

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 28th June, 2012.

Present:- Councillors Sharif (Chair), Aujla, Chohan, Coad, A S Dhaliwal, S K Dhaliwal and Plenty

PART 1

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th January and 28th May 2012

Minutes - 26th January

Councillor Coad raised an issue with regard to Minute No. 18 on individuals in posts earning over £100,000 taking a reduction of 5% in their salary. Councillor Coad asked what action had been taken with regard to this and her understanding that it had been a policy directive. Members of the committee indicated their view that the committee had discussed the issue and had believed the advice from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to be advisory. Following the committee meeting on 26th January a letter had gone to all members of the committee enclosing the article on the subject from Eric Pickles. No further action had been taken. The Committee agreed that the minute had been recorded accurately.

Minute No. 19 – Councillor Coad asked for information with regard to the cost of the seconded Trade Union representatives. The Assistant Director of Professional Services confirmed that three members of staff were seconded to trade union duties and that he would be able to provide the total cost to the authority to members of the Committee.

Minute No. 22 – Update on Planning for the Future - The Committee agreed that the word “disappointment” in the final paragraph of minute should be altered to “disapproval”.

The minutes of the meeting of Committee held on 26th January were taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the amendments as detailed above and the minutes of the 28th May 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

6. Appointment of Deputies on Sub Committees

Resolved – That Councillors Abe and Strutton be appointed as deputies to Councillor Wright on the Employment and Appeals Sub-Committee and Councillors Smith and Coad be appointed as deputies to Councillor Wright on the Appeals Sub-Committee.

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7. Workforce Strategy

The Committee considered a report setting out the key elements of the Council's Workforce Strategy and the planned programme of work. The Committee's comments and views were sought on the proposed strategy and members were asked to determine methods for reporting progress at future Employment and Appeals Committee.

Members were advised that the key elements of the strategy had been developed through discussions and consultation which aimed to reflect the specific challenges and opportunities for Slough for the next 2-5 years. The focus of the strategy was on employability and the Council's aim to attract people with the best skills, competencies and behaviours to help the Council succeed in the current climate and situation. Key elements of the strategy included development of commercial and entrepreneurial skills and abilities, action to recruit and retain the right workforce, reward and engagement, improvement of overall staff wellbeing and reduction to sickness, improved leadership skills across the council and introduction of robust employee management systems and information. In discussing the strategy members of the committee made a number of comments which included the need for entrepreneurial behaviour to be rewarded although a "bonus culture" was not widely supported. A strong appraisal system was necessary and the use of temporary staff needed to be closely monitored. It was agreed that managers needed to be equipped to manage effectively and be given the skills necessary to address management issues. After discussion it was agreed that further reports would be made to the Committee on:

- Details of the Tender Contract for temporary staff at the Council – currently held by Pertemps.
- Details of the appraisal percentage by directorate.
- A report on reward and engagement as part of the development of the strategy.

Resolved – That the principles of the Workforce Strategy be agreed and that the reports detailed above be made to the Committee at the appropriate time.

8. Wellbeing Strategy

The Committee considered a report detailing the work currently underway to improve overall staff wellbeing and reduce employee absenteeism. The Assistant Director of Professional Services advised that the Council was committed to providing a working environment and management practices that promoted the good health and wellbeing of all its employees thus reducing the occurrence of absence and related costs. Whilst it was inevitable that people became ill and would sometimes need to take time away from work, the Council had identified a need to improve the overall level of wellbeing amongst its employees and reduce the sickness absence levels. Members discussed the main causes of absence and expressed concern that many staff indicated stress as a reason for absence. Members of the

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Committee asked for a report on the absence due to stress prior to and since the move to St Martin's Place. Members of the Committee confirmed their view that the "welcome back" to work interviews after a period of sickness were critical and that referral to Occupational Health needed to be considered further as, at present, it was left to Manager's discretion. Members welcomed a further report on the Wellbeing Strategy to their meeting in September which would include further work on the incentives to increase exercise and activity, review of new occupational health contract implementation and proposed changes to the sickness absence policy following consultation with the trade unions.

Resolved – That the key principles of the Wellbeing Strategy be endorsed.

9. Management Information on the Workforce - HR Indicators - January 2012 to March 2012

The committee considered a report setting out key management information and HR indicators on the Workforce January 2012 to March 2012. The Assistant Director of Professional Services advised that the information that had been provided was not 100% accurate and that the Council was working with ARVATO to ensure the robustness of the data. Members of the committee drew attention to their concerns with regard to the workforce profile particularly with regard to salary scale data versus areas of under and over representation of the various communities in the workforce. The Assistant Director advised that some work could be done with regard to "triangulating" this data with the census data and undertook to bring a report back to the September meeting. Members raised an issue with regard to the number of agency staff used and their length of tenure and it was agreed that this information would be included in the report to be produced for the committee in September. This report would also include "self employed" contractor appointments. Members were particularly concerned about the days lost in Community and Wellbeing and felt that more information was needed on jobs and sickness by reason.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

10. Date of Next Meeting - 20th September 2012

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)