

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**  
held on Thursday, 16th July, 2015 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

## **PRESENT**

Councillor B Moran (Chairman)

Councillors D Brown, J Jackson, D Marren and M Parsons (substitute for Cllr Stott)

## **Officers**

Phil Badley, Interim Head of HR and OD

Anita Bradley, Head of Legal Services

Dinah Robertson, HR Business Partner

Karen Begley, HR Business Partner

Lisa Burrows, Workforce Development Manager

Bronwen MacArthur-Williams, Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Rachel Graves, Democratic Services

## **7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Jones, D Newton and A Stott.

## **8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor J Jackson declared that she was a member of GMB.

## **9 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

No members of the public were present.

## **10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meetings held on 28 April 2015 and 11 June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

## **11 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the membership and terms of reference for the Staffing Committee and the Staffing Appeals Sub Committee be noted.

## 12 HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a report which gave a year-end review of the Human Resource and Organisational Development Service for 2014/15 and a summary of the workforce priorities for 2015-16, along with the Quarter 1 Health and Safety data and key workforce data.

During 2014/15, a total of 547 corporate and school employees had been trained on 56 health and safety training courses and 34 workplace inspections and visits to premises had been undertaken. Annual Health and Safety Reviews in schools who purchased Health, Safety and Risk Management Services had taken place at 17 secondary schools, 4 special schools and 139 primary schools. 4969 accidents and incidents had been recorded on PRIME, of which 93 were RIDDOR reportable. No Health and Safety Executive investigations had been carried out. The Corporate Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed, along with the Fire Policy. The Corporate Health and Safety Service had won its third ROSPA Gold Award for Health and Safety.

The Workforce Development team had introduced a new evaluation and feedback process so that each training course could be assessed and the return on investment highlighted. The corporate learning programme, Towards Excellence, offered employees statutory courses on fire, health and safety, data protection and equality. Training on adult and child safeguarding had been delivered to employees, students, volunteers and elected members. A range of monthly management development sessions entitled 'Business Breakfasts' had been introduced to improve business acumen, with sessions from a range of externally commissioned providers, such as North West Employers Organisation and Manchester Metropolitan University. A number of effective communications theories, such as Insights Discovery, the science of Laughology and Neuro Linguistic Programming, had been introduced into management team development sessions. It was confirmed that it was Council policy to require employees, who left within 12 months of undertaking any extensive training paid for by Cheshire East Council, to pay back the cost of the training; this would apply to the more expensive training, such as post-graduate training, but not for short internal courses.

It was confirmed that no employees had set themselves up as contractors/companies and that all employees were subject to a universal PAYE system.

The apprentice scheme had been refreshed and renamed the A Star Apprentice Programme and the age appropriate wage had been implemented to attract high calibre candidates. Twelve apprentices had gained employment with the Council in the last year.

The HR Strategy and Organisational Development team had been working on the commitment to adopt the Living Wage for directly employed staff.

The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 placed a requirement on all councils to prepare and publish a range of factual data on which policy decisions were based. The workforce elements of the Code had been published on the Council's website to meet four sections of the code – organisation chart, senior salaries, pay multiples and trade union facility time.

The staff survey had provided a valuable snapshot of how colleagues felt about working for the Council. A number of actions had been progressed corporately and locally in teams and services to build on strengths and weaknesses identified. These included the formation of a Resilience working group, a series of colleague conferences in the services led by the Chief Operating Officer, and the 'Big Event' conferences for all staff.

The HR Delivery team had supported the introduction of the recruitment management system Taleo, which allowed Managers to manage and monitor the advertising and appointment process. The Committee was assured that paper based applications would remain an option for applicants. A paper based recruitment exercise, outside of the on-line system, would be considered if there was a strong business case to do so. The team had provided HR support to the establishment of a number of ASDVs in 2014/15 including ANSA, Orbitas, CoSocius, ESSAR, TSSL and Civicance. The voluntary redundancy scheme continued to support planned organisational change. A total of 30 staff had left under voluntary redundancy in the 2014/15 financial year, 14 of whom held posts within management grades. There had been no compulsory redundancies due to redeployment interventions and the successful application of HR policies and procedures.

The Education HR Consultancy service had launched two levels of service – Gold and Silver, for schools and academies to buy back. In 2014/15 total buy back equated to 90% of schools. The Service had delivered 5 workshop/training events for headteachers which had focused on leadership and management development as well as briefing on key changes contained in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2015. Two training courses for governors had also been delivered covering headteacher performance management. The Team had also supported major staffing restructures in 5 secondary and primary school/academies and had managed 29 TUPE transfers. Eight new or updated policies and procedures for schools and academies had been issued.

