

**DRAFT Minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Human Resources Committee  
Albany House, 73-75 Great Victoria Street, Belfast  
Monday 23 September 2019 – 12.00 noon**

**Present:** Paul Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Canning (DC), Grainne McAleer (GM), Brian McGrath (BMcG)

**Apologies:** Paul O’Doherty, Eamon McDowell.

**In Attendance:** Sam Gallaher (CEO), Angela Barratt (AB) HeadsTogether HR Advisor.  
**In attendance for Agenda item 11** [REDACTED] NIPSA, [REDACTED], Local NIPSA representative

Action

**1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies received.

**2. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest.**

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

**3. Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HR Committee**

Minutes of the HR Committee meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> June were agreed.

**Proposed by GM, seconded by DC**

**4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**5. HR Update**

■ case – The CEO provided an update and confirmed that the tribunal hearing was still scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019. He is to seek a further update from DSO this week.

Grievance case – A grievance submitted by a member of staff in May has been investigated and considered by a panel drawn from Council. The grievance was not upheld and the member of staff has subsequently appealed this decision. An appeal is in hand.

Workplace Survey – see agenda item 11

The CEO raised concerns in relation to the BBC article recently published and about apparent breaches of confidentiality in GTCNI. This had been drawn to the attention of the ARAC committee. He was disappointed as it appears the Committee has not initiated an

investigation. There was a discussion on the ongoing investigation into information management and data protection issues and the CEO will follow up with internal audit in relation to the latest breach.

It was agreed that as a regulatory body, information management should be water tight and there was a discussion on the trust issues that exist both within the Council and with staff as a result of recent data breaches and breaches of confidentiality.

Organisational Structure – see agenda item 7

Fixed Term Contracts (ftc) – The CEO advised that there are presently four staff on a ftc until December 19. He updated on the key work priorities and the need to look at resources in light of these. Decisions concerning continuation of ftcs will be taken within context of progress in respect of revised organisation structure and work priorities.

Performance Management / Appraisals – CEO advised that work was progressing however timing of implementation, as noted in the recent survey report needs to be considered. AB agreed with this and advised that the action plan suggests an implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. This would allow time for consultation and training for all staff and managers prior to implementation. The Committee agreed with this suggestion.

Voluntary Exit Scheme – CEO advised HR Committee that the Department had advised that GTCNI could express an interest in participating in a voluntary exit scheme. This may assist with the organisational structure review however it should be noted that the principal of VES means that posts cannot be replaced. CEO confirmed he had lodged an expression of an interest. There is no guarantee that any application would be accepted but the CEO felt that this perhaps was an option worth having at this point. The Committee agreed.

## **6. Absence report**

The CEO presented the absence report. The DE set target in our business plan is 6% and GTCNI is currently sitting at 12-13%. There has been an increase in long-term absence over the past quarter which is impacting on operational issues. There have been no temporary cover arrangements put in place for the individuals currently off on long term sick.

One member of staff returned from long term sickness last week and referrals to occupational health have been arranged for the other two members as per our policy. The Committee noted the report and the cost of absence to the organisation year to date (presently £33,365 which is more than in all of 2018/19) and the concerns raised in relation to operational issues.

## **7. Staffing structure**

The CEO provided a summary of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan and presented two affordable options in relation to a revised structure to support delivery of the Corporate Plan. He stressed that in his opinion what was proposed was not significantly radical and was built around two key directorates each with a head who along with the CEO would comprise an SMT. It would necessitate recruiting to existing vacancies and in terms of cost, based on current calculations, would be an increase of £14K on the current pay line but lower than the pay line of the staff complement at Apr 2018. It was stressed that job descriptions were being finalised and job evaluation undertaken. This exercise will confirm costs and GTCNI had purchased a licence to use the GLPC Job Evaluation Scheme which is recognised and

Action

used extensively by Local Government. A staffing business would then be prepared for submission to DE

Action

There was robust discussion on the proposals. BMcG commented that the proposals seemed to be appropriate. PF noted that the proposals would create a firmer and more settled structure, with clear roles and responsibilities. This linked to the survey action plan and also supports the implementation of a performance management system post-implementation.

**Proposed by DC, seconded by PF.**

### **8. NIPSA recognition agreement**

There was a discussion on the previous proposal by NIPSA to amend the recognition agreement. The Committee agreed that essentially the proposed forum (JNC) should comprise the SMT as this is most appropriate, however there should be an open invitation for the Council Chair, Vice Chair or HR Committee Chair to attend meetings, but their attendance should not be mandatory. It was noted that in all likelihood at least one of these Council members would attend.

### **9. AOB**

DC provided an update to the Committee on the terms of reference agreed with Headstogether in relation to the work commissioned by the Council following the NIPSA Survey. He also updated on a business case addendum that was agreed with DE following the Council decision to extend the ongoing onsite support. He stressed that it was necessary that these documents were agreed retrospectively under the circumstances.

**Proposed by PF, seconded by BMcG.**

As this was the final meeting of the present Committee, PF recorded thanks to HR Committee members for their work during their tenure on the Committee and also recorded thanks to DC, CEO and AB for their support.

### **11. Draft Survey Action Plan**

██████████ joined the meeting for this agenda item. ██████████ advised they had not received a copy of the paper and draft action plan. SG provided confirmation that the document had been emailed to ██████ at 08.00 am on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019. ██████ advised that NIPSA were having problems with emails and that may be the reason she did not receive the paper in advance and would look into the matter.

██████████ were offered an opportunity to read the action plan however they commenced a discussion on staff concerns and staff allegations in relation to the CEO. BMcG stopped the discussion and asked ██████████ to advise what actions will assist staff in moving forward. It was emphasised that an HR presence had been on-site for many weeks, that staff had availed of 1:1 meetings with HR, that focus groups had been held and staff reminded of how

they can and should raise issues and that an action plan to address matters raised in focused groups had been developed.

There followed robust discussion around actions with suggestions to include the display of zero tolerance posters (in respect of bullying and harassment), communication from the Committee or Chair in relation to zero tolerance and confirming staff can be supported at meetings. It was also suggested the Committee visit staff before they left.

██████████ agreed to review the draft action plan and provide comments before the end of the week, ahead of the Council meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

████ raised the matter of the NIPSA Recognition Agreement indicating that █████ felt that in light of current circumstances that it should be revised to ensure negotiation with the Council or HR Committee. AB pointed out the implementing the present agreement forms part of the proposed action plan.

PF agreed to issue communication to all staff and PF, GM and BMcG undertook to speak to staff after the meeting.

Action

PF  
GM  
BMcG

Signed..... Dated .....