

# Staff Consultative Panel



<b>Title</b>	<b>Agenda</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Monday 18 July 2022</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>3.00 pm</b>		
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Facilitated by Microsoft Teams virtual meetings platform only. Members and officers attending this meeting are requested to see their separate Outlook meeting invitation to join the meeting.</b>		
<b>Full Members</b>	<p><b>Chair</b> To be appointed by the Panel</p> <p><b>Vice Chair</b> To be appointed by the Panel</p> <p><b>West Suffolk Council (7)</b> (Employer's side)</p> <p><b>Conservative Group (5)</b></p> <p><b>The Independent Group (1)</b></p> <p><b>Labour Group (1)</b></p>	<p><b>Staff Representatives (7)</b> (Employees' side)</p> <p>Carol Bull John Griffiths James Lay Birgitte Mager David Nettleton</p> <p>Ian Shipp</p> <p>David Smith</p>	<p>Lizzi Cocker Robert Cooper Paul Davison Carys Frost Penny Mills (Vacancy) (Vacancy)</p>
<b>Substitutes</b>		<p><b>West Suffolk Council (3)</b> (Employer's Side)</p>	<p><b>Staff Representatives (2)</b> (Employees' Side)</p>
	<p><b>Conservative Group (1)</b></p> <p><b>The Independent Group (1)</b></p> <p><b>Labour Group (1)</b></p>	<p>Sara Mildmay-White</p> <p>Andy Neal</p> <p>Cliff Waterman</p>	<p>(Vacancy) (Vacancy)</p>
<b>Note: This panel is not governed by the normal Access to Information rules (The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012) in the Council. Therefore, these meetings are not open to attendance by the public.</b>			
<b>Interests – declaration and restriction on participation</b>	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.		

<b>Quorum</b>	Four members, comprising at least two employee representatives and two members of the council.
<b>Committee administrator</b>	<b>Sharon Turner</b> Democratic Services Officer <b>Telephone</b> 01638 719237 <b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:sharon.turner@westsuffolk.gov.uk">sharon.turner@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>

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# Agenda

**Note: Whilst these agenda papers are not covered by the normal Access to Information Rules (see agenda front), where items are listed as containing exempt/confidential information, members of the Panel are requested to treat them as such.**

## 1. Substitutes

Any member (which includes councillors and staff representatives) who is substituting for another member should so indicate, together with the name of the relevant absent member.

## 2. Election of Chair: 2022/2023

The approved Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultative Panel requires that the Chair of the Panel shall be rotated between the Employer's and Employees' Sides. When the Chair is a Member of one side of the Panel, the Vice Chair shall be a Member of the other side.

In 2022/2023, the Chair is required to be elected from the Employer's Side.

Therefore, the Panel is requested to **ELECT** a Chair in accordance with this arrangement.

## 3. Election of Vice Chair: 2022/2023

The approved Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultative Panel requires that the Vice Chair shall alternate between the Employer's and the Employees' Sides.

As the Chair of the Panel shall be from the Employer's Side in 2022/2023, the Vice Chair is required to be elected from the Employees' Side.

The Panel is requested to **ELECT** a Vice Chair in accordance with this arrangement.

## 4. Apologies for absence

## 5. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 (attached).

- 6. Workforce Data Overview (verbal)**
- 7. West Suffolk Workforce Strategy Update (verbal)**
- 8. Managing Menopause at Work Guidance (verbal)**
- 9. Employee Benefits - Tusker/Salary Finance (verbal)**
- 10. Job Evaluation Panels (verbal)**
- 11. New Learning Management System (iLearn) (verbal)**
- 12. Dates of future meetings**

The following dates for future meetings of the Panel are listed below. All dates are Mondays starting at 3pm. The venue will be determined nearer the time of each meeting:

- Monday 14 November 2022
- Monday 16 January 2023
- Monday 27 March 2023

# Staff Consultative Panel

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Panel** held virtually via MS Teams remote meeting platform on **Monday 31 January 2022** at **3.00 pm**

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** Paul Davison (employees' side)

**Vice Chair** Birgitte Mager (employer's side)

**Members (employer's side)**

David Nettleton

Ian Shipp

Carol Bull

David Smith

**Substitutes attending for a full member (employer's side)**

Sara Mildmay-White

**Staff representatives (employees' side)**

Lizzi Cocker

Penny Mills

**In attendance**

Andy Neal (Observing)

(Substitute Member (Employer's Side))

45. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White substituting for Councillor John Griffiths (Employer's Side).

46. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Griffiths (Employer's Side) and from Carys Frost (Employees' Side).

Councillor James Lay (Employer's Side) was also unable to attend the meeting.

47. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2021 were received and confirmed as a correct record, **subject to the inclusion of Councillor David Smith to the list of Councillors (Employer's Side) present.**

The Vice Chair (Councillor Birgitte Mager) referred to Minute Number 43 (West Suffolk Workforce Strategy Update) and the discussion which had been held on Agile Working. Councillor Mager made specific reference to Page 5 of

the minutes where the Panel had discussed the use of the phrase '*Work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go*'. Councillor Mager expressed her strong objections to the use of the phrase '*activity*', as she considered that it did not accurately reflect or could even be seen to trivialise people's work roles/tasks within the organisation. Other Panel Members also again expressed their reservations over the use of this type of phraseology and asked whether this could be further reviewed.

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) acknowledged the views expressed by the Panel at the previous meeting regarding this phraseology and again explained that this was trying to reflect all the work-related tasks that were undertaken. It was also recognised that the agile working documents were constantly evolving.

#### 48. **Workforce Data Overview (Presentation)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this item which provided a 'snapshot' of the West Suffolk Workforce Data as at 31 December 2021.

The Panel discussed the data presented. Since the last update to the Panel, it was noted that the staff turnover had again slightly increased to 11.07% (from 10.46%). The Panel also noted that sickness absence had increased, particularly in relation to short-term absence, some of which had been due to COVID.

The Panel referred to the use of agency staff within the Council's workforce. The Service Manager confirmed that the main use of agency staff was within the manual workforce, particularly within the Operations Team, mainly due to the demands of the service. However, agency staff had also been used in other service areas in the short-term, for example, Environmental Health and Licensing, which had been mainly due to the increased responsibilities due to the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, the Service Manager was unable to provide the exact number of agency staff being used, but would attempt to confirm numbers to the Panel accordingly.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the updates provided.

#### 49. **Staff Turnover Data (Presentation)**

At the last meeting, whilst considering the Workforce Data, the Panel had asked whether it would be possible to break-down the staff turnover data to also show age and service area.

Therefore, the Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented a break-down in relation to staff turnover which considered headline data, service area, gender and age. It was also noted that further work was also being undertaken with regards to the analysis and understanding of this data.

The Panel discussed the data as presented, which they had found to be very interesting and informative. Discussions were also held with regards to the understanding of the key reasons for leaving, particularly within some of the

service areas, and to ensure that these were picked up within the exit interview process. Due to the added pressures which had been put upon the workforce due to COVID, it remained important to ensure that staff continued to be supported.

Reference was also made with regards to the younger employees to ensure that they were properly inducted into the workforce, particularly with the added difficulties around the COVID working practices. Officers confirmed, that fortunately, the younger employees who had been recruited had been very adaptive within the working environment.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the data as presented.

#### 50. **COVID-19 Update (Presentation)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided the Panel with an update on how the Council was continuing to manage the effect of COVID-19 on its own workforce. The update covered the following specific areas:

- **Managing COVID-19 Data**

The Council's Staff Tracker system continued to be updated on a daily basis with information from managers. In line with the national situation, the Council had experienced a steady increase in staff absence from COVID-19.

- **Managing the Offices**

The Council continued to operate its agile working practices and those activities which needed to be undertaken within the Offices, continued to require staff to maintain social distancing and mask wearing and the taking of regular Lateral Flow Tests. Work was still being undertaken in relation to the reconfiguration of the office floor space at West Suffolk House and it was hoped that this would be fully operational as soon as was practical to do so.

The Chair referred to the reconfiguration of the floor space at West Suffolk House and explained that it was important to ensure that the staff had the opportunity to input into the future use of this space. The Service Manager referred to the 'Return to Work' Officer Group which had been established, which included representatives from each of the service areas. The Chair asked to ensure that UNISON were also involved and had the opportunity to input into this process. This was acknowledged by the Service Manager.

