

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 at 3.30 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

**Present:** Councillor Harry Scobie (Chair); Councillors Albon, Austin, Davis, Dawson, Donaldson, Duckworth, Everitt, Garner, Huxley, Ovenden, Whitehead and Worrow

### 42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

**Post Meeting Note:** Councillor Wright had advised Democratic Services before the start of the meeting about her apologies. Unfortunately the message was not sent through to the meeting clerk in time to advise the Chair about the apology.

### 43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the General Purposes Committee meeting that was held on 24 October 2023.

### 45. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Councillor Huxley proposed, Councillor Austin seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the extraordinary General Purposes Committee meeting that was held on 12 December 2023.

### 46. PHASE 2 HR POLICY REVIEW

Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources introduced the report and made the following comments:

- Phase 2 HR Policy Review - as General Purposes Committee you are being asked to review the proposed report and are asked to consider and adopt a new other types of leave policy and 2 revised policies of restructure and redundancy and recruitment policy and procedure with effect from 1 February 2024;
- Review of HR policies continues with a number of phases outlined and ensuring robust policies are in place is essential for providing clarity and consistency, thus ensuring legal compliance and best practice, establishing fair practices and promoting a positive work culture within our council;
- With regards to corporate implications from a financial and value for money perspective there are no financial implications arising directly from the refresh of the Restructure and Redundancy Policy or the Recruitment Policy and Procedure, however there is the potential for the new Other Types of Leave Policy to generate a small amount of additional costs. It is anticipated that any costs associated with the approval and implementation of this policy will be very low and therefore containable within existing resources.

- From a Legal perspective as indicated within the report, these policies have been developed to improve practices across the Council and they address issues of concern highlighted in the Independent Monitoring Officer Report;
- Risk management perspective HR policies serve to define behavioural expectations, promote fairness, compliance and efficiency within an organisation;
- The risks associated with failing to implement new or revised HR policies may potentially expose the council through out of date policies with changing laws, industry standards and organisational needs;
- From a corporate perspective it is important that the council's HR policies are updated and reviewed and in supporting this review extensive research has been carried out to look at best practice, organisational needs as well as considering the policies and procedures in place at other comparable local authorities;
- The revised policies have been developed in line with ACAS and any relevant legislation and consideration also from a HR perspective around the practical issues that have emerged whilst operating within existing policies and procedures;
- A review of policies continues and the final versions of policies identified within Phase 2 are included within this report;
- The main change to the restructure and redundancy policy applies in the case where a position is being deleted and the employee affected is put at risk of redundancy and there is no suitable role identified. In the updated policy, the employee will receive the same status as if they were on notice of redundancy. This means that they will have priority for any suitable alternative roles and be given priority with any internal job applications;
- There are a few proposed changes to the recruitment policy and procedure:
  - One of the more significant changes is that managers will be able to advertise some job vacancies internally for a period of only one week;
  - The current policy requires all vacancies to be advertised internally and externally for at least two weeks.
- The other types of leave policy: This is a new policy and covers types of leave that were not covered in any other policies. It allows for one additional day of paid leave each year for voluntary work, which have been requested by several members of staff in recent months and staff must meet the requirements set out in the policy to qualify.
- The draft policies were agreed by CMT before commencing a 30 day consultation period with the trade unions; Unison and GMB and staff;
- During the consultation period, feedback was received from staff and Unison. Feedback did not result in any significant changes to the draft policies and only some minor changes in wording were applied to the proposed policies;
- And positive feedback had been received from both staff and Unison with regards to the one day paid leave each year for voluntary work as covered within the new 'Other Types of Leave Policy';
- The policies presented within the committee report if agreed by the General Purposes Committee would go live on the 1 February 2024.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- One Member said that the report was concise and easy to understand;
- They further asked why the policy on recruitment allowed for a week period to advertise vacancies internally before going out for external recruitment;
- Another Member asked what discretion Heads of Service had in conducting their own departmental restructures before a wider corporate restructure was considered;
- They also asked if there would be simpler versions of the policies;

- When a vacancy becomes available, would temporary and agency staff be considered ahead of external candidates?
- Learning days for staff would be beneficial for employees. Could staff be offered learning days?
- Another Member said that the coming in-house of the HR function was a good approach. There were now good relations between the Unions and HR;
- Were the rights of those on apprenticeships recognised in the policies?
- Were staff allowed leave of absence to undertake duties like military duty.

Sonia Godfrey and Sarah Flack, Employee Relations Lead responded as follows:

- Giving a week's period for advertising vacancies internally would give managers more flexibility;
- Departmental restructures depended on the nature of the changes being sought;
- HR were working closely with Heads of Service on small tweaks or minor job changes for their respective departments and was being done outside corporate restructures;
- Policy guidance had been developed to assist staff with understanding the policy content and how these policies would be applied;
- When a vacancy becomes available agency staff would have the same rights as external candidates;
- TDC could access the national apprenticeship scheme. Departments could approach HR to get assistance on how to access this scheme;
- Apprentices would get a contract that was specific to their work.
- The Council could also access the apprenticeship levy to upskill current staff;
- Leave of absence was available to staff.

Councillor Scobie proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed to adopt the HR policies with effect from 1 February 2024.

#### **47. CHANGES TO CEX WORKING HOURS IN NOVEMBER 2022 - A VERBAL UPDATE**

Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update and advised the committee that the decision made for changing the CEx working hours in November 2022 was due a misunderstanding of the process for making such changes. This had since been remedied.

Members thanked the Monitoring Officer for the update and were satisfied that the issue had been addressed.

Councillor Scobie proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed to note the update.

Meeting concluded: 3.48 pm