

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a meeting of the Human Resources Committee held in the District Council Chamber, Kendal Town Hall, Kendal, on Tuesday, 14 June 2022, at 3.00 p.m.

Present

Councillors

Rachael Hogg (Chairman)

Pat Bell
Eamonn Hennessy

Matt Severn
Shirley-Anne Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali Jama (Vice-Chairman), Brian Rendell and Heather Troughton.

Officers

Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Kira King	HR Specialist
Julia Krier	Legal, Governance and Democracy Senior Specialist (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Courtney Langhorne	Case Management Officer (Support Services)
Jackie McKay	Specialist - Human Resources
Charlie McShane	Specialist - Human Resources
Simon McVey	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources
Charles Officer	HR Lead Specialist

HR/1 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 1st February 2022.

HR/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were raised.

HR/3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED - That the items in Part II of the Agenda be dealt with following the exclusion of the press and public.

HR/4 TERMS OF REFERENCE - HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – That the Terms of Reference for Human Resources Committee be noted.

HR/5 ANNUAL ABSENCE REPORT 2021/22

The HR Specialist presented the Annual Sickness Absence Report to the Human Resources Committee providing details of employee sickness absence in the Council during the period 1 April 2021 to March 2022.

It was recommended that the Human Resources Committee approve the report with any actions to be taken moving forward and approve the target for sickness absence for 2022/23 of 7.50 days to be maintained.

During the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, the Council had an average full time equivalent (FTE) of 413.5. The Council lost 4668.6 working days through sickness absence, compared to 4040.5 in the previous year (an increase of 628.1 days, 15.5%).

This was equivalent to 11.29 days per FTE employee per annum. This represented an increase of 1.14 days per FTE employee compared to last year which was 10.15 and an increase of 3.79 days over the target of 7.5 days per FTE employee agreed by the Human Resource Committee.

The Human Resources Specialist confirmed that the HR Team regularly reported on absence and managers are supported by HR to monitor these absences, providing updates through monthly KPI reports.

The Human Resources Specialist confirmed to the Committee that the Council was introducing pro-active measures and interventions to address long term sickness days through stress, depression and fatigue. Free confidential counselling was provided to employees, as well as smart working policies, the introduction of the alcohol and substance policy and mental wellbeing support for employees.

During discussion members noted concerns regarding the lower target, asking that the categories be considered in further detail and disaggregated to provide more accuracy on sickness absence 'other' category.

The Human Resources Specialist confirmed that in previous years the percentage of cases in the 'other' category had been very low and therefore an increase of only a small number of cases would have the result of increasing the overall percentage significantly. It would be important to consider whether this was a one-off instance of increase in this category. The HR team would look into the parameters of the software system and evaluate whether additional categories need to be added to the list. The Lead Specialist Human Resources also highlighted that the 'other' category for absence was occasionally used for example for personal circumstances or bereavement cases, which were areas that were not easily defined by other sickness categories. In those instances, use of the 'other' category enabled the Council to support these employees in the best way possible in the circumstances.

The increase in non-work related muscular skeletal absence was also noted by members. The Human Resources Specialist confirmed that, following clarification regarding the differences between work-related and non-work related absences, information was now being captured more accurately for this category of absence.

The Committee noted acknowledgment of the stress, depression and fatigue figures and asked that additional support be put into place for staff going through the TUPE process in relation to Local Government Reorganisation. It was confirmed by the Human Resources

Lead Specialist that the HR work stream in the Cumbria LGR programme was aware of these issues and had created a full communications strategy and narrative to support employees from all councils through these changes. In addition the Lead Specialist drew attention to the Council's wellbeing strategy and the tools in place to support employees including the Employee Assistance Programme and regular informative updates on the Council website.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Annual Report on Employee Sickness Absence be approved;
- (2) The sickness absence target for 2022/23 of 7.50 days be maintained.

HR/6

HR POLICY UPDATES

The HR Specialist presented the HR Policy Update report to the Human Resources Committee, identifying changes made and updated wording in a number of the Council's policies. It was noted that there were seven new policies for members to approve, following structural management changes through Customer Connect, legislative changes and simplification of processes.

It was highlighted that the Recruitment policy had been revised to include a policy to accommodate armed forces veterans. Other policy updates included the introduction of flow charts. These updates sought to make the Council's policies fit for purpose for moving into the new unitary council, and more user-friendly for employees.

The Human Resources Lead Specialist highlighted that the HR and OD work stream of the LGR programme had been reviewing and comparing each sovereign council's respective HR policies with a view to reviewing which policies would be taken forward into the new authority. It was imperative that certain policies were in place from day one of the new authority and the Council's HR Specialists were heavily involved in those discussions in the LGR work stream.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The updates to the Flexible Working, Recruitment, Capability, Probation, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Secondment Policies, along with the relevant appendices, as attached to the report, be approved.

HR/7**FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT REQUEST**

- *Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual.*
- *Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.*
- *Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Summary

The Director of Strategy Innovation and Resources presented the report in relation to a request for flexible retirement. Members supported the request noting that it was a welcome opportunity, in the circumstances, to retain the skills of the post holder as well as facilitating development opportunities for other members of the team.

RESOLVED – That:-

- (1) The request for Flexible Retirement from Post Holder C0046 be approved; and
- (2) The Director of Strategy Innovation and Resources be delegated authority to agree the date the flexible retirement should commence.

The meeting ended at 3.44 p.m.