

# West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

**West Suffolk**  
working together

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel** held on **Monday 30 January 2017** at **3.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present:	<u>St Edmundsbury Borough Council</u> (Employers' Side) Cllr Bob Cockle Cllr Clive Springett Cllr Patricia Warby	<u>Forest Heath District Council</u> (Employers' Side) Cllr Ruth Bowman Cllr Rona Burt Cllr Stephen Edwards	<u>Staff Representatives</u> (Employees' Side) Lizzi Cocker Mark Johnson Julie Roberts
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#### 34. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Claire McKenna and Jane Orton (Staff Representatives – Employees' Side).

#### 35. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

#### 36. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2016 were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 37. **West Suffolk Programme/Projects - Presentation**

The Service Manager (Corporate Policy) gave a presentation on the arrangements for the delivery of projects across West Suffolk. The presentation outlined how the projects linked to the Strategic Plan Priorities and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Service Manager informed Members that in order to meet the MTFS the emphasis of the projects had shifted towards investment rather than savings. The presentation also outlined the importance of effective project governance and project management, and highlighted the roles and responsibilities of Elected Members, Leadership Team and Service Managers. The Service Manager also explained how projects were building in and aligning capacity and also the different structures that projects could take.

Members held a brief discussion on the presentation and asked questions of the Service Manager to which comprehensive responses were provided.

There being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the presentation.

### 38. **Leadership Team Restructure**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services presented Report No: JSP/JT/17/001 which provided Members with an update on the proposed Leadership Team Restructure.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services advised Members of the initiative behind the restructure to reflect the focus of future working of the Council. There would be no reduction in the number of posts and instead various areas of work would be re-allocated across Service Areas.

The Chairman voiced his opinion that whilst the Union understood the need for restructuring, the Council needed to ensure there were sufficient staff to operate efficiently and that staff were also receiving the support they needed. The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services also agreed and noted the concerns raised.

There being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

### 39. **Shared Legal Service - Update**

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services provided the Panel with an update on the progress with the Shared Legal Service with Forest Heath District Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council.

Members were reminded that the objectives of the four authorities working in partnership through the Shared Legal Service were to:

- Add value and improve the legal service of all four Councils
- To reduce reliance on external lawyers
- To exploit economies of scale and increase efficiency and productivity
- To maintain a resilient and effective legal team

A cost share had been agreed between the four authorities to fund the Shared Legal Service. However there was no system currently in place which recorded the allocation of Officer case work. The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services explained that they were currently in the process of selecting and implementing a Case Management System which would assist with the recording of this data going forward.

In response to questions asked by Members, the Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services explained that all staff would remain with their current employer.

The Chairman voiced his concerns that the workload for existing West Suffolk Lawyers could increase substantially by taking on additional work.

The Head of HR, Legal and Democratic Services concluded the update by informing Members that the current focus for the Shared Legal Service was to now recruit to the vacant posts and to progress with the selection and implementation of a Case Management System which could possibly be shared between ten authorities across Suffolk.

There being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

#### 40. **Human Resources Policies - Progress**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided an update on the progress of four new Policies and Strategies for West Suffolk. These new policies were:

- Workplace Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019
- Mental Health at Work Policy 2016
- Mentoring Policy 2016
- Mediation Policy 2016

The Mental Health at Work Policy, Mediation Policy and Workplace Wellbeing Strategy were launched in September 2016, with the Mentoring Policy already being in place at this time.

The Service Manager explained that the Human Resources Team had been working together with other building users (Suffolk County Council, East of England Local Government Association, West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group) to promote Mental Health Awareness at Work. They had also been working with Suffolk Mind and Norfolk Mind to deliver a training programme across West Suffolk which aimed to raise manager's awareness of the responsibility they had over their staff's mental health at work. Training had also been offered to staff with the aim of helping individual's manage their own mental health and wellbeing and feedback had been positive. The Service Manager explained that these initiatives formed part of the Council's commitment to the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, which the Council signed up to last year.

There being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

#### 41. **Workforce Data**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented Report No: JSP/JT/17/002 which set out the West Suffolk workforce data for the period up to 31 December 2016. The report also provided a comparison between the data as it stood now and with that reported to previous meetings of the Panel during 2015/2016.

The Service Manager highlighted that the average age of employees had decreased by one year to 44 years. This was thought to have possibly been as a result of Managers having a more creative approach to the recruitment

and development of younger employees. Staff Turnover (Voluntary) had continued to decrease, as had the average days sick per full time equivalent (FTE) which remained below the National Average for Local Authorities.

Members held a brief discussion and asked questions of the Service Manager to which responses were provided.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the workforce data, attached as Appendix 1 to Report No: JSP/JT/17/002 be noted and supported.

The Meeting concluded at 3.47 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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