

REMOTE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 17 JULY 2020

Councillors Present: Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Lee Dillon (Substitute) (In place of Adrian Abbs), Garth Simpson (Chairman), Richard Somner (Substitute) (In place of Peter Argyle) and Joanne Stewart

Also Present: Rebecca Bird (HR Manager) and Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Adrian Abbs and Councillor Peter Argyle

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 24 April 2020 and 14 May 2020 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. Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee

The Chairman noted that as this was the first meeting of the Municipal Year he felt that it would be appropriate for the Committee to be appraised of its Terms of Reference.

He noted that the Council had delegated its work in relation to agreeing and making changes to HR and Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, appointing staff at Head of Service level and above by means of an Appointments Panel, appointment of Proper Officers, and for determining requests for the early release of pensions, subject to the financial implications of each request being approved, the Executive decision making process to the Personnel Committee.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked that the word Proper Officer be replaced with the term Statutory Officers, or to at least include this in brackets afterwards, to aid clarity.

RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee be noted. The term 'Statutory Officers' would be included in the document.

6. Menopause Policy (PC3940)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) which asked Members to consider and if appropriate approve the policy. Rebecca Bird in introducing the policy noted that the menopause affected many employees, not just women, and could impact upon their working lives. The policy aimed to raise awareness of the menopause and its impact, encourage open and supportive conversations between employees and their line manager so that reasonable adjustments could be explored to support the employee at work and enable them to continue to be effective in their jobs.

Ms Bird noted that 78% of the Council's workforce identified as female and of those employees 59% fell within the 40 to 60 year old age group. These employees were more likely to be affected by the menopause. The awareness of the impact of the menopause on employees was an issue that had been raised nationally and Advisory, Conciliation

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and Arbitration Service (ACAS) guidance stated that it was good practice to have a policy in place. The need for a policy had also been raised by the unions, especially Unison.

Officers had looked at a number of other policies and identified good practice that could be incorporated into West Berkshire Council's policy.

The menopause was still widely seen as a taboo subject and it was hoped that the adoption of the policy would raise awareness and facilitate more open discussion amongst staff members to enable all employees to work as effectively as possible.

If Members were minded to adopt the policy an article would be placed in the Council internal communication document (Reporter), information would be put onto the intranet and Heads of Service and Service Directors would be asked to cascade information to their teams. HR were looking to get some training most probably via e-learning in place for managers to assist them. HR would monitor any queries arising in respect of the policy or on this subject matter and see if any adjustments to the policy and training were needed.

Councillor Jeff Brooks commented that he was supportive of the adoption of the policy which he believed would assist managers to respond sensitively and appropriately to employees that were experiencing symptoms. He was pleased to see that the Council had looked at other policies in order to identify good practice while ensuring that it reflected the local situation.

Councillor Jo Stewart stated that she was pleased to see that the policy stated that this was not an issue that only affected women and that age was also discussed. She noted that the menopause did not only affect older people. In particular she welcomed the associated risk assessment document which she believed could help to depersonalise discussions where managers or employees felt awkward in discussing the condition. She believed that it was important to have a training programme in place to support managers. Councillor Stewart felt that it would be useful to revisit the policy in the next six to nine months to see if it needed any adjusting given that it was a new policy. **(RB to Action).**

Councillor Garth Simpson asked who would be responsible for undertaking the risk assessment. Ms Bird explained that it would be undertaken by the manager but that they would be able to access support from the Health and Safety Team. Most managers would need to undertake these risk assessment in relation to other areas of work so training was already available and managers were accustomed to undertaking them. Councillor Simpson stated that he welcomed the allocation of quiet rooms and he felt that it would be beneficial to ensure that they had comfortable chairs and an ability to show that the room was occupied.

Councillor Richard Somner commented that he welcomed the holistic approach. He commented that he had recently become aware that men were affected by the menopause too and he therefore supported the inclusive nature of the document. He hoped that the introduction of the policy would be supported by a poster and intranet campaign to aid awareness and facilitate more open discussion.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that he too supported the policy.

RESOLVED that the Menopause Policy and use of appropriate rest rooms be approved.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the dates for the next two meetings were:

- 13 November 2020 at 10.30am
- 12 February 2021 at 10.30am

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(The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and closed at 10.57 am)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature