

Human Resources Committee

28 June 2023

Present: Councillor SL Hancock, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor PJ Morgan and Councillor A Wilcox.

[Councillor GA Jones joined the meeting remotely during consideration of item 7, the Human Resources Management Report.]

(Virtual meeting: 10:00am – 11:26am)

1. Election of Chair

Councillor M James opened the meeting and nominated Mrs Julie James for the office of Chair. No other nominations were received.

On the proposal of Councillor M James, Seconded by Councillor Dr S Hancock, it was **RESOLVED** that Mrs J James be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

2. Election of Deputy Chair

The Chair nominated Councillor M James for the office of Deputy Chair. No other nominations were received.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, Seconded by Councillor R Jordan, it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor M James be elected Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor M James as past Chair of the Human Resources Committee, commending him for his work and added that she looked forward to continuing to work alongside him in future.

The Chair began by welcoming the new HR Manager and requested that the thanks of the Committee be passed on to the HR Team for their hard work since the previous HR Manager left the organisation.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Clements and Dr R Heath-Davies.

4. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.



5. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 November 2022 and 8 February 2023 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Councillor PJ Morgan, Seconded by Councillor M James, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 be confirmed and authenticated.

On the proposal of Councillor M James, Seconded by Councillor A Wilcox, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 be confirmed and authenticated.

6. Action Log and Matters arising

a) Staff newsletter (Minute 4a) HR Committee 23 November 2022)

The Chair reported that Members had not received the newsletters since December. It was agreed that Members would be sent missed copies of the newsletter and would be on the mailing list for future editions.

b) Countryside Traineeships (Minute 7b) HR Committee 23 November 2022)

An update was sought by the Chair regarding Countryside Traineeships.

c) Health & Safety Training (Minute 7f) HR Committee 23 November 2022)

The Chair sought an update regarding Health & Safety Training for Members. The Democratic Services Manager noted that some training had taken place and that further training would be included in the Training Plan as appropriate.

d) The Kickstart Scheme

The Chair asked the HR Manager to compose an update on the Kickstart Scheme and distribute to Members.

7. Human Resources Management Report

The Human Resources Management Report featured information on the following topics: Training, Health & Safety Policies, Sickness Absence, Health & Wellbeing, Menopause, Employee Assistance Programme, Covid19, Pay and Grading Review Update and Recruitment & Retention.

a) Health & Safety

The Chair expressed concern regarding the level of information presented as she believed that matters may be missed between the HR and Audit & Corporate Services Committees. It was agreed that a separate discussion would take place between the Chair, Chief Executive, HR Manager and H&S Project Manager on this matter.



b) Sickness Absence

It was reported that sickness absence was significantly lower in May, however there had been absence hotspots. One Member requested clarification on the sickness absence hotspots. The HR Manager confirmed that these cases were not linked to the workplace.

The HR Manager reported that she was set to meet with Managers and Caer Health to identify what further support could be provided to staff and to ensure that all staff were aware of available resources.

The Chair highlighted that the percentage of absence was missing from the latest report and requested it be featured in the next. The HR Manager agreed to feature this percentage in future with confirmation as to how this is calculated.

c) Health & Wellbeing

The report provided an update regarding the Authority's Occupational Health provider, Caer Health, who were set to visit Llanion on the 6 July.

The Chair asked whether Caer Health offered health checks for staff. The HR Manager confirmed that she aimed to organise a wellbeing event where blood pressure and cholesterol would be checked. It was acknowledged that there was work to be done in further supporting staff and added that the team were looking into developing an action plan for Health & Wellbeing. The HR Manager explained that although they were looking into more opportunities to support staff, she was mindful that her main priority was the Pay and Grading Review.

One Member asked if staff had access to private health care benefits. The Chief Executive confirmed that as part of a consultation on staff benefits, benefits of this nature had not been raised by staff at the time however this could be explored again with the Employee Forum to understand whether staff priorities had changed. The Chief Executive explained that Employee Forum meetings had been postponed in the past due to a lack of agenda items being presented by staff. He requested that the topic of Staff Benefits be submitted by Members to ensure the next meeting goes ahead and to establish a more partnership approach. Members agreed to this action. The Democratic Services Manager added that the Authority was partnered with the Welsh Hospital Association which offers private health care benefits.

d) Covid19

The report provided an update regarding Covid19. It was reported that with advice from Caer Health, Covid19 would now be categorised, managed and monitored as any other respiratory infection.

