

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
5 OCTOBER 2016
7.30 - 8.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors McLean (Chairman), Allen (Vice-Chairman), Angell, Mrs Birch, Leake, Mrs Temperton and Worrall

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Miller and Heydon.

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Minutes from previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

The Chairman of the Local Joint Committee reported that the meeting of the Committee earlier in the day had gone well. He stated that the trade unions had made the following comments:

- Trade union representatives had noted that the Relocation Policy was not open to all staff.
- Trade union representatives expressed their appreciation for the way in which information had been shared with them around the Transformation work.

It was agreed that the minutes of the last two Local Joint Committee meetings be added to the agenda of the next Employment Committee meeting.

13. Amendment to Relocation Policy

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that a number of minor changes were being proposed to the Council's Relocation Policy to modernise it. The focus of the Policy would be posts that were difficult to recruit to.

The Policy now recognised that all applicants may not be in a position to relocate when they accept a post, they may wish to rent a small flat locally to avoid uprooting their family. The Policy now recognised this and allowed the individual to lodge in the local area.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that this Policy had not been utilised heavily in previous years, for example in 2014/15 £14,000 was utilised. Recent experience of nationwide recruitment exercises reflected that the recruitment process would not have been successful if this policy was not in place.

Members felt that the first paragraph under eligibility on page 14 was confusing. The Chief Officer: Human Resources stated that officers were keen to reflect that there were no grade barriers and that the policy was open to all posts but subject to the post qualifying for assistance.

Members queried why (h) on page 15 referred to both a 40 mile radius and 50 mile radius. The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that this had been in the current policy and had not been revised. She agreed to look into this.

In response to Members' queries, the Chief Officer reported that once an employee had received £8k under this policy, they could not claim anymore relocation costs. Some Members expressed concern that after claiming £8k in relocation costs, an employee could then sell their home and legitimately claim the Council's Mortgage Subsidy Scheme.

The Chief Officer stated that an employee making a claim for relocation costs would be required to sign a form to state that they were not permitted to apply for the Council's Mortgage Subsidy Scheme. She stated that this part of the policy needed some clarity, as if an employee's circumstances changed within the first year and they decided to sell their home, it may be possible for the employee to claim Mortgage Subsidy from the Council.

The Chairman proposed that this item be **deferred** and brought back to the next meeting of the Committee, with clarification of the points raised above by Members to ensure there was no ambiguity. .

14. **Code of Practice on English Language Requirement for Public Sector Workers**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Government had published a draft Code of Practice which covered a requirement for customer facing workers to be fluent in spoken English. It was anticipated that the Code of Practice would be finalised in October 2016. The Code of Practice was intended to support public sector organisations to meet the duty, which was part of the Immigration Act 2016, with minimal burden.

The Chief Officer reported that existing policies and procedures would need to be revised to meet this requirement.

In response to Members queries, the Chief Officer reported that there was no prescribed standard for fluency in English, there would need to be a judgement call made by managers who were recruiting. The Code would only apply to customer facing staff and it was important that it was not discriminatory.

The Chief Officer reported that there was a requirement within most person specifications that employees can communicate effectively with the public. This requirement would need to be met by any new employees. With respect to existing employees, no issues had been identified.

The Committee noted the information report.

15. Annual Performance Report on Retirements and Redundancies

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that this was an annual information report that outlined current policy on severance issues and explained any potential for change. The report also detailed the capital costs and savings on early retirements/redundancies and reported on ill health retirements.

The Chief Officer reported that ill health retirements had remained the same as last year; this reflected the rigorous work of the Council's Occupational Health Team. Redundancy figures were anticipated to be higher next year as a result of current budget pressures.

The Committee noted the information report.

16. Monitoring the Council's Workforce 2015/16

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Council had a legal duty to publish their workforce composition, with the intention of advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between people. If discriminatory practices were identified, these would be investigated.

The Committee was asked to note the report and endorse and agree the strategy set out in the report which would seek to ensure that the workforce was representative of the population it was serving.

The Committee stated that it was confusing to include fixed term contracts within the figures for the percentage of staff leaving within one year of starting (L131). The Chief Officer reported that as this was a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that would be used to make comparisons with other local authorities and therefore it could not be altered but that in future years a qualitative explanation be included to clarify this.

In response to Members queries, the Chief Officer reported that there was a need to identify and understand why the rates of ethnic minority staff leaving was typically higher. This was one of the reasons it was important to ensure that all staff were undertaking exit interviews.

The Committee stated that it was key that exit interviews were being carried out and being done properly. Paperwork needed to be incorporated into an automated system where both the manager and employee could record their comments.

The Chief Officer reported that the way in which exit interviews were being carried out was being considered. There was an opportunity with the new HR system to improve the response rate, particularly for those with a difficult relationship with their manager. A near 100% response rate should be achieved by including exit interviews within the leavers checklist and using the new HR system. The new system for starters/leavers should be up and running by April 2017.

In response to Members queries, the Chief Officer stated that if a pattern began to emerge from exit interviews that there were issues relating to a manager, this would be investigated.

The Chairman stated that this was a monitoring report which reflected the position of the Council. It was important to not lose sight of the fact that the best candidate should be recruited, regardless of age, sex or ethnicity.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the contents of the report and endorsed and agreed the strategy as set out in the report.

CHAIRMAN