

EMPLOYEE FORUM

08 November 2023

Present:

Member representatives:

Councillor D Clements, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor R Owens, Councillor B Price, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor C Williams.

Staff representatives:

J Arkley, G Jones, T Jones, G Lister, H Lloyd, R Lovell, C Price, D Roberts and E Rooney (Unison Rep).

Union representatives:

Manuela Hughes (Unison) and Tracey Sayers (Unison).

(Green room, Llanion Park: 2.00pm – 2.45pm)

1. Election of Chair

It was noted that it was the Authority's custom for the Chair to be elected from Member and staff representatives alternately. Although the previous Chair had been a Member representative, nominations were sought from Members of the Authority due to the high level of newly appointed staff representatives.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor R Owens be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

[Councillor Owens then took the Chair]

2. Election of Deputy Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that C Price be elected Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Broome, Tom Bean, Ainsley Corp, Kate Gravell, George Higgins Washbrook, Tomos Jones, Johnathan Lewis (UNISON), Catriona Price and Bryony Rees.

4. Introductions

All those present introduced themselves.

5. Disclosures of interest

It was noted that all Staff Representatives had an interest in item 7a, Staff Benefits, however as no decisions were being taken, the Authority's



Monitoring Officer had confirmed that individual declarations of interest were not necessary. A declaration was made on behalf of all Staff Representatives in relation to item 7a, Staff Benefits.

6. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27 July 2022 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor R Owens, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 27 July 2022 be confirmed and authenticated.

7. Staff Benefits

Members had asked Authority staff for their views regarding current staff benefits for those within the Authority. A list of current staff benefits was presented to the Forum and the Chief Executive (CEO) explained that Members sought Officers views on the matter to understand whether the Authority could offer additional benefits to ensure it was an attractive employer and to ensure that all members of staff were happy.

A UNISON representative took the opportunity to commend the Authority for the range of benefits available to staff and asked whether staff were supported with matters such as childcare, dental care and access to gyms (to encourage active lifestyles and staff wellbeing). In response, the CEO confirmed that staff had access to childcare vouchers however the HR Manager confirmed that she was aware of changes that had been made to this scheme that made it less attractive. It was agreed that the HR Manager would revisit the childcare voucher scheme to fully comprehend any changes that may impact staff within the Authority. Following a brief discussion, it was determined that the Authority had previously offered corporate memberships to Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) gyms however due to a lack of engagement in the scheme, it had ceased. An Officer added that PCC had reduced overall membership costs to the public to encourage a larger uptake and to ensure accessibility.

An Officer suggested reduced electric vehicle charging fees for staff who used the facilities in National Park car parks as a potential staff benefit. The CEO noted the suggestion and agreed to look into this. The Chair of the Authority agreed that this could be a good benefit for staff if possible and asked whether the Authority could offer free parking to staff at National Park chargeable sites. The CEO responded that the Authority had previously looked into this however it was established that this would be categorised as a taxable benefit for staff and would therefore not be as beneficial as initially considered. In response, an Officer queried whether the staff discount of 25% off applicable Authority sites and merchandise



could also apply to the season car park passes rather than them being entirely complimentary. This was noted by the CEO who agreed to investigate this.

A UNISON representative queried whether, as part of the ongoing Pay & Grading review, a living wage would be provided to relevant members of staff. The CEO confirmed that the Authority began to pay the 'Real Living Wage' 8 years ago by paying an allowance to the individuals on scales that fell below the living wage level, however the decision was made at the time not to pursue the associated accreditation. In response to a query raised, the Chief Executive explained that the living wage allowances had caused the compression of some grades however this was set to be addressed by the recent pay settlement and the ongoing Pay & Grading review. A discussion ensued regarding the 'Real Living Wage' Accreditation for Employers, and it was agreed that the Authority should pursue this. The CEO agreed to present a paper on this to a future National Park Authority for approval.

The HR Manager asked whether the provision of Welsh language training should be included on the list of staff benefits. The Chief Executive agreed that this should be included in addition to the day of volunteering that all staff were entitled to.

Noted.

8. Any Other Items of Business

a) Pay & Grading Review Update

The HR Manager confirmed that all necessary information had been provided to the West Midland Employers (WME) Consultants for their attention and fortunately, very few queries had been received in return therefore all was progressing in accordance with the agreed timeline. The HR Manager added that nominated staff and trade union representatives had been trained by WME on the JNC 13 factor job evaluation so they may participate in the moderation and evaluation process as panel members. It was reported that a site visit to the Authority headquarters had been conducted with WME to help inform them of the work that staff do and to provide context. It was confirmed that the completed evaluation was expected by the end of November 2023 and the appeals process had been drafted in preparation for the latter stages of the overall review process. The CEO added that an All Staff meeting had taken place the previous day and an update on this matter had been provided at the meeting.

b) Staff Wellbeing Day

The HR Manager reported that the recent Staff Wellbeing Day had been successful and positive feedback had been received with an array of



suggestions on how the event could be developed and improved in future. Officers reported that following the event, regular yoga sessions and lunchtime walks for wellbeing had been proposed and staff had responded positively.

The Chair of the HR Committee requested that an Action Log be established for the Employee Forum to ensure progress.

Noted.

