

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

29 JUNE 2020

PRESENT

Councillors A.M. Whyte (Vice-Chair in the Chair), D. Acton, A. Akinola, M. Cordingley, J. Holden, B. Rigby and R. Thompson.

In attendance

Sara Saleh	Corporate Director of People
Kate Sturman	Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2020 be approved as a correct record.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None were received.

3. HR SERVICE - WORKFORCE UPDATE

The Corporate Director of People introduced the report to the Committee. The Committee were informed that the response to the COVID 19 pandemic by staff had been exceptional. The Corporate Director drew the Committee's attention to a number of areas of the report including sickness absences during the pandemic, the new approach to training, the new approach to recruitment including virtual interviews and the resource hub, and the health and safety approach to the Council's buildings and working from home.

Communications had included regular COVID 19 updates to the whole workforce, manager webinars, and there were plans to roll out virtual Let's Talk meetings. The Council were looking to develop a strategy that would cover communications with staff for the foreseeable future. The Council were also looking to develop staff awards with cheers for peers being a way for staff to thank each other for the support they had received. Meetings had been held with the Chairs of the Council's staff support groups and these were to be continued going forward.

Following the update the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions. Cllr Akinola asked whether there had been any pattern of increased issues among BAME staff in response to COVID 19. The Corporate Director of People responded that no trends had been identified although as BAME men had been

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identified as at risk this had been factored into the guidance and risk assessment for staff returning to the workplace.

Councillor Rigby asked whether trade unions had been consulted during the lockdown. The Corporate Director of People answered that there had been consistent communications between the Council and trade unions.

Councillor Thompson asked how the Council would get accurate sickness data. The Corporate Director of People responded that the Council had been asking people to report if they were not feeling well. The Corporate Director of People added that the Council had expected to see a reduction in sickness due to the nature of agile working and the benefits that it offered. There are also many other factors affecting sickness rates.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

4. WORKFORCE UPDATE COVID-19 RELATED ABSENCE

The Corporate Director of People introduced the report to the Committee which set out an approach to managing and supporting staff unable or unwilling to work due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The Committee were informed that the Council had shared information and benchmarked their approach with other local authorities and partners such as North West Employers. The resulting recommended approach was contained within the report and the Corporate Director asked the Committee if they had any questions and to support the approach outlined within the report.

Councillor Acton thanked the Corporate Director of People for the comprehensive report and stated that he felt that the Council was taking every precaution and voiced his support for the recommendations within the report. The Chair asked the Committee if they supported the approach within the report and the Committee unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee support the approach outlined within the report.

5. PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT POLICY

The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence introduced the report. The Committee were informed that the government had passed a piece of legislation which provided parental bereavement leave but at statutory pay levels. Trafford's policy was to increase this to full pay. The Committee were told that this would be eligible to all staff as soon as they started working. The Committee were informed that the policy was in addition to the Special Leave for bereavement policy which was already in place.

Following the introduction Councillors Rigby, Akinola, and Acton all voiced their support for the policy and the Committee approved the policy.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee approve the Parental Bereavement Policy.

6. OVERPAYMENTS POLICY

The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward and Intelligence introduced the report stating that overpayments did occasionally occur despite the Council's best efforts and that the policy formalised the Council's approach for when they did occur. The Committee were informed of the process for reclaiming the overpayment from staff. It was hoped that this would be done quickly but fairly to minimise disruption but if an overpayment happened over a number of months the Council would normally look to reclaim the money over the same number of months.

Councillor Cordingley asked what would happen in a case where it happened to a new starter and the large impact the correction could have. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward and Intelligence stated that the policy was the general approach but the process was flexible in areas where a member of staff would be impacted particularly badly by repaying the overpayments.

Following the Committee's questions the report was noted and the recommendations agreed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and recommendations be agreed by the Committee.

7. RECOVERY PLAN

The Corporate Director of People introduced the presentation and updated the Committee about the continuation of the modernisation work programme that had started prior to COVID 19. The Committee were informed that the recovery strategy would look to deliver according to the modernisation plans and would feed into those plans. A sub group had been created to aid with staff member reintegration into the workforce.

Staff members were to continue to work from home where possible with the two meter social distance rules being maintained within Council buildings. The Council were looking at buildings operating with a maximum of 20% occupancy for the foreseeable future. A survey had been sent out to staff members, which included gathering their opinions on working from home. 41% of staff who had responded to the survey wanted to work from home full time and 76% wanted to work from home for some of the time. Following the Corporate Director's introduction the Committee were asked if they had any questions.

Councillor Acton welcomed the work and the lessons that had been learnt from going through this crisis around working patterns. When looking at remote working and remote meetings there had been some excellent work within the Council and the Councillor stated that they would like to see Member involvement in this work. The Councillor asked that Members be considered in terms of how the Council's

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business would continue and that they could be involved in talking to the community. The Corporate Director of People responded that so far consultation had been conducted with Executive Members but this would be developed with a wider base of Councillors. Community engagement had also been done working with the Trafford Partnership.

Councillor Rigby asked that it be captured within the minutes that COVID 19 had been a life changing experience for many and that it would continue to impact people for a long time. The Councillor welcomed the report and the work which was being done.

Councillor Thompson asked whether there had been a drill down on the responses to the survey on working from home as to why 41% wanted to continue full time and 76% part time working from home. The Corporate Director responded that the Council had received over 700 responses which they were working through and more information would be provided once that work was completed.

Councillor Cordingley asked what was being done to monitor the Health and Safety of staff moving forward in the new ways of working, such as the impact on stress from working from home. The Corporate Director of People responded that the Council were looking at the impact of working from home, for example the amount and length of meetings staff were having, and how this was affecting individuals.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That additional information on responses to the working from home survey be shared with the Committee when available.

8. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY

The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward and Intelligence gave a verbal update to the Committee. There had been a total of six requests for extensions to the sickness policy in the previous quarter. Of those six five had been agreed and one had not required agreement as the staff member's ill health application for retirement had been agreed. The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions but none were raised.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.05 pm and finished at 4.45 pm