

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2021, 7.00 – 8.46pm

Councillors: Dhiren Basu (Chair), Julie Davies (Vice-Chair), Paul Dennison, Yvonne Say 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)

Councillor White gave his apologies for having to leave the meeting early, after Item 8, as he was also attending Cabinet that evening. Therefore, there was a slight change to the order of business and Item 15 was taken directly after Item 8 and the live stream was paused whilst the committee went into the private session.

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 2 February 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- Item 9 – People Report – December 2020, final paragraph – the words ‘change in tax burden’ to be replaced with ‘responsibility for identifying self-employment status’.

The following matters arising were also raised:

- In response to a question regarding the London Living Wage, as detailed on page 2 of the agenda, the Chief People Officer stated that the monitoring of this would be undertaken by another committee, however he gave an assurance that

when a contract was up for renewal there was an ongoing review process in place to ensure that this stipulation was included. This was also covered by the London Living Wage Accreditation.

- In response to a question regarding the ability to amend payslips, as detailed on page 4 of the agenda, the Chief People Officer confirmed that they did have the ability to put messages on payslips. He added that there was a review taking place of what we had got available and what should be made available, alongside talking to networks, in order to identify what changes could be made.

7. RECRUITMENT POLICY

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, introduced the report as set out in the agenda. The Chief People Officer stated that the policy had been substantially rewritten and subject to a full consultation process. The policy would be introduced in a phased basis between 1 April – July 2021. He added that the practice notes were still under development and would be circulated to the committee once available.

In response to a question regarding the talent pool, as referenced on page 12 of the report, it was explained that this would include candidates that had not been previously successful but could be contacted for future opportunities. This provided an opportunity to not have to advertise each application individually, however it was noted that applications would not only be restricted to the talent pool.

Councillor Davies welcomed the vision part of the policy and requested that the words 'we select on merit' be included in the policy. It was also requested that promoting equal and fair treatment be included in the policy, in order to recognise the needs of underrepresented people within the council. Further reference was made to the talent pool and it was suggested that this should be time limited. Councillor Davies stated that it was important to get the wording right in the policy in order to get the balance right. She believed that access to a promotion as a right should not be included in the policy and felt that internal only vacancies should be the exception and not an expectation.

In response, the Chief People Officer stated that the comment regarding promoting fair and equal treatment had already been included in the Vision part of the policy, 5th bullet point, detailed on page 12 of the agenda. He also confirmed that he would find a suitable place to include 'we select on merit' within the policy.

In response to a question regarding senior staff appointments, it was stated that a link to the Senior Appointment Guidance was included on page 18 of the agenda pack. The Chief People Officer stated that this was in the development stage and that an updated version would be circulated once available.

Councillor Dennison referred to page 15 of the agenda and advertising and questioned what would constitute an appropriate vacancy. He was also of the view that advertising internally in the first instance should not be the default position.

In response, the Chief People Officer confirmed that the wording of point 6, advertising, as detailed on page 15 of the agenda was the intended wording. He added that the council had a clear aim to maximise job opportunities for local people, however if it was felt that a position required wider advertising in the first instance then the council would follow this route and confirmed that the policy did not preclude this. He added that each service would review the most appropriate advertising route for each individual vacancy and identify the best way of recruiting for that particular role.

Further discussion took place regarding this position as the Committee expressed concern about this proposal and believed that the council should recruit for excellence and not preclude the opportunity to advertise each vacancy internally and externally. The Committee also stated that there should also be a focus on the redeployment pool, in order to show a commitment to those members of staff that may be made redundant. In response, the Chief People Officer stated that he had taken the concerns on board and that it had been a delicate policy to process and negotiate.

Following concerns raised by the Committee and an indication that they felt further discussion should take place before an approval was made, the Chief People Officer recognised that it was the will of the Committee to advertise vacancies internally and externally and that each application should be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine whether it was appropriate to advertise more widely in the first instance. It was therefore requested that the Committee allow him the scope to achieve this aim and approve the policy and delegate the amended wording to the Chief People Officer, which would be circulated separately.

Councillor White wished to clarify the concerns raised regarding advertising locally and ensuring the best people were being employed for the role. In response, Councillor Davies stated that recruiting locally in the first instance may not always be the best way of filling industry specific roles. She felt that it was more beneficial to advertise as widely as possible, grow the local workforce and reduce the reliance on agency staff.

Councillor Dennison stated that it was important to monitor how many local people were being employed by the council and also identify where they had seen the vacancy advertised.

In response to a suggested proposal that the policy and practice notes be adopted at the next meeting, it was stated that there was a need for a policy to be agreed and finalised before work started on some insourcing week commencing 1 April. The Chief People Officer therefore requested that the Committee approve the policy, subject to the exact amended wording being delegated to himself and circulated separately. There would be a dedicated recruitment team in place that would identify the most appropriate route for each application. The policy could then be brought to the next meeting for further ratification, if necessary.

