

Minutes of the Meeting of the HUMAN RESOURCES PANEL held on 8 December 2016

PRESENT -

Councillor Hannah Dalton (Chairman); Councillors Alex Clarke, Jean Steer and Peter Webb

Absent: Councillor Robert Foote and Councillor Guy Robbins

Officers present: Shona Mason (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development) and Fiona Cotter (Democratic Services Manager)

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Councillors in items on this agenda.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel (meeting as the Joint Staff Committee) held on 20 October 2016 would be circulated separately for agreement by Panel members and signature by the Chairman.

7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee resolved to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended) and that pursuant to paragraph 10 of Part 2 of the said Schedule 12A the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

8 SICKNESS ABSENCE UPDATE

The Panel received and considered a report which provided additional information requested in relation to sickness absence for 2015-16 and an overview of sickness absence for the period April – September 2016.

It was noted that the stats could easily show peaks because the departments were small and, in some cases, could often be explained by a single case of long term sickness. The top reason absence in the year to date was anxiety/stress with a quarter of the total days lost to this reason. Whilst absence for this reason affected only a small number of employees, absence tended to be for a longer

period. Absences for post op recovery were usually linked to another ailment. If possible, bearing in mind the age demographic of the workforce overall, reasonable adjustments would be made to an individual's duties in the period leading up to surgery to help reduce absence and manage the workforce.

The Council's proactive approach to sickness management was noted. Health and Wellbeing was actively promoted across the organisation and examples of this given such as the recent staff seminar on stress management; the tolerance of flexible working arrangements such as home working, and that the Council had an Emergency Dependents' Leave policy in place. The Staff Consultative Group was working well and good lines of communication had been established with management. Sickness was monitored on a monthly basis, HR advisors met with managers and sickness trigger points were in place for staff. It was important for management to understand the trigger points and for staff to understand the impact of sick leave on the business. However, the Head of HR and Organisational Development was mindful that the Council's current sickness policy was quite elongated and could arguably be said to be excessive for an organisation of this size. The policy was currently being revised. It was about getting the balance right between managing the two difficult extremes of persistent short term absences and long term absences. However, the Head of HR and Organisational Development indicated that she considered that the major challenge facing the organisation was managing an older workforce and longer term sickness.

The Chairman thanked the Head of HR and Organisational Development and her team for the production of a comprehensive report which had facilitated a good discussion.

The meeting began at 5.38 pm and ended at 6.14 pm

COUNCILLOR HANNAH DALTON (CHAIRMAN)