

**PEOPLE AND  
ORGANISATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**6.10 P.M.**

**21ST NOVEMBER 2023**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Prof Chris Harris (Chair), Jason Wood (Vice-Chair), Mandy Bannon, Paul Hart, Paul Newton, Sue Penney and Sam Riches (substitute for Councillor Caroline Jackson)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Caroline Jackson

Officers in attendance:

Alex Kinch	Chief Officer - People and Policy
Dawn Bradley	OD Manager
Laura Collins	HR Policy and Strategy Lead
David Richmond	Talent & OD Officer
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer

**9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Jason Wood declared his interest as an employee and member of UNISON and as a member of Unite the union, these interests being publicly declared. He also declared that his wife is a member of UNISON, Unite the union and GMB.

**10 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**11 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR**

There were no items of urgent business.

**12 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Talent and OD Officer presented the draft Employee Engagement Strategy and provided a summary of the work undertaken so far towards meeting the relevant People Plan goals. The Committee was asked to consider and provide feedback on the introduction of the Strategy. Strategies such as this did not require formal Committee approval but views were welcomed.

The Strategy covers areas such as:

- Developing employee voice
- Increasing organisational integrity
- Improving strategic narrative
- Creating engaging managers

In response to discussion at JCC on 1 November 2023, references to specific survey data in the strategy have been removed and the wording to express our commitment to working with Trade Unions had been strengthened.

The Committee acknowledged the amount of work that had gone into the draft strategy. It was noted that this subject had also been discussed at the monthly Trade Union meetings.

***Resolved: -***

The Committee thanked Officers for their hard work in producing the Strategy and informed of their unanimous support, with the following feedback:

In the Introduction detail and/or the second section of the Strategy to include the formal NJC negotiating practices to acknowledge the formal structures in place for this Strategy.

**13 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE UPDATE FOLLOWING 2023 ASSESSMENT**

The Organisational Development Manager submitted a report to update the Committee on the key findings and overall result of the 2023 Investors In People assessment.

The report set out a summary of the recent Investors In People (IIP) assessment, where Established Silver accreditation was awarded.

Members were informed that IIP is a highly regarded organisation that assess organisations against their 'We invest in people' framework, which considers how people are led, supported, and developed at work. Recommendations and advice is then given on how to improve workplace culture, specifically in areas around employee engagement, communication, organisational culture and work practices. A comparison is also made against other organisations and in the sector.

Questions and/or feedback from the Committee were welcomed.

***Resolved: -***

- (1) That Officers be congratulated for their hard work in the significant achievement of the award of the Established Silver accreditation.
- (2) That the Committee acknowledges the result of the 2023 Investors in People assessment.

**14 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Organisational Development Manager submitted a report for the Committee to consider and provide feedback on the introduction of the Learning and Development Strategy. Strategies such as this did not require formal Committee approval but views were welcomed.

The Organisational Development Manager provided a verbal update at the meeting that informed that since the agenda report for the Learning and Development Strategy was submitted, she had met with Councillor Wood as per the agreed actions from the JCC to discuss in further detail the concerns that he had raised. As a result, an introductory

section to the strategy had been inserted to confirm our commitment to lifelong learning, as follows:

Initial introductory section to recognise the concept of lifelong learning:

We recognise that lifelong learning and development benefits both our current and future workforces, not only for the council as an individual employer, but also to the district as a whole should an employee choose to work elsewhere. Equipping our employees with new and transferable skills will help support individual development goals and fulfilment, and we will endeavour to provide access to education and skills training.

It was reported that the HR/OD Team are inviting comments and feedback on the introduction of the Strategy. The need for a focussed strategy on learning and development was highlighted during the research and consultation phases of the People Plan.

The Chair acknowledged the positive steps taken by the proposed Strategy.

***Resolved: -***

The Committee thanked Officers for their hard work in producing the Strategy and informed of their unanimous support, with the following feedback:

- To provide more clarity with regard to Volunteering in section 7 of the Strategy to include the current flexible working hours band width for council staff.
- On page 2 of the Strategy, the first bullet point to insert the word “local” after “with” and before “schools”.

**15 PEOPLE PLAN UPDATE**

The Organisational Development Manager submitted a report to update the Committee on progress of the People Plan. The Committee was asked to acknowledge the progress made on the People Plan to date. Questions or feedback were welcomed.

The report provided a summary of the progress made on the People Plan and was a strategic plan to enable employees to work at their best. Details of Year One Progress were provided within the report.

Members were informed that work was being delivered in line with the People Plan and feedback from the recent Investors in People assessment had confirmed that it is an ambitious strategy that has the potential to help people to work at their best. A briefing to all members was being planned.

The Chair expressed his thanks, appreciation and recognition of the success that had been undertaken to date.

