

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 26th September 2019 at 1100 hours.

PRESENT:-

Council Representatives:- Councillors Derek Adams, Mary Dooley, Graham Parkin, Ross Walker and Rita Turner.

Unison Representatives:- Kevin Shillitto.

Unite Representatives:- None in attendance at the meeting.

Officers:- Lee Hickin (Joint Strategic Director – People), Sara Gordon (Human Resources and OD Manager) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer).

Christopher McKinney (Unison) in the Chair

0332. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Dan Swaine (Chief Executive Officer).

0333. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0334. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

0335. MINUTES – 27TH JUNE 2019

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Derek Adams
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Union / Employee Consultation Committee held on 27th June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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0336. SICKNESS ABSENCE QUARTER 1 (APRIL 2019 – JUNE 2019)

Committee considered a report which provided sickness absence figures for the Quarter 4 period (January 2019 to March 2019), with comparative data from previous years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Absence for Senior Managers was shown as 50% of the total absence for Senior Managers as this was split between Bolsover and North East Derbyshire District councils.

The average number of days lost per employee for Quarter 4 was 2.09 days but this was lower than Quarter 4 in the previous year (2017/18) at 2.80 days. The annual outturn figure for the average number of days lost per employee for 2018/19 was 8.7 days against an annual target of 8.5 days.

Benchmark data had been sought which showed that the average days' sickness absence per full time equivalent for councils in the East Midlands Region was 9.1 days, this meant that Bolsover had one of the lowest sickness absence outturns in the East Midlands Region.

A summary of key corporate trends in table formats were included in the report and covered;

- Organisational Outturn Average Number of Days Absence
- Organisational Long Term/Short Term Split Days Percentage
- Number of Long Term/Short Term Cases
- Top Three Services Proportionately Experiencing Highest Levels of Absence
- Top Three Services Proportionately Experiencing Lowest Level of Absence
- Top Three Reasons for Absence

Sickness levels had reduced for the second consecutive year. Long term sickness accounted for a high proportion of days lost (63.75%) over the year. Stress/Depression featured in the top three reasons in all four quarters and muscular skeletal was featured in 3 out of the 4 quarters.

Managers had support from dedicated service area HR Link officers and were issued monthly sickness absence information. Managers were also able to access sickness information for their teams' on a daily basis via the HR21 Self Service portal.

Operational concerns around management of sickness absence cases were raised with respective managers and dealt with as per standard practice and policy.

In response to a Member's query, the Human Resources and OD Manager advised Committee that the current number of full time equivalent Streetscene operatives was 183.16

The Chair noted that positive trends were now showing with regard to sickness absence.

Moved by Kevin Shillitto and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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0337. DRAFT ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES – MILEAGE AND RELATED TRAVEL EXPENSES

Committee considered a report which provided information on the recently revised Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy.

The policy had been previously considered and approved by Strategic Alliance Management Team (SAMT) and from 14th August 2019 had been subject to consultation with the trade unions and service managers. The revised policy document superseded any previous mileage and related travel expenses policies or procedures in place at BDC.

The Human Resources and OD Manager advised Committee that upgrades to HR21 were being arranged to ensure the system was fit for purpose in relation to the details as set out in the revised policy document. Briefing sessions with practical demonstrations would be set up to enable staff to use the system after the upgrade and there would also be access to the system via an 'app' on work mobile phones.

A Unison representative advised the meeting of various concerns raised by Unison members regarding the revised policy and also by some managers with regard to the increased administrative burden when in their view there was no legal requirement for the documents to be produced and no reason to doubt that staff would adhere to the relevant laws. The Human Resources and OD Manager replied that professional advice had been taken from relevant Council teams that a requirement for staff to evidence insurance/MOT documents would protect both management and employees. With regard to business mileage claims and where it was not possible to take the shortest route due to road diversions or adverse weather conditions, paragraph 2 of Part 10 of the revised policy outlined that these instances were required to be appropriately identified on a claim form and authorised by an employees' line manager prior to submitting the claim. The Human Resources and OD Manager added that a review could be carried out in 6 to twelve months' time to see if the administration of the policy was having a significant effect on Managers' time. The Unison representative requested that for clarity and consistency, paragraph 2 of Part 10 should clearly apply to the first bullet point in Part 3 of the policy.

The Chair suggested further clarity to the wording in the 5th bullet point of Part 1 of the policy as highlighted in bold below;

- Employees must provide ~~the following details~~ **sufficient and reasonable detail** on a mileage claim form
 - Date of journey
 - Start location
 - Locations visited
 - End location
 - Reason for the journey
 - Total business mileage incurred

The Unison representative noted that the revised policy did not meet current HMRC guidance on what qualified as an employee's usual workplace for the day and provided the meeting with an example of a scenario which would result in some members of staff

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receiving less mileage expenses than with the previous policy. The Human Resources and OD Manager replied that the revised policy related to all staff contracts of employment where a normal place of work would be considered as any location within the District or a Council site. However, it would be slightly different depending on whether the member of staff was a joint officer or not and also whether a journey was within the District or outside of the District. Using the same example provided by the Unison representative, a Joint officer travelling from home e.g., (Sheffield) to a meeting in Derby would deduct the mileage from home to Mill Lane (which would be the nearest place of work to the officer's home) and claim the mileage from Mill Lane to Derby. The Joint Strategic Director – People, noted the Unison representative's concern and suggested further wording be added to the policy for clarity.

The Unison representative requested that the Council remained with the Bolsover policy of using the shortest distance rather than the deduction of commute. The changes had the potential to reduce the mileage that could be claimed by staff compared with the current policy and there was nothing to suggest the current policy was unlawful. The Human Resources and OD Manager replied that the Council needed to show that it was not paying employees commuter mileage and the revised policy left no doubt as to what employees could claim.

The Unison representative noted that he had further points to raise with regard to the revised policy but could address these outside of the meeting. The Chair suggested that the roll out of the policy take place after the briefing sessions had taken place which would provide time for the Unison representative's further points to be addressed.

The Human Resources and OD Manager noted that if approved, the policy would be presented to Council in November for approval and would be presented as set out at this meeting along with the suggested amendments. The policy would then be rolled out and briefing sessions would take place after approval by Council.

A Member suggested that a review on how the policy was working be carried out in 6 months' time.

Moved by Christopher McKinney and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley
RESOLVED BY MEMBERS that (1) subject to the following amendments, UECC support the Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy;

- (i) paragraph 2 of Part 10 shall clearly apply to the first bullet point in Part 3 of the policy;
- (ii) wording in the 5th bullet point of Part 1 of the policy as highlighted in bold below;

*Employees must provide ~~the following details~~ **sufficient and reasonable detail** on a mileage claim form*

(2) that the revised Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy be rolled out after the briefing sessions had taken place.

(3) a review on how the policy was working be carried out in 6 months' time.

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(Human Resources and OD Manager)

Kevin Shillitto (Unison) voted against the recommendation and the Chair did not cast a vote. Accordingly, the UNION side REJECTED the recommendation.

The meeting concluded at 1235 hours.