

MINUTES

JOINT NEGOTIATING

4 DECEMBER 2017

Attending:

Councillors: Councillor Chapman (Chairman)
Councillor Brown
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Whitman
Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe.

Trade Union: M Nix, Branch Officer, Unison
C Smith, Trade Union Representative, Unison

Officers: E Walker - Health and Safety Team Leader
A Stunell - Human Resources and Organisational Development
Team Leader
R Twidle, Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 6.30 pm;

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

M Nix offered his apologies on behalf of D Lloyd to the Committee.

23 MINUTES

There were no minutes. The Chair confirmed they would be available at the next meeting.

24 MATTERS ARISING

None.

25 HEALTH & SAFETY - VERBAL UPDATE

E Walker updated the Committee on the Health & Safety issues being managed by the Council. She confirmed that P O'Day had left DBC on 1 December. She said that recruitment to his role had been unsuccessful, but advised that his interim replacement was Hayley Ramsay. E Walker said that the post would be advertised in the New Year.

She said that work was continuing in the following twelve work streams, with a thirteenth recently added:

Lone working

E Walker said that companies were being invited in to demonstrate lone working devices (which would also be trialled) for the re-tender process for following year.

Adventure PlayGround

E Walker told the Committee that unannounced audits would be conducted in Q1 to ensure that working practices were fully absorbed and being put into practice, and that the appropriate documentation was correctly completed.

Vehicle Repair Workshop (VRS)

E Walker said that Corporate Health and Safety had assisted S J Smith in reviewing lifting equipment risk assessments and implementation. She said that several Skilled Technicians posts would be recruited in January 2018.

Noise

E Walker said that the newly drafted 'Noise at work' policy had been approved by CMT on 7 November; it had been communicated to the relevant service areas.

E Walker said that Clean, Safe & Green (CSG) equipment had been assessed; new ear defenders had been purchased and the majority of the equipment could be used without reaching the Noise action levels. She said that, with the exception on the chainsaws, the equipment would require monitoring to ensure they were not used for excessive time periods by a single operator.

She also said that Old Town Hall sound absorbing foam panels were to be installed in the DJ's booth.

Whole Body Vibration

E Walker told the Committee that the 'Whole Body Vibration' policy had also been approved by CMT on 7 November. Again, this had been circulated to the relevant service areas.

Contractor Safety

E Walker told the Committee that work continued to progress on this especially with regard to CDM projects. She said that three areas had been focused; on Pre Tender, Tender Award and Contract Monitoring.

Occupational Health

E Walker said that four companies had put forward submissions for tender for the new contract; this process was ongoing. A meeting was due to take place the following week with E Walker, A Stunell and M Rawdon to discuss the tenders.

Asbestos Management

E Walker advised the Committee that the draft 'Asbestos Management' plans had been submitted to the forthcoming Corporate H&S Committee for approval in the near future.

Training:

Awareness of Health & Safety Risk Assessments: E Walker said that two courses had been run and feedback was very positive.

Introduction to Manual Handling: E Walker said that three courses have been run. Feedback was very positive.

Sharps Training: One course had already taken place; another was due to take place on 6 December (Conference room 2) at the Forum starting 10:00am to 12:00noon.

Legionella Awareness Training: E Walker advised that this course was now being run in Q3.

E Walker asked the Committee if there were any further questions; none were forthcoming. The Chair thanked her for the update.

26 HUMAN RESOURCES - VERBAL UPDATE

A Stunell updated the Committee on the various ongoing aspects of The People Strategy.

Apprenticeship Levy Board.

A Stunell said that the Board was still meeting on a monthly basis. She confirmed that three apprentices were due to start/commence their courses; this was with Customer Services in December and HR in January; a gardener was also due to start with CSG team. A Stunell said that HR had conducted a review to see what qualifications DBC most needed and the Board were keen to ensure that the budget was being correctly spent in line with this.

Investors in People (IiP)

A Stunell said that following the submission of the paper to CMT that proposed not to continue with the IiP scheme (due to the significant continuation costs which could be £7k - £13k, and that much of the reaccreditation proposals were already covered within The People Strategy), CMT had asked for more information, specifically as to what other Councils were doing. A Stunell said that this research had been completed, and that she would be scheduling a meeting with the CEO to discuss whether this should be continued.

