

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2009

Councillors: Paul Bryant (P), Adrian Edwards (P), Tony Linden (P), Quentin Webb (P), Keith Lock (P)

Substitutes: Andrew Rowles (SP)

Officers: Jane Milone (HR Manager – Policy and Strategy), Katie Penlington (Human Resources Officer) and Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager)

PART I

19. APOLOGIES.

There were no apologies for absence received.

20. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2009 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

22. ORGANISATIONAL STRESS POLICY.

Jane Milone sought approval for an approach to the identification and risk assessment of workplace stress in the Council (Agenda Item 4), including a draft organisational stress management policy.

Jane explained that the policy would provide a structured approach to identifying work place stress. There was currently no policy in place and best practice suggested that the Council should adopt this type of strategic document. This policy was not about individuals but would be used to identify stressful work practices and environments within the organisation and methods for redressing these issues.

Officers would use the findings of the Annual Staff Satisfaction Survey, sickness and grievance records and exit interviews to map out areas of the organisation where stress might be more of an issue. HR would work with the Heads of Service in these areas to see what support mechanisms should be put in place.

A model strategy would be drafted that the schools' governing bodies could adopt if they chose too.

Jane reported that Councillor Pamela Bale had requested that the document should have links with the Council's Sickness Absence Policy and these would be woven into the document where appropriate.

RESOLVED that the proposals set out in the report be approved by the Personnel Committee for implementation for implementation by Human Resources and Health and Safety.

23. THE SMOKE FREE POLICY.

Katie Penlington and Jane Milone informed Personnel Committee of the proposed revisions to the West Berkshire Council Smoke Free Policy (previously called The Smoking Policy), and sought a decision upon the proposed amendments (Agenda Item 5).

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Katie explained that the Smoking Policy had been adopted a year ago and as part of the process it had been agreed that the policy would be reviewed a year later. A number of changes to the policy were being proposed following consultation with the Trade Union and Managers and following the introduction of the revised legislation.

The key changes were:

- An amendment to the title;
- Paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 which related to smoking in vehicles;
- Paragraph 3.10 which required employees who wore uniforms to cover their uniforms if they went off-site to smoke; and
- The introduction of exemptions in exceptional circumstances which would allow certain service users to smoke on Council premises if they would be at greater risk if they were expected to smoke away from the premises.

In discussing the policy Members felt that instructing employees that wore uniforms that they had to cover their uniforms if they went off site to smoke was too draconian. Members also discussed if it would be appropriate to request that service users receiving planned visits from Officers refrain from smoking for one hour before the visit. Officers reported that this was to protect staff from the effects of secondary smoking and that one hour was the guidance set out in the General Social Care Council information. The Council would need to demonstrate that it was doing all it could to protect its staff. Members requested that the policy should be amended to reflect that this applied to planned visits only and also that it related to smoking that took place indoors.

Members raised some concern about the policy stating that smoking was not permitted in private vehicles where other employees or service users were being transported. Officers explained that if a vehicle was used to transport colleagues or service users, during business hours and for business use, it was considered to be a place of work and legislation therefore stated that smoking would not be permitted.

The Personnel Committee requested that the following amendments be made to the policy:

- Paragraph 2.2, second bullet point, second sentence replace 'may with 'will normally' so that the sentence reads: 'This includes care homes; however exemptions will normally be granted to residents who live in such establishments'.
- Paragraph 3.10 to be deleted.
- Paragraph 4.4 amended to insert the word 'planned' visits and clarify that this related to smoking indoors.
- Paragraph 6.4, 4th bullet point delete 'heavy' from the sentence ending in 'heavy smoker'.

RESOLVED that the policy be approved subject to the amendments set out above.

24. UPDATED ON HR POLICY AND PROCEDURES.

Jane Milone introduced a verbal item (Agenda Item 6). Members requested that Jane draft a full set of all the Council’s HR policies and procedures for the next meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 2.00pm closed at 3.04pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature: