

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 6th February 2020 at 1100 hours.

PRESENT:-

Council Representatives:- Councillors Mary Dooley, Graham Parkin and Rita Turner.

Unison Representatives:- Kevin Shillitto and Liz Robinson.

Unite Representatives:- No representatives present.

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

Christopher McKinney (Unison) in the Chair

0610. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Derek Adams.

0611. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0612. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

0613. MINUTES – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Moved by Kevin Shillitto (Unison) and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley
RESOLVED that subject to the first paragraph of Minute 0336 being amended to read;
‘... sickness absence figures for the Quarter 1 period (April 2019 to June 2019)’, the Minutes of a Union/Employee Consultation Committee held on 26th September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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0614. SPECIAL MINUTES – 5TH DECEMBER 2020

Moved by Kevin Shillitto and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Special Meeting of Union/Employee Consultation Committee be approved as a correct record.

0615. SICKNESS ABSENCE QUARTER 2 (JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2019)

Committee considered a report which provided sickness absence figures for the Quarter 2 period (July 2019 to September 2019), with comparative data from previous years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

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 2 was 1.84 days. The 2019/20 predicted outturn figure for the average number of days lost per employee was 7.38 days. The annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2020 was 8.5 days.

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 3 services proportionately experiencing highest levels of absence
- Top 3 services proportionately experiencing lowest level of absence
- Top 3 reasons for absence

The average number of days lost per full time employee during Quarter 2 (1.84) was lower than the previous 3 corresponding Quarters. Six departments in total had nil sickness during Quarter 2 in comparison to only 1 department with nil sickness in Quarter 1 - the 3 Departments listed within the report were selected due to the highest number of full time employees.

Other Muscular Skeletal and Stress/Depression continued to remain within the top 3 reasons for absence and there seemed to be a direct correlation between employees aged over 50 undertaking physically demanding work and high levels of sickness.

In response to a Unison representative's query regarding sickness absence cost to the Council as set out in the report, the Human Resources & OD Manager advised the meeting that the figures were calculated on salary cost only.

A Member noted that the Council provided good support for employees who were absent due to stress whether work or home related and it was important that this support was in place.

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Moved by Kevin Shillitto and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

0616. SICKNESS ABSENCE QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2019)

Committee considered a report which provided sickness absence figures for the Quarter 3 period (October 2019 to December 2019), with comparative data from previous years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

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 3 was 2.43 days. The 2019/20 predicted outturn figure for the average number of days lost per employee was 8.16 days. The annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2020 was 8.5 days.

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 3 services proportionately experiencing highest levels of absence
- Top 3 services proportionately experiencing lowest level of absence
- Top 3 reasons for absence

The average number of days per full time employee lost during Quarter 3 (2.43) was lower than the previous corresponding Quarter. Other Muscular Skeletal and Stress/Depression/Chest Respiratory continued to remain within the top three reasons for absence. There seemed to be a direct correlation between employees aged over 50 undertaking physically demanding work and high levels of sickness.

Moved by Councillor Graham Parkin and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

0617. DRAFT ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES – MILEAGE AND RELATED TRAVEL EXPENSES

Committee considered a report in relation to the revised Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy.

At a special meeting of the Committee held on 5th December 2019, it was resolved that the Human Resources and OD Manager send a revised draft of the policy to union representatives that incorporated the following changes:

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- a) paragraph 2 of Part 10 shall clearly apply to the first bullet point in Part 3 of the policy;
- b) 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*

- c) additional wording be added to the policy to clarify what constituted 'a normal place of work'

It was further resolved that union representatives would respond to the above and provide the Human Resources & OD Manager with a list of their outstanding issues.

The draft revised Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy now presented to Committee incorporated the changes agreed between the unions and management and the Human Resources & OD Manager confirmed that a Manager must confirm to an employee what constituted 'their normal place of work' for the post.

Unison representatives thanked the Human Resources & OD Manager for her partnership working on the policy and for her patience and cooperation and also Members on the Committee for helping Unison to get to a conclusion.

