

Meeting of the Employment Committee

Wednesday, 10 March 2021, 10:00



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Meeting held virtually, via Skype

Committee Members present

Councillor Jacky Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Annie Mason (Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Communities)
Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of The Council)
Councillor Barry Dobson (The Deputy Leader of The Council)
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Adam Stokes (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)
Councillor Paul Wood

Other Members present

Councillor Bob Adams
Councillor Breda Rae Griffin

Officers present

Karen Bradford (Chief Executive)
Gary Smith (Strategic Director Commercial and Operations)
Shahin Ismail (Director of Law and Governance)
Neil Moverley (HR Manager)
Jane Jenkins (Senior HR Officer)
Shelley Thirkell (Acting Principal Democratic Officer)
Naomi Page (Democratic Officer)
Alice Atkins (Graduate Trainee)

29. Register of attendance, membership and apologies for absence

Following a register of attendance, it was confirmed all Members of the Committee were present.

It was noted that Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew (Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy) and Councillor Dr Peter Moseley (Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations), who were due to attend the meeting, had tendered their apologies.

30. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

31. Actions

Members considered the update provided on actions from previous meetings.

It was noted that the actions were progressing well and that updates on actions, would be provided as part of individual agenda items.

A Member queried when the item relating to Gender pay queries would be considered by the Committee. The Senior HR Officer confirmed that this was due to be considered at the 19 May 2021 meeting of the Committee.

32. Minutes of the previous meetings, held on:

21 January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021, were proposed and seconded. Following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

27 January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021, were proposed and seconded. Following a vote by exception they were agreed.

8 February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021, were proposed and seconded. Following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

10 February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021, were proposed and seconded. Following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

33. Health and Wellbeing Survey

The Leader of the Council introduced the Committee to a report on the Council's Health and Wellbeing Survey.

During the pandemic, the Health and Wellbeing of staff had been a priority for the Council. Not only for those who remained working on front line services but also for the 400 plus employees who were now working remotely. The

survey was the 3rd that had been undertaken during the year and had seen a great response with approximately 230 employees having responded.

The Local Government Association Graduate Trainee had been working with HR and had produced a presentation on the findings of the report, this was provided to Members. The presentation also detailed what the Council had done in response to the findings and any upcoming programmes to assist with the wellbeing of staff.

Following the presentation, Members raised various points and responses were as follows:

- Was the response to the recent survey, 100% of all staff?

The Chief Executive advised that the figure was around 50% of SKDC employees

- Did the Chief Executive submit a response to the survey?

The Chief Executive confirmed that she did submit a response and felt it was important for her to participate in all surveys available to employees.

- The results show how different everyone is and how the Council can cater for that and encompass all different types of wellbeing needs.
- If there were any social or support groups for employees to participate in outside working hours?

The Senior HR Advisor confirmed that teams were encouraged to form virtual social groups outside working hours and that there were also virtual fitness classes that had an excellent uptake.

- Members queried if LeisureSK Ltd could assist in holding virtual fitness and wellbeing classes?

The Leader of the Council advised that he would raise the matter with LeisureSK Ltd.

- There were concerns about the 50% of employees who didn't respond to the survey and if any reasons for that had been provided.

It was noted that the standard return rate of surveys across different sectors is considered to be 40-60%. Reasons for not participating in a survey are considered to be that; some individuals preferred to not participate in surveys, others didn't wish to give any details that may identify them and some people state they do not have time to complete them. It was confirmed to Members that the wellbeing survey was completely confidential and anonymous. The Team had worked with the Data Protection Support Officer, to ensure

anonymity and information was secure. A Member queried if all staff had been re-assured of this, perhaps further assurances would encourage better uptake in future surveys. It was also confirmed that one of the benefits of carrying out pulse surveys are that they are short sharp surveys and generally focused on specific topics. If individuals are not interested in that topic however this could be another reason for not completing a survey.

- How many times had the Mental Health First Aiders been contacted within the last year?

Members were advised that this information could be added into the HR Dashboard, which would be presented at a future meeting. This would only include figures, as further details would be confidential between the employee and the Mental Health First Aider

- A Members was concerned to hear that employees had highlighted that there were further costs associated with working from home.

