

MINUTES OF THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 2023, 7.05 - 7.50 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Reg Rice (Chair), Councillor Anne Stennett (Vice-Chair), Councillor Ibrahim Ali, and Councillor Marsha Isilar-Gosling.

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julie Davies.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were no deputations / petitions / presentations / questions.

6. MINUTES

It was noted that the Committee had agreed the Recruitment Policy at the meeting on 20 October 2022 but had also agreed to meet with trade unions to discuss the wording that was not taken forward in relation to Section 6 (Advertising). The Head of People explained that conversations with the trade unions were ongoing. It was noted that the previous decision of the Committee remained in effect and that any updates from discussions with trade unions would be presented at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

1. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Staffing and Remuneration Committee meeting held on 20 October 2022 as a correct record.

2. To confirm and sign the minutes of the special Staffing and Remuneration Committee meetings held on 7 November 2022, 9 November 2022, 11 November 2022, and 3 February 2023 as a correct record.

7. PEOPLE REPORT - DECEMBER 2022

The Head of People introduced the report which provided relevant workforce data in an easy to understand format in order to support informed, strategic decision making.

It was noted that there had been a focus on reducing agency staff, particularly higher paid workers, and there had been a reduction in the off payroll workforce from 76 to 54 in the quarter. It was commented that the base pay had increased by 7.5% in the quarter whilst the headcount had increased by 1%. It was explained that the difference in these numbers was due to the national pay award, which was backdated to April 2022. It was also noted that sickness absence had increased but that this had been anticipated following the insourcing of Homes for Haringey and the reporting of historic sickness absence for 12 months; it was commented that the increases were expected to continue until the insourced staff had been with the Council for 12 months.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following responses were provided:

- In response to a query about agency workers for projects, it was commented that the arrangements generally depended on the expected length of a project and how the Council could source the required resources. It was explained that it was difficult to provide permanent employment for projects and so alternatives such as fixed term contracts or agency workers were often considered. Longer term work or projects with more certainty of funding were likely to have more fixed term contracts.
- It was commented that the pay of agency workers varied; those employed by the Council were paid Council rates but agency rates were variable. It was noted that it was not possible to pay agency workers less than permanent staff.
- In relation to a query about resourcing, the Head of People noted that there was an aim to reduce reliance on agency workers. It was stated that a reduction in agency staff did not seek to give additional work to permanent employees; there were various measures to ensure sustainability, including recruiting permanent workers, redesigning some work, and seeking to make jobs more attractive.
- It was enquired whether agency or off role workers would receive the national pay award. The Head of People explained that any workers who were on Council pay scales and who met the service requirements were eligible for the pay award. It was noted that any workers who were paid in excess of the Council's pay scales were not eligible for the pay award.
- In relation to apprentices, the Head of People noted that work was underway to formalise the Council's approach. It was believed that having a Council-wide approach would be more efficient than hiring apprentices within services as there would be additional group training and networking opportunities. It was added that this would also create a stronger pathway to permanent employment. It was noted that a number of apprentices were existing employees whose training and development was funded through the apprentice levy.

RESOLVED

To note the report.

8. HR POLICY REVIEW - DISCIPLINARY POLICY, GRIEVANCE POLICY, AND SABBATICAL POLICY

The Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation introduced the report which outlined the content of one new Human Resources (HR) policy: the Sabbatical Policy, and two revised policies: the Grievance Policy and the Disciplinary Policy. It was noted that all three policies had been subject to consultation with the trade unions.

In relation to the Grievance Policy, the Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation explained that this had been reviewed in 2019 and was being updated to reflect best practice and to clarify some processes. It was noted that the recommendations provided clarity on who could raise a grievance, on the status of agency workers in relation to grievances, on mediation, on data storage, and on the process for dealing with any recommendations arising from grievance cases.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following responses were provided:

- It was explained that grievance appeals were normally heard by senior managers who would be independent. It was noted that grievance appeals did not normally involve councillors unless they related to the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, or Section 151 Finance Officer.
- It was enquired whether grievances would be addressed by a senior officer from the same directorate and whether this could lead to conflicts of interest. It was noted that this would depend on the nature and the grounds of the grievance. It was explained that some departments were large and it was possible for a number of senior managers in the directorate to be able to act without a conflict of interest; this would be important if any directorate-specific knowledge was required. It was highlighted that a representative from HR would be assigned to each case and would provide advice, including advice relating to potential conflicts of interest.
- It was noted that the revised policy aimed to provide clarity in relation to ex-employees. It was explained that these cases were expected to be resolved in a timely way. It was added that, after an employee had left, there was not normally a right of appeal but this would be considered on a case by case basis.
- It was confirmed that there had been consultation on the revised policies. The Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation noted that the consultation had included discussion and clarification of the process for ex-employees and the arrangements relating to data access and processing.