Sickness Absence

A Stunell said that the review of the Sickness Absence policy was still ongoing; there had been a number of negotiations with the TU's, and drafts/redrafts were still being exchanged. She said that following discussion with M Brookes, Solicitor to the Council, although there were no significant changes, it was felt that it needed to go through the full Council process of consideration by CMT, Cabinet and Council. A Stunell said that R Smyth, Director of Performance, People and Innovation, would shortly be presenting to CMT, with the view to this being placed on the Forward Plan for Cabinet.

Recruitment

A Stunell told the Committee that the review looking at how recruitment was conducted was still ongoing. She said they were looking at how DBC's attracts potential staff, specifically looking at social media, and how DBC brands itself. She said that Kelvin Solely was leading on this strand, with a member of the HR team consulting.

Training

A Stunell said that the Coaching & Mentoring Strategy was ongoing; she said that she had been in discussions with East of England LGA as they have a Coaching Pool. They had been due to send a survey on her behalf, however this did not happen and so this had been put back. A Stunell said that the purpose of this was to ensure that DBC were mindful of other successful schemes, rather than drafting from scratch. She reminded the Committee that she was continuing with her own coaching qualification, and of its use to staff.

A Stunell said that the mandatory training for 'Leading in Dacorum' had also been reviewed, specifically looking at e-learning. As a result, she said that a lot more courses had been added.

In addition to this, A Stunell said that another area of review was the training for Member Development. She said that a great deal of the courses would be the same for the Members as for the staff; however she was aware that some Members had experienced difficulty accessing these courses. Cllr Taylor confirmed that he was the Chair of the Member Development Steering Group, and that this was correct. He said that this matter was to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting. He also said that although it was his and the Group's view that not all training should be mandatory, he believed that there was a need for the courses that were mandatory for staff, should also be for Members. He confirmed that A Stunell should receive an update shortly after this meeting.

The Chair asked how many had completed the e-learning courses. Cllr Taylor confirmed that no Members had currently completed them.

Terms and Conditions

A Stunell noted that this matter had been spoken about at length at the previous meeting, and that M Rawdon was currently in communication with both regional branches of Unison and Unite – at this stage M Nix confirmed that a meeting was due to take place with the members within the following days at Cupid's Green. He also confirmed that Richard Gates and Nalin Cooke would be addressing the membership.

Appraisals

A Stunell confirmed that this strand was being led on by M Rawdon and Donna Kemp. This was looking at how appraisals would be conducted in the future; currently the majority of DBC staff had an appraisal in April/May, then a mid point review is conducted in October/November. A Stunell said that manual staff and members of CSG had a yearly review. She said that they were considering if it would be beneficial for all staff receiving a yearly review, but with standardised format on the monthly 1-to-1's, that were linked to the appraisal.

Work Force Data

This was being led on by Charles Berry Ottaway. At this stage, there was no update on this strand.

Induction

A Stunell said that an electronic induction had been developed; this meant that HR was able to monitor that managers were completing the induction process with new staff. It also meant that all aspects of the induction were located in one place, with a

consistent message. A Stunell said they were continuing with the plan of 'On Boarding', and staff were being sent information/policies to read in advance of their start date.

A Stunell said that this completed the People Strategy update. In addition to this, she also advised the Committee of the following:

Gender Pay Review

A Stunell confirmed that this project was being conducted between HR, Robbie File and Payroll. She confirmed that DBC needed to provide a report on this review by 31 March 2018, indicating what, if any, gaps there were with staff. She said that they had hoped that the payroll provider Serco would be able to provide this information; however they were unable to provide this information till February, which was insufficient time in relation to the deadline. As a result, internal Payroll were providing this information, which was time consuming.

General Data Protection Act (GDPR)

A Stunell confirmed that the GDPR would supersede the DPA in May 2018. As a result John Worts was in the process of briefing all Group Managers of its impact and the new obligations. A Stunell said that she was particularly concerned of its impact on HR, therefore had arranged a number of briefings between J Worts, herself and the HR team. Cllr Taylor also advised that J Worts would also be attending the forthcoming Member Development session to brief the Membership.

