

23 JUNE 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HR COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Wednesday, 23 June 2021

- * Cllr Edward Heron (Chairman)
- * Cllr Mark Steele (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Hilary Brand
- * Keith Craze
- Kate Crisell

Councillors:

- * Michael Harris
- Maureen Holding
- * Mahmoud Kangarani

*Present

Officers Attending:

Zoe Ormerod, Heleana Aylett, Bob Jackson and Andy Rogers

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 11 June 2020 and 18 March 2021 be confirmed and signed.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised in the public participation period.

7 HR UPDATE

The Committee received an update on HR matters since the last Committee meeting.

Leisure centres had reopened on 12 April and some instructors had returned on 17 May. The Leisure transfer and TUPE arrangements were on track for 1 July. A further update would be made at the September Committee meeting.

Some leisure staff (mostly Gym and Yoga instructors) were still furloughed, but most were back at work.

The Council had recruited 7 kickstart placements in the following areas : Data Entry, Waste, Grounds Maintenance, Maintenance (x2), Customer Service, Planning Admin

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8 HR METRICS

The Committee noted various workforce - related data and statistics, which were provided in order that better informed business decisions could be made within the Council.

It was noted that the number of top 5% earners that were women was 34 (down by 6% on last year), and Members emphasised the importance of monitoring the number of women in senior management positions closely.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

9 WORKSMART

The Committee considered proposals for the implementation of the WorkSmart initiative, the next step in the Council's Smarter Working Programme, and recommends a related new HR Policy.

The significant majority of the Council's c400 office-based employees worked in roles that had been working from home since the middle of March 2020.

WorkSmart introduced a policy to allow staff to continue to work from home or an alternative base. Working from an alternative base is not possible for our Operational and field-based employees. The investment made by the Council in recent years in its ICT equipment and infrastructure meant the Council was in an excellent position to respond to the immediate challenge faced by enforced home working in March 2020.

Staff surveys had shown the majority of employees prefer a hybrid approach between working at home and at the office. With their manager's agreement, employees would be able to work flexibly outside of the current 'core hours'. There would be some exceptions that are role dependent. Performance management measures would be incorporated, and managers would need to ensure staff were not working excessive / unplanned unsociable hours.

Moving to a hybrid way of working enabled the Council to make a good contribution towards its sustainability agenda. Employee travel in 2019/20 was in the region of 480,000 miles. A reduction in travel was anticipated from employees who had a new flexible working arrangement in place, which could generate financial and time benefits.

The proposed policy set out expectations relating to:

- Hours of work / Visits to the workplace
- Equipment and materials / Telephone and Internet accounts
- Mileage claims
- Health and safety issues / Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements
- Requests to work from home or an alternative location

It was accepted that amendments to the Policy may have to be made subsequently, due to external factors such as the NJC pay negotiations, which include a homeworking element. The initial applications for flexible working can be granted for up to 12 months. The arrangement will be reviewed throughout the agreed period with a more formal review at the end before any further extension was agreed.

The Business Case for the proposal was considered separately by the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet, a report on which appears elsewhere on the Council agenda.

That it be a RECOMMENDATION to the Council:

That the Worksmart Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) together with related documents, be approved.

10 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

CHAIRMAN