

**JOINT EMPLOYEE COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 virtually through MS Teams**

**Present:**

Employer's Representatives:

Councillors C Entwistle, J Evans, D G Pidwell and J M Sanger.

Employee Representatives:

M Bassett , K Circuit, P Lee, T Walstow, and J Whalley.

Officers in attendance:

K Childs, S French, E Hinsley and J Lavender.

(Meeting commenced at 3.00pm.)

The Chair welcomed all to the virtual Joint Employee Council and explained that councils have been enabled to hold virtual meetings in order to allow business to be conducted while maintaining social distancing due to the outbreak of Covid-19. The Chair then introduced Members and Officers by doing a roll call. The Chair outlined that in the event of the livestream failing or Members losing connection the meeting would be adjourned to allow the connection to be re-established. He also reminded participants to take appropriate safety precautions from their place of livestreaming.

**54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M W Quigley and Employee Representative J Common.

**55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

**56. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be approved.

**57. MINUTES FOR ACTION**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes for Action be received.

**58. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST**

**RESOLVED** that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

## **SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC**

### **Key Decisions**

None.

### **Other Decisions**

#### **59. REPORT(S) OF THE EMPLOYER'S REPRESENTATIVES**

##### **(a) Update on Progress of People Strategy Action Plan**

The Committee received an update on progress towards the actions identified in the People Strategy Action Plan for 2021/22, which was approved at Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

The Head of People and Culture (HPC) also advised that following on from a verbal update at the previous meeting, Cabinet had approved an additional day's leave in recognition of how staff had responded to keep services going over the past year during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members praised the progress made on the People Strategy Action Plan.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the update report and attachment be noted.

##### **(b) Domestic Abuse Policy**

Members were presented with the proposed new Domestic Abuse Policy, applicable specifically to employees.

The HPC advised that the Council does not currently have a Domestic Abuse Policy in place, although the People Strategy proposes the development of one. Domestic violence has had a reported increase over the past year, linked to the impacts of the Covid-19 situation. A Domestic Violence Bill is also currently progressing through Parliament and is expected to place a duty on local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse.

As an employer, the Council has a legal duty of care, which includes providing a safe working environment. Research emphasises that domestic abuse has a negative impact at work and victims are likely to be targeted at work.

Members commended the addition of the new Domestic Abuse Policy and suggested some other types of behaviours associated with domestic abuse to be included. The HPC agreed that these would be incorporated into the Policy.

In response to questions, the HPC advised that training on domestic abuse awareness would be incorporated into managers' training on managing challenging situations. The policy makes it clear that it is the individual's choice with whom they share this information and the decision on how to proceed should only be made with the employee's consent.

With regards to any disciplinary action to be taken should an employee be found to be a perpetrator of domestic abuse, the HPC advised that each case would be judged on its own merit.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed Domestic Abuse Policy be agreed as amended and recommended to Cabinet for formal approval.

#### **60. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and after considering the public interest test as set out by the officer in the body of the report, Members agreed that the following items of business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4, and therefore, in accordance with Section 100A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting:

Agenda Item No. 7(a) – Shared Cost AVCs – Paragraph 3

Agenda Item No. 7(b) – Review of Agency Workers – Paragraph 4

## **SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE**

### **Key Decisions**

None.

### **Other Decisions**

#### **61. REPORT(S) OF THE EMPLOYER'S REPRESENTATIVES**

##### **(a) Shared Cost AVCs**

The Committee was presented with a proposal to adopt a shared cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme, which would benefit employees and the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the information contained within the report be noted and the Joint Employee Council support the introduction of a shared cost AVC scheme.

##### **(b) Review of Agency Workers**

Members were updated on the use of agency workers and consultants for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The data was appended to the report with a year's worth of data for comparison.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The report on the use of agency workers and consultants be noted;
2. In order to seek to reduce the incidence of agency working, to require that managers complete the quarterly monitoring form, which will be reported to the Joint Employee Council.

#### **62. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT**

An Employee Representative raised the question of whether staff were able to be prioritised for access to any of the extra vaccines provided by the hospital. The HPC advised that the hospital had offered spare vaccines to local employers while NHS staff were being vaccinated however this opportunity passed once the hospital completed staff vaccinations.

As there was no other urgent business to discuss, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 3.58pm.)