

HUMAN RESOURCES ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 10TH DECEMBER, 2012

Present – Councillors A. Ibrahim (Chairman), Adia (Vice-Chairman), Dean, Francis, Mistry, Silvester and J. Walsh.

Also in Attendance

Mrs. L. Ridsdale - Assistant Director People and Transformation
Mrs. V. Ridge - Deputy Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hayes and Jones.

Councillor A. Ibrahim in the Chair

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 4th July, 2012 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

4. GENERAL PEOPLE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Ms. L. Ridsdale, Assistant Director People and Transformation, gave a presentation which updated members on a number of issues which were currently being progressed in relation to human resources and employee relations.

Specific information was provided in relation to the following areas, viz:-

- General update;
- Policy update on both legislative and local changes;
- 2013-2015 Savings and Efficiency Programme Staffing Impact; and
- The 2013-2015 Severance Campaign.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

5. UPDATED WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY AND POLICY STATEMENT: PROTECTION OF STAFF WHO ACT AS WITNESSES FOR THE COUNCIL

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided details of the updated Whistle Blowing Policy and also proposed a new policy statement: Protection of Staff who Act as Witnesses for the Council.

By way of background members were reminded that, this year the Council had dealt with a significant case within the learning disability network, where two former members of staff were convicted of the abuse and neglect of service users in their care. The case was brought to court as a result of a number of staff 'whistle blowing' to senior management, who then alerted the police. Consequently, an independent internal investigation was undertaken into this matter to establish the learning points for the Council and, as a result, a number of recommendations were made by the independent reviewer related to improvements around the council's whistle blowing policy and process, specifically:-

- Change and re-launch a whistle blowing policy with an independent person able to receive concerns;
- Ensure that such concerns when raised must be shared by the recipient of the Whistle blowers concerns with the Professional Social Worker who had responsibility for the Service User's wellbeing;
- Review the Council's position in respect of obtaining support for staff that were likely to face a traumatic time ie: court proceedings.

In response to the recommendations put forward members were advised that the Council's proposed revised whistle blowing policy included a new role for the Office of the Borough Solicitor in receiving and monitoring complaints and these were detailed in the report. In addition, a new policy statement had been drafted which set out the Council's commitment to supporting staff who act as witnesses for the council in the course of their professional duties and explained the nature of the support that should be made available to them.

In conclusion, it was stated that the proposed policies would significantly strengthen the Council's management of whistle blowing cases and would provide better support to staff that were required to act as witnesses on behalf of the Council. However, to be effective managers and staff must all be aware regarding the Council's policies provisions and have the confidence to invoke them appropriately. Consequently, a major policy launch and communication was proposed immediately upon approval and details of this were provided in the report.

A copy of the proposed Whistle Blowing Policy, together with the Policy Statement, were attached to the report.

Members discussed the proposals and they suggested that other methods of communication/publicity of the new policy be considered to ensure that all managers/employees were fully aware of its existence.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.00 p.m. and finished at 5.40p.m.)