

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Personnel Committee held at online on 19 May 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.14 pm

39 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

40 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the consultative meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 22 March 2022 were agreed.

41 Declarations of interest

Minute numbers 44 to 47

Cllr J Loudoun; Personal: Receives a pension from Unison.

42 Matters of urgency

None.

43 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item that officers recommended should be dealt with in this way. This is recorded at minute 47.

44 Worksmart update

The committee received a further update on the Worksmart Review, following previous reports provided in September and November 2021.

The update outlined the work undertaken to implement a revised Worksmart approach from May 2022 onwards, building on the experience of delivering services through the pandemic.

Current work included managers working with teams to determine operations in line with the principles of Worksmart, including assessment of workspace, training and technology; and measurement of carbon impact on commuting.

The new Worksmart Policy was presented to the committee for debate and recommendation forward. This included:

- Working from home will not be a requirement of employment, but is available as an option subject to manager and team agreement;
- Requests for homeworking for all of the employee's hours will be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The policy, once agreed will be kept under review through a formal evaluation of progress and outcomes. The committee would receive a further update in the autumn of how the initial months of implementation had progressed.

The committee discussed:

- How officers would establish the “exceptional circumstances” for 100% homeworking. In response, a number of factors that could be considered were discussed, with the stress on service delivery reiterated, as set out in the report;
- The Worksmart policy was a positive benefit for both retention and recruitment of staff;
- Assessment of pre and post pandemic carbon impact helped towards the Council’s objective relating to climate change.

RECOMMENDED to Senior Officer for approval that the new Worksmart Policy and the minor amendments to the Flexible Working Requests and Travel policies be agreed.

45 **People Data report**

The People Data report included:

- A slight increase in headcount of employees from the previous report in January 2022 from 502 (461.26 FTE) to 505 (463.26 FTE);
- A significant increase in vacancies, from 23 as at 31 December 2021 to 47 at 31 March 2022. The time taken to fill vacancies has slightly decreased to 99.4 days, still in line with benchmarking against the common circa 100 days to fill a vacancy;
- Market supplements remain high, an issue being addressed through the Reward Review;
- Agency worker levels remain constant;
- Turnover at a monthly level remains stable at under 1%;
- Sickness absence has decreased to 0.76 FTE days lost in March 2022.

Debate from Councillors included:

- Establishing if there were particular service needs due to the level of vacancies, or if the issue was widespread across all services – in response, the committee were informed that the impact of vacant posts is across most of the services of the authority, but that there were particular pinch points currently for the Housing team and the Tree Team. These issues would be flagged by Service Leads to their Portfolio Holders and other Councillors, in order to inform them about work priorities based on capacity;
- Many local authorities were experiencing the same issue due to competitive rates elsewhere, with examples given of the difficulties in recruitment for both officer and management posts;
- Some increase in agency staff was anticipated, but there were still difficulties in obtaining agency staff, as demand is high across the agency market too.

The committee endorsed the report.

46 **Personnel forward plan**

The committee noted the presented forward plan, with the inclusion of a Worksmart update to the scheduled October meeting.

47 **Reward Review**

Following discussion by the committee, they made the following recommendation:

Recommendation to Senior Officer to approve:

1. the proposed variations to the pay and grading structure, and agree for the Head of Paid Service, subject to completion and consideration of the equalities impact assessment, to progress the detailed design, consultation and, if agreed through consultation, to implement the proposals and to review and amend relevant policies as appropriate;
2. that Price Waterhouse Cooper undertake the equality impact assessment (cost to be funded from existing salary budget).

Attendance List

Councillors present:

I Thomas (Chair)
M Armstrong
P Arnott
K Blakey
B De Saram
P Hayward
J Loudoun
N Hookway

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

G Jung
C Brown
D Ledger

Officers in attendance:

Joanna Fellows, Corporate HR Manager
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Councillor apologies:

V Ranger
D Bickley
I Hall
R Lawrence

Chair

Date: