

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 6TH DECEMBER, 2016

PRESENT:

Councillors: Raj Sahota (Chair), Jason Arthur, Bernice Vanier, Viv Ross and Sarah Elliott

49. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr McShane, for whom Cllr Elliott was substituting.

51. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

53. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were no such items.

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

55. DELEGATED DECISIONS, SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS AND URGENT ACTIONS

There were no such items.

56. MY CONVERSATION MAP AND UPDATE

The Committee considered a report and presentation on the My Conversation map, presented by Daksha Desai, Head of Workforce Programme. The presentation set out the context within which the My Conversation Map had been launched, details of the map, the overall results and breakdown of results by area, details of the results in the Scope to Improve, Excellent Achiever and Ambitious and Strong Achiever categories, breakdown by BAME and disability compared to the overall Haringey population and planned next steps. The Committee noted that the results had not been moderated.

The Committee asked about areas of the Council where returns had been poor, and it was reported that the lower rates of return were spread across the Council, rather than being concentrated in any specific area. It was noted that services with a number of staff working in a non-office environment, for example on-street enforcement officers, might be expected to have lower rates of return.

Looking at the results for people in the Scope to Improve section of the map, officers advised that there was an expectation that people would not be in this category for longer than 6 months, and managers were encouraged to provide staff with the necessary support to achieve this. It was noted, however, that it would always be expected that there would be some staff within this area, and that people might be in the Scope to Improve category for a wide range of reasons. The demographic information for Scope to Improve in particular indicated that this was not representative of the workforce as a whole and mirrored some of the findings of the Equalities Audit – this demonstrated that there was more work to be done around issues such as unconscious bias, and it was anticipated that the results of the recent Mind survey and Stonewall survey would help to inform the work that needed to be done. In particular the Committee noted the over-representation of staff with disabilities in the Scope to Improve cohort, and asked what action was being taken to address this; it was confirmed that specific actions to address these issues may form part of the action plan arising from the results of the Mind survey, looking at mental health wellbeing. It was noted that the Council needed to refresh some of its data relating to disabilities as it was felt that there was some under-reporting in this area.

In terms of next steps, it was advised that there would be an audit of the My Conversation process, looking at the evidence underpinning the reported results, in order to provide assurance around the robustness of the process. It was noted that this data collection exercise had not captured any narrative in terms of the way that decisions had been reached, nor had any moderation been undertaken, for example where a manager was observed to have rated everyone in their team as Excellent Achiever, but issues such as this would be picked up as part of the audit process.

The Committee asked whether there was any data on differences of opinion between managers and staff regarding their placement on the map; officers advised that this was not captured as part of this data collection exercise, but agreed that this would be useful to record next time the data collection was carried out. The Committee also asked whether any work was being done to identify any common issues across the Scope to Improve cohort, in order to see if there were any particular supportive measures that the Council could implement which might be effective; officers confirmed that this was something that was being worked on.

The Committee asked what the staff reaction to the new process had been. It was noted that there had been a mixed reception from the 800 staff who had attended training sessions when the process was being rolled out, but that in general people had welcomed a move to more regular opportunities for feedback from management. Staff were also being asked to provide their views around this as part of the current Pulse survey.

The Committee welcomed this as a positive piece of work and agreed that a further update would be brought back to the Committee in the new municipal year, following the next data collection exercise.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

57. APPRENTICESHIPS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report on the apprenticeship programme and the implications of the Government's apprenticeship levy and targets for the Council, as presented by Daksha Desai, Head of Workforce Programme, and Maxine Sobers, Workforce Resourcing Manager. The report set out the background to the Council's apprenticeship programme, the recruitment process and roles that had been generated, the programme completion details, issues that had arisen during the programme, a review of progress against objectives and details of the apprenticeship levy and apprenticeship target to be introduced under the Enterprise and Finance Acts 2016.

The Committee considered the level of apprenticeship starts across London Boroughs as set out at paragraph 7.4 of the report. It was noted that there were different approaches to apprenticeship schemes, with some Councils employing a large number of apprentices each year as a work experience, with no prospect of an opportunity for any of the participants to apply for a permanent position at the end of their scheme. At Haringey, there had been more focus on creating longer-term employment opportunities for young people at the Council.

In relation to the apprenticeship levy and apprenticeship target, it was noted that further detail on these schemes was awaited, in particular whether schools staff would be included in the apprenticeship target and whether there would be any penalties for not meeting the target. The legal advisor to the Committee noted that the legislation stated that there was a need to have 'due regard' to the target, which indicated that it was unlikely that there would be penalties imposed for failing to achieve them. The Committee noted that the Council had the option of not doing anything to recruit to the apprenticeship target, or aiming to recruit to the full number of apprentices as set out in the target, or a combination whereby a number of apprentices were recruited and some existing staff were reclassified as apprentices in order to meet the target figure. Work was currently taking place to identify where the organisation would particularly benefit from apprenticeship roles, such as roles that were currently difficult to recruit to, and would therefore offer genuine career prospects for apprentices in these areas.

