

Minutes of: EMPLOYMENT PANEL

Date of Meeting: 12 September 2024

Present: Councillor T Rafiq (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, J Grimshaw, E Moss, M Walsh,
T Tariq, J Lancaster and L Smith

Also in attendance: Sam McVaigh – Director of People and Inclusion, Simon Bagley, Head of Human Resources, Catherine King, HR Business Manager, Nicole Howarth, HR & OD Business Partner and Phil Llewellyn, Democratic Services Manager.

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C Cummins and Lynne Ridsdale, Chief Executive.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for absence are noted above.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 11th July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Sam McVaigh, Director of People and Inclusion, submitted some minor changes to the Employment Panel Terms of Reference, namely:

- Under 1. Function – removal of the wording “Applications for premature retirement”
- Under 3. Key Responsibilities of the Board – 6. Removal of the wording “and applications for premature retirement”.

The Employment Panel agreed:

The amendments to the Employment Panel Terms of Reference as submitted.

14 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

Sam McVaigh, Director of People and Inclusion, presented the Workforce Policy Review report, which set out the next phase of the policy review work, including six new/changed policies for approval and five policies for withdrawal. Trade Union colleagues had been fully engaged in this work.

Changes were proposed in the following areas:

1. Managing Attendance Policy and Local Conditions of Service Section 5: Sickness Scheme – a new Managing Attendance Policy to replace the Supporting Positive Attendance Policy, with an associated update to the Local Conditions.
2. Volunteering Policy – a revised policy which strengthens the Council's position on encouraging employer supported volunteering and simplifies the process of applying for volunteering leave.
3. Code of Conduct – following a review by safeguarding leads in Adults and Children's Social Care, an additional section has been added to the Code to require employees to declare when they are under investigation for certain matters. This will enable support to be put in place or other action, including disciplinary, to be taken as appropriate.
4. Local Conditions of Service Section 6: Travelling, Subsistence and Housing – following a review and taking account of the Council's experiences through international recruitment, revisions have been made to add clarity regarding claims for relocation expenses, overnight stays, travel by public transport and bicycles allowances.
5. Redeployment Policy – Minor revisions to reflect the ability to manage the redeployment process through the new Greater.Jobs Applicant Tracking System and integrate with the Council's end-to-end recruitment process to streamline arrangements and improve colleague experience.
6. Withdrawal of 5 policies which are either out of date, have their content duplicated in other policies or have been superseded by newer policies:
 - Examples of Equivalent Qualifications (Appendix X of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Flexible Work Base Policy
 - Premature Retirement Scheme (Appendix G of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Suggestion Scheme (Appendix D of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Appendix U of Local Conditions of Service)

This followed a detailed review of the full HR policy framework to simplify and remove duplication.

Members asked a number of questions and made comments relating to the Managing Attendance Policy and Local Conditions of Service Section 5.

It was confirmed that the changes to the Policy were to clarify and streamline the short term absence process, and also removes some areas of management discretion in the early parts of the process, but still offering some discretion later in the process if needed.

In terms of Six Town Housing, although the staff had transferred under TUPE regulations and were therefore under a different policy, there were not materially big differences between the two policies and there would be integration over time as new recruits joined who would be under the Council policy.

It was noted that in terms of the reporting procedure there could be some exceptional circumstances for unauthorised absence that could arise, but that an exhaustive list of such circumstances would not cover all eventualities, and also that there may be occasions where rather than using the Occupational Health service, it may be appropriate for individuals to see their GP or Consultant with individuals being dealt with on a case by case basis.

It was commented that the policy was light on pregnancy and mental health support, and that it was important to involve specialist outside agencies as appropriate. In response it was confirmed that in terms of both areas, there were dedicated policies and wider support available, however Sam McVeigh noted that it would be helpful to put all of the support available in one place, to offer a basket of support options available in an easily accessible way.

In terms of the other policies presented, comments were made on the Code of Conduct, with it being essential for staff to declare if they were under investigation for certain matters, which could involve non-work related matters. Members also discussed the Local Conditions of Service Section 6: Travelling, Subsistence and Housing, in particular the change of distance for removal expenses to 30 miles, which brought the Council in line with other GM authorities.

The Employment Panel agreed:

1. The new Managing Attendance Policy and revised Local Conditions of Service Section 5: Sickness Scheme;
2. The revised Volunteering Policy;
3. To commend the proposed addition to the Employee Code of Conduct to Council on 13th November 2024 for approval and authorise the Council's Monitoring Officer to make subsequent changes to the Council Constitution;
4. The proposed revisions to Local Conditions of Service Section 6: Travelling, Subsistence and Housing;
5. The proposed revisions to the Redeployment Policy;
6. The withdrawal of the following:
 - Examples of Equivalent Qualifications (Appendix X of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Flexible Work Base Policy
 - Premature Retirement Scheme (Appendix G of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Suggestion Scheme (Appendix D of Local Conditions of Service)
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Appendix U of Local Conditions of Service)

That the new, revised and withdrawn policies/procedures will go forward for endorsement via the Trade Union Consultation Meeting and the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee before being published or withdrawn, as appropriate, on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff with the intention to come into force from 7 October 2024.

15 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ

Chair