

EMPLOYEE ISSUES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 26 October 2021

Chair:

Councillor Isobel Dorman

Councillors Present:

Councillor Graeme Campbell, Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Lynsey Hamilton, Councillor Ian Harrow, Councillor Graeme Horne, Councillor Joe Lowe, Councillor Monique McAdams

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Janine Calikes, Councillor Jim McGuigan

Attending:

Education Resources

S Nicolson, Head of Education (Senior Phase)

Finance and Corporate Resources

H Calley, Administration Officer; C Lyon, Administration Officer; E McPake, Human Resources Business Partner (Education and Social Work Resources); K McVeigh, Head of Personnel Services; A Norris, Administration Assistant

Trades' Unions

H Scott, GMB; T Slaven, UNISON; K Wallace, Unite the Union

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Employee Issues Forum held on 17 August 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Head of Personnel Services advised that she had responded to the individual members regarding their questions from the last meeting of the Forum. In relation to Councillor McAdams' question on whether there was currently a recruitment freeze on Care Worker posts, the Head of Personnel Services confirmed that there had not been a recruitment freeze.

Councillor Convery stated that, whilst he took cognisance of what the Head of Personnel Services said in respect of the recruitment freeze, Councillor McAdams was given this information from an officer within Social Work Resources. The Head of Personnel Services advised that she had spoken to Heads of Service within Social Work Resources and also her own team, within Personnel Services, who were busy recruiting in this area at present and she was confident that there had been no recruitment freeze.

In relation to the question from Councillor McGuigan requesting further details on the reasons for veterans not attending interviews, the Head of Personnel Services advised that this data was not held within the national system but from anecdotal evidence, and it was generally found it was due to the fact that they had secured another post.

The Forum decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Council-wide Workforce Monitoring – July and August 2021

A report dated 8 October 2021 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the following Council-wide employee information for the period July and August 2021:-

- ♦ 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 12 June 2021

In terms of the recruitment figures, the Head of Personnel Services advised that, at paragraph 5.1, there was an error in the figures and the comparison from the previous year should be an increase of 52 and not a decrease of 200.

Following discussion regarding a recent communication to Council employees requesting assistance to provide a bank of staff for care workers, the Head of Personnel Services confirmed that the letter sent was part of winter planning to ensure that the Service was adequately covered.

In respect of registration costs, the Head of Personnel Services advised that she would check the current position and feedback to Councillor McAdams.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 August 2021 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Education Resources – Workforce Monitoring – June to August 2021

A joint report dated 7 October 2021 by the Executive Directors (Finance and Corporate Resources) and (Education Resources) was submitted on the following employee information for Education Resources for the period June to August 2021:-

- ♦ 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 June 2021

Councillor Convery requested a breakdown of:-

- ♦ the type of employee in relation to disciplinaries
- ♦ the reasons given by employees at exit interviews as to why they were leaving the Council

The Human Resources Business Manager advised that she would provide this information to Councillor Convery.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 29 September 2020 (Paragraph 4)]

5 SQA Provisional Awards 2021 – Alternative Certification Model (ACM)

A report dated 30 September 2021 by the Executive Director (Education Resources) was submitted providing an overview of the ACM in relation to the preparation of provisional awards for SQA candidates following the cancellation of the 2021 SQA examination diet.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SQA National 5 2020/2021 exams were cancelled with an SQA-led National Qualifications Group (NQ21) established to develop alternative means of certification, known as ACM, based on demonstrated attainment supported by robust evidence. In December 2020, the SQA Higher and Advanced Higher examinations for 2020/2021 were also cancelled with the ACM adapted to also accommodate those qualifications.

The NQ21 Group developed a model to aid understanding of SQA standards and the required quality assurance processes, along with an agreed timeline. However, due to the January 2021 lockdown, prelim diets for Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications did not proceed. During the period of uncertainty as to when lockdown would end, course content was reduced, some assessment elements removed and timescales for submitting awards extended.

Schools were supported in planning for assessment and for quality assurance during the phased return of pupils after the spring break.

Weekly meetings had taken place throughout the session between central Education Resources' staff and secondary Head Teacher representatives to plan and agree guidance in respect of ACM. Weekly meetings had also taken place with teacher professional association representatives to consider proposals and the implications for their members. SLC guidance was developed and disseminated in relation to both assessment of young people and the quality assurance processes applied.

Individual provisional results were established using professional judgement on assessment evidence and controlled exam conditions. Schools undertook a sense checking exercise on unusual or unexpected results, as well as with senior Education Resources' officers, although results were neither upgraded nor downgraded directly as a result of those checks. Each Head Teacher was required to sign-off all provisional results for their school.

HMIE scrutinised local authority approaches to ACM and met with focus groups. The outcome included an individual local authority feedback session and a national report published in May 2021. SLC approaches and processes had been highly commended and included as good practice in the report, in particular, the effective communication and resulting consistency of understanding of approaches and expectations.

Ongoing dialogue and engagement between teachers and learners meant there were no surprises with results and few complaints and concerns raised, with an early indication the level of appeals was lower than anticipated nationally. A broad analysis indicated candidates had performed better or as well as, in previous years and could be attributed to:-

- ◆ SQA adjustments to course content and assessment requirements for a range of qualifications
- ◆ removal of high stakes final exams and the resulting opportunity to fail
- ◆ assessments developed to reflect individual school and learner context
- ◆ positive learner engagement with the assessment and moderation process
- ◆ robust and high-quality teacher engagement with the assessment and moderation process

SQA had confirmed details of changes to National Qualifications for 2021/2022, with information regarding the approach to certification to be provided early in the new term. Education Resources would work with stakeholders to support delivery of National Qualifications in 2021/2022.

The Forum commended the Head of Education (Senior Phase) and his team for the excellent work done during challenging times.

The Forum decided: that the effective partnership working undertaken in support of Alternative Certification process for SQA awards for candidates presented in session 2020/2021 be noted.

6 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.