***Resolved: -***

The Committee thanked Officers for their hard work and acknowledges the progress made on the People Plan to date.

## 16 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST-AID POLICY

The Organisational Development Manager reported to the Committee requesting approval of the Mental Health First Aid Policy. Members were provided with a summary of the work of the Mental Health First Aid team and presented a draft Mental Health First Aid policy for approval.

In response to discussion at JCC on 1 November 2023, two small errors were corrected.

The Committee acknowledged the excellent work undertaken and extended thanks to all those involved with the project.

It was moved by Councillor Prof Chris Harris, seconded by Councillor Jason Wood and resolved as follows:

***Resolved unanimously: -***

The Committee acknowledges the excellent work undertaken and extended thanks to all those involved with the project and that the Mental Health First Aid Policy be approved.

## 17 HR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The HR Policy and Strategy Lead presented proposals for revised Appeals, Grievance and Performance Improvement policies. The Committee was asked to consider and approve the introduction of revised Grievance and Performance Improvement policies and the introduction of a new Appeal Policy.

Comments and amendments following the meeting of JCC on 1 November 2023 were set out in the report.

The Committee considered each of the Policies as follows:

### **Grievance Policy**

The HR Policy and Strategy Lead summarised the proposed changes to the grievance policy as detailed in the HR Policy Amendments Tracker.

It was reported that the Grievance Procedure had not been reviewed since 2017 and consisted of an eight-page master policy and a seven-page appendix governing the overall process to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of each party. The recommended changes to the policy focused on consolidating the procedure to provide only one right of appeal, with a heightened focus on informal resolution and mediation.

It was moved by Councillor Jason Wood, seconded by Councillor Prof Chris Harris and unanimously resolved as follows:

“That the Grievance Policy be approved, subject to clarification within the Policy that if a Chief Officer raises a grievance regarding the Chief Executive that this be dealt with separately.”

Upon being put to the vote the Chair declared the proposition to be unanimously carried.

### **Appeals Policy**

The Committee was provided with a summary of the proposed Appeals Policy which would consolidate the appeals process into a single document rather than forming a part of multiple, separate policies as had been the case previously.

If approved, the policy would be launched alongside a suite of supporting documents which will include Appeal Hearing Officer guidance on how to conduct a fair appeal hearing, updated template letters, interactive supporting information for employees on what to expect in an appeal hearing and how to draft an effective appeal.

It was moved by Councillor Prof Chris Harris, seconded by Councillor Sue Penney and unanimously resolved as follows:

“That the Appeals Policy be approved, subject to it being explicit within the Policy that the sanction cannot be increased from the original decision.”

Upon being put to the vote the Chair declared the proposition to be unanimously carried.

### **Performance Improvement Policy**

The Committee was introduced to the proposed Performance Improvement Policy which had last been revised in 2013.

The Performance Improvement Policy (renamed) was consistent with the Performance Conversation Framework; the first stage of which was the Performance Improvement Conversation set out within that framework. The Performance Improvement Conversation (stage 1) carries with it a commitment to a minimum term of performance review (the Performance Review Period) of 3 months. This was consistent with the original policy.

It was moved by Councillor Prof Chris Harris, seconded by Councillor Jason Wood and resolved as follows.

“That the Performance Improvement Policy be approved, subject to amendment of paragraph 7.5 of the policy, with the inclusion that either the Chief Officer or the employee may require the attendance of the previous decision maker at the Stage 4 – Case Review. That this also be added to the FAQs.”

Upon being put to the vote the Chair declared the proposition to be unanimously carried.

### ***Resolved unanimously: -***

That the Grievance, Appeals and Performance Improvement policies be approved, subject to the amendments set out above.

## **18 HR ASSURANCE**

The Chief Officer – People and Policy submitted a report that updated the Committee on progress against the HR action plan, developed following an audit originally conducted in 2020.

Submitted as Appendix One of the report was the MIAA Audit report (March 2023). This included the original action plan of 35 recommendations, and highlighted 10 that, at this point in-time, remained outstanding or in-progress following their review.

Appendix two to the report contained the HR action plan with the most recent updates on progress against the action plan. This shows that of the 10 outstanding actions, 6 are now complete and 4 are on-going.

In conclusion it was reported that good progress had been made against outstanding HR Assurance Audit actions since March 2023. Outstanding actions were in-hand; 3 related to the work of the newly appointed HR Policy / Strategy Lead, and 1 related to an audit which is due to commence. A further update will be provided to Committee at the next scheduled meeting.

The Committee acknowledged the hard work that had been undertaken to date.

***Resolved: -***

That Committee acknowledges the hard work that has been undertaken to date and the progress made in the completion of the action plan, and how this links to the wider HR and OD work plan be noted.

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Chair

(The meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Stephen Metcalfe, Democratic Support - email [sjmetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:sjmetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk)**