

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
16 OCTOBER 2019
7.30 - 7.57 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Allen (Vice-Chairman), Angell, Bhandari, Neil, Porter, Tullett and Wade

Non-Voting Co-optee Present:

Councillor Heydon

13. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14. Minutes from previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

16. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

The Chairman advised that they had met with Trade Union colleagues earlier to discuss tonight's meeting.

UNISON had reported that they were happy with the amended Social Media Policy, however they were not content with the working within the Sickness Policy regarding phased return to work. Their comments would be reported in detail when the item was discussed.

17. Minutes of Sub Groups

The Committee noted the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 10 July 2019.

18. Social Media Policy

The Committee received a report on the Council's Social Media Policy.

Tris Barnard, Head of HR and Employee Experience reported that the previous Social Media Policy had been brought to the last Employment Committee in July 2017 and had not been approved as the original document was very long. It had since been rewritten and stripped back to a more simplified document alongside a guidance document.

It was clarified that the local press had contacted the Council regarding highlighted sections that had appeared in the final version uploaded to the internet. This did not

highlight a specific issue and had simply not been removed from the final version and this had been relayed back to the press. This version had since been removed and replaced with a non-highlighted version.

RESOLVED that the Social Media Policy be approved.

19. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person. (Item 9).

20. **HR Policies Review**

The Committee received a Report on the Policy Review – Managing Sickness Absence. Following the Council Wide Support Service Review, the Council's Employment policies were all in the process of being reviewed and updated to reflect modern working practices, legislative changes and to ensure the policies are clear for managers to follow.

The sickness policy was one of seven policies/procedures in the process of being updated. They were originally due to come to the committee at the same time, however they required further work and revision and would be brought back to the Committee once the revision was completed thoroughly and, in a format, and content that officers were happy with and reflected the feedback from staff, managers and the Unions. It was expected that at least one or two policies or procedures would be brought to the Employment Committee over the next twelve months.

The updated sickness policy aimed to formalise working practices to supporting staff, such as the use of iWork and more details of staff phased return to work

It was reported that at the Local Joint Committee that UNISON were not happy with the wording around not paying full pay after a phased eight week return. The Head of HR and Employee Experience stated that the Council did not have a major issue beyond this time scale and that this was not a new timeline in the policy and as part of the consultation undertaken in the summer, managers and staff had requested that the timeline be clarified within the policy. This was the current practice and application of the pay subsidiary. However, UNISON had felt that there was no medical consideration within the policy surrounding the phased return issue, and that serious illnesses and accidents didn't seem to be taken into consideration. They also felt that the policy should not be related to finances as this could put individuals at risk therefore they were not in agreement with the policy and would inform their members accordingly.

As a result of the Members' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- Individuals were able to enter their own sickness absence onto iWork. It was the managers responsibility to ensure that this was completed. If an individual didn't enter their sickness themselves, managers could enter the information on their behalf.

- Members' of the committee were content with the phased return to work wording as it was and felt that even after UNISIONS comments that it did not need to be amended.
- Some Members' felt that the eight-week full pay was rather generous and covered a longer period than in the corporate world.
- This wasn't a change of policy, nor was it being assumed it was just clarifying the current practice.
- Benchmarking data could be sought if Members' required it.
- Sickness data was reported in the QSRs.
- Employees didn't have a statutory right to bring a representative or colleague at Stage one of the disciplinary process, but it was often granted at stages two and three. In certain situations, it would be granted that a family member could attend with the employee.

RESOLVED that

- i) the Employment Committee note and approve the updates to the Managing Sickness Absence Policy.
- ii) the Employment Committee note the wider full policy review of main employment policies
- iii) the Employment Committee note the requirement to continually review policies in paragraph 5.4 and delegate minor policy updates to HR and CMT.

CHAIRMAN