

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**  
**5 JULY 2023**  
**7.30 - 7.53 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Pickering (Chair), Gillbe (Vice-Chair), Allen, Frost, McLean, P Thompson and Watts

**Present Virtually:**

Councillor O'Regan

**4. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. Minutes from previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 08 February 2023 were approved

It was noted that Councillor Gillbe was Vice Chair of the Committee and not Councillor Frost as detailed in the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Employment Committee held on 24 May 2023. These would be amended accordingly.

**RESOLVED**, with the addition of the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Annual Meeting of the Committee held on 24 May 2023 were approved.

**6. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**7. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee**

The Committee was advised that the Local Joint Committee had discussed item 8 on the agenda. There had been complimentary comments on the HR Policy Review and Unison was supportive of the proposed changes.

The Committee was also advised that Unison had made a formal request that the Council looked at reconstituting the Health and Safety meetings, Paul Young had advised that work on this was already underway.

Unison had also informed the Local Joint Committee that their ballot on strike action had closed on 03 July 2023. Paul Young would inform the Employment Committee of the results once they had become available which was expected in the coming days.

**8. Minutes of Sub Groups**

The Committee received and noted the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 08 February 2023.

## 9. **Employment Committee Overview Presentation**

The Committee was informed that in place of this presentation a separate Employment Committee training session had been taken place on 29 June 2023. The training session was recorded for any member who had been unable to attend to watch back.

## 10. **HR Policy Review**

The Committee received four HR policies – three which have been revised plus the introduction of one new policy. This was part of an ongoing rolling review of HR policies by the Human Resources team. The process for reviewing the policies had included engagement with stakeholders across the Council and Trade Unions.

The four policies which had been revised were:

- Adoption Leave Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Trans and Non-Binary Policy – this being a newly created policy.

The following amendments had been made to the Adoption Leave Policy (detailed within section 5.4 of the policy):

- The policy had been moved to new template.
- An equality statement had been added.
- Changes had been made to wording for clarity and the use of more inclusive language.

The policy had been moved to new template. An equality statement had been added, changes had been made to wording for clarity and the use of more inclusive language. The following amendments had been made to the Shared Parental Leave Policy (detailed within section 5.5 of the policy):

- The policy had been moved to new template.
- An equality statement had been added.
- Changes had been made to wording for clarity and the use of more inclusive language.
- Terminology had been updated from mother/adopter to birth parent/primary adopter.
- A link to flexible working policy had been added.

The Following Amendments had been made to the Flexible Working Policy (detailed within section 5.6 of the policy):

- The policy had been moved to new template.
- An equality statement had been added.
- Changes had been made to wording for clarity.
- The appeals procedure had been updated and appeals would now be heard by a different manager to the line manager who had originally made the decision if refused.

Furthermore, the Committee was informed of the following amendments to the Flexible Working Policy had been brought forward from later in 2023:

- Employees would be allowed to request flexible working from day 1 of their employment as currently flexible working requests could only be made after 26 weeks of employment.
- The requirement for employees to explain in their applications what effect they thought it would have on their employer would be removed
- Employees would be able to make two flexible working requests per 12 months instead of the one currently allowed.
- The deadline for an employer decision on flexible working requests would be reduced from three months to two months.

Finally, the new Trans and Non-Binary Policy had been created to demonstrate Bracknell Forest Council's commitment to openness and equality. The policy was intended to help any trans employees through any transitioning process and ensure that they would be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. The Committee was also informed that an eLearning training course had been created for all staff members.

Arising from the Committees comments and questions the following points were made:

- It was confirmed that there were already several family friendly policies in place for new parents and dependants including access to additional leave.
- It was confirmed that parental leave is in place of the former maternity leave schemes.
- It was noted that the legal requirements on the Flexible Working Policy were largely insignificant for Bracknell Forest Council as the recommendations choose to go beyond the minimum requirements.
- It was noted that as neighbouring authorities were working to statute, the changes to the Flexible Working Policy could have helped Bracknell Forest Council's attractiveness to current and potential employees.
- Schools were exempt from the Trans and Non-Binary Policy as the school governing bodies were responsible for their own policies. The Education-Employment Sub-Committee would however be able to make a recommended policy for schools governing bodies to adopt in future

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee review and agree:

- i) The newly created Trans and Non-Binary Policy
- ii) The revisions to the Adoption, Shared Parental Leave and Flexible working policies had included engagement with stakeholders across the Council and Trade Unions.

**CHAIRMAN**