Around 1% of the responses had highlighted these concerns, provided in additional details, although specific questions on finances had not been included. It was noted that these concerns had also been raised separately by Trade Union representatives and directly by employees.

- A non-Committee Member felt that some employees may not wish to respond to a mental health survey as it could be hard for anyone struggling to admit this.

The Committee agreed that this certainly was a concern and HR would continue to focus on support for employees and Members, especially during the times of isolation due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Thanks were given to the Graduate Trainee for an excellent and detailed presentation and asked for their feedback be passed back to HR. Members agreed to note the report and presentation.

ACTIONS:

- a) The Leader of the Council to raise the possibility of virtual fitness and well-being classes for Council employees, with LeisureSK Ltd**
- b) Figures to be provided as part of the HR Dashboard reporting on times mental health first aiders had been contacted.**

DECISION:

The Employment Committee note the findings of the Health and Wellbeing Survey and the Council's response and requested that their feedback be taken into consideration.

34. Apprenticeships at SKDC

The Leader of the Council introduced the Committee to a report detailing the current apprenticeships at SKDC.

The Council recognised the huge value and benefits of apprenticeships to the organisation, our employees, and potential employees in the local labour market. SKDC actively promoted the use of apprenticeships as part of workforce planning to provide; Professional development opportunities for employees, management training for first time managers, technical qualifications for specialist roles and entry level roles for local residents to join the Council.

SKDC worked closely with local colleges, universities, and private sector specialist training providers to deliver apprenticeship training and to advertise apprentice opportunities throughout the Council. As a public sector organisation, the Council had an annual target of 2.3% of its headcount to be apprentices. This equated to an annual target of 13 apprenticeships based on current establishment levels.

5 apprenticeships had started during the current financial year and 3 had left to take on roles in other organisations, this meant SKDC currently had 16 employees carrying out apprenticeships. Statistical details were provided to Members on; gender, age range, sections within the Council and types of apprenticeships.

Members made the following points:

- Encourage to see that the gender split was 50/50, male and female.
- Were there any apprenticeships being undertaken in the Council's wholly owned Companies?

Members were advised that there were none currently, but historically the Companies had worked with the University of Lincoln. A proposal was put forward by the HR Manager that supply chain apprenticeships be investigated to provide financial support to wholly owned companies to fund apprenticeships through the Council's Apprentice Levy Fund.

- Could apprenticeships be at any level?

Apprenticeships could be at any level, no longer were apprenticeships entry level trade positions. These were now very extensive, with apprenticeships in management, town planning, accountancy etc.

- Pleased to see what is being done to not only recruit apprentices, but also to support current members of staff to develop in their roles. Members encouraged that this continues by working with organisations like the University of Lincoln
- A non-Committee Member asked for clarification on the number of Planning apprentices and if the Council were still working with Inspire Plus?

The Leader of the Council advised that the Council had a continued relationship with Inspire Plus. There were currently 3 apprenticeships taking place in the Planning Team.

The recommendations of the report were proposed and seconded, following a vote by exception, they were agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS:

- 1. Members noted the update on apprenticeships at South Kesteven District Council.**
- 2. Approved the further investigation of supply chain Apprenticeships.**
- 3. Approved the continuing engagement with the University of Lincoln around the Strategic Leadership MSC Apprenticeship and review of alternative options.**

35. Sickness Absence Update Report Q2 and Q3 2020/21

The Committee received an update report from the Leader of the Council on Sickness and Absence for Q2 and Q3 2020/21.

The Senior HR Officer presented the report which detailed absence statistics for SKDC. This included breakdowns of; causes for both long term and short-term absence for each Directorate and their Departments. Following a request by the Committee this also included data on age and gender.

Quarterly figures showed a reduction in each quarter, for 2020/2021. Compared to 2019/2021, this was a reduction of 28%. Members were advised that statistics did not include absences due to Covid-19 and were collated separately, as per Government Guidance.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- Welcomed the positive step towards a reduction in absence.
- What was the national average number of days sickness in any given year for a full-time employee?

The Senior HR Officer advised that the National Average could only be provided on Local Authority employees. It was noted that this however would be difficult to compare as many authorities did not have Street Scene Departments, which is where high numbers of sickness are generated, due to the nature of the work undertaken.

- Concerns were raised about the Growth Directorate and the level of sickness absence.

The Growth Directorate covered Departments where the work was likely to generate more sickness.

- Had any work been undertaken to see if the downward trend was due to working from home, during the pandemic.

The Senior HR Officer advised that although that may be likely, it was difficult to evidence. It was also noted that work had been carried out to reduce the number and length of long-term absences.

- Requested a breakdown to departments for each age range.

ACTIONS:

- a. Provide details of the National Average days' sickness for Local Authority Employees**
- b. That further details be provided to the Committee on what departments were covered in the Growth Directorate in the age range breakdown on sickness absence.**

DECISIONS:

- 1. That the Employment Committee noted the absence statistics for South Kesteven District Council for Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 (2020 / 2021) covering the period from July to December 2020.**
- 2. That the Employment Committee noted the action plan for managing levels of absence within the Council.**

36. Chief Executive Appraisal Process

Members received a report from the Leader of the Council on the Chief Executive's Appraisal Process.

As part of the Employment Committee's Terms of Reference, there was a requirement for the Committee to undertake the Chief Executive's Annual Performance Appraisal. The Director of HR, Learning and Development & Councillor Development at East Midlands Council was appointed by the Leader of the Council to facilitate the Performance Appraisal.

The process followed a structured format, which integrated feedback from the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition. Following the feedback the Director (EMC) compiled an independent appraisal report. Objectives and targets for the Chief Executive would be presented to the Employment Committee, by the Chief Executive.

The Committee agreed that the process had worked well and were very pleased to receive the objectives and targets for the following year.

DECISION:

That the Committee noted the process undertaken to carry out an appraisal of the Chief Executive's performance.

37. Work Programme

The Committee received the Work Programme for 2021/22.

It was noted that the Committee would look at work that had been undertaken on the new South Kesteven District Council Intranet. Members would look at how it would work and what it would look like. The Chief Executive noted that in an ever-changing digital world, it was important to get this sort of facility right. Members agreed that this should be added to the Work Programme, with a date to be agreed once the schedule of meetings for 2021/22 had been agreed by Annual Council.

ACTION:

The new SKDC Intranet be added to the Work Programme, with a date for consideration to be confirmed.

38. Exclusion of Press and Public

Members considered excluding the press and public, following a vote by exception it was agreed unanimously.

DECISION:

That the press and public be excluded during discussion of the following agenda items because of the likelihood that information that is exempt under paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them.

12:00 - After consideration of the above item, the Chairman lost connection to the meeting. The Vice Chairman therefore took the position of Vice Chairman in the Chair, to continue with the business of the meeting.

39. Agenda order

The Vice Chairman, in the absence of the Chairman used her powers of discretion to amend the order of the remainder of the agenda. This was to be as follows:

- Proposed Commercial & Operations Restructure
- Proposed amendment to the structure for Planning and Planning Policy
- Chief Executive's Appraisal

40. Directors Targets

The Committee received a report from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on the Proposed Director Targets for 2021 – 2022.

Members considered the report and raised a number of questions.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. Considered the proposed targets to be included in the Directors targets for 2021 - 2022.**
- 2. Approves the South Kesteven's Directors targets for 2021-2022, as attached to the report.**

41. Proposed Commercial and Operations Restructure

The Committee received a report from the Cabinet Member for Commercial & Operations on the Proposed Commercial and Operations Restructure.

Members considered the report and raised a number of questions.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. Reviewed and approved the proposed restructure of the Commercial and Operations Directorate.**
- 2. Delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Commercial & Operations to implement the proposed restructure, in line with the Council's HR policies and, where relevant, subject to consultation and change.**

42. Proposed Amendment to the structure for Planning and Planning Policy

The Committee received a report from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on the proposed amendment to the structure for Planning and Planning Policy.

Members considered the report and raised a number of questions.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS:

That the Committee agreed recommendations 1-6 of the report.

43. Chief Executive Appraisal

The Committee received a report from the Leader of the Council on the Chief Executive's Appraisal.

Members considered the report and raised a number of questions.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, following a vote by exception they were agreed unanimously.

DECISIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. Considered the contents of the appraisal report.**
- 2. Noted the contents of the presentation by the Chief Executive of the achievements over the last 12 months.**
- 3. Approved the Chief Executive's targets and objectives set for 2021-22.**

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

There were none.

45. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12:54.