Employee Information System (EIS) replacement

A Stunell said that there was an ongoing project to group the EIS replacement and payroll tender together; it was hoped that this could be issued in the New Year.

Staff Conference

A Stunell told the Committee that this had taken place on 15 November, and focused on staff wellbeing; there were a number of speakers, talking about various aspects of this including emotional intelligence and Mental Health first aiders. In addition, there were also updates from Sally Marshall and James Deane. This was well attended and the feedback had been positive. During this session, the staff survey was also launched which was available for completion until 15 December.

The Chair thanked A Stunell for the update, and asked the Committee if there were any questions.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe noted the support to staff, and was pleased that the Staff Conference had focused on staff wellbeing. She asked what specific support was offered to staff that may be suffering from domestic abuse. Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said that she had recently attended a Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) event, explaining that its purpose was to shine a spotlight on this issue. She said that two speakers at the event had explained that their way out of the abuse was due to the high level of support provided by their employer, including in one case, where the employer facilitated a move to another part of the country. She asked what support DBC were offering to staff that may be facing this.

A Stunell accepted that this was not her area of expertise. She told the Committee that Julie Stills in the Anti-Social Behaviour team was tasked with addressing domestic abuse in the context of the Dacorum area, and was fully aware of the

various areas of support through the interlinking agencies. A Stunell said that in terms of employees, staff had a variety of workplace options, including counselling and Mental Health First Aiders, however she also highlighted that this was an extremely sensitive and delicate issue. She said that although managers may pick up on something following a pattern of sickness absences, or that the return to work interview may highlight domestic abuse concerns, often it will require the individual to speak about the abuse.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said that it was likely that a number of DBC employees were subject to domestic to abuse, noting that it affected all individuals, across the spectrum. She thought there was a need for DBC to be more aware, as well as providing practical support to staff. A Stunell accepted that this was a subject where more awareness should be raised. She also said that although support was available, there was no formal policy in place.

Cllr Taylor suggested that this could be added to a future agenda of the Standards Committee, given that it reviewed DBC's policies and procedures. He said that although it may differ very little to the policy used by J Stills in the ASB team, it would at least ensure that a staff policy in respect of domestic abuse was in existence. At the request of the Chair, A Stunell confirmed that she would liaise with J Stills and take this issue forward.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said that at this event, this had also highlighted to HCC the need to develop safeguarding specifically for staff. She said that this matter was due to be referred for further consideration to the Adult Safeguarding Board, who had representatives across the County. Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said that she could ask for feedback to the districts/borough so that any expertise could be shared, rather than the work be replicated. A Stunell thanked Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe, also noting that J Stills would attend this Board.

The Chair asked A Stunell for further information about the Apprenticeships; he asked if DBC were looking to increase apprenticeships, and what DBC was doing to ensure apprentices stayed. A Stunell said that the apprentice in Customer Services had a 13 month contract; although she would need to consult the budget at the end of this to see if it was possible for them to stay, she noted the turnover of staff in Customer Services and so thought it was likely there would be an opportunity. She said that the person with HR was originally in another department, however had started in September when the apprenticeship opportunity arose; A Stunell said that she hoped she would finish the HR apprenticeship with DBC, but this was only budgeted for 13 months, She said that the Apprenticeship Levy Board were looking at upskilling managers (she explained DBC could not necessarily employ new staff as there may not be a salary budget the following year) but she also highlighted that the costs of some apprenticeships were significantly more than the professional qualification for the same field. She also said that there did not appear to be a qualification for the service areas that DBC had particularly identified as most needed, such as Building Control. She also advised the Chair that DBC could not 'tie in' staff following completion of the apprenticeship – the Levy scheme prevented this. A Stunell said that she had a forthcoming telephone conference with East of England LGA to discuss this issue.

The Chair asked for a target date in respect of liP. A Stunell confirmed that it had expired in March 2017, but DBC had been granted an extension to March 2018. She also confirmed that HCC were also no longer continuing with liP due to the costs.

27 **TRADE UNION - VERBAL UPDATE**

M Nix re-iterated that meeting was due to take place with the members within the following days at Cupid's Green. He confirmed that there was no further update.

The meeting ended at 7:10pm. The Chair thanked all Committee members for attending.

The Meeting ended at 7.10 am