Details of the Council's headcount were included in the report. The Committee requested that to allow for comparison with historical data, the data from April 2013 should be used as a comparator. It was noted that it was difficult to provide a more detailed headcount due to restructurings which had taken place over the past 6 years.

During 2015/16 the Human Resource and Organisational Development Service would be focussing on a range of priorities grouped under six workforce themes:

- Culture and values
- Leadership and management
- Organisation design
- Reward and recognition
- Resourcing and talent
- Capability and capacity.

The Workforce Strategy Team would be consulting operational managers with regard to current policies and procedures to ensure that they remained appropriate and supported business needs. The feedback would inform a future work programme with any proposed changes being discussed with Management Group Board and the Portfolio Lead, prior to consideration by Cabinet and Council.

In relation to Health and Safety in Quarter 1 of 2015/16, it was reported that 65 employees from the corporate core and schools had attended 7 health and safety training courses. School visits and inspections had been undertaken at 36 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. A new Corporate Health and Safety Audit programme had been brought in with the previous audit format being modernised and it now involved a quarterly electronic survey covering up to five different subjects. The Quarter 1 statistics showed a total of 598 accidents and incidents in the corporate core, with 2 being RIDDOR reportable and 341 recorded in schools with 4 being RIDDOR reportable.

The turnover of staff between April and June 2015 was 2.58%, with 98 staff leaving the Council. The number of working days lost to sickness absence per FTE employee were 1.04 in April, 1.71 in May and 2.61 in June 2015.

A range of actions resulting from the information and data presented in the report were agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted

**13 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT 2014/2015**

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the sickness absence rates within Cheshire East Council during 2014-15 and an analysis of the main reasons for these rates. The report summarised the actions taken so far to address absence and promote good attendance.

The sickness absence rate in 2014/15 was 12 days per full time employee, which was a rise on the previous year which was 11.3. Working time lost

to sickness absence as a proportion of all working time available in 2014/15 was 4.6% compared with 4.3% in 2013/14. The most common reason given for absence was stress. Details of the main reasons for absence were shown in Appendix 1 to the Report. It was agreed that the sickness absence statistics could be made more meaningful by introducing different measures such as cost of absence; proportion of employees with no recorded absence; frequency of absence rate, and individual frequency of absence rate.

The latest North West Employers' Organisation report showed that the increase in absence seen by the Council was similar to the increase seen across the region for 2014/15. Benchmarking against other public sector employers in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting benchmarking club showed that the Council was slightly above average in its sickness rates in 2013/14. The data for 2014/15 was not yet available for comparison. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development produced an annual attendance report covering the private and public sector. Their key findings for the public sector in 2014 showed that stress-related absence had increase in three fifths of public sector organisations and stress was the most common cause of long term sickness. Common causes of stress in the public sector were reported as workload, management style and relationships at work.

A Task Group, now called the Wellbeing and Resilience Group had been formed, chaired by Brenda Smith, Director of Adults Social Care and Independent Living. The Group included staff from a wide range of services including Public Health, as the work fitted with the wider agenda to promote health in the work-place as well as for residents, HR Delivery, Health and Safety, Workforce Development, Occupational Health, Operational Services Managers and the Trade Unions.

The Task Group was taking the approach that developing resilience was a critical business issue which needed to be addressed from the three angles of the organisation, managers and individual staff. Pressures would always exist at work and in personal lives, and employers could help to create a work environment where pressure was managed appropriately and there was less likelihood of staff going off sick.

A programme of wellbeing activities would be promoted throughout 2015/16 and would form the basis of an early intervention approach to attendance – details of the programme were detailed in Appendix 3 to the Report.

The Employee Assistance Scheme, which offered counselling, would continue to be promoted and it was hoped that this approach, along with the Council's emphasis on wellbeing and promoting a climate of resilience, would lead to a fall in the shorter-term absence and stress-related absence.

It was agreed that the Head of HR and the Director of Adult Social Care and Independent Living would look at a range of operational performance measures for attendance management as part of implementing the action plan and report back on overall progress after the year end to establish the progress the Council had made in improving attendance management. The Group would also look at the options to pay for some employees to undertake health assessments and treatments in order for them to return to work earlier – which already happens in one of the ASDVs, and also the inclusion of this aspect in the tender for occupational health services.

A further report would be brought to the Committee in due course on the progress of the actions drawn up by the Task Group.

A range of actions resulting from the information and data presented in the report were agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.14 pm

Councillor B Moran (Chairman)