

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 8th July, 2019.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Mohammed Javed(Vice-Chair), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE, Cllr Barry Woodhouse,

Officers: Garry Cummings, Julie Auffret, Jill Douglas, Ian Coxon, Roisin McKenzie, Michelle Connolly, Peter Mennear, Marianne Sleeman (DCE)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Eileen Johnson

**PEO
1/19** **Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

**PEO
2/19** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

**PEO
3/19** **Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th March 2019 - For Approval/Signature**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meetings held on 4th March 2019.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**PEO
4/19** **Monitoring the Implementation of Previously Agreed Recommendations**

Consideration was given to progress of the implementation of previously agreed recommendations.

The draft Action Plan was offered to Members for approval which would be taken to Cabinet in September in conjunction with the BME Staff Forum.

Points for discussion were as follows:

- The Local Authority were looking to recruit approximately 40 apprentices and there had been 900 applications, analysis would be carried out around the percentage of BME applicants.
- Members of the public have a greater awareness of the diversity within the Local Authority due to a story shared in Stockton News by a member of the

BME Staff Forum.

- HR have held open days in Stockton Sixth Form College with positive feedback.
- An Equality & Diversity Adviser had been appointed to join the Council within the HR department.

AGREED:

- 1) The Action Plan be approved and a Progress Report be received in 12 months
- 2) That Members would receive feedback on the percentage of BME applicants for apprenticeship vacancies.

PEO 5/19 Task and Finish Scrutiny Review of Smarter Working in Stockton (Accommodation and Buildings)

Members received information regarding the Scrutiny Review of Smarter Working in Stockton (SWiS) (Accommodation and Buildings). Members considered a presentation on the SWiS programme and the key issues in relation to office accommodation.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members were informed a report on the SWiS Programme was taken to Cabinet in September 2018.
- Highlights from a HIVE survey stated accommodation contributed to sickness absence.
- It was confirmed this would be a long term piece of work and would consider different ways to enable staff to work more efficiently i.e. height adjustable desks etc.
- Council buildings are spread across the Borough which can be detrimental in staff collaborating with each other.
- Whilst flexible working sits within the new Programme, it was acknowledged that not all Service Areas would benefit from this.
- Whilst no cost had been specified in the interim, it was noted the review of Smarter Working in Stockton would save money in the long term; an optional appraisal would be carried out initially.
- Members were assured that the review process was not looking to reduce staff, and that feedback was being gathered from staff as part of the SWiS process.

AGREED:

1) That a Task & Finish Group would be set up to review Smarter Working in Stockton (Accommodation and Buildings).

2) Task & Finish Group Members would be:

Cllr Barry Woodhouse
Cllr Mohamed Javed
Cllr Helen Atkinson
Cllr Bill Woodhead

3) The Scope and Project Plan was agreed and a report would be brought to Cabinet in 3 months.

**PEO
6/19**

Scrutiny Review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Members received information regarding the Scrutiny Review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members were informed of the reasons for the review of the current scheme:
 - Impact of Universal Credit.
 - Council Tax Collection rates.
 - Reduction in Housing Benefit caseload.
 - Current scheme was complex & resource intensive to administer.
 - To ensure the scheme is supporting the most vulnerable.
 - Digital optimisation.
- The Local Authority would be reviewing different ways for the more vulnerable people within our community to claim Council Tax Support.
- The options would be developed over the next few months and presented at this Committee to assist in making a decision. It was noted that if changes were proposed a period of consultation would be necessary prior to the new scheme being adopted.
- Discussions were held around the new scheme taking into account what individual's needs were.
- Confirmation was given around enhanced earnings disregards; an amount of money that is disregarded which would entitle people to claim a larger proportion of benefit.
- Members were assured the review would only focus on the Council Tax Benefit system and not the Universal Credit System.

AGREED:

- 1) The scope and project plan be agreed

**PEO
7/19** **Select Committee Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the People Select Committee Work Programme 2019 - 2020.

AGREED:

Meeting dates would be agreed for the Task and Finish Group.

**PEO
8/19** **Chair's Update**

The chair had nothing further to update.