

Minutes of: EMPLOYMENT PANEL

Date of Meeting: 11 July 2024

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

Also in attendance: Sam McVaigh – Director of People and Inclusion, Kelly Barnett – Democratic Services Officer, Catherine King – HR Business Manager, Vanessa Brockbank – HR Business Manager, Simon Bagley – Head of Human Resources

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C Cummins and Councillor T Tariq

The Chair welcomed all Employment Panel Members to the Committee.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 3 April 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Employment Panel terms of reference were attached to the agenda for information.

5 CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION

It was agreed:

Councillor Bernstein be appointed as the Employment Panel's Corporate Parenting Champion for the municipal year 2024-2025.

6 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

Sam McVaigh, Director of People and Inclusion presented the Workforce Policy Review report and highlighted the proposed changes to the Disciplinary Procedure, the Grievance Procedure, the Family Leave Policy and the Agile Working Policy. Sam McVaigh thanked Catherine King, Melanie Cunnigham and Vanessa Brockbank for their hard work on the Workforce Policy Review.

In response to a Member's question around HR involvement in disciplinary cases and concerns around their role change, Sam McVaigh assured that a HR business partner will be involved in every investigation but will not be the person named on the investigation letters. Sam McVaigh advised that suspensions have also been strengthened and will be completed in collaboration with managers. Sam McVaigh confirmed that the role of the HR advisor would change but would not be removed or diluted.

In response to a Member's question around the Grievance Policy and how learning from grievances will be cascaded around the organisation, Sam McVaigh explained that there are not a huge number of grievances that are dealt with. Sam McVaigh reported the different ways that learning can be cascaded around the organisation which included; through the Management Programme as members from the HR team present a module on the programme, through the Senior Leadership Group meeting which takes place every month and through the Senior Managers' Forum Meeting that takes place quarterly. Sam McVaigh further advised of a HR monthly review session which is around lessons learned, with input around employment law changes. Sam McVaigh reported that the current policy was written at a time where there was not a Corporate HR Team, now there is only one HR Team, where learning can be easily shared amongst colleagues.

In response to the Agile Working Policy, a member referred to it being important to spend time with colleagues as well as working from home and highlighted section 4.1.6 of the Workforce Policy Review report which refers to colleagues' desire to spend more time together. Sam McVaigh reported that newer colleagues have suffered the most around their development, whilst working from home and highlighted that one of the advantages of working from a physical space together, is for colleagues to grow as part of their team.

Members stated that they were in support of the Agile Working Policy but highlighted that it needs to be regularly reviewed. Members acknowledged that retaining and attracting people into the workforce is important as well as balancing that with reducing surplus workspace.

In response to a member's question around the Agile Working Policy and relationship building if colleagues are not in the office at the same time, Sam McVaigh advised that there needs to be a change of mindset, some of this work is around facilitating managers to talk to each other and work collaboratively, as there are not enough desks for all teams to be in the office all of the time.

In response to a member's question around the Agile Working Policy and employees with disabilities having their own workspace, Sam McVaigh reported that adjustments for a person's disability may not mean that they require their own desk, this could be adjustments such as software on their computer, a specialist chair, a specialist mouse or mouse mat. Chairs can be removed from a desk and put to one side as it wouldn't be expected a specialist chair be on general use for others to use. Sam McVaigh explained that further work needs to be done to strengthen this.

The Employment Panel agreed:

1. The revised Disciplinary Procedure.
2. The revised Grievance Procedure and withdrawal of the Dignity at Work Policy.
3. The new Family Leave Policy and withdrawal of the current separate policy arrangements.
4. That the new and revised policies/procedures will go forward for endorsement via the Trade Union Consultation Meeting and the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee before being published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff with the intention to come into force from 1 August 2024.

7 PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Sam McVaigh, Director of People and Inclusion presented the Performance and Development Framework for the Chief Executive report.

Members confirmed that the arrangement in place are working well and that they wish to continue with the current Performance and Development Framework.

The Employment Panel agreed:

1. To continue the use of the existing Performance and Development Framework for the annual assessment of the Chief Executive for a further 3 performance cycles.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

9 MEMBER TRAINING

Members took part in a recruitment and appeals hearing training session.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.35 pm)