

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Personnel Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 16 April 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.44 am

29 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 January 2024 were agreed.

30 Declarations of interest

None.

31 Public speaking

None.

32 Matters of urgency

None.

33 Confidential/exempt item(s)

One item was agreed to be discussed after the exclusion of press and public, detailed under minute 38.

34 CEO Recruitment update

The Corporate Lead – Human Resources verbally updated the Committee on the recruitment process for the role of Chief Executive.

Following the closing date of 5 April, the advertisement campaign had received a good response, with positive feedback. The interviewing process, of which the Interviewing Sub Committee were part of, would take place on the 24th and 25th April. The Sub Committee would then recommend to Council their recommendation of candidate for the role on 8 May.

The details of the number of applications would be included in the full report to Council, but could not be shared at the meeting.

The committee noted the update.

35 HR Policy Review - Performance Improvement Policy

The Committee were asked to approve the revision of an existing policy. The existing policy, named the Dealing with Unsatisfactory Performance Policy, had a number of revisions, including a change of name to Performance Improvement Policy. The change of name helped to better reflect the purpose of the policy.

The response from Unison on the revisions were shared with the Committee at the meeting, summarised as:

- Paragraph 6 relating to confidentiality – Unison felt that there were some circumstances whereby an officer should be able to discuss with other members of their team the performance issue. The committee were advised that the policy did not prevent an officer from discussing work related issues with other team members, but that the procedure being followed under the policy should not be shared and remain confidential;
- Paragraph 12.4 – Unison requested that the ability to have a solicitor present should be included. Legal advice was that this should not be included in the policy
- Paragraph 5 already covered Unison request for an interpreter;
- Paragraph 14.3 – Unison request for a recording of meetings. Again legal advice and best practice was not to record the meetings; but a record in the form of minutes taken or a formal letter recording the discussion would be undertaken, as per the existing policy.

During discussion, some clarifications were sought over making an accurate record of meetings, and who could accompany the officer to those. An officer had the right under the policy to be accompanied and also have another present to assist with any reasonable adjustments required.

RESOLVED To approve the Performance Improvement Policy, subject to final amendments agreed between the Corporate Lead – Human Resources and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Personnel Committee.

36 **People Data**

The Committee received the People Data report for the period up to 29 February 2024.

Highlighted in the report were:

- Market supplement numbers have not changed since December and remain at 11; however the next report will reflect an increase in the next period due to a new surveyor market supplement in Housing which has recently been agreed;
- Vacancies are at 44 compared to 29 in December. Appointments have been made to 10 of these vacancies and start dates have been agreed in the forthcoming weeks;
- The average time taken to fill vacancies has decreased from 72.83 days to 61.69 days since December. Benchmarking data indicates that c100 days is around the average time taken by organisations to fill posts;
- We are beginning to see a return to pre-pandemic turnover rates and the current forecast for cumulative voluntary turnover for 2023/24 is 8.85% which is lower than pre-pandemic rates;
- Sickness absence levels are continuing at a similar level to those reported from December to February. The projected forecast is currently 9.76 days, which is still above the end of year absence target of 8.5 days per FTE.

The Committee discussed obtaining some form of benchmarking data, recognising the difficulties in other authorities supplying such data, and differing service delivery across local authorities. The Committee was advised that the LGA/South West Councils were exploring a new benchmarking service which would assist with this in the future.

Workforce planning was key in helping the authority to be robust to changes in future years. The HR service continued to monitor and assist service areas with workforce planning.

Issues around recruitment were still an issue for local authorities for more specialised roles, such as surveyors and solicitors. Other specialised roles such as environmental health and planning were still difficult to recruit, but some developments such as the LGA's "Pathways to Planning" were helping, in response to a national shortage, and the Council was engaged with this programme.

Breakdown of paygrades against the FTE workforce would be provided in the annual people data report to the Committee.

A request was made for headcount figures prior to the relocation to the current offices used by the Council. This figure was not readily available; however, some anecdotal evidence was offered by both officers and Members on the low levels of staff in previous years; increases in recent years had been in accordance with budgetary requests agreed by Council.

The Committee endorsed the report.

37 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Committee agreed to go into private session for the next item.

38 **Request for additional funding and resource within the HR and Payroll Service**

The Committee considered the report setting out the establishment of a new 'Grow Our Own' budget to support the Council's Grow Our Own strategy, and a new post of HR Operations Manager.

RECOMMENDED to Council

1. that the Grow Our Own budget of £143,000 be approved, to sit within the HR and Payroll Service
2. that funding for a new post of HR Operations Manager of £76,000 be approved.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

E Rylance (Chair)
J Loudoun (Vice-Chair)
K Blakey
V Bonetta
J Brown
T Dumper
P Faithfull
D Haggerty
N Hookway
M Martin

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow

Officers in attendance:

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Joanna Fellows, Corporate Lead - HR and Payroll
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

P Arnott
M Chapman
M Hartnell
P Hayward
E Wragg

Chair

Date: