

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Monday, 9 September 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)

D Ashby  
J Avery  
A C Beal

M Geaney  
A Harrison  
J L Reynolds

J Whitbourn

In Attendance: The Assistant Director - Corporate, the Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS), Councillor C Brewis and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors N Chapman, S Chauhan, L J Eldridge, R A Gibson, J Le Sage, M Le Sage and T Sneath

**30. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

There were none.

**31. CONSULTATION ON REVISED HR POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP ALIGNMENT OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which consulted with the Policy Development Panel on the policies prior to their planned implementation.

The Assistant Director – Corporate and the Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) were in attendance for this item. Councillor Chris Brewis attended as a consultee but not as a member of the committee.

The Assistant Director – Corporate introduced the report which included the following:

- Context of the alignment of workforce terms and conditions of employment;
- Phase 1 consultation activities undertaken to date (alignment was to be implemented in phases);
- The following complete policies relating to the phase 1 consultation:
  - Time Off Policy at Appendix A;
  - Long Service Awards Policy at Appendix B; and
  - Absence and Sickness Policy and Procedure at

Action By

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Appendix C;

- A summary of the phase 1 terms and conditions being consulted on was outlined at point 2.4 of the report;
- Implementation of the phase 1 terms and conditions alignment was planned to take place from 1 November 2024; and
- A consultation process would follow for phase 2.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members stated that the alignment of the terms and conditions of employment demonstrated that the partnership authorities were progressing with their alignment ambitions in a positive way.
- Members asked how the long service awards compared with non-local authority employers.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) responded that whilst long service awards varied widely across public and private sector employers, such awards were common practice and expected within local government. A related framework had been in existence at SHDC however this would be replaced with the aligned Long Service Awards Policy which had incorporated the 'best of' existing terms from the three authorities.
- Members noted a duplication within the report which required correction prior to further publication.
- Regarding long service awards, members asked whether length of service was transferable across local authorities.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) confirmed that length of service, for a long service award, did not take into account service at authorities outside of the partnership.
- Members queried the remuneration policy for successful completion of professional exams.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) responded that:
    - The council's qualifications commitment was included within 'study provisions' rather than written within a policy. Any approved study would be subject to conditions which included a staged payback of course/qualification fees to the authority should the employee leave

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- within a set period of time; and
  - There would be consideration to a different scenario of imposed study which may include exceptions.
- Members queried resource/capacity implications, benefits, and any associated financial impact resulting from the career break policy.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) responded that:
    - A policy in respect of career breaks was already in existence across the other authorities in the partnership;
    - The focus of the policy was retention of staff;
    - Career break approvals were at the discretion of management and included the consideration of service needs; and
    - Any backfilling of resources needed to be financed through existing budgets;
  - The Assistant Director – Corporate added that:
    - Very few career break applications were received; and
    - It was noted that authorities had benefitted from the enrichment and personal development of officers upon their return from a career break.
- Members asked whether further changes to employment legislation were anticipated as a result of the new national political landscape.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) responded that whilst briefings and the relevant manifesto had been studied, some of the details of the changes to legislation could not be anticipated. A period of notice in respect of any changes would be given to enable implementation.
- Members noted that staff were expected to attend medical appointments outside of working hours where possible and stated that multiple appointment options were not usually available.
  - The Assistant Director – Corporate responded that although the workforce was encouraged to make appointments outside of working hours, the partnership worked flexibly with its staff and appointments within working hours were generally approved on a trust basis.

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- Members queried the flexibility of compassionate leave, especially where an officer had experienced a number of tragic events within a 12-month period.
  - The Head of HR and Organisational Development (PSPS) responded that the policy was a guide for managers and that a level of discretion could be applied.

### **AGREED:**

That feedback on the HR Policies to facilitate the alignment of terms and conditions of employment across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership councils, provided by the Policy Development Panel, as consultees, be noted.

## **32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) which asked the Policy Development Panel to note the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/2024 prior to its presentation at Council.

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which included the following main points:

- That the council's overview and scrutiny committees were required to report annually to Full Council on their work programme activities. In this respect, the report included the following summary of overview and scrutiny activity for the year:
  - Role and function of scrutiny;
  - Committee memberships;
  - Corporate Management support;
  - Meeting dates and summary of work undertaken by each Panel;
  - Task Groups;
  - Scrutiny activity in the district; and
  - Joint scrutiny of areas of mutual interest across the partnership region undertaken with scrutiny members from East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council.
- The report had been presented to Performance Monitoring Panel members at its meeting held on 23 July 2024, and members of the Policy Development Panel were given the opportunity to comment on the report at the current meeting.

Members considered the report and stated that they were very

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happy with the document as written. There were no further comments.

**AGREED:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/2024 be noted and recommended to Council.

(The meeting ended at 7.01 pm)

(End of minutes)