



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Catmos, Oakham on Tuesday, 8th February, 2022 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor G Brown Councillor G Waller
Councillor K Bool Councillor S Harvey
Councillor O Hemsley Councillor R Powell

OFFICERS PRESENT: Carol Snell Head of Human Resources
Tom Delaney Governance Manager

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J Dale.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2021.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held 26 October 2021 be **APPROVED**.

4 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

5 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from Members.

6 NOTICES OF MOTION

No notices of motion had been received.

7 FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

Report No. 12/2022 was received from the Strategic Director of Resources. The Head of Human Resources, Carol Snell, presented the report which informed the Committee on the progression of the trial of the hybrid working model for staff, the lessons that had been learnt and how actions were being identified for moving forward. It was noted that returning to the original ways of working model pre Covid-19 was not desired or expected.

Following questions from Members, the Head of Human Resources confirmed that there had been no changes to terms and conditions of employee contracts and if employees were required to come into the office this would be acceptable contractually. The Council had already put in place a flexible working policy prior to the pandemic which broadly covered the way in which the Council was currently working. It was confirmed that there were roughly 100 employees whereby roles were predominantly based at an office location or in the community.

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that the objective was for a more defined model be issued in April 2022 with caveats dependant on organisational requirements and the Covid-19 pandemic. It was asked by Members whether consideration needed to be given in relation to new employees and if working remotely had a negative impact on their experience given the turnover figures in a later report, and the Head of Human Resources confirmed that this was a factor being looked into.

Concerns were raised by Members around employees predominately working from home in relation to any impacts on their mental health, how this would be measured, and how teams would continue to bond and work together effectively. The Head of Human Resources confirmed there would be opportunities for teams to come together under the Hybrid Model, but this needed to be managed safely alongside concerns on employee wellbeing. It is not the intention, in the current model, that an employee works at home for 100% of their time. In addition, the working model for services/teams is determined by the needs of the business and where the service needs to be delivered from.

The report highlighted the importance of flexible working models from a recruitment and retention perspective; also, that adjustments will be necessary to 'buildings' in order to support a flexible working arrangement for staff e.g., enabling people to collaborate and engage with others

RESOLVED

That the Employee and Appeals Committee **NOTED** the report and its contents.

8 GRIEVANCE POLICY

Report No. 13/2022 was received from the Strategic Director of Resources. The Head of Human Resources, Carol Snell, presented the report which sought approval from the Committee for the updated Grievance Policy.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Human Resources explained that if a member of staff had a grievance with their own line manager, it was outlined in the Policy that the grievance could be raised with another line manager or Human Resources.

Following questions from Members the Head of Human Resources agreed to amend several parts of the policy following Committee to ensure that; confidentiality was outlined more predominantly in the policy, to clarify it was not always Human Resources who undertook note-taking of grievance proceedings and amending the reference to 'Panel' in para 6.9.5. The Head of Human Resources is able to subsequently confirm that the issue of recording hearings is covered in the Policy at paragraph 9.4.5.

RESOLVED:

That the updated Grievance Policy be **APPROVED** by the Employment and Appeals Committee.

9 RETENTION OF STAFF

Report No. 14/2022 was received from the Strategic Director of Resources. The Head of Human Resources, Carol Snell, presented the report which provided the Committee with a more focussed paper on loss of staff/turnover and in particular to understand more about reasons for leaving.

Members asked if employees could be asked within staff surveys what encouraged them to stay working for RCC. In response to Member suggestions the Head of Human Resources agreed that it would be useful to understand the underlying reasons as to what prompted employees to leave RCC for career development and further analysis around this would be useful. It was observed one to one meetings for employees were critical to help employees feel valued regarding their development and career progression.

The Head of Human Resources advised that whilst monitoring and reporting of data is useful and helps identify trends, from an employment perspective, data for the last two years is going to prove challenging from a comparator perspective given the unusual circumstances.

It was acknowledged the value of pursuing 'exit interview' information from staff on a statistical and qualitative basis.

The Head of Human Resources highlighted our success in promoting from within the organisation – this helps both our recruitment and retention and demonstrates our commitment to developing staff. She also highlighted the success of some of our trainee schemes e.g. Social Workers, Planners, Building Surveyors.

RESOLVED

That the Employment and Appeals Committee **NOTED** the report and its contents.

10 NATIONAL PAY AWARD

The Head of Human Resources provided a verbal update on the latest situation with the National Pay Award.

In April 2020 a pay award of 2.75% had been awarded to employees. Negotiations for the 2021 award had still not reached agreement and regional briefings were next expected in March. At the end of 2021 the National Employers had submitted a final offer of 1.75% and the three trade unions had advised that they would proceed to ballot on consideration for strike action. The outcome of the ballot for Unison fell short of the minimum turnout of 50% due to only receiving 14.5% turnout; GMB had not proceeded to a formal strike ballot and the outcome for Unite was still being awaited.

There were some increasing pressures with the National Living Wage being increased to £9.50 on 1st April 2022. As RCC only had one employee on pay point 2 this was not a significant pressure. It was noted that inflation was rising, and it was likely that this would either rise again or stabilise at 5/6%. National Insurance Contributions were also due to rise in April 2022.

The Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives had recently agreed a pay award of 1.5% but (at the time of the meeting) the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers was still unknown. *(This has also subsequently been confirmed as 1.5% from April 2021)*

It was confirmed following Members' questions that employees were regularly informed of the updates and that the pay award would be backdated to April 2021. In response to a question regarding the level of National Insurance to be paid if the backpay is not made until after April 2022 – the Head of Human Resources has subsequently confirmed that the rate will be at the higher NI rate at the time of being paid i.e., 2022/23 rate.

The Chair thanked the Head of Human Resources for the update and would look forward to an update in March 2022 following the further regional briefings.

11 WORK PLAN

The Employment and Appeals Committee Work Plan was received, and it was suggested by the Chair that it would be useful to look at all of the employment policies and to understand where these stood in terms of review dates. Councillor G Waller also requested an item to be scheduled in relation to any updates on the National Pay Award.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Employment and Appeals Committee Work Plan be received and the expected items for future meetings were **NOTED**.

- 2) That a list of all employment policies, and their last and next review dates, be provided at a future meeting.
- 3) That an item regarding an update to the National Pay Award be scheduled for a future meeting.

12 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised the Committee that a Chief Officer Appointments Panel had been scheduled in March 2022 for the appointment of the Monitoring Officer and the relevant Committee Members had been contacted.

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.28 pm.

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