

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 24th January, 2013.

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

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Aujla

PART 1

18. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chaudhry declared a personal interest as his son worked for the Council.

19. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th October 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2012 were taken as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20. Update on New Contract for Provision of Temporary Agency Staff

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the implementation of the new contract for a Managed Service Provider to supply Temporary Agency Staff. The new contract and system for ordering temporary agency staff had been awarded to Matrix SCM, had commenced on 7th January, 2013 and, subject to one or two initial problems, had been working well. Matrix has developed relationships with a range of agencies, both local and national, so that the Council could source the right temporary staff at the right time and at competitive rates. There were now 55 agencies fully enrolled and accredited to supply temporary staff via Matrix, with additional agencies including some smaller local agencies, in the enrolment and accreditation phase.

The Committee noted that by entering into the new contract, the Council would achieve efficiency savings of £25k, by no longer having the previous supplier (Pertemps) on site, together with guaranteed minimum savings of 3% or £250k through reduced agency fees, aligned pay rates and tenure control. There was also scope to increase this by a further 3-6%.

In answer to questions, the Committee noted:

- SBC would always have a need for temporary staff, but savings could be achieved by reducing the number and the length of contracts for temporary staff.
- The new system would highlight a need for 3/6 month reviews of all temporary contracts.
- The contract with Matrix was for a 3 year term.

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- The system would provide comprehensive management data on the use of temporary staff and a full progress report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

21. Competency Framework

The Committee considered a report on the implementation of the new Leadership Competency Framework to be implemented as part of the Workforce Development Strategy. The leadership and management elements of the Strategy were to be taken forward by implementing a new competency framework for leaders and managers. It would be necessary to ensure managers were familiar with the new competencies, able to use them for recruitment, and to take account of them in the revised appraisal process. The report contained those competencies that had been prepared for Team Leaders, Service Managers, Assistant Directors and Directors, as developed by a project group of Assistant Directors and Directors. In addition, a timetable had been agreed for the programme of appraisals to be completed top down commencing with Directors. A new appraisal form and guidance on how to conduct appraisals had been introduced and a user guide containing examples of behaviours that demonstrate the competencies had been produced. The next stage was to review existing competencies for the rest of the workforce.

Arising from questions posed, the Committee noted:

- The timetable for appraisals using the new competencies would commence in mid-March and conclude by the end of May.
- Achievement of competencies at the relevant level would be built into the personal objectives set during the appraisal process.
- A number of models in both the private and public sector had been looked at to assist in drawing up a competency framework appropriate for SBC.
- While the 11 competencies defined seemed a lot, Managers would be concentrating on those key to development of individual members of staff.

The Committee endorsed a suggestion made that more training/guidance for Managers/Appraisers/Staff should be provided on the roll out of the Competency Framework to ensure an effective implementation. A copy of the new Appraisal Form adopted would be circulated for the information of members.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

22. Update on Wellbeing Strategy

The Committee considered a report with an update on progress made on the Wellbeing Strategy. The Wellbeing Project Group had produced a project

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plan which had arranged a Health Kiosk on five different staff sites for 3 weeks in September, a Health Fair between 2nd and 17th October, and “Feel Good Factory” leisure activity taster sessions in September 2012. The Occupational Health Contract now in place provided for a proactive approach to early intervention and appropriate management action. The last six months reporting period showed an average of 27 management referrals (compared to the previous average of 23 referrals). A programme of 13 training sessions was underway to ensure maximum take-up of the new Sickness Absence Management Policy. To assist Managers, a “How to do” sheet had been produced (attached to the report as Appendix) and interactive guidance for Managers was about to be released on the Council’s staff Insite. A sickness absence balanced scorecard had been developed to support the Council to capture and measure management data and a progress report on this would be made at the next meeting.

The Committee was informed that future initiatives planned by the Wellbeing Project Group included “Pace along with your Pedometer” – a competition to encourage staff to walk more; “Super Bowl League” – teams to play ten pin bowling; and “Ice Karting Grand Prix” – teams to take part in local competitions.

Members had a number of comments and questions about the report and the following points arose:

- The procedure where pay was withheld if an employee missed an appointment at Occupational Health was explained.
- It was proposed to repeat the Health Fair in 2013 at a different site.
- The high level of monthly figures for sickness days lost was queried.
- It was considered this high level may in part be due to more accurate reporting under the new policy, while the full benefits of the new procedure are yet to be realised.

Members also raised the question of the accommodation strategy and how it affected staff. It was reported that some rearrangement of working areas may be possible after the summer decant of staff at SMP. A suggestion was made that a report could be presented at the next meeting covering results of the staff attitude survey about accommodation, with improvements around staff satisfaction, and, if appropriate, the Director of Customer and Community Services to attend.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

23. Use of Suspensions

The Committee considered a report with an update on how the suspension process is applied in disciplinary cases. Suspension, or the temporary removal from work was used at SBC where allegations of serious misconduct were made against an employee, and it was considered that in the best interests of the investigation, or the employee, the employee should be away

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from the work place while an investigation took place. Suspension would only be considered as an option if one or more of five set criteria applied.

The report contained figures and explanations of where suspensions had been used, and importantly information about the average length of a suspension. The Committee noted that the lengthiest suspension cases occurred where the investigation was carried out by an external agency, for instance, a case involving safeguarding allegations that required police investigation.

Members made a number of comments about the report and queried why of suspension outcomes reported, none had concluded in a dismissal. The Assistant Director of Professional Services undertook to report the Committee's comments to CMT and agreed a further report on suspension outcome information be made to the next meeting covering a longer period (if possible up to 2 years) to give a more complete picture.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

24. Date of Next Meeting - 3rd April 2013

The Committee requested that an attendance record summary be included on the agenda for future meetings.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.05 pm)