

# EMPLOYEE ISSUES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 30 August 2022

**Chair:**

Councillor Margaret Cowie (after item 2)

**Councillors Present:**

Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Celine Handibode (Depute – after item 2), Councillor Richard Lockhart, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Kirsten Robb

**Councillors' Apologies:**

Councillor Archie Buchanan, Councillor Geri Gray

**Attending:**

**Finance and Corporate Resources**

H Calley, Administration Officer; E Maxwell, HR Business Manager; K McLeod, Administration Assistant; K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; S Somerville, Administration Manager

**Also Attending:**

J Gaffney, EIS; T Slaven, UNISON

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## 1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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## 2 Appointment of Chair and Depute Chair

Consideration was given to the appointment of the Chair and Depute Chair of the Employee Issues Forum.

Councillor Convery, seconded by Councillor Brogan, moved that Councillor Cowie be appointed as Chair of the Employee Issues Forum.

Councillor Convery, seconded by Councillor Brogan, also moved that Councillor Handibode be appointed as Depute Chair of the Employee Issues Forum.

**The Forum decided:**

- (1) that Councillor Cowie be appointed as Chair of the Employee Issues Forum; and
- (2) that Councillor Handibode be appointed as Depute Chair of the Employee Issues Forum.

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## 3 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – April to June 2022

A report dated 18 August 2022 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period April to June 2022:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics

- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers and exit interviews
- ◆ recruitment monitoring
- ◆ Staffing Watch as at 11 June 2022

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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#### **4 Housing and Technical Resources – Workforce Monitoring – April to June 2022**

A joint report dated 18 August 2022 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Housing and Technical Resources for the period April to June 2022:-

- ◆ attendance statistics
- ◆ occupational health statistics
- ◆ accident/incident statistics
- ◆ disciplinary hearings, grievances and Dignity at Work cases
- ◆ analysis of leavers and exit interviews
- ◆ Staffing Watch as at 12 March 2022

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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#### **5 Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

A report dated 22 August 2022 by the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) was submitted providing advice on the support and assistance to Ukrainian Refugees by employees within Housing and Technical Resources working with internal and external partners.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government announced a 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. Phase one was launched on 18 March 2022 and enabled Ukrainian nationals to apply for a visa to live in the UK, where they had a named sponsor providing a home or room(s) within their home.

At the same time, the Scottish Government launched the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme, which operated within the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Super Sponsor scheme provided an alternative route for Ukrainian nationals to apply for a visa, without the need for a named sponsor, before they were given permission to travel to the UK.

The Scottish Super Sponsor scheme offered Ukrainian nationals temporary accommodation on arrival in Scotland through Welcome Hubs and provided a matching service to secure accommodation, which had been checked by local authorities, to ensure that it was safe and met required standards.

It was initially anticipated that the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme would support around 3,000 Ukrainian nationals, however, since it was launched, over 10,000 people had arrived in Scotland so, including the Homes for Ukraine scheme, there were now more than 13,000 Ukrainian nationals in Scotland.

The first Welcome Hub hotel in South Lanarkshire, managed and directed by Housing and Technical Resources, was established in East Kilbride at the end of April 2022. A total of 3 hotels in East Kilbride and 1 in Hamilton were operating as Welcome Hubs (152 rooms in total). As of 15 August 2022, there were 445 Ukrainian nationals living within the 4 hotels, all of which were managed by Housing and Technical Resources.

The Welcome Hubs provided safe and secure temporary accommodation with meals for Ukrainian nationals until arrangements would be made for them to either:-

- ♦ move on to another local authority area
- ♦ move on to suitable interim accommodation
- ♦ be matched to a suitable host and arrangements made to move into the host accommodation
- ♦ be allocated a council or Housing Association property
- ♦ move to a property in the private rented sector

In addition to managing its existing resettlement caseload, the Refugee Resettlement Team worked across all 4 hotels and provided a range of resettlement support and assistance to Ukrainian nationals.

The Refugee Resettlement Team provided a wide range of support to Ukrainian nationals from arrival at the Welcome Hubs through to securing accommodation. This work included practical support and general advice and assistance but also specialist resettlement work which included:-

- ♦ obtaining biometric residence permits
- ♦ applying for state benefits and national insurance numbers
- ♦ opening a bank account
- ♦ registering with a GP and dentist
- ♦ enrolling children in school (working with colleagues in Education Resources)
- ♦ assistance to match to a host
- ♦ arrangements for furnishing properties
- ♦ arrangements for moving to other local authority areas

The Refugee Resettlement Team was also responsible for carrying out safeguarding checks for Ukrainian nationals and worked closely with colleagues in Environmental Services and Personnel Services to ensure that property checks and Disclosure checks were successfully completed and, where possible, issues discussed and resolved.

On 13 July 2022, the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme was temporarily paused for new applications, to allow time to ensure accommodation was secured and support provided to the high numbers of Ukrainians already in the country.

Housing and Technical Resources would continue to actively engage in strategic meetings with the Scottish Government, other local authorities and agencies as appropriate. The current position in relation to the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme would be monitored to ensure that the Council and partners could respond appropriately and put effective arrangements in place to continue to support Ukrainian refugees.

The Head of Personnel Services undertook to pass on members' questions for response.

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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## 6 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.