

Personnel Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 February 2019

Present: Councillor Ollerhead (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors: Akbar, Bridges Craig, Leech, S Murphy, Rahman, Richards and Stogia

Also present: Councillors Ilyas and Sheikh

Apologies: Councillors Leese and N Murphy

PE/19/06 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2018 as a correct record.

PE/19/07 Senior Management Capacity

The Chair informed the Committee that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

PE/19/08 Senior Management Arrangements for the Homelessness Service

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) which sought approval for the establishment of a role of Director of Homelessness Services to take strategic and overall responsibility for the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy within the city.

The Acting DASS explained that currently a temporary resource was in place but in recognition of the growing challenges and demands within the service a permanent Director of Homelessness was required. The Committee acknowledged that a key driver for homelessness was the impact of welfare reform alongside increasingly high private sector rents which had increased three times faster than wages nationally. It was therefore anticipated that demands on the service would continue to increase and would be a significant challenge for the city. In addition, the Homelessness Reduction Act had placed new duties on the Council to prevent homelessness which had widened the application of the assistance and support that the Council is required to give, at the same time had significantly increased the bureaucracy. The Acting DASS then spoke about the vision for homelessness in the city which would be taken forward through the Homelessness Partnership and Strategy which was aligned with the following priorities:

- **Homelessness as a rare occurrence:** increasing prevention and earlier intervention at a neighbourhood level.
- **Homelessness as brief as possible:** improving temporary and supported accommodation to be a positive experience
- **Experience of homelessness to be a one-off occurrence:** increasing access to settled homes

It was asserted that the establishment of the post would enable strategic and overall responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy, address the challenges, champion interventions to support the prevention of homelessness and develop and strengthen the partnerships across the broad range of organisations that are involved.

No comments from the Trade Unions were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

It was acknowledged that tackling the complex issue of homelessness in times of austerity was a significant priority for the Council. The Committee commended the establishment of the post, recognising that dedicated strategic leadership would enable the Council to carry out a key part of the Strategy's pledge and agreed the recommendations.

Decisions

1. To approve the establishment of a post of Director of Homelessness Services to take strategic and overall responsibility for the delivery of the council's statutory functions and in relation to the city's Homelessness Strategy. The post will be part of the Senior Management team within Adults Services.
2. To recommend to Council that the Director of Homelessness Services post is remunerated at Grade SS4 (£94,072 - £103,863).

PE/19/09 Flexible Working Policy Framework

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Human Resources / Organisational Development (HROD) which sought approval of a number of policy and guidance developments in relation to flexible working practices that support the Our Ways of Working (OWOW) programme and the broader aspirations of the Our People Strategy.

It was explained that a significant piece of work had been undertaken to look at flexible working arrangements across the Council with the aim of taking advantage of new technologies, learning from best practice elsewhere and modernising the workforce approach. The Head of Workforce Strategy said that there was a clear evidence base which showed a link between improved flexible working practices and ultimately productivity and organisational performance. There had been a significant programme of engagement with the Council's services in recognition that any policy changes should be flexible and take into account the contrasting nature of services of across the Council – this had ultimately led to the development of a robust policy and guidance framework. The policies had been strengthened to reflect best practice, had used clear user-friendly language and took into account feedback from engagement with staff. As a result, changes were proposed to the Council's Special Leave and Flexible Working policies as well as clearer guidelines for Flexitime and Working From Home.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of leading by example as an employer by removing barriers to employment through a flexible workforce approach. It also particularly welcomed the reference within the Special Leave policy the role of carers,

which aligned with the Greater Manchester Carer's Strategy in which there is an explicit ambition to be an exemplary employer of people who are carers. The Committee noted that this specific area was supported by a detailed piece of guidance which had been developed in consultation with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care partnership and the City Council's own Staff Carer's Network.

There was a discussion about the proposed arrangements within the Special Leave policy that related to IVF treatment of Gender Reassignment. A member felt that requests for leave that related to either of these matters ought to be considered in the same way that disability related special leave. It was felt that robust training and guidance for managers should underpin this specific policy area and be considered on a case by case basis. Officers were subsequently asked to undertake further work to strengthen guidance and training for managers where leave is required in relation to issues that concern these two matters. Officers were also asked to bring back a further report on this to a future meeting of the committee.

No comments from the Trade Unions were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

Decisions

1. To approve the revised Special Leave Policy (attached as Appendix A) with the exception of the approval of the arrangements within the policy that relate to special leave for IVF treatment or Gender Reassignment. Officers are asked to undertake further work to strengthen guidance and training for managers where leave is required in relation to issues that concern these two matters. A further report on this will be submitted to a future meeting of this committee
2. To approve the revised Flexible Working Policy (attached as Appendix B)
3. To note the proposal to strengthen guidance in relation to flexitime and ad-hoc working from home in line with existing policy provision.
4. To note the intention to proactively communicate these developments and the Council's broader suite of support for flexible working as a new Flexible Working Policy Framework.