

Staffing Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 29 July 2013

Present:-

Spencer Flower (Chairman)
Robert Gould (Vice-Chairman)
Trevor Jones and John Wilson

Jill Haynes, as a former Chairman of the Personnel Appeals Committee, also attended by invitation for minutes 88 to 89.

Officers:

Jonathan Mair (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Sheralyn Huntingford (Head of Human Resources) and Rebecca Thomas (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The following officer attended for items as appropriate:-

Catherine Charnley (Lead Human Resources Manager Specialist Services)

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Staffing Committee to be held on 3 October 2013.)

Apologies for Absence

73. No apologies for absence were received.

Code of Conduct

74. There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

75. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2013 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising Minute 72 Director for Children's Services Appointment – Progress Report Review (Paragraphs 1 & 3)

76.1 Members were updated on progress with reviewing the options for the future of Children's Services leadership. Arrangements were underway with South West Councils to commission a facilitator and discussions have taken place with potential interim candidates.

Head Count and FTE Figures 2013/14 - Quarter 1

77.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the County Council's headcount and full time employee (FTE) figures for the period 30 April to 30 June 2013.

77.2 When compared to the previous quarter, there was a reduction of 136 FTE (excluding schools, Dorset Waste Partnership and Public Health). Of this FTE reduction, 120 were accounted for by the transfer out of Dorset Adult Learning (29 FTE) and Learning Centres (91 FTE).

77.3 Since June 2010, the point at which the Coalition Government's grant reductions first became known, the County Council's FTE had reduced by 658 (including the

transfers outlined above), excluding schools and the Dorset Waste Partnership. Of the 658 FTE reduction, 253 FTE were for reason of redundancy, 68 per cent of which were voluntary.

Noted

Management of Attendance 2012/13 - Quarter 4

78.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on sickness absence performance for 2012/13. Commentaries on sickness absence by Directorate and Service were also provided.

78.2 The County Council's performance (excluding schools and the Dorset Waste Partnership) for 2012/13 was 9.20 working days per FTE against the annual target of 8.52 working days set for 2012/13. This represented an increase of 0.17 days per FTE against the performance for Quarter 3 and an increase of 0.05 working days per FTE compared to the 2011/12 performance. Additionally, reported sickness absence for the Dorset Waste Partnership for 2012/13 showed an increase of 2 working days per FTE compared to the 2011/12 full year performance.

78.3 A breakdown of sickness absence into long and short term absences was provided for the period 1 January to 31 March 2013 at service level, and the Head of Human Resources highlighted areas of concern. She advised that Human Resources were seeking to pilot some work with managers on a small group on a targeted basis. Managers would be provided with training, guidance and practical support to enable them to manage attendance across their teams. The outcome of the pilot exercise would be evaluated and brought before the Committee in due course as it was a resource intensive approach for Human Resource.

78.4 A member queried the Dorset Waste Partnership levels of FTE sickness absence recorded in June 2011 (4.35) compared to June 2012 (16.26). The Head of Human Resources confirmed that when the Partnership was established, there were no base/historic sickness figures. The Partnership completed its first full year at the end of March 2012, therefore figures since this date were for a full rolling year. Members asked that this be detailed in future data tables.

78.5 Concerns were raised at the average days lost per FTE within the Dorset Waste Partnership due to long term sickness (particularly within the Ferndown and North Dorset Partnership's depots) and members commented on the significant financial impact to the County Council. Members were asked to note that this would be scrutinised by the Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Committee at their meeting on 30 July 2013.

Resolved

79.1 That the full year performance for sickness absence, including performance against service targets, be noted.

79.2 That the commentary received from Directorate Management teams regarding their performance be noted.

Dorset County Council Apprenticeship Scheme

80.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources regarding a review of the current apprenticeship scheme, taking into consideration the experience gained during the pilot period and options for the scheme's future.

80.2 Members were asked to note that the County Council had operated an Apprenticeship Training Agency (in development) since July 2012 and it remains in place until September 2013. During the period July 2012 to May 2013, 12 apprentices had been

recruited, of which 9 were placed internally within the County Council and 3 with partners. Based on current apprenticeship numbers, the scheme was not yet self-funding

80.3 A review by officers of the current scheme and pilot allowed for reflection upon the successes and challenges and officers recommended 3 future options on how to proceed with an apprenticeship programme. Each option was highlighted to members and officers responded to general questions.

80.4 Members emphasised their support for a corporately managed apprenticeship scheme that gave the appropriate support and long term career opportunities to the apprentice. Taking this into account, members requested that apprentices working in the County Council should only be recruited through the corporate scheme.

Resolved

81.1 That a corporately managed apprenticeship scheme be continued.

81.2 That future arrangements for the scheme be considered and brought back to a further meeting, where appropriate.

81.3 That options for continuing to work with Partners on the scheme be explored and all apprentices working in the County Council to be recruited through this scheme.

Stress Management Policy

82.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources that informed members of the proposed revised Stress Management Policy. A review of the policy, and associated documentation, was identified by the Health and Safety Work Programme as agreed by the Staff Consultative Panel, and maintains the key principles and aims of the current approach. The accompanying procedure also now incorporated the use of the Health and Safety Executive's stress management tools.

82.2 Members were advised that the review of the Policy had taken into consideration feedback from employees, managers, Trade Unions and HR colleagues. Regular updates throughout the review had been provided to Trade Unions through the Directorate Joint Consultative Committees and the Trade Union consultation groups; Green Book, Youth and Soulbury and Dorset Teachers Council. Feedback received had been positive.

82.3 The revised Stress Management Procedure retained a focus on informal measures and the key principles had not changed. The aim of the procedure was to ensure that work related stress was raised by employees as soon as possible and that appropriate action was taken at an early stage, with managers and employees working together to find solutions wherever possible.

Resolved

83. That the revised Stress Management Policy be implemented.

Questions

84. No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Exempt Business

Exclusion of the Public

Resolved

85. That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for minute numbers 86 to 89 because it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt

information as defined in the paragraphs indicated of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing that information.

Dorset Highways - Changes to Contractual Arrangements (Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6(a))

(At this point Mr Kimber sought advice as to whether he should declare a disclosable pecuniary interest, as he had been previously involved with the proposed changes. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that there was no interest under the Code of Conduct.)

86.1 The Committee considered an exempt report by the Director for Corporate Resources that updated members on the current position regarding changes to contractual arrangements for Dorset highways staff. Consultations had now concluded and letters sent to the affected staff seeking their agreement to the contractual changes.

86.2 Members acknowledged that it would not be workable to have differences in employees' contracts and clarification was given to the available options if individuals refused to accept the changes. The Committee agreed that officers should be given delegated powers to take action, as necessary, to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Resolved

87.1 That the proposed changes to contracts of employment of Dorset Highways staff be noted.

87.2 That officers be given delegated powers to consider and implement the available options to introduce the changes to working arrangements as required.

Review of Redundancy Compensation Payments (Paragraph 4)

88.1 The Committee considered a further exempt report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the review of redundancy compensation payments, following members' agreement at their meeting on 6 November 2012 that the redundancy compensation multiplier continue as 1.75 times the statutory redundancy pay formula until 31 December 2013.

88.2 Detailed work had been undertaken on modelling a range of options in respect of changes that could be applied from 2014. These were based on changes to the multiplier and the introduction of a cap on weekly pay. The modelling had been shared with the Trades Unions as part of informal consultation. In addition, the redundancy compensation payments provided by comparable local authorities were reviewed. Clarification was given that many authorities had recently reviewed their schemes and there were no current plans to adjust their payments. Generally, the benchmarking data demonstrated that the County Council's current redundancy pay arrangements were not out of line with other authorities.

88.3 The former Chairman of the Personnel Appeals Committee commented that previously when the multiplier of 1.75 had been agreed, she believed that it had been as part of a phased approach to reduce the redundancy compensation payment to the statutory amount. Reference was also made to the report's comparisons with other local authorities and Mrs Haynes stated that very few could be compared directly with Dorset County Council. She asked that the Committee investigate the introduction of a cap on weekly pay, for employees earning £50k or more.

88.4 Members were advised of the need to consider the potential equality implications should they determine to apply a cap to weekly pay. In particular, due to the distribution of the workforce within Dorset County Council, this would disproportionately

impact certain groups. Any change would have to be applied to all staff equally across the workforce, otherwise it would be open to challenge on one or more of the diversity strands.

88.5 The Lead Human Resources Manager, Specialist Services, further explained the modelled range of options and costs detailed within the report. She advised that the models had been based upon the application of a 0.75% figure to the overall workforce cost. This figure related to the actual number of people made redundant last year (99 employments across schools and non schools) against the current workforce. Using the 0.75% of the workforce formula, the current cost of the existing payment structure was £770,350.

88.6 Overall members were of the view that there was no compelling case at this time to move away from the existing redundancy multiplier which was in line with that in place in other authorities. However, the multiplier was something that the Committee did wish to keep under review.

Resolved

89.1 That the cost modelling undertaken on the options to change redundancy pay and considered the equality data linked to each of the options be noted.

89.2 That the feedback provided by the Trade Unions along with the contextual information and benchmarking data on other local authorities be noted.

89.3 That the existing 1.75 redundancy multiplier continue until 31 December 2014, with a further review in due course.

Meeting duration: 2.15pm to 3.40pm