- **Redeployment**

The Service Manager reminded the Panel of the internal redeployments which had been undertaken in relation to the application and administration of Business Grants Scheme, the community scheme and the self-isolation fund payments. The Council had also been asked to provide staffing for the NHS/CCG in relation to the national vaccination programme, but had not required, although some staff had undertaken some work locally.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the updates provided.

51. **West Suffolk Workforce Strategy Update (Presentation)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) reported on the following actions within the strategic priorities of the West Suffolk Workforce Strategy:

- **People Strategy**

This Strategy was being developed and would cover five key workstreams:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Skills and Behaviours
- Reward and Recognition
- Health and Wellbeing
- Future Planning

The Strategy explained why each was a priority, what the Council wanted to achieve and what actions would be required to achieve this. A copy of this draft Strategy would also be brought to the Panel in due course for discussion.

- **Gender Pay**

The Council's median gender pay gap was -2.01%. The gender pay gap was calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings of men and women, as a proportion of men's average hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

- **Wellbeing**

The following events/initiatives had been delivered:

- Wellbeing calendar for 2022 which focussed on a different health and wellbeing topic each month.
- Men's and Women's health webinars had been delivered in November 2021 by Westfield Health. One further wellbeing webinar to take place before the end of March 2022. The topic was still to be determined.
- Continue with the 'Understanding our new normal life' staff group session on a monthly basis.
- Continue with the Health and Wellbeing workstream.
- Engage with Occupational Health regarding health checks for staff, such as cholesterol and blood pressure checks.
- Support embedding the Domestic Abuse Champions within the organisation.
- Continue to engage and support the Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.
  - Manager Peer Networking Group.
  - Salary finance/Cushon.
  - Staff Achievement Awards.
  - Parent and Carers Support Group.

The Panel discussed the above events/initiatives and welcomed these within the organisation. With regards to the health checks, it was asked as to whether it would also be possible to include pre-diabetes checks as well. In addition, these health checks were also beneficial for the younger

workforce, so it was also requested for these checks to be promoted to these individuals as well.

Councillor Carol Bull commended the Staff Achievement Awards, in which she had previously attended in her role as Portfolio Holder for Governance. She stated as to whether it would be an option in the future for all Members to be invited to attend the Awards, so that they could also see the achievements of the staff.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the updates provided.

## 52. **Staff Well-being Survey (Presentation)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided the Panel with a summary of the results from the Autumn 2021 West Suffolk Wellbeing Pulse Survey. The Survey had explored the areas of:

- Workload and productivity
- Worklife balance and wellbeing
- Working with others
- Feeling supported
- Working at home

The response rate to the survey had been 73%. Wellbeing levels across the organisation continued to be positive. The results from this survey were very consistent with the previous surveys. The survey continued to show that there was great team support and positive working relationships across the organisation, as well as high levels of interest in work.

The warning signs which had been identified in previous surveys remained relevant and the focus of the on-going response (personal resilience; workloads; stress management). This linked to long term sickness figures where wellbeing was the second highest reason for long term absence and needed to consider links to the management of annual leave and 'leaveism'.

The common thread running through almost every aspect of an effective wellbeing programme was the role the line managers played. This was key to helping to address the areas of concern identified by staff throughout these surveys. Focus needed to continue to be on a preventative approach to manage stress through efforts to identify risks and causes and to be able to take early intervention.

Focus needed to continue on integrating mental health and wellbeing considerations into the everyday ways of working and how we managed change and provided effective, timely and good quality support to colleagues who were experiencing mental health difficulties.

We were now two years into remote working and consideration also needed to be given to be able to move forward together to continue to engage and lead the importance of wellbeing.

The Panel then discussed the summary results from the Survey and asked questions regarding the survey content and service area engagement with the survey, particularly with regards to the manual workforce.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the summary results as presented.

53. **West Suffolk House: Re-organisation of Office Space (Verbal)**

The Chair confirmed that this item had since been covered under Minute number 50. above (COVID-19 Update: Managing the Offices).

54. **Dates of future meetings**

The Panel noted the dates for future meetings, as listed below. All dates were Mondays starting at 3pm. The venues would be determined nearer to each meeting:

- Monday 28 March 2022

The meeting concluded at 4.19 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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