

## **UNION / EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Virtual Meeting and Meeting Room TBC, The Arc, Clowne on Thursday, 17 September 2020 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Council Representatives: Councillors D Adams, J Bryson, M Dixon, M Dooley and T Kirkham.

Unison Representatives: Christopher McKinney (Chair), Kevin Shillitto and Liz Robinson.

Officers: Lee Hickin (Head of Paid Service), Sara Gordon (Human Resources & OD Manager), Alison Bluff (Governance Officer) and Tom Scott (Governance Officer).

### **UECC1-20/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **UECC2-20/21 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There no urgent items of business.

### **UECC3-20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **UECC4-20/21 MINUTES - 6TH FEBRUARY 2020**

Moved by Chris McKinney (Unison) and seconded by Kevin Shillitto (Unison); RESOLVED that subject to the headings of Minute 0613 and 0614 being amended to read; '**26TH SEPTEMBER 2019**' and '**5TH DECEMBER 2019**' the Minutes of the Union/Employee Consultation Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 be approved as correct records.

### **UECC5-20/21 SICKNESS ABSENCE QUARTER 1 (APRIL 2020 - JUNE 2020).**

The Human Resources & OD Manager introduced the report and highlighted the salient points from the report, including patterns and emerging trends. She noted that the average number of days lost per full time employee in April to June (Q1) due to staff sickness was 1.5.

Members of the Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report in depth, including on issues related to Covid cases amongst staff (whether these be symptomatic or asymptomatic cases) and the problems staff had faced in accessing tests. She noted that there had not been many cases, and these were across departments including Environment and some in Housing. She highlighted that there had

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been a mobile testing unit on site at the Council offices previously but that it was not something that had been explored as a regular provision because of the small volume of staff physically coming into the office.

Members commented that it might be useful to have a further breakdown of figures in relation to cases per workspace or office, and the Human Resources & OD Manager noted that managers were required to fill in sickness forms for all employees even if they had tested positive but were still fit for work or were self-isolating, and that this information was regularly provided to the Senior Management Team.

Regarding the figures on stress and depression, it was noted that it was a fairly steady picture but that there had been some challenges as a result of the recent situation due to people having been at home for prolonged periods of time, and that officers were working with managers on a regular basis to address this, as well as presenting a different way of assisting employees, for example counselling sessions over Zoom.

The Head of Paid Service gave an introduction to the Homeworking sub-group and noted that the unions would be sent an invitation to join the group, which developed organically out of the recovery plan work. He noted that the group wanted to capture the benefits generated through working from home as well as the downsides.

Councillor M Dooley commented that the measures that had been put in place to make the office safe for everyone were excellent and this was echoed by the Chair who added that the initial set up of the office and how it was looked at and risk assessed was very impressive. He noted that questions on how it had been monitored would be picked up within the next item.

Moved by Councillor M Dooley and seconded by Councillor D Adams

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

### **UECC6-20/21      DISCUSSION REGARDING COVID-19 AND IMPACT ON WORKFORCE.**

The Human Resources & OD Manager introduced the discussion and gave some reassurance of the arrangements that had been put in place during the last few months to accommodate the different circumstances and scenarios that the pandemic had created, as well as to receive any feedback on those arrangements. She noted that it had been challenging to keep on top of the government guidance which changed very quickly and to respond to the situations the staff and services were experiencing. She said overall there had been very positive feedback from managers and staff members. She highlighted that the workplace measures that had been introduced in March (and updated in June, July and August) had initially been for the short term but now officers were looking at reviewing these to make sure they were suitable for the medium to longer term and that they worked on a practical basis. She also noted that all staff had been offered vouchers to have a flu jab, to help with wellbeing and attendance at work.

Union Representative, Kevin Shillitto thanked officers for all that had been done the past few months to support staff and noted that it had been really positive and well received, and that he was grateful that he had clear reasons and explanations to share with his members. He raised a number of issues, including that there had been two surveys on homeworking, the outcomes of which had not been shared with staff; that greater

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guidance was needed in terms of holding informal/team meetings as there was inconsistency about how these were being managed, and finally the lack of clarity on annual leave for those who had been through periods away from work or self-isolating.

In relation to the effects on annual leave, the Head of Paid Service acknowledged that it had been a difficult situation to manage and any impacts on annual leave were currently on hold until the varying factors could be balanced. He noted that the intention was that when people were choosing to be at home for prolonged periods then that would be offset by a reduced period of annual leave but that this had yet to be refined. He confirmed that communications had been sent out to staff the previous day.

In relation to the homeworking surveys, the Human Resources & OD Manager noted that the results of the initial survey regarding employee set up and display screen equipment had been shared with managers who had been asked to discuss this with employees and that she would send out a message to managers to remind them that this conversation should have taken place. The second survey was part of the recovery work plan and was to establish how productive employees had been and any issues they may have had and the results of that survey would be fed into the Homeworking sub-group. Officers noted that they would send out best practice guidance on the format for informal meetings.

The Head of Paid Service extended an offer to the union representatives to join another sub-group which was looking at improvements to the Job Evaluation Scheme (including addressing concerns and issues), and confirmed that Members would also be involved with this process.

The meeting concluded at 10:57 hours.