

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the consultative meeting of Personnel Committee held online on 2 September 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.18 am

1 Chair Introduction

The Chair welcomed the newly appointed HR Manager, outlining her past achievements to date, and continued development to obtain a Senior Leader MBA Degree Apprenticeship.

2 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

3 Declarations of interest

Cllr J Loudoun; Minute 6: Personal Interest; Former employee of union and receives a pension from that union.

4 Matters of urgency

None.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

6 Implementation of proposed independent review of EDDC Management Structure and workforce/HR priorities

The report set out a proposal to revise the original remit for the independent management review, following discussions on the potential procurement frameworks and the desire to include aspects such as:

- Current workforce challenges
- Management pay review
- Succession planning
- Leadership and management development.

An HR Manager has now been appointed and has identified workforce challenges as:

- Ensuring that workforce capacity meets service demand, within budgetary constraints
- Overcoming significant recruitment challenges
- Establishing more robust succession planning
- Learning from the recent office relocation and pandemic working arrangements which support both excellent service delivery and retention of staff

- Continuing to support managers and staff through recent significant changes in working practices and high service demands, relating the work to the emerging Council Plan, and a strong focus on staff health and wellbeing
- Build upon positive employee and trade union relations to support high performance, recruitment and retention, including retaining the Platinum Investors in People (IIP) accreditation.

Prioritising these elements meant that recruitment, retention, and how staff would operate post-pandemic, would need to be addressed first, delaying the review of the management structure until next year.

The interventions to deal with these challenges were set out in the report, alongside the proposed written specification for the appointment of an organisation to undertake the review. The proposed evaluation criteria and procurement approach were also set out for the committee to consider. The expected timeframe led to recommendations for consideration in February, to coincide with the budget setting for 2022/23.

Discussions had been made with framework providers, giving a confidence that a suitable provider could be found.

Debate from the committee included:

- Clarity on how information from exit interviews was used;
- Involvement of the Chair of Personnel and the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination in putting forward the revised approach; discussion would take place after the meeting on the merits of extending this to include another Member from the committee, retaining political balance;
- IIP accreditation renewal was not due for 18 months, so did not attract expenditure for 2022/23 budget. The accreditation was a means of independent assessment on how well the Council was run, and the Platinum accreditation achieved was testament to that. The Council continued to be the best Council both regionally and nationally;
- Work was already underway in assessing how the workforce would operate post-pandemic, including a staff survey and Service Lead evaluation of office-based needs;
- Current informal career pathways would be expanded to look at customer care centre entry level posts that lead to posts within services. The IIP accreditation benefits included regular performance reviews of staff, which enabled high performers to be identified;
- There was no specific budget for continuous improvement, but training budgets were in place, although reduced in recent years due to budget pressures. Assessment would be made on the effectiveness of online learning modules. Continual improvement was a core value for all services across the Council, as part of the embedded process of the systems thinking approach. This had led to both efficiencies in service delivery for the benefit of our customers, and also made budget savings in eliminating waste;
- Awareness of the Council's IIP accreditation should be raised, as it is a selling point for recruitment of staff.

A separate issue of staff availability to see the public at Exmouth Town Hall currently, which had been raised at the previous Cabinet meeting, would be discussed outside of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED to Senior Officer for Decision

1. To prioritise an independent review of the pay and grading structure and rates of pay to ensure that the Council achieves its vision and values to seek continuous improvement and to recognise the pressure on resources, alongside its aspiration to be a median pay employer and to mitigate against current and significant recruitment and retention issues, with the independent review of the management structure then commissioned to be undertaken following this.
2. That external resources to undertake the review are sourced via a Central Professional Services Procurement Framework.
3. That the proposed written specification and evaluation criteria set out in the report be approved.
4. In order for the Council's commitment to transparency to be clearly demonstrated and to avoid 'behind the scenes' lobbying, that all correspondence from Councillors with the successful bidder will be disclosed to the Personnel Committee.
5. That the other HR priorities recommended in the report, which also aim to secure continuous improvement, enable the Council to adapt to new ways of working and mitigate against resource pressures and current workforce challenges, be approved.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

I Thomas (Chair)
M Armstrong
P Arnott
D Bickley
K Blakey
B De Saram
I Hall
P Hayward
R Lawrence
J Loudoun
N Hookway

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

S Hawkins
J Bailey
C Brown
S Chamberlain
M Chapman
P Millar
A Moulding

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Joanna Fellows, Corporate HR Manager
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Councillor apologies:
V Ranger

Chair

Date: