

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Staff and Pensions Committee held on 13 February 2014**

### **Present:**

#### **Members of the Committee**

Councillors: Izzi Seccombe (Chair)  
Jeff Clarke  
Sara Doughty  
Bill Gifford

Officers: David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources  
Judith Coote, Business Partner (Fire and Rescue)  
Sue Evans, Head of HR and Organisational Development  
Andrew Lovegrove, Head of Corporate Financial Services  
Paul Williams, Democratic Services Team Leader

### **1. General**

#### **(1) Apologies for Absence**

Councillor John Appleton and Councillor Brian Moss

#### **(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None

#### **(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2013**

The minutes of the meeting of the 14 November 2013 were discussed and agreed as an accurate record.

Under matters arising and in response to a question from Councillor Bill Gifford Sue Evans (Head of HR and Organisational Development) informed the committee that absence information is collected and monitored at team level. She added that where spikes or other anomalies are identified the information is passed to business partners for consideration. In addition Councillor Jeff Clarke is made aware of any such issues in his role as Portfolio Holder. It was agreed that exception reports should also be brought to the committee where appropriate.

#### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2013 be agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

## **2. Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee Minutes and Membership Update**

Andrew Lovegrove (Head of Corporate Financial Services) briefed the committee on the content of the report. He explained that investments are spread across a range of areas to minimise risk and maximise returns. Funds have periods when they perform well and periods when they do not. This is understood but in instances where the performance of fund managers is becoming a cause for concern the County Council is quick to address the matter with them.

Because fund managers are allowed to set their own benchmarks it is necessary to employ a third party to check the validity of those benchmarks.

The Chair referred to the recent meeting of the Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee and sought clarification over the role of other companies that review the performance of fund managers. The committee was informed that it is necessary to have expert scrutiny of the large body of information provided by fund managers to ensure that less than satisfactory performance is not being missed. Some companies will provide advice on when to sell assets or move investments and when to retain them. This is a useful service to the County Council.

Regarding the membership of the County Council Pension Fund the committee was informed that the growth in membership is good news. However it is necessary to monitor the profile of employees across the authority and of membership of the fund. For example those on fixed term contracts will not join the scheme. Older staff having been in the scheme for many years will receive generous returns but young staff do not necessarily have the experience of their older colleagues. It is also important to be aware of the profile of organisations joining the County Council scheme.

### **Resolved**

That the committee notes the report and thanks the Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee for its efforts.

## **3. Equality and Diversity Workforce Report 2013**

Sue Evans briefed the committee on the content of the published report. She particularly noted changes to the reporting regime, that the number of staff had declined and that staff turnover had decreased. This latter point is, she suggested, a reflection of the current economic crisis.

Councillor Bill Gifford observed that a significant number of part time staff have left the organisation. He was informed that this because staff who may previously have chosen to work part time are now finding it necessary to seek full time employment.

Regarding self-declaration Sue Evan noted that many employees choose not to declare a disability. The Chair suggested however that many people with impaired function do not regard themselves as have a disability. It was also suggested that there are some conditions that people are reluctant to declare, mental health issues being an example.

The property rationalisation programme has revealed more staff with disabilities as workstations have been designed to accommodate them.

Whilst there is an imbalance in gender it is important to reflect this in terms of progression. To ensure fairness staff sitting on selection panels must be trained. In addition selection patterns are monitored. The key is to make certain that people are aware of ethnicity and gender bias.

**Resolved**

That the committee note the Equality and Diversity Workforce Report 2013.

**4. Any Other Business Considered Urgent by the Chair**

None

**5. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information**

**Resolved**

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 & 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

**EXEMPT ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE (PURPLE PAPERS)**

**6. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

The committee agreed the recommendation as set out in the exempt minutes.

The meeting rose at 17.00.

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Chair