One Member asked if home workplace assessments had been completed by those working from home as he was aware that problems could arise



from staff working in the incorrect position. The Chief Executive confirmed that a new Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy had been developed and in line with this policy, staff were expected to complete a home workplace assessment. The HR manager confirmed that an audit of home workplace self-assessments would be carried out to ensure that these had been completed by all relevant staff.

e) Pay & Grading Review Update

The report provided Members with an update of the Pay & Grading Review with a breakdown of the four phases of the project and the new timescale.

The Chair asked what the original timescale was and how far had the Authority drifted from this. The Chief Executive confirmed that job descriptions and questionnaires were originally set to be submitted for evaluation by February however these would now be expected by September. It was reported that firm dates would be confirmed during the next Management Team meeting. One Member asked when the Cendex licence would begin and how long the Review would take. The HR Manager confirmed that the Cendex licence began in July and the Review would be completed within 12 months therefore a renewal of the license would not be required.

One Member requested clarification regarding the costs involved in the project. The HR Manager confirmed that the Authority had opted for a '100 job bundle' license with West Midlands Employers (WME) which cost £9,500 + VAT and additionally, had purchased a license with Cendex at a cost of £9,518 to assist with Phase 3 of the review. It was reported that the license with Cendex would corroborate the work done by WME. The HR Manager added that the expertise provided by Cendex would enable the Authority to be confident in the outcome of the review as it was likely that there would be appeals from staff at the end of the Pay & Grading Review. The Chair noted that as the Committee would be involved with the appeals process, they would need some training.

The Chair expressed her concern regarding the effect that the delay would have had on staff and requested reassurance that regular communications were being distributed on this matter. The HR Manager confirmed that although there had not been an all-staff email distributed since her arrival to the organisation as insufficient information had been available, communication was being filtered down through management. The HR Manager confirmed that she had met with Unison representatives and had arranged training dates for the internal panel. The Chief Executive confirmed that the most recent all-staff email had been distributed approximately 6 weeks ago which informed staff that more information would be provided once the new HR Manager was in post. It was noted that the Authority had received confirmation of an updated timescale in the past



few days and in light of this, the Chair suggested that an all-staff email should be distributed shortly.

The HR Manager confirmed that she would distribute a flyer to all Members regarding Cendex for further information.

f) Recruitment and Retention

It was reported that the Authority was currently advertising 8 posts however recruitment in some key areas was proving challenging.

One member voiced his concern regarding the Authority's ageing workforce and asked what was being done to encourage more young people to join the organisation. The Member requested confirmation of what progress had been made on apprenticeships and work placements.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority had an ageing workforce as many have considered it to be a good place to work and have therefore remained in post for a long time. It was reported that little progress had been made due to capacity reasons although opportunities had been taken on a case-by-case basis. It was acknowledged that more could be done to encourage young individuals to join the Authority such as discussing the matter with Pembrokeshire College and providing development training.

The Member asked if the Authority had considered using recruitment videos and was ensuring that job advertisements were appealing. The HR Manager confirmed that all job adverts should be creative, highlighting unique selling points and advertised on the correct platforms. She added that other opportunities were being explored, such as joining up with other teams within the Authority that conduct work in outreach. The Chair suggested that another means of connecting with the community could be to collaborate with the Youth Forum.

It was acknowledged that although recruitment of new individuals was essential, settled and happy staff were crucial also. On this note, a confirmation was sought as to whether exit interviews were conducted to understand the reasons behind staff leaving. The Chair confirmed that exit interviews were conducted and asked whether themes were reported to the Leadership Team. The Chief Executive explained that numbers of people leaving the organisation were low but development of more general themes could be considered. The Chair suggested that reporting these in the metrics report in the longer term could prove beneficial to have lessons highlighted and hotspots identified.

One Member asked whether the Authority would promote recruitment at the County Show and School Career Days. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority currently engaged with Careers Wales and some schools however Covid-19 had impacted this. It was reported that the provision of



Work Experience could be challenging as this was often for children under the age of 16 which limited the opportunities that would be appropriate. The Chief Executive added, with regards to the County Show, that recruitment would not be promoted directly however the presence of the Authority generally had a positive knock-on effect. The Chair suggested that a Recruitment leaflet could be beneficial to make the most of the opportunity.

g) Human Resources Metrics

A range of metrics were presented, and it was agreed that the data could be refined to better meet the needs of officers and Members. The HR Manager confirmed that the Employee Opinion Survey (EOS) results could be removed as this was dated information and other topics such as staff turnover could be reported. The Chair agreed with this action and asked when the next survey was set to take place. Members acknowledged that carrying out the survey during the Pay & Grading Review would not be an appropriate time however concern was expressed over leaving it too long before conducting another. The Chief Executive replied that a survey would take place once the Review had been completed.

Noted.