It was confirmed that whichever option the Council pursued, the apprenticeship levy was compulsory, and that any levy funds not drawn down by the Council after 24 months would revert to the Government. The Committee expressed the view that efforts should be made to draw down this funding, given that the levy was compulsory, and suggested that the Council speak to those local authorities that were currently recruiting significant numbers of apprentices for advice. It was suggested that even if a number of apprenticeships were created with no prospect of a more permanent job at the end of them, a year's work experience would still be valuable for many young people and would enhance their employment potential more generally. The Committee asked what the impact on funding would be for apprenticeships that were not completed; officers advised that the guidance on this was not yet confirmed, but there had been indications that in such cases 20% of the funding may be withheld.

Given that it was likely that the Council would have chosen to recruit 25-30 apprentices as a progression on this year's work, had these legislative changes not been put forward, it was suggested that the Council proceed with that recruitment anyway and seek to make up the rest of the target with a more 'work experience' model of apprenticeship opportunities.

While it was noted that the current financial context may affect the course of action the Council chose to take, it was noted that Members would need to consider their political priorities and to take decisions relating to any proposed use of resources accordingly. Committee Members noted the importance of apprenticeship schemes, but recognised that there was a need for balance between the benefits and contribution towards the corporate priorities that apprenticeships would offer and the significant salary cost and management resources required to support this, particularly in the current financial position. The Committee noted that there was an identified need for additional support for managers taking on young people as apprentices, and that additional capacity for support would need to be provided if the number of apprenticeships offered were to increase significantly, particularly if the Council was to achieve its aim of reaching out to those young people who were harder to engage with. The Committee suggested that this might be another area where the Council could speak to other local authorities for advice. It was noted that recruitment of young people identified as harder to engage with, such as care leavers and NEETs, had been challenging and there were several reasons for this. It was suggested that, for some of these young people, initial training may be more effective, prior to them entering a formal apprenticeship scheme.

With regards to the apprenticeship target, the Committee suggested that until further guidance was received, the Council should presume that schools would be included. It was advised that if this were the case, schools would be responsible for paying their share of the levy.

The Committee agreed to receive a further report on apprenticeships at the start of the 2017/18 financial year, with proposed next steps and setting out the input required from the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

58. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT REPORT Q2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2016

The Committee considered the People Management report for the period July to September 2016, presented by Carole Engwell, HR Quality Assurance Manager. The report included a comparison of the Council's workforce profile with the profile for Haringey residents, as requested at the previous meeting of the Committee. With regard to spending on consultants and interims, it was noted that this had reduced by £162k compared with the previous year, and that spending on agency staff had reduced by £483k.

The Committee noted the reduction in headcount as set out in the report, and asked whether the profile of those leaving the organisation had an impact on the average age across the organisation. It was reported that it tended to be those aged 55 and over who were leaving in general, however the reduction in headcount had so far not had a significant impact on the age profile of the workforce as a whole.

The Committee noted the changes to the presentation of the data relating to consultants and interims, and requested that for future reports additional information be included relating to value for money compared with permanent recruitment (for interim posts), and also some narrative around the objectives and whether these were being achieved for each post, as well as details of how many times a contract had been renewed. It was agreed that this information would be included in future reports, as these were issues of particular interest to Members.

The Chair noted that he had passed a number of enquiries received from Councillors regarding use of consultants and interims on to officers; it was confirmed that the responses to these enquiries were in the process of being finalised and would be provided to the Chair at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee asked about the sickness absence figures, and whether there was any analysis of which services absence levels were highest in and whether there were any identified causes for high absence rates. It was confirmed that HR was looking at this data and were monitoring the 50 cases with the highest rates of absence, some of which were very complex, and that the Business Managers were proactively providing additional support to the managers involved in these cases. It was noted that the 50 cases with the highest sickness levels tended to change on a quarterly basis, suggesting that management measures were having an effect. Sickness absence levels were also included in the grip scorecard on a monthly basis, in order for any patterns of absence to be identified and analysed. It was agreed that a more detailed report on those service areas with the highest rates of absence and the actions being taken to address these would be reported to the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

59. FORWARD PLAN REPORTS JANUARY 2017 TO MARCH 2017

The Committee considered the report on the forward plan of agenda items for the remainder of the municipal year, as presented by Carole Engwell, HR Quality Assurance Manager. In addition to the reports listed, the Committee was advised that reports on the annual pay policy statement and reward would be added to the agenda for the February meeting. If timing permitted, it was also noted that it was intended to bring some schools' policies to the next meeting of the Committee for approval and defer the Trade Union Relationship and Draft Facility Time Agreement to a later meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the content of the report.

60. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

CHAIR: Councillor Raj Sahota

Signed by Chair

Date