

Employment Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st March, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Ali (Chair), Ajaib, Basra, M. Bedi, Gahir, Qaseem and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Bal and Grewal

PART 1

30. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

31. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd December 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

32. Grievance Policy and Procedure Report

The Project Manager for Transformation outlined the main points of the report, which provided a revised grievance policy for Committee approval. The Project Manager explained that the revised policy sought to reduce formal grievances to a minimum by enabling managers and employees to resolve issues in the workplace before invoking a formal grievance. The revised policy also took into account lessons learned from previous cases.

Questions from Members included on data available on grievance complaints, whether the timescale given of 6 weeks as the normal duration for a grievance investigation was achieved, and on whistleblowing. It was explained that while there were no figures available currently on grievance complaints, overall the number was very low. On the 6 weeks timescale this was not currently being achieved and officers were working to improve on this. It was also explained that whistleblowing was a separate policy but that numbers on this were also currently low.

There was some concern that at the informal stage a complainant may not have anyone to support them in their complaint but officers clarified that complainants could have support at every stage of the grievance procedure. There was also a question of how long records would be kept for in grievance cases and the Project Manager explained that while she did not have the answer to this she could check the policy on record-keeping and let Members know this.

Finally Members agreed with the statement in the report that it would be essential that once approved there would be appropriate communication and training for all staff, as it was vitally important that all staff were made aware of the revised policy.

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Resolved – That the Committee approved the revised Grievance Policy and Procedure.

33. Recruitment Direction Report

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report, outlining that it had been noted at Cabinet the previous evening. The report set out why the recruitment direction had been brought in and the rationale behind it. The Posts covered by the report were also set out in the appendix. The Monitoring Officer drew Members' attention to the Commissioners' comments on the need to review this area of work on a regular basis to ensure the improvements needed were delivered.

In answer to questions regarding the list of third tier posts by directorate, the Monitoring Officer explained that the list could change and was a moveable feast; not all of the posts on the list had been filled yet. There were still vacancies across the organisation including at senior levels, and significant numbers of vacancies in finance and ICT, the Council had a big recruitment agenda and hoped to fill these vacancies by direct recruitment. There was concern from some Members on the number of vacancies in the finance department and the possible domino effect of this on the functioning of the Council. Officers explained that this was under constant review, and two deputies were currently employed in the finance department on an interim basis.

Members suggested a 'traffic light' system to flag up where there were vacancies of critically important roles, and officers agreed this was a good idea which they would suggest to CLT. There was also regular monitoring and reporting to CLT by HR on where there were senior vacancies that needed to be filled. If critical these could be filled on an interim basis and this had been done in some cases, as recruitment of qualified people for senior roles was difficult in the current nation-wide recruitment environment.

Members also raised the need to ensure staff well-being where other team members were affected by a vacant position in a team, especially at senior level. Officers agreed and outlined steps that were in place to support staff including hybrid and flexible working opportunities, well-being activities and the employee assistance programme. HR were conscious of staff well-being, and the planned staff-survey would be useful in terms of getting feedback from staff on what was needed.

There were questions on specific vacancies which had been hard to fill, including in scrutiny, and on upskilling existing staff to enable progression. Officers admitted some posts were difficult to fill where applicants did not have the skill-set required, even when advertised in specialist press, and in some cases the position may be advertised at a higher grade if it could not be filled. In terms of upskilling existing staff, all Council vacancies were advertised internally first, giving existing staff the opportunity to apply for any advertised role including on progression.

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Members asked for further details on the cross-council workshops mentioned in the report which had identified issues and quick wins which could be taken by services and HR. Officers did not have details on this but agreed to update Members by email in the near future.

Resolved – The Committee noted the contents of the report.

34. Performance Management of Chief Officers update

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which was an update to the report on the same subject presented to the last Committee in December. The report included feedback on areas where this was requested to be reported back to the Committee.

Members asked whether an exit interview was usual practice for staff leaving the Council and it was explained that this was usual practice although had not happened as regularly as was hoped. Officers explained that this could be to do with the circumstances of a member of staff's departure and the timeframe involved. Members had no further questions on this update report.

Resolved – The Committee noted the updated actions on the learning points highlighted in the report in December 2022.

35. Attendance Record

Resolved – That details of the Members' Attendance Record 2022/23 be noted.

36. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Committee was able to conduct all business in the public part of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information in Part II of the published agenda. It was therefore not necessary to exclude the press and public.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.30 pm)