

PERSONNEL PARTNERSHIP

15 October 2015

Present:-

Councillors Clatworthy, Greenslade, Hart (Vice-Chairman in the Chair) and Owen

Mr Bowman, Ms Flemington, Mr Ryles, Mr Turner and Ms Rutter

Non-voting members:-

Mr Smith (Head of Services for Communities)

Ms Darcy (GMB)

In Attendance:-

Ms Edwards (HR Manager – Strategy)

Mr Yendole (Assistant County Solicitor – Employment)

Mr Sullivan (Standards Committee)

In Attendance for Minute *PP/26

Ms Fitzpatrick (Interim Head of Children's Social Work Service and Child Protection)

Ms Barnett (HR Manager – Performance)

Apologies:-

Councillors Parsons, Connett and Knight

Ms Roberts

***PP/20 Minutes**

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2015 be signed as a correct record.

***PP/21 Deduction of Contributions at Source**

The Staff Side expressed concerns over the impact of the Trade Union Bill which proposed to end the deduction of union membership fees direct from staff salaries, reasoning that Trade Unions paid employers to take union membership fees and that the proposal to end this practice was nonsensical.

The Employer Side supported the Staff Side's view and advised that the Council would continue to deduct union membership fees from staff salaries for as long as it was able to.

***PP/22 Update on Consultation with Non Union Employees**

The Partnership considered the Report of the Head of Services for Communities (SC/15/21) outlining the Council's communication and consultation methods with all staff, including non union employees, on changes directly affecting employees and future employment, wider organisational issues and changes to terms and conditions.

The Partnership welcomed the Report as an example of good practice.

***PP/23** Dates of Future Meetings

Thursday 14 January 2016
Thursday 21 April 2016

***PP/24** Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business in the spirit of the Local Government Act 1972 and on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

***PP/25** Senior Pay Structure and Redundancy Proposals

The Head of Services for Communities reported that discussions between the Council and Trade Unions on changes to the Redundancy Policy had progressed well and that although it had been a difficult process, some options had been developed.

The Staff Side welcomed the progress made to date and acknowledged the financial pressures the Council was facing.

Matters raised by the Staff Side were inter alia:

- that Trade Union members may need to be balloted on the new Redundancy Policy options;
- that while acknowledging the need to fund redundancies resulting from the recent restructure from the Council's Reserves, the practice of funding all future redundancies from Reserves rather than from individual service budgets would not be appropriate in future;
- that while the Trade Unions supported in principle the proposed cap on exit payments for public sector employees at £95,000 as laid out in the Enterprise Bill, there were concerns that this might lead to some staff 'fast tracking' their exits before the Bill was enacted.

The Employers' Side noted the comments and the Head of Services for Communities responded advising that:

- the new Redundancy Policy options would need to be presented to the Appointments & Remuneration Committee before further action could be taken;
- the funding of redundancy payments would be reviewed as requested;
- the 'fast tracking' of staff exits would not be supported by the Council, but that it was possible that staff who would be affected by the changes, exit the employment of the Council before the Bill is enacted, due to legitimate business reasons.

The Partnership also discussed the Senior Officer Pay Structure. The Staff Side reported that the membership of the review panel did not meet Job Evaluation Panel standards.

The Head of Services for Communities responded, advising that the Assimilation process used to review senior officer pay did not use a Job Evaluation Panel and therefore the membership of the panel differed.

***PP/26** Children's Social Work & Child Protection – Recruitment & Performance Management Evaluation 2014/15

The Partnership received the Report of the Delivery Improvement Group (SC/15/15), presented by the Interim Head of Children's Social Work and Child Protection, evaluating the action taken during 2014/15 by the HR Performance Improvement Team to support

the Children's Social Work & Child Protection Service with the recruitment, retention, performance management and development of their workforce.

Issues raised by the Staff Side were inter alia:

- the lack of response to the Partnership's request for data relating to the number of temporary and permanent social workers and the financial implications of this (minute *PP/19 refers);
- the service's current overspend and the cause of this;
- the high levels of psychological related sickness absence among children's social workers, and what was being done to address this;
- the additional unpaid hours worked by many social workers;
- the use of non-frontline consultants and the reasons for their use;
- the lack of successful applications for ASYE positions from social work students at Plymouth University.

The Employers' Side noted the comments and the Head of Children's Social Work and Child Protection responded, advising:

- the increased spending was in part attributed to additional staffing required alongside the ASYEs due to the ASYEs carrying a reduced caseload;
- that ASYE retention to date had been good;
- although fewer social workers had been leaving the employment of the Council, there had been movement within Children's Social Work teams, including promotions, and to Adult Social Care teams;
- the service's reliance on agency social workers had not reduced as dramatically as was hoped, although the Council's use of agency social workers was lower than the national average;
- action was being taken to address psychological sickness absence rates including work to reduce caseloads, supervision and manager support, resilience building training and the use of staff surveys to assess the impact of these measures;
- the Council had invested in IT to enable more flexible working for social workers and reduce the administrative burden;
- that consultants had been used in the Management Information team to work on specialist, short term projects following recommendations made by Ofsted;
- that the Council was working with Plymouth University to address the reasons for the low number of successful applications for ASYE positions from their social work students.

AGREED that the requested data namely, the number of current social worker vacancies in Children's Services, the current number of agency workers in Children's Services, the current number of ASYEs, the retention rate of ASYEs and the current financial position of the Children's Social Work and Child Protection Service, be requested of the Strategic Director of People, copied to the Head of Children's Social Work and Child Protection, and provided to all members of the Partnership by 31 October 2015.

Chairman

Date

