

# Staff Consultative Panel

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Panel** held virtually via MS Teams remote meeting platform on **Monday 20 November 2023** at **3.00 pm**

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** Paul Davison (Employees' Side)

**Vice Chair** David Smith (Employer's Side)

**Members (Employer's Side)**

Donna Higgins

Victor Lukaniuk

Birgitte Mager

Phil Wittam

**Staff Representatives (Employees' Side)**

Robert Cooper

Penny Mills

Lisa Moss

**In attendance**

Councillor Gerald Kelly

Susan Glossop

Portfolio Holder for Governance and  
Regulatory

Substitute (Observing)

96. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

97. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Margaret Marks (Employer's Side) and from Carys Frost (Employees' Side).

98. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

99. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

100. **Workforce Data Overview**

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory presented this item which provided a 'snapshot' of the West Suffolk Workforce Data as at 30 September 2023.

The data presented had remained fairly stable over the last quarter. The Panel particularly noted the reduction in short term absence, but that long term absence (over 28 days) had increased. Officers explained that the Council continued to operate a robust absence management process. However, for those employees who were on long term absence this was more challenging and may involve the consideration of other interventions/reasonable adjustments.

The Panel again discussed the particular challenges with absence within those service areas requiring physical effort (ie the waste/operations service) and how these absences continued to be closely monitored. Officers also explained that the Council's Health and Safety Team were also working within this service area to advise on work patterns and muscular skeletal health.

#### 101. **Learning and Development Review 2023**

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory presented this item which detailed the recommendations of a review of Learning and Development within the Council. As a result of this review, the paper (which had been circulated with the agenda) summarised how the Council was to:

- Review what it offered and explore different learning approaches.
- Look at how skills could be developed to help people in their roles.
- Review the budget (cost-effective approach).
- Look at the role of leaders in developing their staff.

The Panel also commended the work which had been undertaken on this review.

#### 102. **Health and Wellbeing: Update**

The Director (HR, Governance & Regulatory) presented this paper (which had been circulated with the agenda) which explained that in the staff surveys on well-being and the wider staff survey, there had been very consistent scores around well-being across the organisation and, in general, those engaging with the survey reported good levels of well-being.

However, Officers were aware that there were consistently some areas that regularly got raised as 'warning lights' and rather than undertake another survey to drill into these areas, wished to find out ways that these topics could be explored in more detail with staff and to engage managers engaged in helping to address the issues.

The top five areas of concern were:

- Workload
- Switching off from work
- Managing stress
- Feeling involved and listened to when changes were made
- Staying connected with colleagues

In October 2023, Service Managers participated in a workshop thinking about what was within their control and how they could work differently to influence

those within their teams. All teams were carrying out discussions, with a view to a further discussion in January 2024 around thoughts and ideas as a management team.

Officers also explained the other initiatives which were in place within the Council to assist with health and well-being, which also included an external life-coach counsellor who was offering sessions for staff.

The Panel commended the Council on the initiatives which were in place to support staff.

During the Panel discussions, it was also raised that some Councillors did not always have the opportunity for involvement with staff and asked whether an event could be arranged to provide them with the ability to do so. It was asked whether Members could be involved in the Employee Induction Programme which would provide them with the opportunity to meet with new staff members. The Director stated that consideration would be given as to how Councillors could be given the ability to interact with staff on a more frequent basis.

#### 103. **National Pay Award 2023 Update**

It was noted that an agreement had now been reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union Side on the pay award effective from 1 April 2023 for local government employees.

#### 104. **Arrangements for Future Meetings**

At the meeting of the Panel held on 3 July 2023, it was discussed whether to continue to hold these meetings 'virtually' or whether it would be preferable to meet 'in-person'. The general consensus at that meeting was to continue to meet 'virtually', with perhaps one meeting per year being held 'in-person'. It was agreed for the Panel to further discuss this at the November meeting.

**Therefore, the Panel further discussed the future arrangements for these meetings and it was agreed to continue to hold these meetings 'virtually'.**

The Panel **noted** that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Monday 12 February 2024 at 3pm and would be held 'virtually'.

The meeting concluded at 4.12 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**