

## **EMPLOYER / TRADE UNION COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 15th June, 2020**

Present:-

Councillor P Gilby (Chair)

Councillors	P Gilby	Councillors	Serjeant
Ade McCormick	J Innes	Huw Bowen	Chief Executive
Andrew Fowler	Executive Director	Helen Fox	Chief Accountant
Paula Stephens	UNISON	Maria Slack	UNISON
Tony Devereux	Unite	Liam Rich	Unite
Kate Harley	UNISON		
	Human		
	Resources		

\*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

### 34 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Lesley Waller.

### 35 **MINUTES**

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

### 36 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Chief Executive gave an update on the CMT restructure. It was explained that the review had been suspended and the consultation period extended to mid-June due to the impact of the corona virus pandemic. Additional representations had been received and responded to. The plan was for discussions to take place with all involved and then a more detailed progress report would be brought to the next meeting.

The Executive Director advised the committee that work on the new competency framework had continued and training for managers had begun. The organisational development strategy implementation had been impeded by the Coronavirus pandemic, however, it was recognised that it would be beneficial in terms of dealing with the recovery period and so would be accelerated where possible.

It was noted that following the discussions at the last meeting around project management there had been many successful projects delivered by the Council in response to the pandemic. A further update on the plans for project and programme management would be presented at a future meeting of the committee.

A member asked whether any progress had been made in respect to the mental health first aid programme. The committee was advised that it hadn't been possible to facilitate the training to date due to lockdown restrictions. Online options were being considered and providers were starting to present alternatives to face to face training. The employee assistance programme had been launched although staff awareness was not high according to a survey conducted by HR. A written paper would be delivered to the Senior Leadership Team highlighting the service and the need to communicate it to their teams. A regular management bulletin had also been introduced to encourage the dissemination of information.

### 37 **BUDGET UPDATE**

The Chief Accountant provided an update to the committee on the budget. It was advised that the 2019/20 accounts had now been concluded. A surplus of £148k had been forecast but the actual surplus was £107k. An overview of the current financial situation was provided with the following key points;

- There had been a reduced car park and leisure income due to the impact of COVID-19
- As building services were not operating at the usual level it was thought that it would be difficult to generate a surplus this year and a future loss provision had been set aside from the 2019/20 surplus to mitigate any shortfall in the new financial year
- Reserves and balances were at a reasonable level but almost all were earmarked for particular purposes
- The HRA had finished the year in a better position than expected. This was due to a reduction in the bad debts provision because rent arrears due to the introduction of Universal Credit were not as high as originally forecast. There had also been less spend due to the delay of some capital projects.

The committee heard that COVID-19 was expected to have a substantial impact on future budgets. Over spend had already been incurred in areas such as homelessness, ICT and waste recycling. Some key income

streams had stopped entirely. The Government had provided financial assistance, but not at a level that would cover the losses. Staff in areas such as leisure and venues had been furloughed. Financial information was being sent to central government on a regular basis in order to lobby for further funds.

The budget for 2021 was under review and a report would be presented to cabinet in July. The committee was advised that the council was facing a very challenging period and would need to take some difficult decisions.

### **38 KIER TUPE UPDATE**

The Human Resources Manager provided an update to the committee on the Kier TUPE arrangements. It was noted that a meeting was planned with the unions to start consultations. The Council had received the first cut of anonymised data and were aiming for the transfer to take place on 31<sup>st</sup> July. A communications plan was under development and the staff involved had been advised the previous week. The intention was to meet with all relevant staff during the next six weeks to address any concerns.

### **39 EASING OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN**

The Chair began by thanking all the union representatives for their support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Excellent work had been carried out on health and safety and the unions had helped the Council to put measures in place quickly, to protect members of staff and the public. It was acknowledged that this would also make it easier for colleagues to return to work in a safe manner and feel reassured that appropriate steps had been taken to safeguard them.

The Executive Director delivered a presentation to the committee outlining the preparations that had been carried out in order to facilitate the easing of lockdown, highlighting the following points;

- Risk assessments and guidance had been developed using government advice, consultation with union reps and had been signed off by the appropriate working group
- Council building layouts had been looked at in order to comply with the two metre social distancing rule
- Completed risk assessments were all stored centrally and would soon be available via Aspire
- Access guides for each building were under development

- The committee was shown example signage and an example building plan with one-way system, reduced capacity desk space and installation of screens
- The outdoor markets had been re-opened and the feedback so far had been positive.

The Executive Director echoed the Chair's thanks to the Unions for their support and the key role they had played in developing these processes.

A question was asked regarding the opening of the leisure centres and whether any preparatory work had been carried out. The committee was advised that significant progress had been made in this area, in order to re-open once the government clarified the guidance, but was reassured that the priority was to open in a safe manner, rather than to hit a target date.

#### 40 **PAY AND RATIONS**

The Human Resources manager initiated a discussion with the committee on pay and rations. It was agreed in principle at the start of lockdown that no staff member would be worse off financially if at all possible. Average wages were calculated based on average earnings from January 2020 to March 2020. As staff started returning to work it would be necessary to revert back to normal pay conditions. Staff would only move to normal pay where they had the opportunity and the capability to work their normal hours. Shielded colleagues would remain on average pay.

The committee was advised that Human Resources wanted to give employees the maximum amount of notice they could and were therefore keen to make a decision in line with current pay periods.

A union representative thanked Chesterfield Borough Council for their handling of this situation and for maintaining contractual pay throughout the pandemic.

#### 41 **TRACK AND TRACE**

The Human Resources Manager provided the committee with an update on the track and trace arrangements. The Council had been advised that the stadium had become a part of the national testing programme and so the Council was now unable to refer people there as an employer.

Bookings would need to be made via a national portal. The volunteers that the council had been providing to the test centre would now be required seven days a week from 8am to 4pm. More information on this was expected in due course.

The NJC had provided new guidance that staff members testing positive for COVID-19 would now be classified as sick. It was clarified that a verified case of COVID-19 would not trigger a sickness absence warning, however, if staff were persistently required to self-isolate the cause would be investigated. All staff would be advised to exercise caution in their personal lives as well as professional lives as restrictions are eased.

#### **42 QUARANTINE IMPLICATIONS**

A discussion took place around the potential impact of quarantine rules for staff members returning from holidays overseas. It was acknowledged that this would affect different staff in different ways. In the spirit of fairness, it was suggested that staff speak with their manager before booking any new holidays. They would then need to look for a workable solution together, for example by working from home where possible, using flexi time, taking unpaid leave or potentially bringing forward leave. It was acknowledged that there would be members of staff that already have holidays booked and that staff would be supported and treated reasonably. A formal proposal will be submitted to CMT and unions in due course.

#### **43 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 9.30am via Microsoft Teams.