

Minutes of Personnel Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 1 June 2011, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor D T Smith (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	T Hill
S Brunskill	B Hilton
P Downson	D Taylor
R J Elms	A Yearling

In attendance: Councillor S Bibby (as observer), Chief Executive, Head of HR and Personnel Officer x2.

32 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies submitted to the meeting.

33 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

36 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman gave an overview of the main areas of business dealt with by the Personnel Committee and the different types of reports likely to be tabled. He explained the current relationship with the trade union and informed Members of meeting with UNISON twice a year at Committee meetings. Members were reminded that Personnel Committee had taken the lead on the North West Member Charter referred to at Minute 754 from the previous committee meeting.

37 VERBAL OVERVIEW OF HR ROLES AND AREAS RESPONSIBILITY

The Head of HR provided Members with information relating to the areas outside the Personnel function for which she had responsibility and explained the staffing structure of the Personnel team. She provided a brief history of a number of issues already addressed by the organisation, together with an overview of the key challenges currently being faced.

38

STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

The Head of HR explained the background to the staff survey and the role of the external partner in the process. The Joint Consultation Co-ordinator from CRACS (Collaborative Research and Consultation Service) delivered a presentation to Members detailing outcomes from the survey. Data was presented from an organisational perspective, with further comparisons at directorate level with specific trends being highlighted.

Members discussed the action plan that had been provided in the report of the Principal Policy and Performance Officer and offered ideas to improve the flow of information. The Head of HR invited comments from Members at any time to improve Member interaction with staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

39

DEFAULT RETIREMENT AGE

The Personnel Officer presented her written report which informed Members of recent legislation which had abolished the default retirement age with effect from October 2011. She explained the background to the legislation, the Council's current actions and the effect of the legislation on future processes. It was agreed that this was a positive approach for the ageing workforce and it was noted that there were already cases of staff working beyond age 65. The Personnel Officer provided a brief explanation of pension provisions and flexible retirement options. Members asked for clarification of notice periods and it was confirmed that normal notice periods would apply in the event a member of staff wished to retire. Members agreed this was a positive piece of legislation and would improve the perception of older workers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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EQUALITIES ACT 2010 – WORKFORCE DATA

The Head of HR updated Members on the workforce data that would be published in compliance with the Equalities Act 2010. She explained the duties of public sector organisations and that the burden on the sector to provide detailed information was more onerous than on the private sector. She confirmed the requirement to publish certain workforce data to demonstrate fairness and equality within an organisation's processes and that procedures were in place to check and monitor activities.

It was noted that whilst some data was already collated, there was a need to incorporate some new criteria to enable the required data to be produced and published on the Council's website by December 2011. The Head of HR explained the template which was to be used and guided Members through the document. Members recognised the significant amount of work involved and praised the professional approach of the staff involved in collating and preparing the data.

The Head of HR confirmed that retrospective data would not be collated but that data would be collected on the appropriate characteristics on an ongoing basis.

RESOLVED: That Committee not the report.

41 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Head of HR presented a written report on behalf of the Health and Safety Advisor. This provided Members with a review of the health and safety performance of the Council during the year ended March 2011. She explained changes in recent years towards corporate management responsibility for health and safety and the effects of this on policy development. Some of the risks and hazards were brought to the attention of Members, together with some of the achievements both within the offices and off-site, particularly with refuse workers and staff undertaking manual duties. It was confirmed that waste management would remain a priority issue for the Health and Safety Executive.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of accidents from the previous year but it was pointed out to Members that improved reporting procedures had led to more data being captured and therefore records being more accurate.

The Head of HR explained the background to the Violence and Aggression Register and the reporting mechanisms that were in place to safeguard members of staff.

Reference was made to the recording of reporting near misses and the importance of this aspect as a driver towards improving overall health and safety.

Members congratulated the Health and Safety Advisor on a very thorough and comprehensive report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

42 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from outside bodies.

43 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following item of business be an Exempt Information Under Categories 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

44 ANNUAL ABSENCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Consideration was given to the written report of the Personnel Officer which detailed levels of sickness absence across the authority.

The Personnel Officer explained the current methods used to manage sickness absence and the importance of the involvement of Heads of Service and Corporate Management Team in the process. It was noted that sickness absence represented a considerable cost to the authority but that the continued pro-active approach to effective monitoring and management had resulted in a reduction of the number of working days lost compared to the previous year and consequently a reduction in the cost of absence.

The effect of the revised sick note was discussed and a comprehensive analysis of the length and types of absence showed this to be having a positive effect on absence levels. The Personnel Officer explained some of the initiatives used to bring employees back into the workplace using information provided by the GP.

Comparisons between long and short-term absences showed that long-term absences continued to have a significant impact on the overall figures and the Personnel Officer confirmed this remained a priority item and, although very time consuming, was vital to the success of absence management.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

45 STAFF TURNOVER

The Personnel Officer presented her written report providing information on staff turnover for the year ended 31 March 2011. It was noted that there was a downward trend and comparisons were made with national figures. Following discussion Members agreed that there was less movement in the current economic climate with people not taking the risk of moving jobs.

The Personnel Officer explained that the authority operated a flat structure which resulted in limited opportunity for progression and this had been corroborated through comments made during exit interviews. It was agreed that it was healthy to have some staff movement and that staff changes provided the organisation with the opportunity to review ways of working.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

46 STAFF TRAINING AND COURSES

Consideration was given to the written report of the Personnel Officer which detailed training events that had been approved since the last meeting. It was agreed that Member inductions had proved successful and that input from Members of the Personnel Committee had proved valuable to the process. Attention was drawn to the safe lifting and handling training that was available to all staff via the Health and Safety Advisor.

For the benefit of new Committee Members the Head of HR explained the various methods of funding training activities at corporate and departmental levels and the Chairman confirmed that the increase in in-house training, delivered by officers, had brought a saving to the authority whilst increasing the level of training available to staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

47 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HOMEWORKING

The Head of HR updated Members on the Homeworking Policy for the authority and situations where this might be used. She explained the methods of recording and monitoring homeworking and some of the operational considerations. Members asked about the security aspects of homeworking and the Head of HR confirmed a protocol was in place where remote access to systems was unavoidable.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

48 APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

The Personnel Officer informed Members of appointments and resignations via her written report. She explained that a recruitment freeze was still in operation and advised that the two appointments detailed in her report were temporary posts which had been filled by existing staff.

Attention was drawn to two members of staff who had recently retired from the authority, both with long service, and another who was approaching retirement but had left due to ill health. Members asked that letters be sent to the individuals on behalf of the Committee to thank them for their service.

RESOLVED: That

1. the report be noted;
2. request letters to be sent to three members of staff who had recently left the authority to thank them for their service; and
3. approve the request to re-appoint as outlined in the report.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Julie Smith, extension 4409.