

16 SEPTEMBER 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HR COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Thursday, 16 September 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:

Sophie Thompson, Heleana Aylett, Colin Read, Andy Rogers and Spencer Scott

11 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 5 May 2021 and 23 June 2021 be confirmed and signed.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised in the public participation period.

14 HR UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on HR matters since the last meeting. The report included details on :

- TUPE to Freedom Leisure
- Kickstart Placements
- Sharepoint (new document system)
- Recruitment

15 ANNUAL SICKNESS AND COVID ABSENCE REPORT

The Committee received an update on the Council's approach to managing sickness absence, and trend data for the 2020/21 financial year, including Covid absence.

It was noted that sickness absence had decreased overall in 2020/21 during the pandemic as staff were working from home, therefore reducing transmission of general infections such as colds etc.

The Committee noted various trend data for sick days by service, and the reasons for the sickness. It also noted the action plan for sickness absence, and initiatives for mental health and wellbeing.

Covid sickness figures would continue to be monitored.

RESOLVED:

That the sickness levels for 2020/2021 be noted and the and action plan be supported.

16 PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMPLETION REPORT

The Panel received an update on employee Performance Review completion across the Council, and the overall ratings given.

Whilst members noted that in some services, the performance review regime had been disrupted over the past year as the organisation reacted to the pandemic, the Committee felt it was important to ensure that regular reviews were reinstated.

RESOLVED:

That the performance review data 2020/2021 be noted, and that the Chief Executive be requested to remind managers that that it was a requirement to ensure performance reviews were completed.

17 SUPPORTING WORKFORCE INCLUSION REPORT

The Committee received a report highlighting the Council's commitment as an equal opportunities employer, with supporting measures.

The Chairman welcomed the report and felt it was important that the Council was seen as an open and inclusive employer of choice, and this aspiration was reflected the Authority's policies.

Equality training was made available to members periodically and would be refreshed in due course.

It was suggested that the Council might enter the CIPD and OPMA awards where appropriate to project the Council's good track HR record.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council continues to advocate our inclusive workforce, equal opportunities culture and commitment to all practices as set out in the report.

(b) That all employees continue to mandatorily complete Equality training two yearly as follows:

(i) Office based employees to complete the 'Equalities Essential' e-learning module

(ii).Operational workforce attend 1 hour 'Embracing Equality and Diversity' session, delivered by a member of the HR Team

18 WORKFORCE AGE PROFILE REPORT

The Committee noted statistics relating to the Council workforce age profile.

It was noted that the staff workforce age profile had changed as a result of the transfer of Leisure staff and had shifted slightly to the older age bracket.

It was suggested that officers ask new employees why they chose NFDC as an employer, as a way of investigating how prospective candidates engage with the Council, to ensure the right communication channels are used to attract various age groups, particularly younger people.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

19 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Committee noted the latest position regarding provision of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The Council was nearing the end of the contract with the current provider, Vita Health Group. Comparative research was being undertaken among other providers.

The current contractor provided a telephone help support line covering:

Debt Management
Marital Issues
Consumer advice
Health and Wellbeing

It was important to maintain the above services under the future provider, and for these services to be available on a website, easy to access on all devices without employees having to speak to someone. If any company did not provide any of these services, it may be that these can be 'signposted.'

The value of the contract was approximately £5000 per annum, and the result of the procurement exercise would be notified in the next few weeks.

20 DATES OF MEETINGS 2022/23

The Chairman proposed that the start time of future meetings be amended to 10am rather than 9.30am, to accommodate members' commitments.

RESOLVED:

That the following dates of meetings for 2022/23 be approved (Thursdays at 10am):

9 June 2022
15 September 2022
12 January 2023
16 March 2023

21 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**Christmas Leave**

The Chairman paid tribute to the way in which staff had responded to the pandemic over the last 18 months.

Those on the front line as well as those in our support services teams had been under immense pressure to continue to provide a service to the community, for example our Food Safety Inspectors performed duties that they have never encountered before.

He wished to say a big 'thank you' from the Council in appreciation for all employees' hard work and, following discussions with Cabinet and the Council's Executive Management Team, it was proposed that the Authority would close the Council offices for an additional two days over the Christmas period, and staff would have an extended period of Christmas leave.

The offices would close on Friday 24th December and reopen on Tuesday 4th January 2022.

Some staff would need to work during those additional two days, such as refuse collection teams, and they will be given two additional days' leave to be taken within the first 3 months of 2022, or if applicable payment in lieu.

CHAIRMAN