

MINUTES

Employment Committee

Wednesday, 19 January 2022, 10:00

Council Chamber - South Kesteven House,
St. Peter's Hill, Grantham. NG31 6PZ



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Sarah Trotter (Chairman)
Councillor Anna Kelly (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Annie Mason
Councillor Adam Stokes
Councillor Paul Wood

Officers in attendance

Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive)
Jane Jenkinson (Senior HR Officer)
Sam Fitt (Project Lead)
Alice Atkins (Democratic Officer)

49. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Kelham Cooke.

50. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

51. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** as a correct record.

52. Updates from the previous meeting

Members raised various questions and the responses were as follows:

- Whether the review of the Council's intranet had been assigned.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that work continued to be undertaken in relation to a review and refresh of the Council's intranet. A formal update on the

details of this work was intended to be brought to the Committee and remained on the workplan to be assigned to a future meeting.

- A query was raised relating to a trial of a Buddy System for Members, and whether this had been implemented.

The Deputy Chief Executive noted that whilst officer buddies had been established for newly elected Members, there was further work to be undertaken with party leaders on how parties may best support the induction of new Members into the Council.

53. Pay Review Scope

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities introduced the report which set out the proposed scope of the Pay Review.

Members raised various questions and the response were as follows:

- A concern was raised regarding the use of job evaluations.

It was confirmed that the Council did make use of job evaluations, but these were used alongside other means of determining pay, for example benchmarking.

- Whether the Council continued to use its own individualised rationale to pay staff or whether there was an overall local government-wide system to adopt.

It was noted that every Council used different sets of pay bands and grades and that South Kesteven's terms and conditions were flexible in relation to the national Green Book guidance. The Council was currently looking at how it may best ensure clarity and fairness in an affordable way, in order to recruit and retain the best staff.

- A query was raised relating to the 43 separate pay grades outlined in the report, and whether this was an average number when compared to pay grades across local government.

It was noted that in keeping with the average number of bands across other authorities, there were currently 12 bands and incremental points within those, with these either based on performance or time served. It was noted that 43 was likely a higher number than what would typically be found across local government.

- Whether the Council followed the Real Living Wage 2022, as opposed to the National Living Wage.

It was confirmed that during a meeting of Full Council the previous year, the Council had agreed to follow the Real Living Wage.

- A concern was raised relating to the use of night working and whether this was detrimental to the mental health of staff. Members also expressed concern relating to the level of payment received by night working staff.

It was confirmed that this issue had been raised by employees working nights, although this accounted for very few Council staff. It was noted that HR intended to address the issue as part of the pay review. It was also noted that staff did receive non-monetary benefits, for example free parking and discount at leisure centres.

The Employment Committee noted and endorsed the scope of the Pay Review.

54. People Strategy

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities introduced the report and the appended People Strategy document. The People Strategy sets out the Council's aims in attracting, developing and retaining its most valuable asset – its employees. The strategy replaces the previous People Strategy 2017 – 2020.

Members raised various questions and the responses were as follows:

- A query was raised as to whether the People Strategy had been prepared in-house. The document was commended.
It was confirmed that the People Strategy had been prepared in-house, having been developed by the HR and Communications teams.
- Members raised concerns relating to the proposed use of hot desking and how this may alienate staff from the organisation.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that during the events of Covid-19, the Council had learnt much about the most effective ways of working and the importance of face-to-face contact. Going forward, the ability to be flexible when working would be of key importance, as well as concentrating on being a team when together in person.

- A query was raised relating to the Equalities Champions Group at the Council.

It was noted that whilst work was ongoing, the Council had identified Equality Champions across all services levels. Time was due to be invested in training with two full days of full training having had been completed so far.

DECISION:

The Employment Committee recommended to Cabinet that the People Strategy 2022 – 2025 is approved, subject to the following additional recommendation:

That authority is delegated to the HR team to work with the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities and the Chairman of Employment Committee to make minor typographical amendments to the People Strategy 2022 – 2025.

55. Pay Policy Statement

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities introduced the report and the appended Pay Policy Statement 2022 – 2023. It is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011 that the Council produces an annual pay policy statement. The statement summarises current policies and arrangements already in place relating to pay and the Pay Policy Statement is approved each year by Council as part of the budget setting and approval process.

Members raised the following point and the response was as follows:

- It was requested that an amendment to the recommendation be agreed to include an insertion to paragraph 13.1 stating that termination payments should be kept to a minimum and it must be demonstrated that they are in the best interests of the Council. The purpose of this would be to ensure a clear process and to demonstrate that the Council always works to ensure residents receive the best value for money.

Officers confirmed that final decisions relating to termination payments were reviewed by the three statutory heads of the Council. It was noted that these payments were always agreed in the best interests of the Council. Currently, there were no issues in the way termination payments were decided and processed and the Pay Policy Statement recorded what was currently done.

DECISION:

The Employment Committee agreed the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 is to be submitted to Full Council for approval, subject to the following amendment:

Termination payments should be kept to the minimum and be shown to be in the best interest of the Council.

56. Work Programme 2021 - 2022

Members raised the following points:

- It was noted that the Chief Executive's Appraisal had already been allocated to a future meeting of the Committee and could therefore be removed from the list reading 'items to be allocated'.
- As a significant level of work was due to be done around the structure of payments, it would be a beneficial to ongoingly report on this to the Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Committee that it was unrealistic to expect the Pay Review to be complete by the next meeting due to the complexity of the scope which had been agreed. It was agreed that an update report would be provided to show progress and a timetable for completion.

57. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

There was none.

58. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10:52.