

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 25th October, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Usmani (Chair), N Holledge (Vice-Chair), Bedi, Davis, M Holledge and Sharif

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Brooker

PART 1

13. Declarations of Interest

None.

14. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st June 2016

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

With reference to minute 3, Surjit Nagra, HR Business Partner, confirmed that since the last meeting it had been determined that all Cambridge Education staff would now be moving back to Slough Borough Council.

15. Temporary Agency Staff - Progress on Implementation and Baseline Monitoring

Roger Parkin, interim Chief Executive, introduced a report on temporary agency staffing.

Members were informed that the in-year spend for agency staff was just over £6m, and the projected annual figure was £11.3m. It was recognised that this was a high figure, and so the Council was endeavouring to reduce this spend by converting agency workers to permanent staff, together with continuing the initiatives to develop in-house talent as outlined at previous meetings.

The number of current agency staff was 152, which was 15 less than at the same point in the previous year. It was confirmed that Wellbeing remained the directorate with the highest number of agency workers, due to the requirement to use agencies to ensure service continuity in light of the national shortage of social care staff.

A recruitment drive to attempt to fill positions with permanent staff would be conducted in the near future, utilising national adverts and social media such as LinkedIn. It was recognised that the Council may have to offer increased flexible or remote working as incentives for staff.

The officer concluded by confirming that the Matrix contract had provided transparency over agency spend, and had made managers more accountable

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for their spend on recruitment. It was confirmed that the contract was now under review, to determine whether to renew for a further year.

Members remained concerned at the amount of money being spent on agency workers, and highlighted the importance of incentivising agency staff to convert to permanent staff by way of market supplements; travel assistance, key worker accommodation and staff reward schemes, where possible.

Resolved - (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Employment & Appeals Committee.

16. Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure

Gemma Bailey, Head of Corporate HR, introduced a report on the new Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure.

Members were informed that the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure was a key HR policy, fundamental to establishing an effective workforce. The policy and procedure provided a clear and transparent framework for managers to be able to assess the suitability of an employee for the post to which they had applied.

The ODHR service had reviewed the policy and procedure as part of a greater review of employment policies to ensure they continued to reflect best practice and the council's strategic aims, were user friendly, and worked together cohesively.

The objectives that had been used to review the policy were:-

- The need to ensure there is clarity at all stages of the process
- The need to ensure that staff are given opportunities to apply for vacant posts before they are advertised externally, although there is recognition that there will be exceptions
- The need to be consistent with other HR policies and procedures

Consultation had taken place with the employee engagement forum, senior management, recognised trade unions and the Disability Forum, all of whom had responded positively to the improvements.

Key improvements to the policy and procedure included:

- Outlining clear process steps to effectively review a vacancy before advertising

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- Confirming that where feasible advertisements will be collated into a composite advertisement to increase employer brand and reduce advertising costs
- Introducing a requirement to advertise vacancies internally first to maximise equality of opportunity and provide career development opportunities
- Additional guidance on advertising for non-EEA nationals
- Additional guidance on the new English language requirement for public sector workers
- Clearer information on panel composition, including giving due regard to panel member diversity
- Guidance on supporting candidates with disabilities
- Guidance on effective interviewing questions
- Guidance on providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates

The revised Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure would be implemented via various communication methods including:

- Grapevine staff newsletter
- News round email
- E-mail to all line managers
- HRBPs to provide briefings at Senior Management Team Meetings
- Communication with Transactional HR services

Full training for managers would be provided as part of the implementation process.

Resolved - That the reviewed recruitment and selection policy and procedure be approved.

17. Criminal Records Check (DBS) Policy and Procedure

Gemma Bailey, Head of Corporate HR, introduced a report on the revised Criminal Records Check Policy and Procedure.

Members were informed that the Criminal Records Check Policy and Procedure was a key HR policy which was fundamental to establishing an effective workforce. The policy and procedure provided a clear and fair framework for managers to be able to ensure that an employee or volunteer

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engaging with children, young people and other vulnerable client groups was suitably checked.

The ODHR service had reviewed the policy and procedure as part of a greater review of employment policies to ensure they continued to reflect best practice and the council's strategic aims, were user friendly, and worked together cohesively.