A Member also thanked the Human Resources & OD Manager.

Moved by Kevin Shillitto (Unison) and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley
RESOLVED that the draft revised Mileage and Related Travel Expenses Policy be recommended to Council for approval.

(Human Resources & OD Manager/Governance Manager)

0618. FACILITIES AGREEMENT AMENDMENTS

A Unison representative presented a report in relation to proposed trade union Facilities Agreement amendments.

In January 2018, the Bolsover Branch of UNISON merged with the wider Derbyshire Branch. Terminology in the Trade Union Facilities Agreement required updating with a view to recognising the current position. The agreement also required updating to reflect changes in job titles within the Council.

A draft agreement with tracked changes to reflect the proposed updates had been circulated to Committee members after the publication of the agenda for this meeting.

In addition to updated terminology, the agreement contained amendments to deal with issues in relation to facility time.

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Branch Facility Time

It was the democratic right of any UNISON member at the Council to stand for official positions within the Derbyshire Branch. It was important to recognise the contribution Bolsover members could make through these roles to the wider branch, the visibility this would offer Bolsover within the Branch and that this cooperation reflected well on the Council in its recognition of the trade union movement.

It was proposed that in this respect the Agreement be amended to provide one day of paid facility time per week to any Bolsover employee elected to one of the following recognised branch officer roles:

- Branch chair
- Branch secretary
- Branch treasurer
- Branch health and safety officer
- Branch young members' officer
- Branch equalities co-ordinator
- Branch education co-ordinator
- Branch lifelong learning co-ordinator
- Branch communications officer
- Branch membership officer
- Branch welfare officer
- Branch women's officer
- Labour Link officer
- Environmental officer

It was proposed that this facility time be limited to a single person (whether or not combined with other duties). Any additional facility time for Branch roles would need to be determined through negotiation with the Branch and Derbyshire County Council.

Local Facility Time

While the Convenor for Bolsover benefitted from a set amount of facility time for organising purposes, trade union duties (whether carried out by the same person or others) were determined on an ad hoc basis.

Recent experience had demonstrated that an ad hoc approach to facility time was difficult for those who had fluctuating workloads and/or work in teams too small for effective cover arrangements to be determined on such a basis. This could lead to situations where both the individual and their department were unable to properly plan and manage their workloads and availability.

In the case of the current UNISON Convenor it had resulted in negotiations, representation and other TU duties being undertaken in time set aside for organising, consuming much of that fixed period of facility time and undermining the purpose of having that time allocated to them.

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Therefore it was proposed that the agreement be amended to provide fixed periods of facility time for trade union duties where appropriate. It was suggested that requests should generally be based on providing a minimum period of facility time. For example, a steward could be granted 5 hours a week of fixed facility time but could still request additional ad hoc time as and when demanded by their case load.

It is anticipated that determining fixed periods of facility time would be done following discussion between the trade union, the individual's manager and HR.

Members were requested to recommend the above amendments for inclusion in the Trade Union Facilities Agreement.

In response to a query from the Strategic Director – People, the Unison representative confirmed that the proposals were for 1 trade union person to have 1 day per week to spend on branch roles. Holding multiple roles would not result in additional days' release.

The Human Resources & OD Manager suggested that the wording in bold and underscored below be added at 10.2 in the Agreement;

*The Council understands the positive contribution that local UNISON members can make to the wider Derbyshire Branch and the importance of Bolsover having a voice within the Branch Committee. In recognition of that the Council will permit one day per week of paid time off for one employee elected to one **or more** of the following recognised branch officer roles:*

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Kevin Shillitto (Unison) **RESOLVED** that subject to the following amendment highlighted in bold and underscored below, the revised trade union Facilities Agreement amendments be recommended for approval by SAMT under delegated powers;

*The Council understands the positive contribution that local UNISON members can make to the wider Derbyshire Branch and the importance of Bolsover having a voice within the Branch Committee. In recognition of that the Council will permit one day per week of paid time off for one employee elected to one **or more** of the following recognised branch officer roles:*

The meeting concluded at 1125 hours.