

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS,
POWYS ON FRIDAY, 31 JANUARY 2020**

PRESENT

County Councillor J M Williams (Chair)

County Councillors E Durrant, D R Jones, DW Meredith, K M Roberts-Jones,
L Roberts, D A Thomas and J Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors F Jump, C Mills, P Pritchard, L Skilton and G Ratcliffe who was on other Council business.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 25th October 2019 as a correct record.

4. SICKNESS ABSENCE UPDATE

The Committee received a detailed breakdown of sickness absence figures. Powys had the third lowest sickness absence rates of all Welsh local authorities at a rate of 9.16 days lost per full time equivalent employee. The report detailed annual sickness absence data by reason, a breakdown of short-term and long-term absences and by directorate. The report also set out the actions being taken by the Council to reduce absences. The Employee Assistance Programme had been introduced in summer 2019 offering employees with stress, depression and mental health issues 24/7 confidential advice and support. The Committee was also advised that there had been good feedback since the introduction of the new occupational health service on 1st December and that the backlog of referrals was being reduced. Members were concerned to note the number of return to work forms not being completed and officers acknowledged that managers needed to address this. They also confirmed that the sickness statistics were shared with the Council's Senior Leadership Team.

It was confirmed that schools leadership teams were responsible for managing sickness absence but that HR provided advice and support through service level agreements.

ACTIONS: Include details of days lost due to work related accidents and incidents in future reports.

Contact Property Services about the possibility of changing old fashioned taps to reduce the risk of cross contamination. Officers to consider how statistics from schools are reported so as not to skew the figures.

5. WORK FORCE PLANS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the seven-step approach to workforce planning. The 12 service areas had produced workforce plans linked to the Council's transformation programme Vision 2025 and their integrated business plans and budget planning.

The arrangements were currently being audited by Wales Audit Office and the feedback so far was very positive.

6. EMPLOYMENT POLICY UPDATE

In the last quarter a large number of policies had been reviewed and updated:

- Apprenticeships
- Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – Powys was 1 of only 2 local authorities in Wales offering safe leave for victims of domestic
- Redeployment Policy
- Safer Recruitment
- Shared Parental Leave
- Welsh Language and Recruitment
- Whistleblowing
- Disciplinary
- Sickness Absence Management

In addition, the Leader had signed the Council up for the Employer Supported Policing scheme offering up to 5 days additional paid leave for special constables and police support volunteers.

Policies on agile/smart working, unacceptable customer conduct, trans equality and disability were in development.

Members asked for an update on the plans to move staff out of Neuadd Maldwyn. The building would close on 31st August with staff transferring to other buildings in Welshpool and Newtown.

ACTION: Professional Lead - Human Resources Management and Development to contact Property Services about the need to repair the lift in foyer at County Hall.

Organisational Design and Development Manager to ensure training to counter violence and aggression against staff is offered to elected members.

7.	HR PERFORMANCE INCLUDING COUNCIL WIDE APPRAISAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE
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The Committee received an update on the number of disciplinary and grievance cases and management of change processes being supported by HR and the annual staff appraisals being carried out by managers in each directorate. Officers explained that the reason for the low numbers in some directorates was that appraisals were being carried out but were not being recorded on Trent. Step by step instructions would be sent to managers.

ACTION: That an update on staff appraisals be provided at the next meeting.

8.	WOD INTEGRATED BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE
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The Committee was advised that there were 60.27 staff in the HR service. The service had a budget of £3.77m but generated income of £2.4m through service level agreements with schools, and from organisations who had bought into the disclosure barring service and payroll.

The Council had a corporate training budget of £103k excluding schools and sought to make the best use of this by offering joint training with Powys Teaching Health Board. The Council paid out £660k in the apprenticeship levy and received £480k back. The Committee was also advised that the results of the staff survey had been very positive.

9.	MEMBER VOLUNTEERS FOR APPEAL PANELS
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The Chair asked colleagues to make themselves available for disciplinary and grievance panels. Members asked if more dates could be offered when hearings were being arranged.

10.	EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE
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The Committee received an update on recent employment case law.

County Councillor J M Williams (Chair)