



## Staffing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,  
Dorchester, DT1 1XJ on Monday, 26 November 2018

### Present:

Peter Wharf (Chairman)  
Janet Dover, Rebecca Knox and Andrew Parry

Officers Attending: Paul Beecroft (Communications Officer (Internal)), Sara Collinson (HR & OD Business Partner), Paul Loach (HR and OD Business Partner), Tracy Scott (Principal HR & OD Adviser), Carl Wilcox (HR Specialist Services Lead) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(Notes: 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 **Monday, 28 January 2019.**)

### Apologies for Absence

57 Apologies for absence were received from Hilary Cox (Vice-Chairman) and Ray Bryan.

### Code of Conduct

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

### Minutes

59 The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2018 were confirmed and signed.

The Chairman advised members that the recommendation had been unanimously agreed by the County Council at its meeting on 8 November 2018.

### Public Participation

#### 60 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

#### Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

### LGR Update

61 The Leader of the County Council updated members on the progress of LGR to date with a focus on staffing issues. Work was in progress in respect of the Tier 2 appointments and this process would be concluded by the end of play on 4 December 2018. If any appointments were unable to be made there were plans in place to address this.

Currently the biggest issue was TUPE and it was highlighted that every member of staff had a right to transfer under TUPE terms. Some convergence discussions were continuing but it was important to have the right discussions with those individuals

that were currently part of the discussions with the Task and Finish Group.

The Chairman highlighted a request that had been received from UNISON which was to include a representative from that trade union present with elected members at future meetings of the Shadow Executive Committee. Discussions were continuing, but he felt it would be necessary for any such person who attends future Shadow Executive meetings to represent all locally recognised trade unions, and to not be given preferred status as one trade union among several that were recognised. Other Staffing Committee members agreed this was a fair condition to set down.

One member sought assurance concerning the disaggregation of East Dorset and Christchurch and asked if there was any sign of any particular difficulties in this area. The Leader advised that work was continuing to ensure that, through disaggregation, clients were not being left without the professional care that they had been used to. The Director for Children's Services was currently working on a solution but it was more about casework and how it was managed to ensure a smooth transition. She added that, if members of staff felt their outcome was not as they had wished, they were encouraged to discuss it initially with their manager or the relevant HR Officer.

The Chairman made reference to the data in the sickness and absence report which showed the levels of sickness absence were at their lowest for a number of years and added that he felt staff were being very helpful and professional.

### Noted

#### **Headcount and FTE Figures and Non-Directly Employed Contract Workforce - Quarter 2 2018/19**

62 The Committee considered a report by the Service Director for Organisational Development which covered all aspects of workforce resourcing in the period up to the end of Quarter 2 2018/19 (ending 30 September 2018). The report highlighted that the Council used a combination of directly employed staff, casual workers, agency workers and specialist workers to cover services or provide or deliver service developments.

The HR&OD Business Partner highlighted that overall directly employed positions continued to decrease, despite some areas of recruitment, and that spending on agency workers over the short-term past had increased, across all service areas except DWP and Public Health, by 9% between Quarter 1 and Quarter 2. Spending on the use of consultancy had also increased over the same short-term review period, by 62%, across all service areas. This reflected the procurement of additional skills and capacity to support business as usual, transformation, service redesign and in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

One member expressed concern about the recent increase in the amount of consultancy spend and requested information on the specific areas where consultants were being used and what they were involved in. The HR&OD Business Partner advised it was in areas where, for example, specific technical advice was needed e.g. legal, planning etc. The Chairman made reference to the Vacancy Management Protocol that had been adopted across all the Dorset Area Councils to avoid recruiting new members of staff that could possibly not then be needed in a few months' time.

The Leader added that, by employing less people, this would effectively mean having to make less changes to those staff already in place. She made reference to the additional support in human resources that had been secured to assist staff and offer independent advice in relation to opportunities in the new organisation, e.g. cv preparation and interview skills.

One member reflected on his knowledge of how Trading Standards used both agency staff and consultants, for example veterinary advice in animal health cases.

### **Resolved**

That officers advise members, outside of the meeting, how the increase of 62% in consultancy spend was made up and what work consultants were involved in the Chief Executive's and Cabinet areas specifically that had resulted in such an increase.

### **Management of Attendance 2018/19 - Quarter 2 (July 2018 to September 2018)**

63 The Committee considered a report by the Service Director for Organisational Development which advised members that sickness absence had fallen to its lowest level in at least the past two years. It now stood at 7.70 days per FTE which was a reduction of 0.54 days per FTE for this quarter. The Chairman stated that he believed this was the lowest staff sickness absence level on record at the County Council, but this was not possible to prove definitively because of changes in how the data had been reported over time.

Previous reports to the Committee had made reference to the Chartered Institute for Professional Development's (CIPD) national employee sickness absence report, which stated the nationwide Local Authority average sickness level was 10.5 days sickness per FTE.

Sickness reduction in the council was going in the right direction at a time when staff were under increasing pressure to carry out both their existing duties and those in relation to the creation of the new unitary authority. One area of concern was a rise in sickness in Organisational Development which would continue to be monitored.

The Chairman highlighted the reasons for sickness absence related to mental health, and the extent to which they were work related or non-work related. A range of data collected, including for employee counselling referrals, showed that the majority of such absences in this instance were non-work related.

Following discussion members agreed to send out a press release to show the Committee's appreciation of the additional work and to recognise that in some instances staff were covering 2 jobs. However, members were keen for a message to be conveyed that those staff that were ill were not expected to come in.

Following a question from a member about the tools and support being given to staff to manage any mental health issues, the HR&OD Business Partner highlighted the initiatives used including the Five Ways to Wellbeing courses and that courses on understanding mental health were being planned. Counselling services continued to be offered.

The HR Specialist Services Lead advised that the proportion of days absent relating to mental health in the last quarter was historically around 20% of all sickness recorded, or just above that figure. Some recent data indicated that it had increased as a proportion of all sickness, and officers were looking at directorates where it appeared more pronounced. The Council was currently advertising for another Employee Wellbeing Adviser to ensure resources were available to match demand.

In response to a question about sickness levels with those members of staff in Passenger Transport Assistant roles, the HR&OD Business Partner advised that changes had been made as to how sickness absence was now recorded. The Principal HR&OD Adviser highlighted the continuing work with Dorset Travel and that absence monitoring had since improved. Officers agreed to provide a further update in the next Management of Attendance report on 28 January 2019.

**Resolved**

1. That the Chairman would issue a press release on behalf of the Committee to show the Committee's appreciation of the hard work being done by staff to maintain essential business as usual commitments and achieve LGR.
2. That further information on the recording of sickness in respect of Passenger Transport Assistants be reported to members at their meeting on 28 January 2019.

**Redundancy Costs - Quarterly Report**

- 64 The Committee considered a report by the Service Director for Organisational Development which considered costs for redundancy dismissals effective from 1 July to 30 September 2018 (Quarter 2).

The Principal HR&OD Adviser advised members that there were no severance packages over £100k for this quarter and that the average payback period for redundancy dismissals was 7 months.

**Noted**

**Questions from County Councillors**

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 10.50 am