

# Staff Consultative Panel

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Panel** held virtually via MS Teams remote meeting platform on **Monday 14 November 2022** at **3.00 pm**

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** Councillor Birgitte Mager (Employer's Side)

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

**Members (employer's side)**

James Lay

David Nettleton

Ian Shipp

David Smith

**Staff representatives (employees' side)**

Lizzi Cocker

Robert Cooper

67. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

68. **Apologies for absence**

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

69. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

70. **Declarations of interest**

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

71. **Workforce Data Overview (verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this item which provided a 'snapshot' of the West Suffolk Workforce Data as at 30 September 2022.

The Panel discussed the data presented. Since the last update to the Panel, it was noted that the overall Headcount remained static and that staff turnover had slightly reduced to 13.46% (from 14.02%).

Total days lost due to absence had increased since the last update. Again, some of the short term absence still related to COVID-19. Short term absence continued to be recorded by Managers and was monitored on a daily basis. The Panel did express some concern over the increase in absence compared to September 2021, which had showed a significant increase over the last year. The Officer responded by stating that there was confidence that these numbers would reduce over the forthcoming year. The figures may also be over-inflated as staff were more conscious about not coming into work when they were feeling unwell, in case it was a COVID related illness. This was particularly pertinent within the Operations/Waste Service. In terms of the average days absence per FTE, then the Council, as an organisation, would like to see between 6.15 to 7.50 days (currently sitting at 7.54 days). This position would be reviewed again in the next quarter.

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

## 72. **West Suffolk Workforce Strategy 2022 to 2028 - Update (verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided updates on the following workstreams and priorities within the Strategy:

- *Skills and behaviours*
  - Leadership behaviours for managers.
  - Managers networking and Peer Support Group
  - Developing Future Leaders Programme

The Panel further discussed the Developing Future Leaders Programme. The Officer explained that this Programme would commence in January 2023 and was linked to the Personal Development Review (PDR) process. The intention of the programme was to bring together, not only succession planning for services, but also talent management/staff development. The programme would run with a small cohort each year. Once on the programme, staff would be encouraged to work on an 18 month Development Plan and would have on-going opportunities to be involved in wider corporate activity. This programme would start at the Salary Band 7/8. However, there were opportunities to evaluate and consider how this could be extended to lower management positions and/or Service Managers in the future, to ensure that opportunities were provided to all.

- *Recruitment and retention*
  - Corporate Induction Sessions
- *Pay, reward and recognition*
  - New staff benefit (Smart Tech)
  - Staff Awards: 7 December 2022
- *Health and wellbeing*
  - Connecting our staff: support group sessions

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

### 73. **West Suffolk Staff Survey: Organisation Feedback (verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided an overview of the organisation results from the West Suffolk Staff Survey which had been held in Spring 2022.

The Panel discussed the key themes which had come through from the Survey and made the following comments/observations:

- The Survey should become integrated within the annual PDR review process, to ensure that there was corporate ownership at all staff levels.
- The identified actions arising from the Survey were noted. However, it was important to ensure that success was able to be measured in addressing the issues/challenges which had been raised. The Officer explained that service-led action plans would be produced and all Service Managers would be asked to complete an action plan to respond to the survey findings.
- The integration of the learning and development packages within the Operations/Waste service were particularly discussed. The challenges of this were acknowledged within this area, due to the limited access to ICT. The Officer explained that the Operations Managers within that service had been addressing this issue, which had resulted in some of the sessions being completed 'in-person', particularly for those which were mandatory. This situation would continue to be monitored accordingly.
- The Panel supported the continued focus on workload management.
- The Panel supported the continuation to build on the Council's leadership culture, with a particular focus on listening/engagement and visibility. This was also linked to the need to embed the Council's change programme across the organisation, along with the need to raise its awareness and understanding.

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

### 74. **Use of Agency Workers (verbal)**

The Staff Representatives again wished to discuss the use of agency workers within the Council, as had previously been discussed by the Panel. One particular area of concern was highlighted and the Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) confirmed that this particular issue would be raised with the relevant Director concerned.

The Officer confirmed that there were a total of 12 agency workers currently working across the Council within Environmental Health; Legal; Planning; Parking Services; Facilities/Leisure and Licensing. The Panel discussed the use of agency workers, particularly in those service areas where it seemed particularly challenging to recruit permanent staff. The Officer agreed that within these particular service areas, consideration needed to be given to

career pathways and succession planning, along with the understanding of the specific reasons behind these recruitment challenges.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** this item.

75. **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 16 January 2023
- Monday 27 March 2023

The meeting concluded at 4.32 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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