

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – ADVISORY
MEETING
8 DECEMBER 2021
7.30 - 8.02 PM**



Present:

Councillors Allen (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Angell, Bhandari, Dudley, Mrs L Gibson, Porter and Wade

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Leake and Neil

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

11. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

12. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

13. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

The Chairman update the Committee that Local Joint Committee had been held earlier in the afternoon and had covered the items that were on the Employment Committee agenda. There were no particular issues raised.

14. HR/OD Workforce Update

Paul Young, Head of HR and Contracted Services presented an update on the Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy 2021 – 2024 which had been updated in July 2021. At the July meeting it was agreed that a 6-month update be provided.

Eleven objectives and four themes had been included in the strategy which covered the areas that would be focused on. A Workforce Board had been established which met every 3 weeks which would identify areas that required development, and this would feed into the Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy.

It was recognised that through the strategy period, that the council and schools had also been working hard on the covid response in addition to normal duties.

HR Delivery and Transformation were focusing on pay and reward as there were real challenges with retention of staff in certain areas of the council. As a result, job evaluations would be looked at, alongside reward packages that were being used in Bracknell Forest. The aim was to reduce the amount of agency staff that were being used across the Council and to decrease the spend in this area which would be a challenge as there were particular areas that were a challenge to recruit to not just in

Bracknell Forest, but also in neighbouring authorities. It was hoped that regular updates would be provided to the Committee, but it would be a real challenge to crack, and was a really large piece of work.

In addition, the management practise across the Council was being looked at, with manager sessions being held which also focused on recruitment and retention and a training program for managers would be commencing.

Health and Wellbeing had been important over the past 18 months, an employee assistance program had been worked on, and support was being provided across the Council. A bid was being submitted to the Public Health funds to see if there was anymore that could be done.

Streamline support was being looked out for HR support and processes, with better online support signposted for managers.

A new recruitment platform was being introduced in January 2022, it was hoped that this would provide better data for recruitment and that the right target audiences were reaching vacancies. It was also a more streamline approach, making recruitment easier for managers.

Targeted recruitment events had been attended at both the Community Care Live event in the Autumn and the Lexicon. Another recruitment campaign would be happening in February, where the Council would have a presence.

Policy reviews were still ongoing, and there was a rolling programme in place.

Career pathways within the council were being looked at for social care and occupational therapy.

Values and behaviours were being redefined due to feedback received from staff. These would be used as part of the Bracknell Forest brand and recruitment going forward. Equality and Diversity work was ongoing, and 25 Equality Allies had been trained across the Council, there role was to be a listening ear for anyone who was facing any challenges or issues. They had been in place for the past 2 months.

The Bracknell Forest Manager framework and Leadership and management development was being updated and streamlined.

A new Learning and Development plan was being put in place; a skills analysis has been undertaken across the council with a 50% response rate, this had allowed real qualitative data to show where the skill gaps were missing across departments. This work also linked into the mandatory and statutory training requirements, so the department had a real understanding about what training was required across the Council and therefore, the learning and development across the council could be planned in a more targeted way.

A future update would be brought to the next meeting.

15. **HR Policy Review - Managing Absence and Equality & Dignity at Work**

Paul Young reminded the committee that the HR team were undertaking a review of the policies. A schedule had been established to update HR policies and as a result revisions had been made to the Managing Attendance Policy together with a new Equality and Dignity at work policies.

The Managing Attendance Policy this was an updated policy had been developed from the previous Sickness Absence Management. The policy would be streamlined, and amendments made to include Covid and now also referenced menopause. A statement to cover management responsibilities had been included in the policy, and equalities act responsibilities included.

The Equality and Dignity at Work Policy superseded the Fair Treatment Policy and would support the Council's approach to equalities. At present, there was not a separate policy document on equalities alone as duties had been included in all other HR policies where the responsibilities were clearly defined. This approach would continue but given the profile of the equalities work across the Council it was felt that a clear statement was important. There had been feedback that the Fair Treatment Policy hadn't been transparent enough.

Working from home was just another location for working, under agile working arrangements, and for attendance purposes it didn't matter where the staff member was located.

RECOMMENDED that:

- i. the revised policy for Managing Attendance is reviewed and agreed – therefore superseding the former Absence Management policy, procedure and guidance.
- ii. the policy for Equality and Dignity at Work Policy is reviewed and agreed – therefore superseding the Fair Treatment Policy.

16. **Health and Safety Assessment Report**

Stuart McKellar, Executive Director: Resources, provided an update on the COVID-19: Health & Safety Assessment Report.

The report was particular pertinent, given the Government recent announcement encouraging staff to work from home where they could.

As a result of COVID 19 and the changes with working arrangements, the report summarised the results of completions of the eLearning packages on Display Screen Equipment, Home Working Assessments, returning to the Office Assessment and BAME Vulnerable Assessments, which have all been undertaken since January 2021.

The Council had a duty of care under the Health and Safety legislation for ensuring the wellbeing of staff and therefore it was important to push harder to have the complete record of all staff so as employer all obligations were being reached.

RECOMMENDED that:

- i. All new employees be required to complete a Home Working Assessment prior to commencing employment.
- ii. Completing a Home Working Assessment be mandatory for all existing employees.
- iii. All employees be required to review their Home Working Assessments if their personal circumstances change.

- iv. All new employees be required to undertake a Display Screen Equipment Assessment, and the eLearning package Display Screen Equipment as part of their induction process.
- v. Completing a Display Screen Equipment Assessment and the eLearning package be mandatory for all existing employees.
- vi. All employees, including new starters, be required to complete a Returning to the Office Assessment, prior to returning to any office environment.
- vii. All Executive Directors be required to ensure that new members of staff complete a Display Screen Equipment Assessment, Home Working Assessment and Returning to the Office Assessment by the end of June 2022 and provide the data to Health and Safety, highlighting any changes or issues with individuals home working arrangements since ICT equipment has been made available for home working.
- viii. All Executive Directors be required to review existing risk assessments for staff with potential work-related exposure to COVID-19 by the end of June 2022 and provide the data to HR and OD highlighting any concerns raised by managers and staff.
- ix. HR and OD provide an annual report on issues/concerns highlighted in the risk assessments for staff with potential work-related exposure to COVID-19.
- x. The Health & Safety Assessment Report be produced annually, to provide comparative data.

CHAIRMAN