

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

22 February 2010

Attendance:

Councillors:

Worrall (Chairman)
Weston (Vice Chairman in the Chair) (P)

Achwal
Anthony (P)
Collin
Cook (P)
Gemmell (P)

Howell (P)
Learney (P)
Nelmes (P)
Verney (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Sanders (Standing Deputy for Councillor Worrall)
Councillor Spender (Standing Deputy for Councillor Achwal)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Performance and Organisational Development)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 23 November 2009 (less exempt item) be approved and adopted.

2. **HUMAN RESOURCES – QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2009/10**

([Report PER169 refers](#))

Councillor Godfrey introduced the Report and drew particular attention to the number of full time equivalents in post at the Council which continued to be affected by the Council's Vacancy Management Policy. Appendices 1B and 1C to the Report also indicated that sickness absence figures had increased during the previous quarter and there was particular concern over the number of longer-term absences.

During discussion of the increase in sickness absence figures, the Head of Organisational Development advised that managers continued to monitor trends and manage the issue accordingly. She referred to a recent stress management audit undertaken at the Council and suggested that analysis of

its results, together with those from The Times 'Best Place to Work' survey (also recently undertaken), was likely to assist in informing action plans. Their results would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee was particularly concerned at the continued absence in the Landlord Services Division and that it was apparently primarily related to stress related illness. It was acknowledged that some areas of the Council's work, particularly those forward-facing services that dealt with the public, could be stressful environments. Members were reminded that certain instances of long-term sickness absence in the Landlord Services Division were primarily related to organisational change in sheltered housing schemes and the situation continued to be proactively managed.

Further to a request, the Head of Organisational Development clarified that although terms and conditions of employment differed between the public and private sectors, the Council was bound by national agreements. This included full pay for the first three days of self-certificated absence and also full pay for up to six months and half pay for the following six months, after five years of service. However, she was satisfied that the organisation managed all absence proactively, including applying the 'Bradford Index' to identify occurrences of regular short term absence and monitoring the situation accordingly, as well as regular liaison with staff with longer-term sickness. She clarified that the Council did not investigate only those absences of more than 10 days. Members also noted that, although some local authorities had previously opted out of the national terms and conditions of employment, it had been observed that higher pay awards had been negotiated in those areas.

The Chief Executive stated that a correlation between sickness absence due to stress, and organisational change, should not be assumed. He reminded that recent restructures had impacted on a relatively small number of individuals, the majority of which had been senior management. He advised that pressures on officers due to reduced capacity within teams (including that due to vacancy management) were normally identified as soon as possible as part of the Business Planning process and resources managed accordingly. The Council's various regulatory functions also occasionally placed pressures on some officers at certain times of year.

Councillor Godfrey also acknowledged the Committee's concerns about long-term sickness due to stress. He suggested that proposals for flexible working across the organisation might assist in targeting those areas where capacity had previously been identified as an issue. He also acknowledged that the number of working days lost to the Council from sickness absence during the previous quarter was high. Further to Member's suggestions that the Council should consider opting out of national terms and conditions of employment, to reduce its liability for sick pay during the first three days of uncertified absence and also over the longer term, he suggested that this was likely to undermine the Council's policies of being an 'Employer of Choice'. He advised that he was also confident of the monitoring undertaken by Human Resources of absence figures and that robust action was taken to address situations, wherever appropriate. Further to a suggestion, he agreed that he would

support investigation of an incentive or reward scheme for those officers who had not had any absence during the previous year.

With regard to Appendix 2 to the Report – Human Resources Division Business Plan Monitoring, the Head of Organisational Development undertook to check the apparent zero per cent progress against Action Code OD/OD/06 (Support to New Finance System).

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee remained concerned at the increase in sickness absence at the Council. Although mindful of the various mechanisms utilised to manage staff absence, Members considered whether nationally agreed employment terms and conditions relating to sick pay could potentially contribute, in some instances, to these higher levels of absence at the Council, compared to some private sector organisations. It was agreed that an Informal Working Group of the Committee be appointed to consider this and related matters raised during discussion, and to make specific recommendations to the Portfolio Holder on ideas that might potentially improve the situation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.
2. That the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Organisational Development have regard to the comments of the Committee with regard to:-
 - (i) its support for a scheme that gave official recognition to those members of staff who had achieved a 100% attendance record over the previous year.
 - (ii) that the Business Planning process have regard to reduced capacity within teams, including due to vacancy management, and that resources be managed accordingly.
 - (iii) that consideration be given as to whether nationally agreed employment terms and conditions relating to sick pay could potentially contribute, in some instances, to higher levels of absence at the Council, compared to some private sector organisations
3. That an Informal Group be appointed as follows to consider the matters raised during debate, and highlighted at 2 above, and to make specific recommendations to the Portfolio Holder on those ideas that may potentially improve sickness absence at the Council:

Councillors Cook, Gemmell, Nelmes, Sanders, Verney and Worrall (Weston – deputy)

3. EXEMPT BUSINESS

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Exempt Minutes of previous meeting held 23 November 2009:) Information relating to a particular individual. (Para 1 to Schedule 12A refers).
	• Guildhall Catering Contract – Further Update) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)
) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority. (Para 4 to Schedule 12A refers)
##	Winchester City Council Organisational Development) Information relating to a particular individual. (Para 1 to Schedule 12A refers).
) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. (Para 2 to Schedule 12A refers)

)
) Information relating to any
) consultations or negotiations,
) or contemplated
) consultations or negotiations,
) in connection with any labour
) relations matter arising
) between the authority or a
) Minister of the Crown and
) employees of, or office
) holders under, the authority.
) (Para 4 to Schedule 12A
) refers)

4. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minute of the previous meeting of the
 Committee held on 23 November 2009 be approved and adopted.

5. **WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
 (Report PER170 refers)

The Committee considered a Report that set out proposals for organisational
 change at the Council (detail in exempt minute).

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.15pm.

Chairman