The revised Criminal Records Check Policy and Procedure had been prepared with due regard to the new DBS Code of Practice and prevailing legislation. The updated policy would ensure that the Council complied with all requirements in respect of DBS checks and recognised safeguarding responsibilities.

The policy had been circulated for formal consultation with the Corporate Management Team, recognised trade unions and Employee Engagement Group. Both the Head of Democratic Services and the Council's Monitoring Officer were consulted on the arrangements for Members. All of the groups had responded positively to the improvements within the policy and procedure.

The main changes to the policy and procedure included:

- Outlining in a transparent and user friendly way the legal position with regards to undertaking DBS checks, when they apply and the criteria that must be met for each level of disclosure
- Introducing a risk assessment form for when, in very exceptional circumstances, an employee may start work before the DBS check has been returned
- Guidance on how to deal with an adverse disclosure including the requirement to complete a Cause for Concern Form to ensure a comprehensive record of decisions and actions taken.
- New guidance to provide clarification on the eligibility and procedures for Member DBS checks
- New guidance on making a referral to the DBS (where we have withdrawn permission for a person to work with children/vulnerable adults)

The revised Criminal Records Check policy would be made available to staff and managers initially through SBCinsite. The policy would then be communicated to staff and managers through policy update briefing sessions and through appropriate internal communication methods including:

- Grapevine staff newsletter
- News round email

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- E-mail to all line managers
- HR Business Partners to provide briefings at Senior Management Team Meetings
- Communication with Transactional HR services

Resolved - That the revised Criminal Records Check Policy and Procedure be approved.

18. Staff Development Programme Update

Surjit Nagra, HR Business Partner, introduced a report on updates to the Staff Development Programme.

Members were informed that the purpose of the Organisational Development (OD) team and its function was to promote Slough Borough Council as a learning organisation - to create a motivating environment where employees prospered and were enabled to advise and support each other, residents, visitors, businesses and partner organisations.

The Staff Development Programme aimed to:

- Support staff to be safe and effective in their roles through a Mandatory Training Programme that is regularly reviewed by CMT and Directorate SMTs to ensure compliance;
- Offer a comprehensive corporate learning and development programme which supports organisational needs;
- Appreciate and respond to the different learning styles, preferences and capabilities of Slough's workforce; and
- Upskill staff throughout their lifecycle with Slough, so that they are confident in their current roles; recognise their own potential and evolve into role models for their colleagues and customers.

(Councillor Sharif arrived at 19.15)

In order to support the stated aims, a learning and development directory setting out 2016/17 programmes had been produced and had been made available to all staff through the Council's internal website.

CMT had approved a Mandatory Training Programme for staff which included training around health and safety, safeguarding and equality. This programme was established with a requirement for all employees to complete 11 e-learning modules between now and the end of March 2017, through a staged approach.

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The programme had been established to support the Five-Year Plan outcomes and would be monitored and revised accordingly. CMT were being advised of the level compliance for each Directorate on a monthly basis as part of the workforce data schedule. Through the OD / HR Business Partners, the Directorate SMTs were also being updated.

The current Management Development Programme was due to end in January 2017. The OD work programme was tasked with evaluating the programme's effectiveness with a view to determining future needs. Options for a future programme would be proposed by the end of this year with a view to starting the new programme in 2017/18.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

19. Staff Wellbeing Update

Surjit Nagra, HR and OD Business Partner, provided an update on staff wellbeing.

Members were informed that the data was for the period April to June 2016.

The target of sickness absence for each directorate was 8.1 per FTE, with the exception of the Wellbeing directorate, which had a target of 9.4 per FTE in recognition of the different challenges staff faced. Overall, the Council had achieved a figure of 8 per FTE, marginally under the overall target of 8.1. It was recognised that the Wellbeing directorate and the Regeneration, Housing and Resources directorate had exceeded the 8.1 target, whilst the Chief Executive directorate and Customer and Community Services were comfortably achieving their targets.

By division, certain areas such as Housing and Environments had exceeded their target, but measures were being taken to reduce sickness absence levels within these divisions.

It was highlighted that of the 829 total Council staff, there were 5 staff members who remained on long term sickness. Formal processes for these staff members were in place.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

20. Member's Attendance Record

The Member's Attendance Record was noted.

21. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 21st January 2017.

Chair

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(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.27 pm)