

23 NOVEMBER 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HR COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Tuesday, 23 November 2021

* Cllr Edward Heron (Chairman)

Councillors:

* Hilary Brand
* Keith Craze
Kate Crisell

Councillors:

* Michael Harris
* Maureen Holding
Mahmoud Kangarani

*Present

Officers Attending:

Colin Read, Heleana Aylett, Alan Bethune, Claire Crocker, Zoe Ormerod, Spencer Scott, Minna Shervington and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Kangarani.

22 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2021 be confirmed and signed.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests by Members.

24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised in the public participation period.

25 PAY NEGOTIATIONS

The Chairman reported that the national pay negotiations for 2021 were continuing and it was unlikely that an agreement would be reached until at least February 2022.

The current offer stood at 2.75% for the Council's band 1 spine point, 1.5% for Chief Officers and 1.75% for all others.

The Council's current position was to implement the 2.75% for band 1 and 1.5% for all others.

For the purposes of the pay award Chief Officers of the Council are the Executive Management Team.

As the situation was likely to remain unresolved for a while, the Chairman confirmed that he had asked the Chief Executive to reflect the additional 0.25% pay award to all applicable employees within the December payroll.

26 HR UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on recent HR activity.

In response to question on the Kickstart placements, officers were pleased to report that out of three placements, one had earned a permanent position with the Council and another had recently achieved a fixed term contract.

With regard to employee benefits, the Committee were informed that following an approach by an external provider, the Council would be running a full procurement exercise to assess the options available. A survey through South East Employers would also allow for some local benchmarking.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

27 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYEE SIDE LIAISON PANEL

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Employee Side Liaison Panel held on 5 November 2021, be received.

28 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

The Committee considered a report which recommended the adoption of the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 by the Council.

One Member welcomed the work on domestic abuse and supporting employees, the subject of a report later on the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to the Council that the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

29 CHANGE TO LOCAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS - SICKNESS ENTITLEMENT AND CONTINUOUS SERVICE

The Committee considered a report which recommended a proposal to recognise continuous service from associated public sector employers when calculating sickness entitlement. It was recognised that in order to remain competitive in a challenging recruitment market, this was a positive step to bring the Council's policy in line with neighbouring authorities and the National Joint Council guidance.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support and recommend to Council the proposal to recognise continuous service when calculating sickness entitlement.

30 APPRENTICE PAY UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report which dealt with an increase in apprentice pay.

The Council's Executive Management Team had agreed that, from 1 January 2022, apprenticeship pay would change for current and new apprentices to £6.56 per hour in year one, in line with the National Minimum Wage for 18 – 20-year-olds, and then the National Living Wage of £8.91 per hour in any subsequent years. These rates would update as national rates changed, normally in April each year.

The Committee were informed that a new Government £3000 payment incentive per apprentice was applicable before the end of January 2022, which had given the Council a push for further recruitment of apprentices.

In response to questions on the financial impact of the changes, the Council's Section 151 Officer confirmed that the proposals were manageable within existing budget provisions and did not amount to a huge burden in the context of the wider wage bill.

Members expressed their support for the changes and discussed the particular challenges of the cost of living in the New Forest District. Officers were encouraged to consider other benefits for apprentices such as sustainable travel to work schemes.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the increase in apprentice pay.

31 DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES POLICY

The Committee considered a report which proposed the adoption of a suite of policy and guidance documents to support employees with regard to dealing with domestic abuse. Domestic abuse had risen quite dramatically during the pandemic and the policy commit to the Council providing access to an internally designated single point of contact for domestic abuse, alongside workplace supporting checklists and a guide to supporting employees.

Members spoke in support of the policy and encouraged officers to ensure all partner organisations were fully engaged as part of this subject. The Committee considered it was appropriate to recommend the policy to Full Council to ensure the subject was considered by all councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support and recommends to Council that the proposed policy and guidance notes be adopted.

32 SAFETY PANELS REVIEW REPORT

The Committee considered a report which reviewed the arrangements for consultation with employees on Health, Safety and Welfare matters. The report had been considered by the Council's Executive Management Team in September.

It was considered that the arrangements for Safety Panels were well established and operated well. Attendance was good and documentation was well produced. In order to improve staff awareness, dedicated pages on the Council's forestnet intranet pages were planned to ensure the information was available to all.

Members welcomed the transparency and engagement planned by making the information more readily available for employees.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted, including the Terms of Reference for the Safety Panels, Structure Chart, Template Agenda and current panel membership.

33 QUARTERLY HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

The Committee considered the quarterly health and safety report which highlighted the health, safety and welfare work across the Council from July to September 2021.

Members noted the move to step four of the Government's Covid-19 recovery roadmap in July, which prompted changes to guidance to be circulated to the Council's workforce.

The Council's renewed approach to asbestos was highlighted and in due course a review of the Council's warning marker register would take place.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the quarterly update and ongoing actions, be noted.

CHAIRMAN