

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Personnel Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 14 January 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.06 am and ended at 11.12 am

9 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 13th June 2024 were confirmed as a true record.

10 Declarations of interest

None.

11 Public speaking

None.

12 Matters of urgency

None.

13 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

14 Pay Policy Statement

The committee are required under the Constitution to consider and make recommendation to Council on the Pay Policy Statement, required for review on an annual basis.

The statement had been reviewed but no changes in wording to the previous year (other than the year the statement related to) were required.

The committee were also updated on the 2024/25 national pay negotiations that had now completed and been implemented.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 be adopted.

15 HR Policy updates

The HR policy review report sought approval for a new Probation Policy, and approval for revised Notice Provisions and Use of Temporary Workers and Volunteers policy.

Probation Policy

Current arrangements were not covered by a formal policy. The policy before the committee set out:

- That all employees (regardless of continuous local government service) should be subject to a probationary period;
- Expected government changes on employment rights are likely to include a statutory probationary period and the policy will be amended as and when such legislation is updated.

Notice provisions

The minimum notice period that employees are required to give during a probationary period in the current provisions does not match the National Joint Council (LJC) Conditions of Service. The provisions were therefore presented for approval with changes to match (minimum being one month) and other wider provisions updated following review.

Use of Temporary Workers Policy

Review of the policy had resulted in changes put forward to the committee for approval, covering:

- Clarification on the checks required;
- Minimum expectations for managers and temporary workers in respect to compliance with data protection, health and safety, equality, diversity and inclusion, whistleblowing and safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Additional service specific policy and training requirements.

Volunteers Policy

Review of the existing policy included recommendations from a recent audit. The changes included:

- Greater clarity on volunteering supervisor's responsibilities;
- Mandatory training and policy awareness for volunteers;
- Additional documentation that provides a checklist for supervisors, engagement letter template and guidance in production.

The committee were updated on the response from UNISON who considered the proposals at a recent Staff Joint Forum, and were content with the changes put forward.

Further work with updating Managers on the changes will take place following approval by the committee.

RESOLVED

1. **That the Probation Policy be approved;**
2. **That changes to minimum notice periods be approved;**
3. **That the revised Use of Temporary Workers and Volunteers policy be approved.**

People Data

The committee received the regular update on key people data up to Data highlighted included:

- Implemented structural changes including the fourth directorate of Place;
- Headcount had increased from 552 in April 2024 to 566 by end of October 2024, within budget;
- Market supplement numbers had also increased as expected and previously reported to the committee, due to failed attempts to recruit to specific posts;
- Vacancies were at 32 compared to 44 in April 2024; in comparison to headcount, there had been a decrease from 7.97% to 5.65% in October 2024 with a decrease in the number of days to fill posts down to an average of 61.85 days;
- Sickness levels were still high, but leaving out long term sickness data, the short term sickness levels had reduced.

The committee discussed the positive aspects of the data provided. The Corporate Lead for HR and her team were thanked for the work which had directly impacted on the data and resulted in improvements.

Concern was voiced for the impact on staff as the devolution agenda progressed. The committee would still be able to keep a watching brief on the people data as a standing item on the committee's agenda; the Chief Executive also assured the committee that business continued as usual to deliver to the District's residents, and the vast majority of those roles would still be required in any new unitary authority.

The committee noted the data update.

17 **Driving at Work Policy**

The report set out for the committee outlined amendments to the Driving at Work Policy in order to meet safety requirements. The policy was first put in place in 2017 and is regularly reviewed to meet updated legal requirements and current operational procedures. The key changes were highlighted to the committee, including:

- Fleet vehicles
- Driver conduct
- Fitness to drive
- Alcohol and drugs
- Smoking and vaping
- Mobile phones and electronic devices
- Actions following a road traffic accident
- Journey planning
- Risk assessment

The committee offered some minor changes for clarify to the policy, including:

- Additional working in relation to mobile phone use when safely parked includes "with ignition off";
- "make or take calls" to clarify when mobile is being used in hand rather than hands free in the vehicle.

The committee also asked for clarification on the preferred fuel provider which was not available at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the updated Driving at Work Policy be approved.

18 **Grow Our Own Update - verbal update**

Gemma Roberts, HR Operations Service Manager, updated the committee on the work under the Grow Our Own initiative.

In the period April to December 2024, the highlights were 20 apprentices, 1 graduate and 4 work experience individuals, with more detail set out to the committee.

Plans for 2025 covered:

- Finalising bid for salary funding from the dedicated Grow Our Own budget;
- Corporate Work Experience Programme Planning for Summer 2025;
- Development of promotional material;
- Supported Internship aimed at assisting a young person with learning disabilities to develop skills and confidence to gain employment;

- Work in partnership with the Deaf Academy to offer meaningful work experience;
- Engage with Devon County Council's Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People.

The committee expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken to date and the planned work for the coming year. In response to a question, it was confirmed that contact was made with all secondary schools in the district in respect of the offer from the service. It was also confirmed that the LGA had a long established scheme for promoting some local government roles in finance to university graduates. The service could look at other specialist areas to specifically promote to undergraduates.

The committee noted the report.

19 **Appreciation for departing Corporate Lead - HR and Payroll**

The Chair and Committee voiced their appreciation and thanks for the work of Jo Fellows, who was now departing the role.

The Vice Chair spoke on her stability and sensibility during the last few years, and outlined some of the many achievements she had been directly involved in. These included the recruitment for four directors and two CEOs; as well as the pay award arrangements that had put the Council on a competitive advantage to recruit; and the work with apprentices.

The committee showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

E Rylance (Chair)
J Loudoun (Vice-Chair)
P Arnott
K Blakey
T Dumper
P Hayward
T McCollum

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Jeremy Pritchard, Principal Environmental Health & Safety Officer
Agnieszka Grzegorzczuk
Gemma Roberts
Joanna Fellows, Corporate Lead - HR and Payroll
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Councillor apologies:

A Bailey
B Bailey
J Brown
N Hookway
M Martin

E Wragg

Chair

Date: