

Minutes of a meeting of the Staff and Pensions Committee held on 22 July 2014

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillors: Izzi Seccombe (Chair)
John Appleton
Sara Doughty
Bill Gifford
Kam Kaur
Peter Morson (for Brian Moss)

Officers: David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources
Andy Dunn, HR Business Partner, Communities
Sue Evans, Head of HR and Organisational Development
Gordon Latham, HR Business Partner for Schools
Janet Purcell, Democratic Services Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Brian Moss. (Councillor Peter Morson attended as his replacement).

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2014

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2014 be agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

2. Proposed 1% Pay Award for Warwickshire County Council Employees on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions

Gordon Latham, HR Business Partner for Schools, presented a paper that explained the position with regard to the proposed 1% pay award to those staff on school teachers pay and conditions. The national School Teachers' Review Body had recommended a 1% uplift from September 2014 but for the first time the uplift will only automatically apply to minima and maxima of all pay ranges. It was expected that the Secretary of State would support this recommendation and leave it for local authorities to decide whether they wish to apply the 1% to other than those on the top and bottom of pay scales.

A number of authorities had already indicated that they intended to apply the 1% across all staff on school teachers pay and conditions.

The Committee discussed the issue and agreed that the 1% should apply to all staff on school teachers pay and conditions.

Resolved

That, subject to confirmation from the DfE of the proposed 1% pay award, the Committee agrees to pay a 1% pay award to Warwickshire County Council Staff on School Teachers Pay and Conditions.

3. Employee Sickness Absence Management Report – 2013/14

Andy Dunn, HR Business Manager, Communities, presented the annual report on employee sickness absence. This showed that the days lost per employee during 2013/14 stood at 9.6 but this did not include schools which, if included, brought the figure down to 8.47 (the national public sector average being 8.7). It was noted that in 2012/13 the days lost stood at 10.69 per employee if the figures for schools was excluded compared to the 9.6 days in 2013/14. This shows that there had been a decrease in absence and also been a slight increase in the percentage of employees with no absence (from 36.3% to 39.9%).

Members noted that as with 2012/13, stress and mental health remains the top reason for sickness absence (23.7%, up from 17.4% in 2012/13). Sue Evans, Head of HR and Organisational Development, explained that it was feedback from people in this category that indicated that the economic pressures and continuous changes in the workplace were having an impact on anxiety and stress levels experienced by staff.

Councillor Kam Kaur, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customers, assured the meeting that HR and service managers were working hard to support staff through the changes and there was a range of support and advice for managers. Sue Evans advised that, in addition to the examples of support set out in paragraph 8 of the report, HR were working with Public Health in developing pro-active approaches to preventing and tackling stress.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe thanked officers for the report and the strategies to deal with absence and looked forward to further decrease in sickness absence.

It was agreed that the Committee be provided with some more detail including data for 2012/13 by department and comparisons with other County Councils.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee notes the performance information in relation to the management of employee sickness absence for 2013/14.
- (2) That the Committee supports a proactive approach to managing absence which includes on-going training of managers.

4. Any Other Business

Councillor John Appleton, Chair of the Pension Fund Investment Sub-Committee, reported that the scheme valuation at the end of March was very favourable and the funding level stood at 82%. He also reported that the Government's changes to pension legislation included changes to the governance arrangements and a proposal to introduce a Pensions Board. The Head of Finance is looking at the implications of the proposals that were currently out to consultation.

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. Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2014

Resolved

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2014 be agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

The meeting rose at 4.45 pm

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Chair

