

Lancashire County Council

Employment Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 8th November 2021 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Phillippa Williamson (Chair)

County Councillors

A Vincent	J Mein
A Ali OBE	D O'Toole
L Beavers	A Riggott
P Buckley	

1. Apologies

None.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 September 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Revised Attendance and Working Flexibly Policy and Procedures

Deborah Barrow, Head of Service Human Resources presented the revised Attendance Policy and revised Working Flexibly Policy for the committee's consideration and approval.

It was highlighted that the two policies formed part of the Human Resources policy review programme and incorporated the programme's principles.

The revised Attendance Policy focussed on employees' individual circumstances regarding health and attendance, rather than adopting a prescriptive approach.

The revised Working Flexibly Policy subsumed a number of existing flexible working arrangements and sought to promote a more agile, modern approach to working. The policy was linked to the county council's wider organisational development and change programme, and it had been agreed with the recognised trade unions that it would be reviewed six months after its

implementation. Good engagement with the trade unions would continue throughout the policies' implementation and review.

It was noted that members had received correspondence directly from some council staff regarding the two revised policies. Some of the concerns raised included the lack of consultation with staff, other than through the trade unions, and the lack of communication with staff.

In response to questions from members, the following points were made:

- Generally, feedback from the trade unions had been positive, though three issues had been raised with the revised Attendance Policy and one issue with the revised Working Flexibly Policy, as set out in the report.
- The correct forum for formal consultation and negotiation on policies such as these was with the recognised trade unions, which represented the council's workforce even though all staff were not trade union members.
- Communication with staff about the revised policies had been limited to date because the policies needed to be considered and approved by the Employment Committee first. Subject to and following the committee's approval, the Human Resources Service had planned a separate launch programme for the revised policies. Consultation with the recognised trade unions and feedback from staff focus groups had informed policy content.
- The replacement of the Flexi Scheme with Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) continued to enable staff to take back accrued additional time they were asked to work.
- It was estimated that approximately one-third of the staff were Unison members.
- Under the revised Attendance Policy, referrals to Occupational Health would continue to be manager-led. Nonetheless, employees could have conversations with their managers about the nature of the support they needed, such as from the council's Wellbeing Team or from their GP.
- Guidance on undertaking a home working risk assessment was in place, together with support for staff through the Wellbeing Team in the Public Health Service and a contribution to buy a suitable work desk or sourcing an appropriate chair from the council.
- To support embedding the policies, guidance, webinars and briefings would be available.

It was noted that flexible working arrangements would be important to recruit and retain staff.

It was agreed that the outcome of the planned six-month review of the revised Working Flexibly Policy would be presented to the committee.

The Chair highlighted the importance of employees and managers fully understanding the new policies, so they would be confident to apply them, and

that the planned six-month review would help to assess how the revised policies were meeting business needs as well as those of employees.

The Chair thanked Deborah for the report and members for the points raised in discussion.

Resolved: That

- i) The Attendance Policy and Procedure, as set out at Appendix C, be approved;
- ii) The Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure, as set out as Appendix D, be approved; and
- iii) A report on the Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure be presented to the committee following the six-month review of the policy with the trade unions.

5. Urgent Business

None.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would be held on Monday 6 December 2021 at 2.00 pm at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston