

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Thursday, 26th October, 2017 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor B Moran (Chairman)
Councillor G Barton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors G Baggott, D Brown, D Flude, J Jackson, M Parsons and
JP Findlow (substitute for Cllr R Bailey)

Councillors in Attendance

Councillor B Burkhill

Officers

Kath O'Dywer, Acting Chief Executive
Sara Barker, Head of Strategic HR
Rosie Ottewill, Organisational Development Manager
Therese Hynes, Senior Organisational Development Officer
Suzanne Antrobus, Team Manager Legal
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

The Chairman announced that there would be an item of urgent business to considered. He confirmed that, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, he was of the opinion that the item should be dealt with at the meeting. It would be dealt with in the public part of the meeting and the reasons for urgency would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor R Bailey.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Jackson declared that she was a member of GMB and
Councillor D Flude declared that she was a retired member of UNISON.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

No members of the public in attendance wished to speak.

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

11 HR AND HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report on the progress with the Council's People Plan 2017/18.

The report provided details on the progress with the main priorities for each HR service area in the People Plan, and on HR Performance Data for Quarter 2, which included headcount and employee turnover, voluntary redundancy and working days lost to sickness absence.

The report also provided a summary of accidents and incidents in Quarter 1 and Quarter 1 of 2017/18 and details of the RIDDOR reportable accidents.

The Committee noted the tragic incident at Tipkinder Park which resulted in fatal head injuries and offered their sympathy to the family of the deceased.

In relation to the table at paragraph 15.2 - Employee turnover by financial year since 2009-10, the Committee felt that it was complicated and requested that it be reviewed with the aim of simplifying it.

The Committee requested that details of compulsory redundancies be included in future reports.

The Committee noted the progress to date with the Apprenticeship Levy and requested that a report be brought detailing the budget, numbers of apprentices employed and how many remain with the Council once their apprenticeship is finished.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 the report be noted;
- 2 the Employee turnover by financial year since 2009-10 table be simplified for the April 2018 committee report;
- 3 details of compulsory redundancies be included in future reports;
and
- 4 a report be brought to the Committee in January 2018 on Apprenticeships.

12 WELLBEING IN WORK

The Committee considered a report on Wellbeing in Work.

The report detailed the work underway to improve staff wellbeing and resilience, to ensure the workforce was engaged and performing at the highest level.

The Wellbeing in Work 2017 programme had been launched in October 2017 and outlined the board range of policies and practices already in place. A monthly newsletter would be launched in November 2017, with each edition covering one of the five wellbeing in work areas, alongside hints, tips and other helpful information. The aim of the newsletter was to remind staff of what was already in place alongside the introduction of new initiatives.

The Employee Assistance Programme had recently changed supplier. Known as Workplace Wellness, it provided an independent and confidential helpline available 365 days a year with a 24 hour service either online or over the telephone. The Committee requested that it receive a report in 6 months on the usage of the Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 the report be noted; and
- 2 an update on the Employee Assistance Programme be brought to the Committee in April 2018.

13 LGA CULTURAL REVIEW

In accordance with Section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed that this item be considered as an item of urgent business in the light of the announcement made by the Leader of the Council at the meeting of Council on 19 October 2017.

The Leader of the Council had announced at the meeting of Council on 19 October 2017 that the LGA had been commissioned to carry out a review of the culture of the Council with particular regard to an ongoing perception that there were significant issues relating to bullying and harassment.

The Committee considered the draft Project Brief report which outlined the methodology and timescale for the review and made a number of suggestions in relation to them including that staff be selected randomly to take part in the focus groups; the interviewing of staff take place outside of the work environment; staff who have left within the last 24 months be included; and reference be made to the Member/Officer relationship.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 that the Project Brief report be noted: and
- 2 the following points be given consideration:
 - Random selection of staff for the Focus Groups
 - Interviews with staff to take place off site
 - Inclusion of staff who have left within the last 24 months
 - Reference made to Member/Officer relationship.

At the end of the meeting Councillor B Moran made the following statement

“I would just like to make a statement, if I may please, in the context of Culture, which relates to a Member’s item at last week’s Council meeting.

A particular Member acknowledged the Leader talking about this particular piece of work, under Leader’s Announcements, and it was welcomed. But at that time that particular Member did say that the Chair of Staffing Committee had sat on and not addressed issues of bullying and in particular the very sad incident at Macclesfield – the knife incident, as it has been called.

What I want to say to Members of the Committee, is that I completely refute these allegations. I have not sat on issues of bullying. I have not covered up, as some newspaper articles have reported, the incident in Macclesfield. Rather, I have actively encouraged Members to report incidents, through the Council’s established mechanisms.

I take particular exception to what was said at the Council meeting by that particular Member. The Leader is quoted publically saying: “reporting of individual incidents, such as in Macclesfield, where they are serious or shocking, fall outside the terms of reference of Staffing Committee. This incident was not covered up; it was dealt with responsibly and sensibly and through our established processes.”

I should like to make these points clear to Staffing Committee Members.

In response to the Member, at Council, Cllr Bailey (the Leader) did mention about the terms of reference and roles of Staffing Committee.”

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.55 pm

Councillor B Moran (Chairman)