In response to a question regarding interim or agency staff, the Chief People Officer stated that it had been difficult to address this fully in the policy. He stated that there were some roles where the use of agency staff was preferable, for example staffing the lateral flow test centres, which had been externally funded. However, in principal,

the council sought to reduce the reliance on agency staff and would prefer to recruit permanent staff, where possible.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approve the new Recruitment Policy, subject to the amended wording, to be delegated to the Chief People Officer.

8. HR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION - PROPOSED REDUNDANCY

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

Members wished to save their questions for the consideration of agenda item 15.

RESOLVED:

That the compulsory redundancy pay package be approved, in accordance with the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2020/21.

9. APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MONITORING OFFICER

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

In response to a question regarding the new monitoring officer, it was confirmed that this position had not been appointed by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee due to the post being a Head of Service and therefore not within the remit of the Committee. The Chief People Officer stated that the purpose of the report was to amend the constitution to ensure that members remained responsible for taking steps for the appointment of the Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Davies raised wider concerns regarding the downgrading of the post and the Committee not being involved in the recruitment process, as discussed at a previous meeting.

In response to concerns raised regarding the appointment of the new Monitoring Officer, it was confirmed that it was within the legal remit of Full Council to formally appoint the new Monitoring Officer, as a Head of Service. The Chief People Officer confirmed that it had been an officer appointment, with members involved in the process as part of a stakeholder panel.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommend to the Full Council meeting in July to agree amendments to the following parts of the Constitution:

1. Part Two – Articles (Appendix 1).
2. Part Three Section E Part 1 – Officer Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 2).
3. Part Three Section E Part 1 – Officer Delegations to Directors (Appendix 3).

4. Part Three Section E Part 1 – Delegations to the Chief Executive and Statutory Officers (Appendix 4).
5. Part Four Section K – Officer Employment Procedure Rules (Appendix 5).

10. HR POLICY REVIEW

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda. It was noted that there was a short term capacity issue within the HR team which had slightly delayed the process, however this would be resolved soon.

Councillor Davies requested that there be some acknowledgement of time off for instances of domestic violence included within the Family Friendly cluster of HR policies. In response, the Chief People Officer welcomed the proposal and confirmed that he would look at including this within this section of the policy.

Councillor Dennison raised a request for a forward plan of policies to identify which policies were due to come to each meeting. In response, the Chief People Officer welcomed the proposal however it was noted that the length of time to negotiate each policy varied and therefore the timetable could be subject to some slippages. He confirmed that he would look into producing an indicative forward plan for the next meeting.

In response to a question regarding trade union protocols and the structure and arrangements of this, the Chief People Officer stated that he would look into how it was structured at present and the best way to include those in the policy.

RESOLVED:

That the report on HR Policy Review be noted.

11. UPDATE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, gave a presentation on employee engagement during the pandemic, as detailed within the report.

Councillor Dennison believed there was a level of staff uncertainty on the future way of working and indicated that the IT system had not been as good as it could have been. He stated that if hybrid working arrangements were being implemented going forward there was a need for this to be addressed. He also urged that this exercise be as bottom up as possible, in order to include grass roots input and continue the learning that had been done during the pandemic.

12. REGULARISING THE SENIOR OFFICER PAY SYSTEM

Dan Paul, Chief People Officer, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda. It was explained that the purpose of the review was to regularise the pay framework for senior managers with the rest of the workforce, allowing for structured progression and to ensure it was fair and equitable.

In response to a question regarding the negotiated pay increase, it was explained that the negotiated pay increase that had been paid on the 1 March 2021 would have been paid in addition to those senior staff that were placed on the next spinal column points from their current pay. The Committee felt that the use of objectives, with monitoring of progress after a six month period and an evaluation at the end of the year should be used before an annual increment increase was granted. The Committee stressed that they would like to see a real commitment to monitoring people's performance, with real targets set.

The Chief Officer confirmed that it was the intention to set smart targets, which would be managed through the 'my conversation process', with a 6-month review and judgement made at end of year. He added that the guidance would be ready shortly and that the first opportunity for an increment would be in March 2022.

In response to concerns raised regarding a potential inflation in the salary bill, the Chief People Officer referred the Committee to page 130 of the agenda, which detailed the costs of the senior manager contracts affected by the process.

In response to a question regarding performance management in general, it was stated that the Section 151 officer was involved in the whole process. The 'my conversation' programme was an ongoing process of performance management and there was also a need for an annual rigour to enable pay decisions to be made and ensure that those eligible received their increment. It was confirmed that the Chief Executive's performance management review was undertaken by the Leader, with external advice.

13. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

Following a discussion with the Monitoring Officer, Councillor Davies added an item of urgent business and referred to the previous report of Mike Cook, as she wished to know whether the recommendations detailed in the report had now been implemented. In response, the Chief People Officer stated that this could be looked into for a future meeting, as part of an exempt report.

14. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 15 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); paragraphs 1 and 4.

15. HR SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION - PROPOSED REDUNDANCY

The Committee considered exempt information pertaining to Item 8 of the agenda.

16. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of exempt urgent business.

CHAIR: Councillor Dhiren Basu

Signed by Chair

Date