

Meeting of the Employment Committee

Wednesday, 15 January 2025,
10.00 am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Anna Kelly (Chairman)
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Bridget Ley

Other Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Barry Dobson

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Graham Watts, Assistant Director
(Governance and Public Protection) and
Monitoring Officer
Fran Beckitt, Head of Service – Human
Resources and Organisational
Development
Peter Harrison, Environmental Protection
Officer and Trade Union Representative
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Officer
Sam Fitt, Senior HR/Corporate Project
Officer
Leila Foster, Human Resources Officer
Angelina Mielczarek, HR Assistant

10. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Matthew Bailey,
substituted by Councillor Robert Leadenham.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rhys Baker, substituted
by Councillor Bridget Ley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gloria Johnson.

11. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024

The minutes of the both the AM and PM meetings held on 13 November 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED to be an accurate record.

13. Gender Pay Gap Report

The Gender Pay Gap Report was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The report outlined that, contrary to the national trend, South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) had a negative pay gap for mean rates of earnings. The Council's mean gender pay gap for 31 March 2024 was a negative measure of -4.83%, i.e. women at SKDC were paid 4.83% more than men. (The mean gender pay gap for 31 March 2023 was a negative measure of -0.98%). Therefore, for every £1 a woman earns, a man earns 95p. The mean hourly rate for men was £15.92, and the mean hourly rate for women was £16.69.

The mean was defined as the average and was calculated by adding up all the salaries and dividing by the number of staff.

The median gender pay gap for 31 March 2024 was 0.80%, (the median gender pay gap for 31 March 2023 was 0%). The median hourly rate for women was £15.93 and the median hourly rate for men was £16.06.

All the figures were calculated using the standard methodologies used in the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. The Council was therefore confident that its negative gender pay gap did not result from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work.

Although the gender pay gap was not significant and the median was 0.80% this year, it was recognised that changes to the workforce would cause fluctuations in the data each year. As such the Council pledged to continue to implement actions to ensure equality, including:

Pay and Grading – Grades being determined via objective analysis and job evaluations.

Recruitment - Aiming to recruit from the largest possible talent pool by advertising job vacancies widely, ensuring gender-neutral language in job advertisements, and use of competency-based selection techniques to guard against unconscious bias in recruitment processes.

Monitoring - Monitoring shifts in the gender pay gap data each year to identify any trends and analyse underlying causes.

The Gender Pay Gap Report was noted by the Employment Committee.

14. Employee Engagement Action Plan 24/25

The Employee Engagement Action Plan 2024/25 was presented by the Leader of the Council.

The Action Plan built on the results of the Employee Engagement Survey undertaken by 502 respondents, constituting 85% of SKDC employees.

The report outlined that the Engagement Index had increased to 72. The Index was a measure of employee engagement based on the following 6 survey questions:

- I would recommend working for SKDC,
- I am proud to be working for SKDC,
- I am happy with my current job at SKDC,
- I find the work I do interesting,
- My job makes good use of my talents, skills and experiences,
- Morale at SKDC is generally good.

Amongst the notable results identified was that 88% of respondents said that they were treated with respect by their colleagues, and 80% said that they found their work interesting.

58% of respondents also agreed that morale at SKDC was 'generally good', an increase of 26% upon the 2022 response. The Head of Paid Services noted that they were particularly pleased with these results but would strive to act on the findings to pursue further positive increases in morale.

The report identified the following to be the key areas of focus for the Action Plan:

- Teamworking
- Communication and Change
- Training and Development
- Wellbeing
- Other areas.

Each of these areas was broken down into individual feedback given by employees with a subsequent action identified. There was then an owner of the action, and a timeframe codified.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The impact of the survey results and the Action Plan on the level of absenteeism amongst colleagues. The Human Resources (HR) Manager noted that year-on-year absentee levels had decreased,

however, there had been a short-term increase over December 2024 due to cold/flu. This was worse for service areas that were unable to work from home. In response to this the HR Department were planning a focus on the availability of the flu jab for staff. It was also noted that the level of mental health-related absences had decreased given the wealth of mental health support available.

- The availability of training and development opportunities. It was confirmed that Officers had online access to the HR Hub with a dedicated training section. An initiative had also been introduced in 2024 of internal work experience between departments. Furthermore, training and development opportunities were clearly signposted during all-staff calls and internal spotlights.
- Potential reasons for the significant increase in workforce morale were queried. The union representative suggested that key reasons for this was the Head of Paid Services' open-door management style, the open-plan office space and the thorough work of the Wellbeing Team in organising mental health support. The Chairman praised the work and co-operation of the union representative in the increased morale of the employees.
- The Leader of the Council urged Members to mirror this positive morale and identified training opportunities as key to achieving this.
- The aspect of the Wellbeing feedback regarding high workloads was queried, particularly regarding which service areas this related to. The HR Manager agreed to feed this back to the Member following the meeting. **ACTION**

The Employment Committee noted the Employee Engagement Action Plan 24/25.

15. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

Following the Employee Engagement Action Plan 2024/25, a change to the agenda order was suggested and AGREED resulting in the Work Programme and Any Other Business preceding the originally scheduled Exclusion of the Press and Public and the HR Policy Implementation.

It was noted that the following would be included in the March Work Programme –

- Chief Executive Officer's appraisal,
- Director Targets (if these could not be produced in time then this would be amended to the June Work Programme),
- Local Government Reorganisation Updates.

The People Strategy Updates would be added to the Work Programme for the June meeting.

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

The Chairman wished the HR Manager well for their upcoming maternity leave.

17. Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED that the press and public were excluded during discussion of the upcoming HR Policy Implementation agenda item because of the likelihood that information that was exempt under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them.

18. HR Policy Implementation

The HR Policy Implementation was NOTED by the Employment Committee.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.

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