

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

18 November 2020

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)
Councillor Mrs D Clements, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs J James, Mr
GA Jones, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor
S Yelland.

(Virtual meeting: 10.00a.m. – 11.15a.m.)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor ML Evans.

2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was noted that there was a typographical error on page 3 of the Welsh minutes whereby the final sentence of the first paragraph of minute 7 should have read “yn dangos”.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendment.

4. Matters Arising – Corporate Health Standard (Minute 7)

A question was asked regarding progress in the development of a Drug and Alcohol Policy for the Authority. The HR Manager replied that a draft of the policy had been circulated to the Authority’s Staff Representatives Group, however feedback was awaited. A copy of the draft policy would be circulated to Members in advance of the next meeting of the Committee to allow their input.

NOTED.

5. Revised Terms of Reference

The HR Manager explained that following agreement of a policy regarding the approach to Human Resources Policy Development, Approval and Implementation at the National Park Authority on 30 September 2020, consequential changes needed to be made to the Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee. Members’ comments were sought on the draft document which had been circulated.



Members queried various elements of the Terms which the officer clarified had not been changed as a result of the latest revision but formed part of the original Terms of Reference. With the agreement of the Committee he advised he would undertake a wholesale revision of the Terms of Reference, taking account of the comments made at the meeting, and recirculate these, with the changes shown as tracked changes, prior to the next meeting of the Committee. The Administration and Democratic Services Manager clarified that the National Park Authority had delegated personnel matters to this Committee and any changes to its remit was a decision for the Authority.

It was **RESOLVED** that a wholesale revision of the Terms of Reference be undertaken and a draft circulated to the Committee prior to its next meeting.

6. Policy Development

Referring to his earlier comments regarding the ongoing review of the policy on Drug and Alcohol use, the HR Manager advised that work was also continuing on a review of fire safety policy and procedures. The existing policy for the Llanion site had been updated as a result of recent legislation and staff changes and this was being used as a template for the Authority's other sites. He advised that this work had been delayed as sites had been closed due to the pandemic and new procedures could not be tested. However it was intended that policies would be in place at all sites prior to the commencement of the new season in spring 2021.

In addition, First Aid policies and procedures were being reviewed to clarify roles and responsibilities, and a review of the Authority's Maternity Policy had taken place to clarify the rights of staff and update information on childcare vouchers.

The HR Manager went on to refer to the sickness policy and procedure which had been identified as in need of review in the recent internal audit report. He advised that the management of short and long term absences could require different approaches and additional guidance would be provided for managers. The policy would also be aligned with the new HR System to be introduced in the New Year and this would allow better absence reporting and monitoring to take place.

Acknowledging that a number of the Authority's policies had not been updated for a number of years due to staff absences, Members were pleased with the progress that had been made. However they asked whether a report could be made to future meetings regarding such things as the numbers of leavers, starters and those on maternity absence to



allow the Committee to better understand those elements that were critical to the organisation. The HR Manager advised that similar statistics were reported to the Authority's Review Committees, however he could provide a more targeted report to provide reassurance of the health of the organisation going forward.

NOTED.

[With the agreement of the meeting, the Chair took the Staff Survey item out of order of the agenda to allow the Chief Executive, who had to attend other meetings, to join.]

7. Staff Survey

The presentation of the HR Manager, which had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, provided them with the topline results of the staff survey which had been undertaken in September of this year. An excellent response rate of 80% had been achieved, and he believed that most of the staff who did not complete the survey were on casual, rather than permanent, contracts.

The survey had consisted of 34 questions with staff asked to rate statements using a 5 point Likert scale. The responses had been condensed into three categories for ease of reporting. Staff had also been given the opportunity to provide their personal views and opinions in response to the questions, however these had not been published as they were provided on the understanding that they would remain confidential.

The survey results showed many positive scores, with 70-80% indicating they agreed or strongly agreed with many statements, with only 6 of the 34 questions receiving a negative of 25% or above staff disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and these were areas that required further exploration and attention. The HR Manager noted that changing the perceptions of those staff who provided a neutral response was an opportunity to be seized prior to the survey being repeated next year.

It was noted that the survey was a snapshot in time and provided only quantitative responses. The HR Manager explained that he had facilitated a number of sessions with staff at all levels within the organisation to further understand the drivers behind the lower score lines and to seek their views of the actions that were needed for these to improve. It had been agreed that 3 actions would be identified and work would focus on addressing these in the first instance. The Chief Executive added that this was the start of a process, and that an action plan would be developed and reported to the Committee.

Members were pleased with the rate of response and that officers were proactively looking at the results; it was hoped that this would encourage staff to participate in the future. Focusing on the number of staff who had reported finding it difficult to switch-off, they believed that this was true of many people who had found themselves working at home due to the pandemic and wondered whether this particular response would be different in future years. While not disagreeing with this comment, officers also noted that for many staff, working for the Authority was a vocation, rather than a job. Although this was a positive, it was one the Authority needed to be mindful of, ensuring that staff had an appropriate work-life balance and did not feel pressured to work above and beyond their contract.

Other comments related to responses in respect of communications and leadership, and it was also suggested that consideration be given to using the ongoing survey results in the Chief Executive's annual Performance Review. Members believed that the Authority's communications during the pandemic had been exemplary and questioned whether Members needed to hold the mirror up to themselves with regard to their decision making. The Chief Executive replied that he believed that the criticism was mainly aimed at the staff leadership, rather than Members, and could have reflected occasions when staff views had been sought, but the decision taken had not been in line with those views. The HR Manager added that he had undertaken many staff surveys in different organisations, and communications and leadership were areas that typically returned low scores, nevertheless it was hoped that action could be taken to address these areas.

NOTED.

8. Written Statement of Employee Particulars (Contract of Employment)

The HR Manager reported that the new written statement of Employment Particulars had been drafted as part of the ongoing review of HR policies and procedures and had been prioritised to respond to new legislation introduced earlier this year. In addition to the legal changes set out in the report, all existing terms had been reviewed to ensure they remained compliant and protected the Authority in all eventualities.

Both the Authority's Leadership Team and its Staff Representatives Group had been consulted/informed of the Statement and a copy had also been provided to the Authority's Solicitors for them to agree their legality and compliance with UK employment legislation.



Members were advised that once approved, a Welsh Language version would be made available and casual staff contracts would be revised to reflect this approach.

One Member was pleased to see the proposed provision of the Contract in Welsh and asked how new starters would be proactively offered this, in line with S44 of the Welsh Language Measure. The HR Manager replied that a new engagement letter had also been prepared and this would encourage new staff to receive the documents either in Welsh or bilingually.

It was **RESOLVED** that the new Written Statement of Employment Particulars be approved.

NOTED.

The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 23 June 2021 without amendment

