

## **UNION/EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Union/Employee Consultation Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, the Arc, Clowne, on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 1100 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Council Representatives:- Councillors Mrs P.M. Bowmer, M.J. Dooley, A. Joesbury, K. Reid and K.F. Walker.

Unison Representatives:- K. Shillitto and J. Clayton.

Unite Representatives:- No representatives present.

Officers; D. Swaine, (Chief Executive Officer), S. Barker (Assistant Director HR and Payroll), P. Wilmot (HR Business Partner), A. Bluff (Governance Officer) and L. Robinson (Governance Assistant, (shadowing)).

Councillor A.M. Syrett in the Chair

### **0733. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **0734. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Moved by K. Shillitto and seconded by Councillor K. Reid

**RESOLVED** that J. Clayton be appointed as vice chair of Union/Employee Consultation Committee.

### **0735. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **0736. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **0737. MINUTES – 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016**

Moved by Councillor K. Reid and seconded by Councillor A. Joesbury

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Union/Employee Consultation Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

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### 0738. EARLY VOLUNTARY RELEASE POLICY

Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director – HR & Payroll which sought approval to introduce an Early Voluntary Release Policy.

Although there was no requirement for the Council to have an enhanced redundancy scheme for either compulsory or voluntary redundancies, the introduction and use of voluntary early release would maximise the flexibility of workforce planning and mitigate the necessity for compulsory redundancies in future, though this could not be guaranteed in the current financial climate.

There were a number of circumstances where early voluntary release may be under consideration for an employee; these could relate to the individual situation of an employee if it enabled flexibility for change, or be through the result of employer-led organisational change.

Each application would need to be decided taking into account all considerations and be based on sound business reasons and affordability in both the short and long term.

The policy would not replace the existing compulsory redundancy scheme that was currently in place.

A Unison representative welcomed the policy and stated that Unison was happy with the scheme put forward; however, Unison would always want to ensure that any redundancies, including voluntary release, were a last resort once the Council had carried out all possible alternatives.

Moved by Councillor K. Reid and seconded by Councillor A. Joesbury  
**RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the Early Voluntary Release Policy.

(Assistant Director – HR and Payroll/Governance Manager)

### 0739. SICKNESS ABSENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH STATISTICS 2015/16

Committee considered the sickness absence and occupational health statistics for the April to December 2016 period.

It had recently been agreed with the Chair of Safety Committee and the Unions to provide the sickness absence and occupational health statistics to UECC by way of the Safety Committee minutes as an alternative to the regular formal report which was also reproduced for the Quarterly Performance meetings. The Safety Committee minutes also noted Members and Unions' queries regarding the statistics and the responses provided at the meetings.

Committee were asked to note that any matters relating to the Sickness Absence Policy for consideration would continue to be presented to UECC.

Moved by Councillor A.M. Syrett and seconded by Councillor M.J. Dooley  
**RESOLVED** that the sickness absence and occupational health statistics for the April to December 2016 period be noted.

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### 0740. EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY 2016

Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director – HR & Payroll which informed the meeting of the results of an Employee Health and Wellbeing survey undertaken at both councils.

This was the first time that either council had undertaken a specific health and wellbeing survey for employees and the survey had been designed with assistance from Public Health.

The survey had received a 31% response rate which was satisfactory and enabled each council to make decisions on the development of Health and Wellbeing initiatives.

As part of the survey, employees were asked if they would also like to volunteer to be a Health and Wellbeing Champion. This had produced a joint group of 'Champions' made up of employees across both councils.

A joint action plan for the January 2017 to December 2017 period was attached as an appendix to the report with some specific actions for Bolsover. The Action Plan had been endorsed by the Strategic Alliance Management Team.

A Unison representative referred to the results from the survey and the points made regarding the physical environment at the Arc and what could be put in place to alleviate issues.

Further to a discussion, the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive Officer noted that the Council's Accommodation Working Group were currently looking at work areas for staff as well as car parking and heating etc and this was the right group to debate these sorts of issues. An accommodation strategy was being developed which would look at best use of the Arc site long term, including remote working, less desks, staff availability to work elsewhere etc.

Moved by Councillor A.M. Syrett and seconded by Councillor M.J. Dooley

**RESOLVED** that 1) the content of the report and the results of the Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey be noted,

2) Union/Employee Consultation Committee supports the initiatives outlined on the Action Plan for 2017.

