

**5 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HR COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Thursday, 5 September 2024

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

\* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

Mark Clark  
\* Kate Crisell  
\* Sean Cullen

**Councillors:**

\* Jeremy Heron  
\* Colm McCarthy  
Joe Reilly

\*Present

**Officers Attending:**

Heleana Aylett, Alan Bethune, Zoe Ormerod, James Loring, Lisle Joykson and Laura Stead

**11 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Joe Reilly.

**12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman paid tribute to former Councillor Keith Craze, who passed away suddenly on 18 August. Through his experience and career in the HR field, Keith had been a valued and knowledgeable member of this Committee, and had been a dedicated and conscientious ward councillor. He would be sorely missed, and heartfelt condolences were extended to his family.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome to the meeting Laura Stead, HR Advisor and Lisle Joykson, Assistant HR Advisor, who had recently joined the HR team.

**13 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024 were confirmed by the Chairman as correct record.

**14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**16 HR UPDATE**

The Committee received an overview of the work undertaken within the HR Service in addition to re-active casework.

The report covered areas such as:

- Staff Engagement Survey
- Recruitment
- Learning Management System
- Learning and Development
- Management Development Programme
- LGBT+ Employee Network
- Employer of Choice

In answer to a question, it was reported that the 14 apprenticeships currently running were spread across various services.

Of the new staff who had completed apprenticeships, approximately two thirds had chosen to stay with the Authority.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**17 REVIEW OF TRAVEL**

The Committee considered proposed changes to the Council staff Essential Car User Scheme and the Travel Policy.

It was explained that the car allowances scheme had not been reviewed for some time, and was necessitated by changes in working practices as well as the advent of hybrid working.

It was noted that Unison were supportive of the clarity for Essential and Casual user status, and the proposed increase in mileage allowances.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the current situation regarding mileage claimed across the Council. Attached at Appendix 1 be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed changes to the Essential Car User Scheme with effect from April 2025 be noted.
- (iii) That the updated Travel Policy attached at Appendix 3 with effect from April 2025 be noted.

**18 HEALTH AND WELLBEING ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT 2023 - 2024**

The Committee received a summary of the Councils sickness absence rate in the previous 12 months and actions taken to manage attendance.

It was noted that Working time lost to sickness absence in 2023 – 2024 was 3.53%, down from 3.92% the previous year.

Stress/depression was the most common reason for sickness absence (25.25%), an increase from 15% in 22/23.

There was an increase from 13 in 2022/23 to 21 long term absences in 23/24 because of this reason; 9 colleagues cited work issues contributing to their ill health.

Sickness absence was proactively managed and Wellbeing support remained a priority. The report detailed corporate preventative support.

In response to a query on the possibility of ascertaining whether stress / depression absences were work or home related, it was confirmed that an HSE stress questionnaire was used, which facilitated discussions and sometimes led to voluntary disclosure of this information. It was also noted that Council employees had confidential, 24 hour access to the Employee Support Line, and counselling sessions.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the report be noted and the proposed attendance management action plan detailed in the report be supported.

**19 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT (Q1 2024 - 2025)**

The Committee noted work undertaken by the Corporate Health and Safety team in Q1 2024 – 2025, including various policy reviews, feedback from service safety panels and working groups, together with accident and incident statistics.

This report highlighted the significant work undertaken by the Corporate Health and Safety team in Q1 2024 – 2025 and included a number of scheduled policy reviews (lone working, the control of contractors and the control of asbestos containing material).

The report also included the key feedback from service safety panels and working groups, which were the Councils primary function for health and safety cooperation and consultation. The quarterly accident/incident report provided accident/incident statistics for quarter 1 2024 – 2025.

It was noted that during a test of the Orbis Protect and StaySafe lone working solution, some staff had reported areas of poor signal reception. As part of the review, consideration was being given for all high-risk visits within areas of poor signal, such as Sway, for two members of staff to attend.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the draft Corporate Asbestos Policy be approved.
- (ii) That the draft Corporate Control of Contractors Policy be approved.
- (iii) That the draft Lone Working Policy be approved.
- (iv) That the impact on employees in relation to the recommended updates on the Corporate Drug & Alcohol Policy be noted.
- (v) That the items raised at the Service Safety Panels and Working Groups be noted.

(vi) That the findings identified within the Q1 2024 – 2025 accident/incident report be noted.

**20 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED:**

That the following dates be agreed for meetings of the Committee in 2025/26:

(Thursdays at 10am)

**2025**

19 June

11 September

**2026**

8 January

12 March

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

CHAIRMAN