

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Thursday 8 September commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Jessie Milne

Representatives of Union members: Paul Key
Karen Lond (Vice-Chairman) (In the Chair)

Representatives of Non union staff: Kate Hearn
Rachel Parkin

In attendance:
Ian Knowles Director of Resources
Emma Redwood Team Manager – People and Organisational Development
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor David Cotton (Chairman)

33 MINUTES (JSCC.23 16/17)

(a) Meeting held on 8 September 2016

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 8 September 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

34 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

35 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (JSCC.24 16/17)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 16 November 2016.

It was noted that all actions had been completed.

RESOLVED that progress on the matters arising schedule as set out in report JSCC.24 16/17 be received and noted.

36 ABSENCE MONITORING REPORT – 6 MONTH POSITION

The Committee gave consideration to a report which presented an update on levels of sickness absence for West Lindsey District Council employees for the current year, 16/17, to date so far (up to October 2016).

The report also provided comparative figures from previous years and comparative benchmarking data.

In presenting the report the Team Manager – People and Organisational Development, highlighted each of the charts contained within the report to the Committee and gave a brief resume of the trends emanating.

The cumulative total of lost days per FTE, for 2016/17 currently stood at 5.68, compared to 3.52 days in 15/16 and 4.34 days in 14/15 at the same point in the year. Total sickness absence had risen sharply during July and October when compared to previous years, however when reviewing the data in charts 2.3 and 3.1, it was clearly demonstrable that this was primarily as a result of a number of long term absence cases. Short term absence figures had remained at a fairly even level when compared to the same point in time, in recent years, only currently accounting for a total of 2.17 FTE. However long term absence was currently quite high and it was acknowledged by all that in a small organisation, just a few incidents of long term sickness, could have a considerable impact on the figures.

It was with some sadness that the Team Manager – People and Organisational Development, advised that unfortunately a number of these long term absences, were now considered life changing absences, in so much as the individuals concerned would never be able to return to work. Having worked at length with occupational health, the situation for these individuals was so complex that it would result in an ill health retirement. Whilst the statistics would recover, the Committee were extremely mindful that behind the statistics, there were individuals, and families affected. It was acknowledged that ending service in this manner was very difficult for all concerned.

Members questioned what support was offered to those employees who often had to cover sickness absence, particularly that which was longer term. In response Officers advised it did pose difficulties as often there was no budget to back-fill posts (as employees were initially paid whilst absent). Furthermore it was often difficult to predict how long an absence would continue for. For this reason interims were not always considered appropriate. There were also training and development needs which needed to be taken into consideration, often creating further capacity issues in teams initially. It was also confirmed that no key officer insurance was in existence across the Council, an option sometimes used by other organisations.

Despite the spike in figures, the Committee were supportive and understanding of the position.

All were in agreement that last year was a fantastic year end position with the best attendance record achieved since data had been collected (2009). Furthermore the organisation had out performed those it benchmarked against last year achieving only 6.07 days lost per FTE. The Committee were therefore confident that this was not a trend, simply a moment in time, resulting from some very difficult and complex health conditions.

The Committee felt it important that those employees who retired due to ill-health were given the same thank you and “send off” as those who retired in good health. The Team Manager – People and Organisational Development, gave assurance that this was the case, but undertook to ensure that this was included in the written procedures.

RESOLVED that the levels of sickness absence for the year to date, April 2016 – October 2016 be noted.

37 STAFF ENGAGEMENT GROUP – VERBAL UPDATE/PROGRESS

Rachel Parkin, Staff Representative and Member of the Staff Engagement Group, provided a verbal update to the Committee on the work of the Staff Engagement Group.

The Group had last met on 29 September 2016, and had commenced work on the area of “Feeling Valued and Recognised” by firstly identifying all of the offers, schemes and incentives currently in place. A number of these were shared as examples. The Group had been asked to take the comprehensive list away and share this with their teams, to see if they agreed and whether there were further things they considered could be put in place. With this feedback the Group would again be asked to devise mini-projects for implementation with a view to creating an action plan.

At this meeting there had been discussion regarding the introduction of salary sacrifice schemes, however following recent announcements from the HRMC, it was unlikely that such schemes would now be introduced.

The Group had further acknowledged, that whilst there was a whole raft of incentives currently in place to reward and recognise staff, including such things as 1-2-1s, Appraisals and Training and Development opportunities, the success of these could vary from team to team and there was a need to apply a consistent approach, and a set of consistent standards across all teams, to assist with improvements being seen.

The Group had previously been working on the theme of communication, devising a number of mini-projects. A number of these had now been implemented and appeared to have been received positively. These mini projects had formed an action plan and the Group would keep this under review. It was considered a number of “quick-wins” had been achieved and Group were working in a positive manner.

It was noted that further updates would be submitted to the Committee as the Group's work progressed.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

38 FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY – POLICY REVIEW (JSCC.26 16/17)

The Committee were asked to give consideration to a report which reviewed the current Flexible Working Policy and recommended a number of changes arising from updated legislation to be adopted subsequently by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

In presenting the report it was noted that all of the proposed changes had been listed out in Appendix A to the report for clarity and ease. The Policy did not amend any terms and conditions of employees, nor had the main thrust of the Policy changed. It was further noted that this Policy did not cover flexi-time; as such matters were covered by a separate policy.

The Policy had been developed by the HR and OD Officer. The Policy had also been sent to Unison and Staff Reps for comment.

The Policy would be made available on Minerva and hard copies at the Depot. Clear communication would be sent to all Managers to make them aware that the Policy had been reviewed and to update them on their responsibilities. Training and support would also be offered by the HR Team on the implementation and application of this policy.

In responding to questions it was confirmed that the Policy was regularly and well used by employees for all sorts of different situations.

Officers confirmed that there were currently few job share arrangements in operation across the Council. Job Sharing could present difficulties and some examples of these were shared with the Committee, however it was an option available to employees, if deemed job and service area appropriate.

RESOLVED that it be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that: -

- (a) The Flexible Working Policy be approved for formal adoption; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Resources to make minor house-keeping amendments to the Policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

39 WORK PLAN (JSCC. 27 16/17)

Members gave consideration to their future work plan as set out in report JSCC.27 16/17. It was noted that if any Committee Member wished to see a report on a particular issue, this could also be raised.

Officers advised that there were further policies to come forward and undertook to populate the Work Plan further following the meeting.

In responding to an enquiry from a UNISON representative, the Team Manager – People and Organisational Development, confirmed that any queries regarding the interpretation of the Managing Attendance Policy, or any policy, should be sent formally to the Human Resources Team in the first instance.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan, as set out in report JSCC.27 16/17 be received and noted.

40 TO NOTE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 19 January 2017 at 4.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 4.42 pm.

Chairman