

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 23 JULY 2013 AT 7.30 P.M IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WEELEY**

Present: Councillors A J Mitchell (Chairman), R Callender (Vice-Chairman), Amos, Broderick, C Callender, Calver, Colbourne, Griffiths, J Henderson, S A Honeywood, D R Mayzes and Tracey.

In Attendance: Corporate Director (Corporate Services) (Martyn Knappett), Human Resources Manager (Anastasia Simpson), Workforce Development Manager (Stuart Brian), Work Based Learning Manager (Debianne Messenger) (items 25 – 28 only), Payroll and Payments Manager (Cathy Calder), Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice) and Senior Human Resources Generalist (Emma Horne).

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Heaney (with Councillor D R Mayzes substituting) and Councillor Chapman.

26. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

28. VERBAL UPDATE ON APPRENTICES BY THE WORK BASED LEARNING MANAGER

The Work Based Learning Manager (Debianne Messenger) delivered a short presentation on the apprenticeship scheme and gave details of the qualifications that could be gained by the apprentices. She explained how most of the apprentices were in the 16 to 20 age range mainly working in administration and customer services - and explained that the age group of 16 to 18 was 100% fully funded with the age group 19 to 24 only 50% funded. She added that funding was by of a Career Track sub-contract with the Colchester Institute to draw funding from the Skills Funding Agency.

Ms Messenger gave details of the apprentices who had been on the work programme and informed the Committee that 15 young people had progressed into Higher Education and in the last six months 11 young people had gone onto full time employment within the Council. She explained that currently the school leaving age was 17 which gave pupils the option of either staying on at school, taking on an apprenticeship or going into work as long as it included some form of training. She also added that the school leaving age would be rising to 18 in 2015.

During questions from Members the issue was raised of the qualifications that the apprentices could gain. Debianne Messenger also confirmed, when asked, that the preferred age range of the apprentices was 16 – 18, although they could be across the whole age range. She added that the Council may look at employers looking to cover any funding shortfall for those aged 19 and above.

29. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME: EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS

The Committee had before it a joint report (A.1) by the Human Resources Manager and Payroll and Payments Manager, which sought its approval for the adoption of pension discretions for Tendring District Council. The Payroll and Payments Manager (Cathy Calder) informed the Committee that various Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations required the Council as a participating employer to prepare and publish a written statement as to how the Council would exercise the various discretions provided by the Scheme.

It was moved by Councillor Tracey, seconded by Councillor R Callender and:

RESOLVED that the arrangements for discretionary pensions and early release of deferred benefits under the Local Government Pension Scheme for employees of Tendring District Council as set out in Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

30. STAFFING STATISTICS

The Committee had before it a report (A.2) by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services), which gave an overview of the current staffing statistics and their relevance to the Council as an employer. The analysis of workforce data provided an update and included details on:

- Gender Profile
- Age Profile
- Disability Profile
- Ethnicity Profile
- Length of Service

Full details had been provided and were set out in the Appendix to the report.

The Workforce Development Manager (Stuart Brian) informed the Committee that the Council's Disability Profile showed that 9% of the Council's workforce considered themselves to have a disability. He added that nationally 26.4% of employers had one to two 2 per cent of employees with a disability and 17.9% had more than 5% of employees with a disability (figures provided by XpertHR₃ statistics) and that this Council was an employer with a higher than average number of employees with disabilities.

Mr Brian said that the Council's age profile showed that the majority of employees fell between two age ranges which were 41 to 50 and 51 to 60. This was a lower average range than had been reported at the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2013.

It was noted that the ethnicity profile of the Council was again reflective of local demographics with the majority of employees within the White, British category.

Members asked questions on how Officers covered duties of others within their departments particularly over holiday periods and leave due to sickness. It was reported that this was not easy to answer as some areas were big enough to cover absences while in other smaller areas this would be more difficult with no other Officers available to cover duties.

The Human Resources Manager reported that since restructuring the workforce there was now an administration pool across the Council which could be rotated to cover other areas with more Officers becoming multi-skilled and gaining more expertise.

The Corporate Director (Corporate Services) (Martyn Knappett) added that since the Council had gone through a lot of change it was now shifting attention to developing the staff that was in place with skills development and succession planning.

When asked if Officers could get stagnant by being in a role too long, the Workforce Development Manager informed the Committee that this was not a problem as the restructure of the last two years had changed many jobs with most Officers having to go through a selection process for their own jobs where these had changed.

It was moved by Councillor Tracey, seconded by Councillor Broderick and:

RESOLVED – That in noting the contents of the report, that Officers give consideration to succession planning within the Council.

31. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING UPDATE

The Committee had before it a report (A.3) by the Human Resources Manager, which provided it with an analysis of current health and wellbeing trends within the Council.

Members were advised that the year end absence figures illustrated an increase in absences per Officer to 9.28 days for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. The Senior Human Resources Generalist (Emma Horne) said this figure was due to 22 long term absences during this period, of which 16 cases were in the period 1 January to 18 July 2013 which were each in excess of 20 days duration.

She recognised that a holistic approach to absence was required when supporting an Officer with any form of absence and the combination of counselling, health champions, occupational health, phased returns, risk assessments all played a part in demonstrating that as an employer the Council's main objective was the Officers' well-being.

During questions from Members concern was raised about stress levels amongst Officers, however the Human Resources Manager said that discussions about stress had shown that most stress had been caused by issues outside of the workplace and that the updated Stress Policy, with stress guidance on staff noticeboards, counselling support and workplace champions were all in place to help staff.

When asked if stress levels could be monitored across the departments, the Workforce Development Manager said this would be difficult as many departments had changed considerably with staff moving across various departments.

After further discussion on stress levels amongst staff, and in noting the report, it was:

RESOLVED – the Health Action Plan and Work Plan attached as Appendix B to the report be noted.

32. LOYALTY AND RETIREMENT GIFTS POLICY

The Committee had before it a report (A.4) by the Human Resources Manager which reminded the Committee that the discretionary Long Service and Loyalty Awards Policy had been suspended at its meeting held on 30 June 2011 and Members had requested that an updated policy be now agreed.

The Committee was informed that the Policy was in two parts, Firstly, the Loyalty Award was for staff who had completed 25 continuous years service as at 1 April each year. The amount payable to staff was £100. The second part of the policy was in relation to Retirement Gifts.

Members raised considerable concern over the issue of the Retirements Policy and whether it was treating staff fairly. Members were concerned whether the Retirement

Policy was fair to all retiring Officers, particularly for an Officer who had been with the Council for a considerable number of years receiving the same amount as an Officer with only a few years service.

The Human Resources Manager informed the Committee that the reinstated Retirement Policy was midway between what other Local Authorities were offering. Further discussion amongst Members highlighted that some thought the Retirement Policy Gift should be higher than £100 and that perhaps further comparison with other Local Authorities be made available to the Committee.

It was therefore agreed that the Human Resources Manager be asked to report back to a later meeting of the Committee with further options for the Retirement Gift Policy.

33. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked Members and Officers for attending and the meeting was declared closed at 9.05 p.m.

Chairman