

## **Employment Committee**

**Minutes of meeting held in the Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes on 10 September 2018 at 10.00 am**

### **Present:**

Councillor Elayne Merry (Chair)

Councillors Mike Chartier and Paul Franklin

### **Officers in attendance:**

Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Helen Knight (Head of Human Resources), Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer) and Jazmin Victory (Committee Officer)

### **Employees' Side Representatives:**

Robert Haigh and Graham Purdye

### **11 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2018 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

### **12 Apologies for absence/declaration of substitute members**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Robbie Robertson and Stephen Gauntlett.

### **13 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

### **14 Written questions from councillors**

There were none.

### **15 Urgent items**

The Chair reported that she had agreed, in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, that a verbal update given by

the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation regarding health and safety matters across the Council be considered as a matter of urgency in order that the Committee could take its decisions based on the most recent information which was available.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation informed the Committee that after the departure of the previous Health and Safety Officer, a Health and Safety Consultant from an external safety company had been recruited to deal with health and safety matters across both Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils.

The Committee queried whether the new Health and Safety Consultant would be present at future meetings of the Committee and whether the consultant would be working full-time across both councils.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation replied that she would request that the new Health and Safety Consultant be present at future meetings of the Committee, and that the consultant would be working part-time – one week on and one week off – although the consultant would be accessible by phone at any time.

Resolved:

That the verbal update on health and safety matters provided by the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation be noted.

## **16 Update on the Joint Transformation Programme**

The Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation provided a verbal update on the progress of the Joint Transformation Programme (JTP); a restructuring programme (currently between phases two and three) which aimed to deliver the majority of Lewes District Council (LDC) and Eastbourne Borough Council's (EBC) services via shared teams and by adopting new ways of working.

Members were informed that despite earlier difficulties with the Licensing transition, the transition was back on track. The revenues and benefits transition had been successful and was still going well. The Planning transition was on track for 26 September 2018 and the Housing transition was on track for 3 December 2018.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that phase 3 was the next significant transition. Once phase 3 began, more updates on staffing and other related issues would be relayed to Members. She further explained that the business case for phase 3 would be going to the October 2018 meeting of the Cabinet. Staff consultation would then begin once the business case had been considered and decided by Cabinet.

The issues surrounding the Customer Contact Centre were highlighted by the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation. Website queries had gone up by 93% in the last year, despite staff in the Customer Contact Centre dealing with a consistent vacancy level, partly due to staff moving to other posts within the Authority.

The Committee wished to express its appreciation for all of the hard work by the staff in the Customer Contact Centre despite the current level of vacancies.

Resolved:

That the verbal update on the Joint Transformation Programme be noted.

## **17 Sickness Report**

The Committee received the report which provided an update regarding the Council's sickness figures for the period quarter 1 2018/19 (1 April to 30 June 2018), together with the reasons for staff absences as set out in the appendices to the report.

The Head of Human Resources explained that from 1 April 2018 Human Resources (HR) had been reflecting combined sickness figures for both LDC and EBC, and that the current report was the first report to reflect these figures, which were broken down by service area.

The Head of Human Resources brought the Committee's attention to paragraph 2.1 on page 7 of the report. She clarified that the average number of absence days for each employee for quarter 1 2018 should read as 1.62 days instead of 1.54 days as stated in the report.

In addition, following discussions with the Corporate Management Team and Members of EBC's Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed to reduce the combined 2018/19 target of 9 sickness days per full-time employee to 8 sickness days per full-time employee for both LDC and EBC.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

## **18 Dignity at Work Policy**

The Committee received the report which provided a review of the Dignity at Work Policy.

The Head of Human Resources explained that HR had been working on aligning the Dignity at Work Policy at both LDC and EBC. She further

explained that the report had been considered by the Equalities and Fairness Steering Group and that comments made by the group had been considered and applied to the policy where necessary.

Two significant changes to the policy had been made, which included the addition of a section which dealt with cyberbullying and what to do if a member of staff was accused of cyberbullying.

The employees' side representatives welcomed the new additions to the policy.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

## **19 Agile Working Policy**

The Committee received the report which provided an update regarding the review of the Agile Working Policy.

The Head of Human Resources explained that the review of the Agile Working Policy was similar to that of the Dignity at Work Policy, in that the two previously separate policies had now each been aligned. She further explained that there was an additional need to remind and refresh staff regarding agile ways of working, in particular the areas of the Agile Working Policy which dealt with hot desks and clear desks.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

## **20 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 10 and 11 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.

## **21 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.

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

The employees' side representatives commented that the Health and Safety Committee had not met for some time and that UNISON hoped to see the meetings resume with the appointment of the new Health and Safety Consultant.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation acknowledged that the Health and Safety Committee had not met in some time and confirmed that meetings would resume with the appointment of the new Health and Safety Consultant.

The employees' side representatives commented that any additional concerns regarding the update on the health and safety matters had already been addressed during the verbal update provided by the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Transformation earlier in the meeting.

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.

**23 Date of next meeting**

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Employment Committee that is scheduled to be held on Monday, 3 December 2018 in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes commencing at 10:00am, be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.34 am.

Councillor Elayne Merry (Chair)