staff. The Head of HR highlighted that the Council had experienced similar situations in the past, and HR had always encouraged staff to come forward. She further highlighted that although it might be a personal matter for a member of staff, it could impact work performance and HR would be able to signpost them to a great deal of help. The Head of HR highlighted that whilst initially staff would need to contact their GP, the Council had various options which allowed for specific support in some areas, often providing support more quickly than a GP was able to.

The Committee queried how frequently staff in safety-critical areas would be randomly screened. The Head of HR confirmed that staff in safety-critical areas would be randomly screened four times per year. Staff outside of safety-critical areas would only be screened with cause.

The Committee queried whether the staff had any further comments regarding the policy. Staff side representative, Hilary Mitchell, confirmed that there were no further comments.

Resolved:

- 1) That the newly aligned policy be noted and endorsed; and
- 2) That the Head of HR be recommended to approve and implement the newly aligned Drugs and Alcohol Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the removal of the words 'not driving to and from work' in section 8.1 of the policy.

22 Exclusion of the public and press

Resolved:

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 9, 10, 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.

23 Sickness Absence Quarter 3 2020/21

The Committee received the Officer's report which provided an update regarding the Council's sickness figures for the period of Quarter 3 2020/21 and outlined the way in which the figures were presented for both Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council.

Resolved:

That the Quarter 3 2020/21 (1 October to 31 December 2020) sickness figures and the way in which the figures were presented for both Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council, be noted.

24 3rd Quarter 2020/21 Accident Report

The Committee received a presentation in respect of key aspects of health and safety matters across both authorities.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

25 Consideration of 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.

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

There were no additional health and safety matters raised by the employees' side over and above those which had been recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

27 Date of next meeting

Resolved:

That it be noted that the next meeting of the Joint Staff Advisory Committee was scheduled to commence at 2:30pm on Monday, 14 June 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm.

Councillor Stephen Holt (Chair)