

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2019

Councillors Present: Adrian Abbs (Substitute) (In place of Nassar Kessell), Dennis Benneyworth, Garth Simpson and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Robert O'Reilly (Head of Human Resources), Rebecca Bird (HR Officer) and Jo Reeves (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Nassar Kessell

Councillor Absent: Councillor Jeff Brooks

PART I

10. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

12. Revised Stress & Mental Well-being Policy (Staff) (PC3826)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning a revised Stress and Mental Wellbeing Policy for Staff.

Rebecca Bird in introducing the item advised that stress was the most common cause of sickness absence in local government. The previous policy had been approved in 2009 so updates were required and Human Resources had work with the Council's Health and Safety Team to update the policy to include clearer guidance for staff and managers.

Councillor Garth Simpson asked for a further explanation of a statement in the document that the policy had been 'largely welcomed'. Rebecca Bird explained that the Trade unions had been concerned regarding the removal of stress audits. There had been a low take up and HR no longer had the capacity or skills to complete these. The unions had undertaken some stress audits and it was hoped they could continue to do so.

Councillor Simpson enquired what the average number of sickness absence days was in the Council. Robert O'Reilly advised it was 8.9 days which was comparable to the rest of local government. Councillor Simpson therefore noted that an average of two days per employee were lost to stress.

Councillor Simpson further asked what managers feedback had been regarding the changes to the policy. Rebecca Bird advised that managers had felt it was important that there was guidance for employees to support their own wellbeing which included a commitment to an open dialogue.

Councillor Dennis Benneyworth asked whether it was standard practice to review the policy every 5 years. Rebecca Bird advised that usually policies were updated every

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE - 15 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

three years but the pace of legislative change had slowed and HR did not have the resources to update policies that frequently.

Councillor Adrian Abbs asked how local government sickness absence compared to the private sector and whether there were any comparable fields in the private sector. Robert O'Reilly advised that on average each private sector employee was absent from work for 6 days due to sickness and he did not have information to hand for each field. More unionised industries tended to have higher sickness absence rates and there was variation between larger and smaller employers. Central government's sickness absence was higher than local government.

Councillor Simpson commended the thorough work to revise the policy which included practical guidance and templates which he hoped that staff and managers found useful.

RESOLVED that the policy be approved.

13. Workplace Chaplaincy (PC3835)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) which proposed the introduction of a Workplace Chaplaincy service as a pilot. Rebecca Bird informed Members that Reverend Richard Littledale had approached the Council to offer his time voluntarily and officers' view was that this should be supported on a trial basis.

Councillor Garth Simpson asked whether Reverend Littledale would respect the diversity of council officers and Rebecca Bird confirmed he would. Councillor Howard Woollaston reported that Operations Board wanted to ensure that all faiths, beliefs and religions were included. Rebecca Bird advised that when the service was publicised, an invitation would be made to any other faith leaders to run a chaplaincy service, however Reverend Littledale had approached the Chief Executive directly to offer his time on a voluntary basis so it was proposed to accept the offer.

Councillor Adrian Abbs asked what benefit to residents would be achieved by offering this service to staff. Rebecca Bird advised that staff would need to visit the Chaplain in their own time so there would be no impact on residents. The service would complement other sources of support to staff.

RESOLVED that a workplace chaplaincy service be for six months with a view to establishing the service permanently.

(The meeting commenced at 3.35 pm and closed at 3.52 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature