

Meeting of the Employment Committee

Wednesday, 13 November 2024,
2.00 pm



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Anna Kelly (Chairman)
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Paul Martin

Officers

Karen Bradford – Chief Executive Officer
Graham Watts - Assistant Director of Governance and Public Protection, Monitoring Officer
Fran Beckett, Head of Service – Human Resources and Organisational Development
Peter Harrison - Unison Representative
Sam Fitt – Senior Human Resources/ Project Officer
Charles James - Policy Officer
Hannah Rowe – Performance Analyst
Joshua Mann - Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Rhys Baker.

2. Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 4 September 2024

Both the minutes from the 10.00 AM meeting and the 2.00 PM meeting of the 4 September 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED as an accurate record.

4. HR Dashboard and People Plan

The HR Dashboard and People Plan report was introduced by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development. The report was presented by the HR Manager and consisted of the following themes from the People Strategy –

- Recruitment and Workforce Planning
- Engagement
- Reward and Recognition
- Development
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Wellbeing.

It was noted that the upcoming Employment Rights Bill would be a sizeable focus of the HR department over the coming year given the proposed changes to zero-hours contracts, unfair dismissal rights, flexible working rights, and increased protection for pregnant and new mothers.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The timeframe from which long-term absence was differentiated from short-term absence. The HR Manager confirmed that a leave of absence of 21 days or more constituted long-term absence, and that referrals were made to the Occupational Health Service when necessary following discussions with line managers.
- It was queried how last-minutes absence from work due to childcare and parenting reasons was recorded (such as receiving calls from school to collect children). The HR Manager confirmed that these short absences would ordinarily be dealt with under the flexi-time policy in accordance with the individuals line manager.
- A Member sought clarity that the reasons for absence bar chart under the Wellbeing section of the report was identifying the number of cases rather than the cumulate number of days lost. This was confirmed.
- It was noted that the Wellbeing figures within the report were including Members and Officers.
- A Member commented that they no longer felt the necessity for SKDC to differentiate Covid-19 related absences from other infection, such as cold and flu related absence (because testing for Covid 19 and isolating are no longer a medical requirement).
- Regarding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section of the report, it was queried what support SKDC offered Officers which had led to seeking the 'Age-Friendly Employer' accreditation. The HR manager clarified that SKDC continued to facilitate a 'Menopause Café' for Officers and there were arrangements in place for 'flexi-retirement' following conversations with line managers and the HR department.
- A Member noted that it was a shame that SKDC had lost some employees due to career advancement. This sentiment was echoed by

the Head of Paid Service, however, they highlighted that this had been the result of the quality development and training provided at SKDC.

The report was NOTED by the Committee.

5. Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report

The Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report was presented by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development.

The report contained the sole action of continuing to embed the People Strategy and accompanying action plan. Subsequently, the following three targets had been established –

- Progress on completion of the People Plan (% of actions completed/on target to assess whether the work is progressing to expectation). It was reported that the Q2 value of this was 100% and as such was subsequently on target.
- Engagement index score, year on year improvement (>70). It was reported that the Q2 value of this was 72 and therefore the target had been exceeded.
- Engagement survey response rate, year on year improvement (>74%). It was reported that the Q2 value was 85% and therefore the target had been exceeded.

In the interests of transparency, it was noted that the findings of this KPI Q2 report would be uploaded to the online Key Performance Indicators dashboard section of the SKDC website at the end of each quarter.

The findings of the Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report were NOTED by the Committee.

6. Pay Policy Statement

The Pay Policy Statement was presented by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development and detailed the following –

- The Council's decision to adopt the Real Living Wage in March 2021.
- The pay increase arrangements for our lowest grade and a number of other grades which are impacted by the Real Living Wage increase.
- These pay increases are an alternative to the annual cost of living

pay award and not in addition to.

Whilst there were no fundamental changes from the 2024/25 Pay Policy, the key changes related to the updating of posts in scope under the definition of Officers covered by the Pay Policy Statement. Furthermore, the policy relating to the remuneration of Chief Officers, the lowest-paid Officers, and the relationship between the two.

The 2025/26 Pay Policy Statement also adds further clarity to the policies for allowances, pension schemes, and gender pay reposting.

The Leader of the Council sought clarity regarding the response of the Trade Union to the consultation over the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26. It was confirmed by the Union Representative that the Union were satisfied with the statement.

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** to recommend the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 to be submitted to Full Council for approval.

7. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

It was AGREED to add an update in the January Work Programme regarding SKDC's policy for driving whilst under the influence of alcohol or misused and illegal substances.

The January meeting was set to include a presentation addressing how the government's Autumn Statement affected South Kesteven District Council. (The Deputy Chief Executive/S151 Officer planned to hold a separate briefing, open to all Members, which covered this matter.)

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

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED for the meeting to be adjourned at 14:43pm.

Cllr Phil Gadd left the chamber and did not return to this meeting.

9. External Co-opted Member - Governance and Audit Committee

Having been moved and seconded, and following a vote it was AGREED to exclude the press and public during discussion of the remaining agenda items because of the likelihood that information that was exempt under paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would have been disclosed to them.

Employment Committee interviewed one candidate for the role of Co-opted Member of Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee unanimously voted to appoint the candidate.

The Chairman closed the meeting as of 15:40pm.