

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019.

Present:- Councillors Brooker (Chair), Chaudhry, N Holledge, Mohammad, Sadiq and Smith

Also present under Rule 30:- None

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Bedi, Bains and Hulme

PART 1

9. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

10. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th June 2019

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

11. Employment Policies and Procedures

Belinda Collins (OD/HR Business Partner) and Jules Potter (Head of Organisational Development) presented a report that sought approval of the new Managing Performance Policy and Procedure and the revised Learning and Development Policy.

Consultation on the policies had been undertaken with: the Trade Unions, Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Management Team, the Employee Engagement Forum, the Disability Forum and the Corporate Consultation Forum.

Members were provided with a summary of the main changes to the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure, which included:

- Further guidance for managers regarding conducting one-to-one review meetings and tackling poor performance. In addition, it provided guidance in respect of coaching an employee and handling difficult conversations.
- An update to reflect the new performance review process.
- Removal of the review stages in the current policy to provide a shorter timescale and swifter progression in the management of poor performance cases.
- The addition of a Data Protection Regulations 2018 clause.

The Learning and Development Policy had been revised as follows:

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- Additional information regarding the Slough Academy apprenticeships programme had been incorporated.
- Amendments had been made to reflect the transition from appraisals to the new performance review process.
- The introduction of volunteers as learners in-line with Section 11 requirements had been included.
- Clearer guidance informing managers how to apply for training funds to support development needs within their directorate.
- Inclusion of information regarding the introduction of a new Learning Management System 'Cornerstone' following the implementation of the Policy.

A Member queried why the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure was scheduled to be internally reviewed every three years, rather than more frequently.

It was explained that a three yearly review process was considered good practice; however, the Policy could be reviewed earlier if considered necessary due to local or national requirements. It was agreed that the front sheet of the Policy would be amended to make it explicit that the Policy could be reviewed earlier, if necessary.

In relation to performance management, a Member queried how long information was held on an employee's record. It was explained that this depended on the 'sanction period' which was time-limited. Information was not kept unnecessarily and records were 'cleansed' appropriately.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the OD/HR Business Partner and the Head of Organisational Development for the report.

Resolved -

- (a) That, subject to an amendment to the front sheet, as detailed above, the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
- (b) That the Learning and Development Policy, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

12. Temporary Agency Staff

The Committee considered an update report on the Council's actions in relation to the supply and control of temporary labour.

At the last meeting held in June 2019, the Committee had requested a range of data and information. In response, the OD/HR Business Partner presented the requested information, as set out on pages 91 to 96 of the report.

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The Council continued to spend on temporary labour at a consistent rate of £8 - £10 million per year. The reasons for employing temporary staff included: to fill gaps in the establishment; to meet peaks of workload; to meet the need for short term, fixed or project work where there was no capacity in the permanent workforce; to provide specific skills or capabilities required on a short term basis.

A Member queried why the cost of temporary labour remained consistent, whilst the overall head count of Council employees had been reduced. In addition, it was asked what percentage of the workforce was temporary. In response, it was explained the Council workforce had reduced mainly due to the academisation of a number of schools; it was estimated that 25% of the workforce was temporary and this was not untypical for an urban council.

The analysis showed that for lower cost roles, there were savings to be made from using temporary labour as well as increased flexibility for the Council. It was recognised that this needed to be balanced against the Council's obligation to provide permanent employment.

The cost of temporary labour was circa £386,883 over the cost of equivalent employed labour. It was highlighted that on costs, which were typically 27% to cover the cost of sickness absence, employer National Insurance contributions, pension and other costs, were not applicable to temporary staff, meaning they could be less expensive than a permanent employee.

Members were informed that there were a number of posts classed as 'national and local shortage' and these roles impacted on the cost of employing such workers, with workers choosing to work as temporary staff, in order to maximise their income. This issue was not isolated to Slough; rather it reflected the broader labour market economics.

In response to this identified issue, the Slough Academy project provided apprenticeships in hard to fill roles, such as social workers and planning officers, in anticipation that training local people would improve staff retention.

With regard to procuring temporary labour services from 2020 onwards, Members were informed that the contract with Matrix SCM was ending in January 2020. As such, the Council was reviewing its requirements and a new contract re-procurement process had commenced. The new contract would be implemented during November and December 2019, and would go live in January 2020. The Council was seeking to change its model from a 'neutral vendor model' to a 'hybrid vendor model'. The hybrid vendor model required the supplier to provide staff directly, whilst also utilising agency staff. This change aligned to the requirements of the Council and was anticipated to generate significant savings.

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Referring to page 98 of the report, a Member queried some of the roles listed as local shortage posts, such as the cemetery and parking roles. It was explained that these posts had been advertised, but due to the shortage of suitable candidates had not been successfully filled. It was agreed that further details about these roles would be provided at the next Committee meeting.

A Member asked if Brexit would have an impact on the Council's workforce. In response, it was advised that the short term impact would be minimal, however in the longer term the impact was unknown.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That further details regarding the cemetery and parking roles, identified as being local skill shortage posts, be provided at the next meeting.

13. Members' Attendance Record 2019/2020

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance Record 2019/20 be noted.

14. Date of Next Meeting - 23rd January 2020

Resolved – The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 23rd January 2020.

Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm)