

Minutes of the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 21 March 2022 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor N J Collor

Councillors: P M Brivio  
S S Chandler (as substitute for Councillor T A Bond)  
K Mills  
C A Vinson

Also Present: Representatives from UNISON

Officers: Chief Executive  
Head of Governance and HR  
HR and Payroll Manager  
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

32 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T A Bond.

33 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor S S Chandler had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor T A Bond.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

35 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2022 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

36 REMOTE WORKING POLICY UPDATE

The Head of Governance and HR presented an update on the Remote Working Policy, which had been agreed by the General Purposes Committee on 19 July 2021.

Members were advised that the Council had seen no detrimental effects on service provision that could be directly linked to home working as opposed to changes which could be linked to the impact of Covid. The overall performance for the year ending 31 March 2021 had seen an increase in the number of green indicators and a reduction in the number of red indicators in the performance report.

The majority (75%) of Council staff preferred working in a hybrid manner as opposed to fully home working. It was felt that a hybrid flexible working approach in conjunction with other employee benefits on offer put the Council in a strong position to become an Employer of Choice and would enable it to continue to attract and retain talent.

An online induction package had been developed that would enable new staff members to meet with the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive spoke of the need to retain Dover's corporate culture and the benefits of in-person and virtual meeting options.

To deal with the challenges that working in a hybrid manner could raise the Council would:

- Reintroduce business plans, which would set out the vision and key objectives of each department.
- Implement a revised personal development procedure, enabling individuals and the Council to understand performance issues and employees' aspirations and training needs.
- Design and deliver management training programmes to increase the skill and confidence of managers in dealing with employee performance and absence.
- Ensure all communication channels that were available to customers were monitored and, where necessary, improved to enhance the customer experience.

In response to comments from Councillor P M Brivio on the importance of maintaining some face-to-face contact options, particularly around the reception, the Chief Executive advised that this was an issue that would be explored further.

It was moved by Councillor C A Vinson, duly seconded by Councillor P M Brivio, and

RESOLVED: That the update on the Remote Working Policy be noted.

### 37 PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Head of Governance and HR presented the report on the Parental Bereavement Policy and Procedure.

Members were advised that the report provided for enhancements to the statutory requirements for parental bereavement leave as followed:

- To enhance the statutory payment to full pay for 1-2 weeks as Parental Bereavement Leave (as opposed to Statutory Pay);
- The removal of any eligibility criteria in terms of length of service or lower earnings limit; and
- Provision of signposting, and referral where necessary to avenues of support.

These were also in addition to the Council's existing special leave policy which enabled a Head of Service to grant up to 5 days of special leave at full pay.

It was moved by Councillor S S Chandler, duly seconded by Councillor C A Vinson, and

RESOLVED: That the Parental Bereavement Policy and Procedure be approved and adopted with immediate effect.

38 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor C A Vinson, duly seconded by Councillor S S Chandler and

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

39 PAY AWARD 2022

The Head of Paid Service presented the report on the Pay Award 2022.

At the Chairman's request, the Committee also heard from the representatives of UNISON present as to their views on the Pay Award 2022.

RESOLVED: (a) That a pay award of 3.25% on the base salary of all staff from 1 April 2022 and increase car and fuel allowances by the same amount be approved.

(b) That an additional award of 0.6% for Grade L2 to bring it to National Minimum Wage level be approved.

40 BUSINESS MILEAGE POLICY

The Head of Governance and HR presented the report on the Business Mileage Policy.

RESOLVED: (a) That the new Business Mileage Policy be approved to take effect from 1 June 2022.

(b) That the Head of Paid Service be authorised to make any amendments to the mileage rates in line with any changes made by HMRC in the future.

(c) That the Head of Paid Service be requested to undertake a review of the Business Mileage Policy with a view to it being consistent with the HMRC scheme and in particular in relation to payment rates for mileage in excess of 1,200 miles per annum and payment rates for engine size.

The meeting ended at 3.14 pm.