

Employment Committee Minutes

Meeting: Tuesday 14 March 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. – XXX

Venue: Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN

Present: Statutory Deputy Mayor Anna Smith (Chair), Councillor Jackie Allen, Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray, Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, and Councillor Bridget Smith

1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, Councillor Anna Bailey, Councillor Sarah Conboy (substituted by Councillor Davenport-Ray) and Councillor Kim French.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jackie Allen as the new representative for Peterborough City Council, and Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray as the new substitute representative for Huntingdonshire District Council.

No declarations of interest were received.

2. Minutes – 8 February 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Human Resources Policies

The committee received a report which included a range of proposed Human Resources policies, some of which were revisions of previous versions, and some of which were new policies. Two further sets of policies would be presented to the Committee later in 2023, and they would subsequently all be reviewed on an annual basis. The review had been carried out to ensure the policies aligned with current legislation and best practice, as well as the Combined Authority's wider strategies.

The Chair noted that an amended version of the Pay Policy (Appendix 11 of the report), had been published following the initial publication of the agenda, and that this amended version superseded the original version that had been published.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Suggested that the Family Leave Policy should allow employees whose baby was born prematurely additional maternity leave and pay to those whose baby was born at full term. Members were informed that a more in-depth review of the leave entitlements would be carried out throughout the year following a consultation, and it was confirmed that the review would consider such matters as miscarriages and premature births.
- Observed that the proposed policies did not include any provisions for those providing general care, although it was acknowledged that officers had discussed a framework on caring responsibilities with Caring Together, which would be developed and incorporated into the appropriate policy in the future.
- Paid tribute to officers for preparing such an extensive range of new and revised policies, and sought clarification on how the Combined Authority's staff would be consulted on them. Members were informed that the policies would support the ongoing strengthening of employee relations in the organisation, and that a regular flow of staff surveys would provide officers with opportunities to engage and express opinions or concerns, alongside a number of further engagement activities.
- Established that a draft recognition agreement had been developed with trade unions and was scheduled to be presented to the Committee at its first meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Noted that not all whistleblowers were anonymous, and sought clarification on the process for ensuring such people did not have a conflict of interest, while highlighting the importance of fostering and supporting informal networks among staff to provide them with spaces to express grievances, while also improving diversity and their general wellbeing. Although it was acknowledged that Section 8 of the proposed Whistleblowing Policy deliberately afforded lead managers a level of discretion on dealing with reported concerns under alternative procedures, Members argued that it could be made more explicit by including Internal Audit in the list of options to which employees could raise a concern, in Section 6 of the Whistleblowing Policy. It was also suggested that the 'via email' phrase be removed from that list.

It was proposed by Councillor Davenport-Ray, seconded by Councillor Nethsingha and resolved by majority to add 'Head of Internal Audit' to the bullet point list in Section 6 of the Whistleblowing Policy, indicating to whom employees could raise their concerns with.

It was proposed by the Statutory Deputy Mayor, seconded by Councillor Smith and resolved unanimously to:

Approve the Human Resources policies listed in Paragraph 2.1 of this report.

4. Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Smith and resolved unanimously to:

Exclude the press and public from the discussion of Agenda Item 5 (Shortlisting for the Role of Chief Executive), on the basis that this would involve the discussion of exempt information relating to the employment status of individuals as defined by Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

5. Shortlisting for the Role of Chief Executive

The committee considered a report that outlined the shortlisting for the role of Chief Executive.

It was resolved to:

Recommend the shortlisting of one candidate to go forward to interview for the role of Chief Executive.