

MINUTES OF MEETING Staffing and Remuneration Committee HELD ON Thursday, 15th October, 2020, Times Not Specified

Councillors: Dhiren Basu (Chair), Julie Davies (Vice-Chair), Paul Dennison and Matt White

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

It was noted that the meeting was being live streamed on the Council's website.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Say.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

None.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 6 February and 3 March 2020 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following note:

6 February – Item 13 – Minutes. The previous Chair wished to correct that she had stated that the Trans Equality Policy was due to come to a future meeting and did not confirm the June meeting.

In response to a question regarding the employment reference policy which had been outstanding since March 2020, it was explained that no further work had been done on resolving this, however it was confirmed that this would be looked at.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Staffing and Remuneration Committees held on 19 March, 23 April, 7 May and 24 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

7. FORWARD PLAN TO MARCH 2021

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda.

The report informed the Committee of the non-standard reports detailed on the Forward Plan until the end of March 2021. It was noted that the February meeting had been moved forward to 1 December 2020.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- The Schools Pay Policy had not been laid before Parliament in time to come to this committee. It would therefore be reported to the next meeting on 1 December 2020.
- It was explained that the redundancy policy may be delayed to the March 2021 meeting as there were some significant changes to the current policy which needed to be taken into account, including the recent changes to the access to pension scheme. It may be that the policy would need to come back to committee more than once.
- It was acknowledged that there were quite a few changes that needed to be made to the flexible working policy, following the Covid-19 pandemic, and the need to provide more flexibility. It was explained that the policy may not be fully completed by December and that a wider update may need to be provided at a later date.

In response to a question regarding the teacher's redundancy policy and the need for this to be urgently updated, it was explained that the redeployment policy was on the forward plan and that the concerns raised had been taken on board.

A question was raised regarding the need for diversity within the recruitment process and how head hunters were engaged to ensure diverse candidates were recruited at a senior level. It was suggested that this data should be monitored on an annual basis, as part of a wider policy.

In response, the Chief People Officer agreed with this point and stated that there was a need to improve on the current workforce data and ensure that it had accurate statistics, which was in progress. The Council was also focusing on insourcing their permanent recruitment and looking at how senior appointments were made. He added that a diversity policy was not currently on the forward plan and would therefore be something that was looked at after March 2021.

The Chair added that his preference was for permanent staff to be recruitment, which promoted confidence and greater accountability.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

8. HR POLICY REVIEW

Ian Morgan, Reward Strategy Manager, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda. The report provided the Committee with an update regarding the running review and revision of HR Policies and Practice notes. It was noted that there had been a slight delay in this process due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- In response to a question regarding the quality of the ethnicity/disability data held by the Council, it was explained that the data was obtained at recruitment stage and there were issues in obtaining this data and therefore being able to produce meaningful statistics. This was reliant on the workforce providing the necessary data and also on self- classification. It was believed that the organisation was in the best position that it could be, given the circumstances.
- In response to a question regarding the capability practice notes, it was explained that this captured people that were unable to do a particular job. The current capability procedure was out of date and a commitment had been made to look into this to refresh the language and also identify things that could be done better.
- In response to a question regarding the Council employee profile data, dated September 2020, it was confirmed that this data was up to date. It was believed that the data was as good as it would get and robust enough to make decisions.

RESOLVED that the report on the HR Policy Review be noted.

9. PEOPLE REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2020

Ian Morgan, Reward Strategy Manager, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- In response to concern raised regarding the number of agency staff at the Council, it was explained that there had been a cohort of social workers that had been made permanent, however some of these staff were in areas that normally had high levels of agency staff, given the nature of the work. Management were however aware that the levels of agency staff were not where Members wanted them to be.
- The Hayes contract was being closely looked at and options were currently being looked into. It was noted that the contract was due to end in July 2021, with an approval given by Cabinet. It was explained that the Council currently had limited options given that the contract was still live.
- It was explained that monitoring of the HR contracts was critical and the Chief People Officer assured Members that sufficient resources would be put in place within HR to ensure that this was undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

10. COVID-19 WORKFORCE UPDATE

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, provided the Covid-19 workforce update, as set out in the agenda.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- It was explained that there were a host of reasons why the number of agency staff had increased. It was noted that the Council had not paid the agency for

those staff that had been fast tracked to a permanent role within the organisation.

- Work was currently being undertaken to look at the long term plans for flexible working in the future. A bigger piece of work was being done to look at the Council's accommodation and workshops were taking place across all services to create a strategic, long-term response.
- It was confirmed that free flu vaccinations would be also offered to all staff in maintained and controlled schools and communications had gone out to the head teachers of those schools notifying them of this. It was noted that a paid for scheme was also being offered at the Wittington Hospital for staff in all other schools.

The committee noted the update.

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

12. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 13 as it 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.

13. EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the Special Staffing and Remuneration Committees held on 19 March, 23 April, 7 May and 24 July 2020 were approved as a correct record

14. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR: Councillor Dhiren Basu

Signed by Chair

Date