

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, 2nd March 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillors: Mary Dooley, Graham Parkin and Nick Clarke.

Jessica Clayton (UNISON) and Liz Robinson (UNISON).

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Chief Executive), Oliver Fishburn (HR & Payroll Manager), and Lindsay Harshaw (Governance & Civic Officer).

UECC01-22/23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor David Downes and Chris McKinney (UNISON).

UECC02-22/23

ELECTION OF CHAIR 2022/23

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Jessica Clayton
RESOLVED that Chris McKinney (UNISON) be elected as Chair of the Union/Employee Consultation Committee for the ensuing year.

UECC03-22/23

APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR 2022/23

Moved by Councillor Graham Parkin and seconded by Liz Robinson
RESOLVED that Councillor Mary Dooley be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Union/Employee Consultation Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor Mary Dooley in the Chair

UECC04-22/23

URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

UECC05-22/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

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UECC06-22/23

MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Graham Parkin and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley
RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Union/Employee Consultation Committee meeting held on 20th January 2022, be accepted as a correct record.

UECC07-22/23

SICKNESS ABSENCE – QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2022)

The HR & Payroll Manager presented the Sickness Absence report for Quarter 3 (October – December 2022) and highlighted that the average number of days lost per employee was 2.27 days and the average number of days lost per employee, if COVID related symptoms were discounted, was 1.89 days. The 2022/23 forecast figure for the average number of days lost per employee was 8.76 days. The annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2023 was 8.5 days.

It was noted that the top three service areas proportionately experiencing the highest levels of sickness were:-

- Performance
- Housing Management
- Streetscene

The lowest service areas for sickness absence were:-

- Heads of Service
- HR & Payroll
- Governance

The key trends for sickness absence were highlighted as follows:-

- The overall average days lost due to sickness had increased to 2.27 in Quarter 3, this had increased from Quarter 2 but was marginally lower than Quarter 1.
- 160 days had been lost in Quarter 3 due to Covid19 symptoms (employees unfit for work) compared with 157.5 days lost in the last quarter.
- The short term sickness had increased from Quarter 2, however, long term sickness had slightly reduced.
- There were 6 cases of absence due to Stress/Depression during Quarter 3, one of which was work related and 5 were not work related.
- There were 16 long term cases in this quarter, 7 were due to physical health ailments and 1 was related to Stress/Depression (work related), appropriate support and assistance had been provided to facilitate support for those who had returned to work and those planning to do so. 7 had returned to work and 2 had chosen to resign (the absence was not work related).

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The Council had arranged for the following support to be made available to staff:

- Mental Health awareness sessions – the number of attendees would be reported at year end
- Cycle to Work Scheme – the number of employees subscribing to this initiative would be reported at year end
- Employees were being signposted to incentives which were available via Leisure
 - Go Active membership at a cost of £15 per month
 - Health Referral Programme (Physical Activity & Lifestyle Support) which was available to employees residing within the Bolsover District Council area. This programme was aimed at changing behaviours and finding solutions to assist people facing daily challenges resulting in a concentrated approach regarding service users health and wellbeing.

A Member queried whether staff were attending the mental health awareness sessions. The HR & Payroll Manager advised that these sessions were run quarterly and that a report detailing the figures would be provided at year end.

A Member asked whether staff were utilising the Cycle to Work Scheme. The HR & Payroll Manager stated that a few members of staff had used the scheme.

A Unison representative commented that Stress/Depression was frequently highlighted as a sickness absence issue and a suite of support had been made available to staff. It was suggested that staff be made aware of the services available to them.

A Member highlighted that Other Muscular Skeletal was also an issue, particularly in relation to Streetscene due to the nature of work undertaken by the operatives. He queried whether consideration was being given to the ageing workforce and asked if programmes were being put in place for the longer term provision of the service. The Chief Executive stated that plans had been put in place as the ageing workforce was quite high across Streetscene and that the Assistant Director of Streetscene was continually reviewing the service to ensure continuity of service. The Health & Safety team was also involved in order to try and keep muscular problems to a minimum.

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Nick Clarke
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

UECC08-22/23

UNISON CONVENOR FACILITY TIME REVIEW

A UNISON representative briefly explained that the purpose of the report was to request an increase in the facility time provided from two to five days in order to respond to the changes taking place within the Council.

Following the merger of the former UNISON Bolsover Branch into the larger Derbyshire County UNISON Branch in 2018, the role of the Branch Secretary

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was replaced with a local Convenor for Bolsover. Since that time, the Local Convenor role had evolved to act as lead steward for Bolsover District Council UNISON members, lead Health & Safety representative for Council workplaces and lead lifelong learning and welfare representative for Bolsover District Council UNISON members. Following a review of the time that these changes to the role had demanded, it was evident that it was becoming increasingly difficult to carry out these additional duties within the two days contractual employment time per week for the purpose of carrying out trade union duties provided for within the Time Off and Facilities Agreement. It was, therefore, felt that the amount of time provided for facility time needed to be increased in order to provide sufficient time for UNISON duties.

Informal discussions had taken place with the Council's Senior Leadership Team and this had indicated a willingness to increase the amount of contractual employment time per week for the purpose of carrying out trade union duties for the UNISON Local Convenor role within the Time Off and Facilities Agreement from the current two days to five days.

A Member queried the number of UNISON members. A UNISON representative advised that there were currently just under 200 members.

The Chief Executive commented that following lengthy discussions with UNISON representatives, she fully supported the request. It was also noted that other unions may also make similar requests.

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Nick Clarke
RESOLVED that the proposal to increase the amount of contractual employment time per week for the purpose of carrying out trade union duties for the UNISON Local Convenor role within the Time Off and Facilities Agreement from the current two days to five days, be supported.

The meeting concluded at 10:18 hours