

**16 MARCH 2023**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HR COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Thursday, 16 March 2023

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)  
Cllr Diane Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

\* Hilary Brand  
Mark Clark  
Keith Craze

**Councillors:**

Kate Crisell  
\* Michael Harris  
Maureen Holding

\*Present

**Officers Attending:**

Spencer Scott, Heleana Aylett, Andy Rogers and Kate Ryan

**40 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

**41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**42 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no issues raised in the public participation period.

**43 HR UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the activities of the Council's HR Service since the last meeting.

The report covered:

- The Learning Management System
- Recruitment
- Career Events
- Apprenticeships
- Inclusive Language Training

As well as the above, the team had dealt with its reactive caseload which included job evaluations, restructuring advice, grievances, disciplinaries and sickness absence matters.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

#### 44 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee received a summary of the results of the Employee Engagement Survey conducted in November / December 2023.

41% (323) of 784 employees in 25 areas of the Council had responded, and although this was better than previous surveys, it was acknowledged that this could be improved upon for the future and officers would look at measures to improve response rates.

Headlines from the survey results included the points summarised below:

- About two thirds of respondents were female and just over a third were male. The majority worked full time and had worked for the Council between 3 and 20 years
- 90% of respondents felt they understood what was expected of them in their role with over 3/4 feeling they were treated well.
- The large majority of staff felt that help and support was available within their team.
- 83% of respondents were satisfied with communications within the organisation.
- 81% of staff knew how to raise any health and safety issues.
- 52% of respondents considered the Council to be an employer of choice, while 32% were unsure and 15% disagreed.
- 14% of respondents said they had been subjected to bullying and harassment

It was agreed that more would be done to help staff identify Health and Safety volunteer representatives and first aiders more clearly.

On hybrid working, it was explained that the Council's Worksmart policy outlined that staff would plan for 50% attendance of their contracted working week to be within the workplace, with consideration of individual circumstances and service delivery requirements. This was a higher rate of attendance in the workplace than many other authorities.

Most services had arranged specific office days, when teams could meet and have direct contact. An increasing number of new employees were seeking more face to face contact with their teams, and it was about maintaining the right balance.

The Committee noted that, when looking at the results as a whole, the overall result was a very positive one, with 60-75% of staff responding positively. It was noted about 10% of staff had generally responded negatively to all questions, and the reasons for this would be considered. The team would also look at individual staff comments to identify issues and address them. These could also be discussed at the Monthly Meet staff events.

Service managers would be given data for their own areas and asked to consider targeted ways to make improvements in their area. They will all be asked to share their top three actions in response to the survey.

The Council would consider emerging themes, including communication, performance management (including 1-2-1's) addressing bullying and harassment, and be confident it is an employer of choice.

Data will be looked at further to understand if certain groups of staff are more impacted by issues than others. A working group including representatives from the employee forum would be set up to support EMT with their consideration of the survey and actions arising.

An overall action plan will consider the issues raised and possible improvements. All the information gathered would inform the Council's People Strategy moving forwards.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report and future actions be noted

**45 QUARTERLY HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT Q3 2022/23**

The Committee received an update on the significant health, safety, and welfare work across the Council from October to December 2022, Q3.

Feedback from the three Safety Panels was also included, together with the accident, incident and near miss statistics.

Q3 accidents, incidents and near misses reported were within normal parameters, down on the last quarter at 38. There were three RIDDOR incidents, two over 7-day injuries and an asbestos break by a contractor, summarised in the report.

The Committee queried the timescales and procedures for keeping individuals on the Warning Markers Register. It was explained that the Council followed national guidance, and whilst employee safety was paramount, there was also a need to comply with statutory data protection requirements. Officers acknowledged the Committee's concerns and undertook to request that EMT receive an update on the Warning Markers Register system for review, to ensure the correct balance.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the contents of the quarterly report, including the accidents and incidents recorded in Q3, and the merged action plan from the safety panels, be noted.
- (b) That the Working at Height Policy be noted, and once agreed by the safety panels, an in-depth review of the procedures and controls in place be undertaken by the relevant H&S Teams projects in 2023/24.

CHAIRMAN