

## **BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

### **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at the Front Committee Room - Town Hall, Reigate on 21 January 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors V. H. Lewanski (Chair), M. A. Brunt (Vice-Chair), S. McKenna and C. M. Neame.

#### **54. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 4 December 2019, be approved as a correct record and signed.

#### **55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **56. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **57. MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT - PRESENTATION**

The Head of Legal and Governance presented to the Committee. The Member Learning and Development Programme had consisted of 32 sessions delivered between May and December 2019. It consisted of an induction day on Saturday 11 May 2019, and two comprehensive phases of training, which included Planning, Financial Scrutiny, Member/Officer relations and Chairing skills. Where attendance was mandatory, (Planning and Code of Conduct) more than 87% of Members attended. However, where attendance was optional, 35% of Members attended. The average attendance for sessions aimed at specific Committees, with optional attendance, was 45%. 92% of those that attended were either satisfied or very satisfied that the training session they attended met its objectives and that the sessions had helped them understand their role and responsibilities.

A 'be a councillor' campaign had been delivered between July and September 2018, in preparation for the May 2019 election. The aim of the campaign was to encourage a more diverse range of people to stand to be Councillors to ensure the council better reflected the demographics of the Borough. The campaign was successful and had started to change the gender demographic from 17.6% of Councillors being women in 2019 to 26% in 2020. Whilst the campaign appeared to have further changed the demographic of Councillors, no equality and diversity data was collected.

The following points were discussed:

- The street art initiative had a positive impact in encouraging more people to stand for election.
- RBBC should explore opportunities to share learning with the County Council for the election of County Councillors in 2021.

- If possible, some of the MLD sessions could be webcast and recordings made available throughout the year, or that more sessions be offered online, if those opportunities were available.
- There would be benefit in better understanding the equality and diversity characteristics of Members, in the same way that the Council already collected the data for Officers.
- This was a timely opportunity to prioritise the sessions offered.
- That a variety of timeslots should continue to be available, noting that offering evening sessions, did not lead to better attendance.
- Whether Group Leaders should play a bigger role in improving attendance.
- The MLD sessions should be aligned to the Objectives in Reigate and Banstead 2020 -2025.
- Each session of the induction, and the programme thereafter, would benefit from a better explanation of *why* Members should attend.
- That whilst cost had exceeded budget, the evaluation of the programme would lead to a streamlining of the programme for 2020/21.

Members were supportive of continuing to provide the induction day on a Saturday, as that had proven successful in 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that

1. The findings of the evaluation be noted.
2. A Working Group of Councillors Bray, McKenna and Neame be formed to consider how to improve the attendance and participation of Members in learning and development.
3. The Committee work programme be amended to provide for the Working Group to report back to the Committee with its findings before the start of the 2020/21 municipal year.
4. The date of the Member induction day, for new and existing Members be 16 May 2020.
5. In accordance with the Council's Equality Objectives, Members' equality and diversity data be collected.

**58. DRAFT PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21**

The Human Resources Manager explained that the Pay Policy Statement was an annual statement required by the Localism Act 2011 to articulate the Council's own policies relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its chief officers, and its lowest paid employees.

In response to questions from Members, Officers explained that:

- The Pay Policy did not yet extend to the Council's companies, since the companies did not employ staff.
- *Real Living Wage* accreditation was an ambition that would be achieved by including the requirement in contract specifications as contracts came up for renewal.
- A performance reward was based on consistently high or outstanding individual performance.
- The take-up of the cycle scheme, and of childcare vouchers was in accordance with demand, with no increase being experienced.

**RESOLVED:** that the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 be forwarded to Council for approval.

## 59. ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of Organisational Development presented the report, updating Members on the Organisational Development approach agreed by the Committee in July 2019. The key outcome of the approach would be *Employee Engagement* and the Council would benefit from employees that:

- Were more customer focused
- Were more creative
- Took less time off sick
- Put in greater effort
- Would do their best and be motivated

The approach would help to shape the culture of the Council, develop its future leaders, with the best people skilled to deliver the objectives set out in the new Reigate and Banstead 2020-25 Corporate Plan. The approach would now be known as the *Great People Programme* which would be delivered in three phases.

- i. Benchmarking and baseline tools had been researched and a preferred supplier had been identified with the aim that initial research would be undertaken by the end of the financial year.
- ii. Re-visioning work with all staff to review the Council's vision, values and behaviours.
- iii. Talent acquisition, to review the Council's recruitment and resourcing approach.

In response to Members observations, Officers:

- Clarified that the baseline data would help officers to understand how frequently thereafter the survey should be undertaken.
- Explained that improving employee engagement was a long-term ambition and would be an ongoing conversation.
- Undertook to provide more data about the take up of apprenticeship schemes.
- Undertook to clarify whether the survey would be funded from the Corporate Plan Delivery Fund or from another budget.

**RESOLVED:** that the progress on the approach to Organisational Development (Great People Work) be supported.

## 60. WORKFORCE DATA SUMMARY

The Head of Organisational Development presented the report which gave a high-level summary of workforce sickness absence and employee turnover data. The average of 9.72 working days lost for the preceding 12 months (Q2) was a significant improvement on the average days lost in 2016, but higher than the reported public sector average of 8.4 days. The Council had a comfortable and healthy turnover rate at a time when unemployment was low.

Members' discussion included:

- Acknowledgement of the improvement in sickness absence in recent years.
- The impact of long-term sickness absence on the overall outturn.
- That more comparative data would be helpful in understanding any trends.

Officers confirmed that the Council offered wellbeing and mindfulness resources for staff and that the *Bradford Factor* was used to measure and manage sickness absence.

**RESOLVED:** that the content of the bi-annual Workforce Data summary, comprising of sickness absence and employee turnover data, be noted.

#### **61. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive asked the Committee to note that the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee would be considering a report on the resourcing of the Council's commercial activity, and that consequentially, a special meeting of the Employment Committee would need to be formed in February.

#### **62. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

#### **63. EXEMPT BUSINESS**

**RESOLVED** that members of the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that: (i) it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act; and (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

#### **64. HEAD OF FINANCE (SECTION 151 OFFICER) UPDATE (EXEMPT)**

The Head of Organisational Development explained that lessons had been learned from the previous recruitment process for the role, which included:

- That other Councils were looking for the same or a very similar role, and that the candidate pool was limited.
- An improvement to the promotion and search for candidates was necessary.
- That the salary, within the existing grade, should be advertised at the upper end of the range, due to the higher salaries offered in some neighbouring authorities.

Members felt that a further learning point was that the Council needed to be certain that the job description was better aligned to the specific skills that the Council needed, regarding both Local Authority *and* Commercial finance. Officers agreed to maintain a dialogue with the Leadership in preparation for the forthcoming recruitment.

Officers and Members commended the interim post holder for the significant support that she was continuing to give to the Council.

**RESOLVED:** that the update be noted.

The Meeting closed at 8.30 pm