(Assistant Director – HR & Payroll)

### 0741. EQUALITIES INFORMATION FOR YEAR ENDING MARCH 2016

Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director – HR & Payroll which provided information on equality data in relation to the Council's workforce and recruitment practices for the period April 2015 to March 2016.

An appendix attached to the report provided a comprehensive summary of equalities data collected and published by the Council on an annual basis; this related to gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. The Council also monitored information with regard to recruitment and selection, training and staff turnover, which was also included in the appendix.

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The report noted that during the financial year 2015/16 there had been no formal disciplinary action taken, no formal grievances (including harassment and bullying) raised and no dismissals.

A Unison representative queried if there was any training in place for Managers to make sure they were aware of disabled staff needs in the workforce. The Assistant Director – HR & Payroll replied that she would look to organise some refresher training for Managers regarding reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities and report back to the next meeting.

Committee was further advised that equalities data for the year ending March 2017 would also be presented to the next meeting of UECC.

Moved by K. Shillitto and seconded by Councillor A. Joesbury

**RESOLVED** that the 1) the Equality Information Summary be noted,

2) the equalities data for the year ending March 2017, be presented to the next meeting.

(Assistant Director – HR & Payroll)

### **0742. APPRENTICESHIPS 2017 ONWARDS – PRESENTATION**

Committee considered a presentation provided by the HR Business Partner in relation to the new apprenticeships levy.

The Government had announced a new apprenticeship levy in the Summer Budget of 2015 and wanted to significantly increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships in England in order to reach 3 million starts in 2020.

The apprenticeship reforms would start to impact on the Council from April 2017 through the requirement to pay an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of the pay bill and meet a minimum of 2.3% apprenticeship starts annually based on employee headcount. For Bolsover, the employee headcount was 502 so the apprenticeship target was 12.

The presentation set out the criteria and details for apprenticeship starts, retraining and apprenticeship career progression etc.

The council had established a working group which included HR, the Partnership Team, Economic Development, Finance and Procurement.

Service managers and senior managers would be asked to review their sections establishment to identify existing staff training needs and potential skills gaps, which could be converted into apprenticeships. For example, those areas with an ageing workforce where existing employees could be developed to fill those gaps; and also to ensure that any restructure/review reports considered apprenticeship options as standard.

Bolsover's traineeship/apprenticeship scheme was currently funded through residual Working Neighbourhood Funding. Plans were in place to recruit 8-10 trainees later this year and then 5/6 apprenticeship opportunities would be made available in 2017. This could be timed so that apprentices recruited counted towards the Council's target.

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There would be extra support for apprentices for any additional learning etc. If a levy paying employer exhausted the funds in their digital account, the Government would meet 90% of the additional apprenticeship training and assessment costs with the employer contributing 10%.

Committee were asked to note that after an 18 month period, any unused levy would be removed and placed into a digital account. The Council could still use the levy but if it were still unused after a 24 month period, the levy would expire and the Council would lose the money completely. This would also apply to any top-ups in the Council's account. Levy fund which had expired would keep its value and be reallocated to committed employers through the top-up to their accounts.

A Unison representative queried if local government would have a single framework for apprentices or if different frameworks would apply depending on what the apprentices' role was; he also queried what safeguards would be in place so that a vacant post at scale 6 would not be filled by an apprentice carrying out scale 6 duties on the living wage

The HR Business Partner replied that although there was no specific local government framework, the new standards that were being introduced were being developed/lead by occupational groups, for example, engineering, computer technology and environmental health etc. The Government had organised a Trailblazer programme which had developed the first 150 occupational groups to encourage other employers to come forward to help develop the standards. With regard to the safeguards in relation to scale 6 posts or other vacant posts being filled by apprentices, this would be covered in the standard and the confines of their job description and contract.

The Unison representative further queried if the Council's working group would include any union involvement in any proposals before they were implemented. It was confirmed that the trade unions would be involved in any new policies and strategies put forward.

In response to a query from the Deputy Leader, the HR Business Partner advised the meeting that the lead HR officer for apprenticeships would be marketing the Council's employment opportunities and the prospect of apprenticeships at careers events.

Moved by Councillor A.M. Syrett and seconded by Councillor M.J. Dooley  
**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1151 hours.