

# **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2012**

**Councillors Present:** Peter Argyle, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock (Vice-Chairman), Andrew Rowles and Quentin Webb (Chairman)

**Also Present:** Nicola Bailey (Recruitment Manager) and Jane Milone (Human Resources Manager), Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Adrian Edwards and Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager)

### **PART I**

#### **3. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2012 and 10 May 2012 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **5. Apprenticeships in WBC**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning apprenticeships offered at West Berkshire Council.

The Chairman welcomed Lizzie Roe, Emma Renton and Anastasia Martin-Mcblain to the meeting to discuss their experience of apprenticeships at West Berkshire Council.

Nicola Bailey, in providing an overview of the apprentice scheme at the Council, explained that since April 2012 the Council had employed 18 apprentices across a number of the Council's services. The Council worked with both Newbury College and the West Berkshire Training Consortium who assisted with the recruiting process. Adverts had also been placed in the Newbury Weekly News. Officers explained that take up of the scheme had been limited. On average around 10 applications were received for each of the vacancies.

Applicants were put through an assessment centre and then successful applicants were allocated to the services taking the applicant's interests into account. All apprentices were employed on a fixed term contract for a year. During that time they would be able to apply for jobs that were advertised internally.

The apprentices explained to Members how they had heard about the scheme, why they had applied, how they were being developed, the level of supervision they were being afforded and their personal experience of the scheme generally.

The apprentices noted:

- that this was a very different environment to school.
- they were being afforded the opportunity to undertake some of the Council's mandatory training courses in addition to their NVQ training.
- they were allowed time off to attend their NVQ training.
- they saw this scheme as a good opportunity to obtain a qualification whilst also gaining valuable work experience.
- they were positive about the practical experience they were receiving.

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- they enjoyed the fact that they were receiving an income while they were being trained.

Members noted that the level of supervision experienced by these apprentices varied and they were concerned about this issue. Members also noted that the Council did not arrange opportunities for the apprentices to get together to share their experiences, as a consequence they could feel isolated at times, and they felt that this was something that would be beneficial to the apprentices.

The apprentices explained that although they received induction training they were asked to assimilate a lot of information quickly and although this helped them to undertake their role later on it was daunting at first. They felt that it might be useful to stagger the amount of information provided more to ensure a smoother transition. It was therefore agreed that it would be useful to provide more information to services on how to induct apprentices.

Officers explained that HR would run a recruitment drive for apprentices each May. Councillor Quentin Webb asked that this information be reflected on the Council's website. He also reported that some of the website pages needed refreshing. Officers explained that they had been into two schools but that they did not have the resources to undertake a lot of this type of activity. It was therefore proposed that they would work with the schools to highlight the opportunities and benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship in a different format.

The apprentices felt that it would be useful to inform more pupils about the apprenticeship opportunities available at the Council. They felt that schools in the area were not necessarily promoting these types of schemes to pupils.

Members thanked the apprentices for taking the time to come and address the Committee.

Members were pleased that the apprenticeship scheme had been introduced and they thanked HR offices for their input. They felt however that it would be useful to enhance promotion of the scheme but accepted that their were limited resources to undertake this activity.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) **guidance should be produced for managers on appropriate induction for apprentices;**
- (2) **opportunities for apprentices to meet up as a group should be arranged;**
- (3) **the level of supervision given to apprentices should be investigated further;**
- (4) **HR to investigate appropriate methods for raising awareness of apprenticeships in schools.**

## **6. An Update on HR Policies within the Remit of the Personnel Committee**

Jane Milone explained that drawing together the list from information on the website had afforded her a useful overview of the policies as a whole. As part of this process she had prioritised the policies that needed to be updated first. policies had been updated in line with legislative changes but there had not been sufficient resources to undertake regular reviews of all policies. HR was in the process of being restructured and it was anticipated that following the restructure Officers would have more time to allow this process to take place.

A review of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy was underway and the Trade Unions were being consulted on revised proposals. The revised policy was being drafted to

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accord with ACAS guidance and to take account recommendations arising from the internal audit of sickness absence that had recently been undertaken. It was hoped that this work would be completed before Christmas and a revised policy would be brought to the Personnel Committee to agree.

The outcome of the recent scrutiny review of domestic abuse would be fed into the Council's Domestic Abuse Policy. The Personnel Committee would also be asked to comment on the Volunteer and Work Experience Policies. Officers also felt that it would be useful for Members to consider any adjustments that were required to the Relocation Scheme given the current economic situation.

Jane Milone explained to Members that a series of training sessions on stress management had recently been run for Managers.

Members thanked Officers for the update and asked that the programme be updated (to include a colour code, with a target date and a decision making body column) and sent to all Members of the Committee.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (1) the programme be noted;**
- (2) an amended programme be circulated to the Committee.**

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed to hold the next meeting on 20 December 2012 at the rising of the Special Executive meeting scheduled for that day.

*(The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.29 am)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....