

Agenda

Employment panel

Date: **Wednesday 9 September 2020**

Time: **9.30 am**

Place: **Online meeting only**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Sarah Buffrey, democratic services officer on 01432 260176 or e-mail sarah.buffrey@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Employment panel

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor David Hitchiner**
Vice-Chairperson **Councillor Tony Johnson**

Councillor Ellie Chowns
Councillor Liz Harvey
Councillor Terry James

Agenda

Pages

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
To receive any apologies for absence.
2. **NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**
To receive details of any member nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the panel.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interests in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the panel in respect of items on the agenda.
4. **MINUTES**
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 August 2020.
5. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**
To receive any written questions from members of the public.
Details of the scheme and related guidance are available here:
https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your_council/61/get_involved
Please submit questions to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk
The deadline for the receipt of questions is 3 September 2020 at 5.00 pm.
Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting.
6. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**
To receive any written questions from councillors.
Please submit questions to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk
The deadline for the receipt of questions is 3 September 2020 at 5.00 pm.
Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting.

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EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

In the opinion of the Proper Officer, the next item will not be, or is likely not to be, open to the public and press at the time it is considered.

RECOMMENDATION: that under section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act, as indicated below and it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

- 2 Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

7. EMPLOYMENT MATTER

To consider an employment matter.

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The public's rights to information and attendance at meetings

You have a right to: -

- Attend all council, cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting.
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all councillors with details of the membership of cabinet and of all committees and sub-committees.
- Have a reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) made available to the public attending meetings of the council, cabinet, committees and sub-committees.
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the council, cabinet, committees and sub-committees and to inspect and copy documents.

Public transport links

The Shire Hall is a few minutes walking distance from both bus stations located in the town centre of Hereford.

Recording of this meeting

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

Fire and emergency evacuation procedure

In the event of a fire or emergency the alarm bell will ring continuously.

You should vacate the building in an orderly manner through the nearest available fire exit and make your way to the Fire Assembly Point in the Shire Hall car park.

Please do not allow any items of clothing, etc. to obstruct any of the exits.

Do not delay your vacation of the building by stopping or returning to collect coats or other personal belongings.

The chairman or an attendee at the meeting must take the signing in sheet so it can be checked when everyone is at the assembly point.

Minutes of the meeting of Employment panel held at Online meeting on Wednesday 12 August 2020 at 2.30 pm

Present: Councillor David Hitchiner (chairperson)
Councillor Tony Johnson (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Ellie Chowns, Liz Harvey and Terry James

Officers: Assistant director, people

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from the members of the panel.

25. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of 13 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairperson.

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

29. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

30. HOME WORKING

The assistant director for people introduced the report. She explained that since March 2020 most council staff were working from home. The experience of this had been largely positive. The council was delivering services effectively and performance was as good if not better than before. A staff survey had been carried out, the feedback from which was set out in the report. The results of the survey suggested that staff would welcome the proposal to formalise home working arrangements. It was intended that the new arrangements be introduced on a temporary basis until December 2021. The impact of the changes would be evaluated before any decision to make the new arrangements permanent.

In discussion of the report it was noted that:

- Not all staff found working at home a positive experience, some did not have suitable space or found it incompatible with their personal commitments;
- Some posts would not be designated suitable for home working, this would reflect business need but requests to work at home would be considered carefully;
- If staff did not want to work from home they would not be made to, it would be a free choice;
- Some teams had a particular need to collaborate which was better facilitated by physical proximity, dedicated team space would be available for those teams;
- Care should be taken not to prejudge the decision in 2021 on making the arrangements permanent and to make sure staff were comfortable with the decisions taken;
- A shift in management approach would be required, looking at outputs rather than presentism, and support would be put in place for managers;
- Careful thought would need to be given to how new starters were introduced to the organisation;
- Home working could open up new recruitment opportunities as staff would not necessarily need to be based close to the county, however the reverse would also apply with current staff able to consider job opportunities anywhere around the country or even the world;
- There was no intention to differentiate pay grades for those working at home and those accessing offices, grades were set on the work that was done, not where it was done.

In relation to staff health and wellbeing it was noted that:

- Staff should not work excessive hours and managers would need to be alert to staff struggling to manage work / life balance;
- The council would assess the impact of the proposals on staff with protected characteristics, anecdotal evidence to date suggested that working from home gave greater control of the working environment allowing each person's needs to be met more exactly;
- If staff were contracted to work at home, the council would be responsible for ensuring that they had appropriate equipment, the level of stock should mean that there was no need to purchase new equipment;
- 42% of respondents to the staff survey said they felt they could better manage their mental health while working at home while 53% said they could better manage their physical health;
- The council had seen a small dip in sickness rates since March, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

It was resolved that:

Employment panel support the proposal to offer staff the opportunity to move to home working contracts for all or part of the working week until December 2021 at which point the success of the arrangements will be reviewed by all parties. The offer will be made to staff in roles where it is possible to maintain performance, professional and customer service standards when working from home.

The meeting ended at 3.03 pm

Chairperson

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