In relation to the Disciplinary Policy, it was noted that the last review had taken place in 2018 and that the majority of changes were to implement best practice and to provide some clarification. There were updates that sought to formalise the arrangements on data sharing when an independent investigator was used, to confirm the ability to have remote investigation meetings where appropriate, to clarify the role of witnesses, and to confirm the recording arrangements.

It was highlighted that the revised policy proposed to remove the right to trade union representation at suspension stage; it was noted that this was not a right according to the Advisory, Conciliation, and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and had caused some delays and issues previously. It was explained that suspension was a neutral act to allow investigation. This issue had been discussed with trade unions and, with the inclusion of a supplementary script for suspension meetings which made it clear that no substantive issues would be discussed at the suspension meeting, there were no objections.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following responses were provided:

- It was noted that dismissal appeals were heard by a panel of councillors. It was confirmed that the panel hearing was a review rather than a re-hearing but that the panel had the power to re-instate.
- It was acknowledged that suspension was a neutral act but some members asked that all other alternatives be considered beforehand. The Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation confirmed that alternatives were always considered before suspension; it was explained that a suspension risk assessment had to be undertaken by the Head of Service and that each case was reviewed by HR in advance.
- It was noted that the policy previously required suspension risk assessments to be completed by the relevant Assistant Director but it was proposed to amend this to be completed by the Head of Service. It was explained that Heads of Service were usually more aware of the details of the case and that the previous requirement to involve an Assistant Director had caused delays.

In relation to the Sabbatical Policy, the Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation noted that this was a new benefit which allowed flexible working through allowing an extended period of unpaid leave. It was noted that the policy included an application process and time limits but was an option to support retention. The Sabbatical Policy would allow employees opportunities to undertake activities such as travel, study, and caring responsibilities. It was commented that any other employment during a sabbatical would need to be declared to the Council.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following responses were provided:

- It was confirmed that a sabbatical was an unpaid period of leave but that there may be rare circumstances where the Council might consider supportive or matched funding for a period of study.
- Some members of the Committee stated that they considered the Sabbatical Policy to be a good way to retain staff.
- It was noted that, if an employee wished to resign, they would still be required to provide the relevant notice to the Council in accordance with their contract of employment.

The Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation circulated a list of HR policies that had been completed during 2021-22 and a list of policies that were due to be reviewed during 2023-24.

HR Policies reviewed during 2021-22:

- Flexible retirement (June 2021)
- Parental leave (December 2021)

- Organisational Change (February 2022)
- Menopause (February 2022)
- Employee volunteering (June 2022)
- Employment references (June 2022)
- Conflict of Interests (June 2022)
- Ill Health Retirement (October 2022)
- Sickness absence (October 2022)
- Honorarium, Acting Up and Secondment (October 2022)
- Sabbaticals (February 2023)
- Grievance (February 2023)
- Disciplinary (February 2023)

HR Policies due to be reviewed during 2023-24:

- Capability in the Workplace – Revision to existing policy (June 2023)
- Relocation – New policy (June 2023)
- Disclosure & Barring Service – Revision to existing policy (June 2023)
- Annual & Other Leave – Revision to existing policy (June 2023)
- Pay policy – Annual revision required for Council approval by 31 March (October 2023)
- Probation & Induction – Revision to existing policy (October 2023)
- Work Experience & Apprenticeships – New policy (October 2023)
- Job evaluation – New policy (February 2024)
- Flexible working – Revision to existing policy (February 2024)

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Grievance Policy, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
2. To approve the Disciplinary Policy, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
3. To approve the Sabbatical Policy, as set out in Appendix C to the report.

9. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

It was noted that Karen Gooday, Head of Employment, Reward, and Transformation, would be leaving the Council to take up another opportunity. The Chair thanked Karen Gooday for her service to both the Council and this Committee and wished her well for the future.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of items 11-12 as they contained exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local

Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); paragraph 1, information relating to an individual.

11. EXEMPT MINUTES

The Committee considered the exempt information.

RESOLVED

1. To confirm and sign the exempt minutes of the Staffing and Remuneration Committee meeting held on 20 October 2022.
2. To confirm and sign the exempt minutes of the special Staffing and Remuneration Committee meetings held on 7 November 2022, 9 November 2022, 11 November 2022, and 3 February 2023.

12. ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of exempt urgent business.

CHAIR: Councillor Reg Rice

Signed by Chair

Date