

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 24TH JUNE, 2021, 19.00 - 21.00

PRESENT:

Councillors: Gideon Bull (Vice-Chair), Charles Adje, Julie Davies, Tammy Palmer and Reg Rice

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)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Basu (Chair) and Dennison. Councillor Bull therefore took the Chair for the meeting as Vice Chair.

Councillor Rice was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Basu.

Councillor Palmer was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Dennison.

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

None.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Staffing and Remuneration Committee meeting held on 16 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record,

7. PEOPLE REPORT - MARCH 2021

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda. It was noted that the level of agency staff reported was higher than usual, due to the testing sites being entirely staffed by agency staff.

Discussion took place surrounding apprenticeships reporting and it was confirmed that this would be included as part of the people report from the next meeting.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Covid on the Council's sickness figures, Dan Paul stated that the overall sickness levels had gone down, both long term and short term. It was believed that this was as a result of the majority of staff working from home and therefore often too ill to travel into work but were able to still work from home where possible. It was however noted that it was important that if staff were too ill to work, they did take time off. It was also stated that the responsibility was on the manager to accurately report any staff sickness and it was felt that this was no more inaccurate than before the pandemic.

In response to a question regarding the recording of Covid related absence and data on long Covid, Dan Paul stated that Covid related sickness absence was recorded under a Covid specific code on the system. Instances of long Covid sickness absence were also recorded under a specific Covid code and the number of staff off sick as a result of long Covid was currently in single figures. He added that the World Health Organisation's definition of long Covid was instances of sickness of 12 weeks or more.

Dan Paul also confirmed that occupational health were still making referrals where necessary, even though the majority of staff were still continuing to work from home.

Reference was made to the number of young people being recruited at the Council and it was questioned what was being done to encourage more young people to join the council. In response, Dan Paul stated that of a comparison of all 33 London boroughs, Haringey had the lowest proportion of staff under the age of 25 years old. The council was looking at various ways of increasing these numbers and creating a balance within the workforce.

It was confirmed that the data included in the people report detailed the key workforce statistics tracked over time, which were of interest of the Committee, and did not provide a full analysis of the whole workforce. More detailed data of the ethnicity and gender split of the overall workforce would be subject to a separate, more detailed report. Dan Paul stated that he would circulate the Workforce Development Strategy 2019, which provided a more detailed breakdown of the council's workforce. **ACTION: Dan Paul.**

The Chair made reference to the use of consultants and questioned whether there was only 7 within the Council. In response, it was stated that it was dependent on how you define the term consultant and that the majority of these were either filling a vacancy whilst it was being recruited to or undertaking a separate project of work. It was noted that the number of consultants in the past had been much higher than at present.

Discussion took place regarding the potential mental health impacts of working from home and Dan Paul advised that there had been a lot of engagement with employees throughout the pandemic. The Chief Executive had hosted a number of Let's Talk sessions with staff throughout the pandemic to keep them informed on what was happening, as well as regular check in sessions with managers. Where possible, staff had also attended the office on an adhoc basis. The Council was looking at the best ways of working going forward, balancing the needs of the organisation as a whole, as well as staff and it's residents.

RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.

8. HR POLICY REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

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

RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.

9. PRACTICE NOTES FOR RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY

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

Reference was made to paragraph 9.3.1 of the report and it was explained that this was taken directly from the policy which had been agreed at the previous meeting. However, it was noted that the Council stayed clear of single sex recruitment panels.

In response to a question regarding the cost of external agencies and recruitment costs, Dan Paul stated that the long-term aim was to reduce the external recruitment costs, with the increase of internal capability and in-house recruitment. This saving could then be invested back into internal recruitment staff.

It was confirmed that the policy did not cover school-based policies, which were covered by other school-based arrangements.

In response to a question regarding unconscious bias, it was confirmed that the Council did provide mandatory unconscious bias training for all new employees. It was also hoped that the service could have greater control over this with recruitment being brought in-house.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee note the Practice Notes associated with the Recruitment and Selection policy ready for implementation with effect from 26th July 2021. Staff training on the policy will be incorporated into the council's wider policy training programme.**
- 2. That the Director for Customers, Transformation & Resources is also authorised, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to make such amendments to the Recruitment Policy and Practice Notes as considered minor.**

10. REVIEW OF THE FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY

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

In response to a question regarding the wider external working lives strategy, it was believed that the policy formed part of this wider approach, however if it wasn't then we would commit to doing so.

In response to a question regarding the leaving restriction related to flexible retirement, it was stated that there was no restriction on returning to the organisation

or joining a new organisation. It was noted that the restrictions related to those members of staff taking voluntary redundancy.

The Committee raised concerns regarding redundancies and retirement, where there was an expectation that they would receive a pay-out. It was important to be confident that they were genuine redundancies and would like to see a panel exercising a rigorous redundancy process.

It was confirmed that the policy did not apply to schools, as they had a separate school consultant committee which dealt with such policies.

It was confirmed that the policy would not prevent reengagement of employment for consultancy purposes. The purpose of the policy was to enable individuals to reduce their hours and pay and to still access their pension.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the changes proposed to the Flexible Retirement Policy, attached at Appendix 1.

11. PRESENTATION - FUTURE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE

Richard Grice, Director of Customers, Transformation & Resources, gave a presentation at the meeting on future working arrangements update.

Discussion took place surrounding the proposed plans for staff coming back into the office and it was stated that it was not proposed to use a people to desk ratio going forward. Working through for each team. The Council previously worked to around 8 to 10 people in the office at any one time and it was expected that this would reduce to around half or less going forward. It was recognised that certain teams had different demands and pressures and that it was important to get the balance right between working from home and coming into the office, which would be determined by the needs of each individual team and service.

In response to concerns raised regarding potential inherent prejudice between those staff that chose to come into the office and those that chose to work from home, it was stated that it was important to focus on how to manage by outcomes and how managers could provide support for this. It was noted that hybrid working was the hardest to manage and that it was important to ensure that staff still felt engaged. It was reported that the feedback from the recent team days had been positive so far. It was suggested that the key learnings from working within the pandemic and team days could be brought back to a future meeting, to look at what's worked well and best practice.

In response to a question regarding London weighting pay and whether this would continue, it was confirmed that Haringey did not have London weighting.

Richard Grice stressed the importance of the organisation being agile and responsive to the needs of staff and its residents. A system called Process Performance Plus was being implemented, which allowed teams to manage remotely in one place. This had been particularly effective within social work teams.

It was recognised that health and safety was a real issue and that staff had been issued with guidance and health and safety forms to complete whilst working from home. A number of staff had also taken equipment home. The Council had been investing in more universally versatile equipment, which would have some budget implications.

In response to a question regarding the percentage of staff that lived outside of London, it was stated that before the pandemic the Council had a good idea of where everyone lived, however since then a large number of staff had moved. Pre-Covid, around 75% of the workforce lived within 6 miles of the council offices. A piece of work was required to determine this. It was noted that even if staff had decided to move further away from the office, they would still be required to attend the office when needed.

It was confirmed that if a member of staff had relocated further away from work, there would be no payment for the additional travel as it was their choice to move further away from work.

12. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 14 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.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the previous meeting held on the 16 March 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to a minor amendment.

15. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of exempt urgent business.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date