

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2016**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Raj Sahota (Chair), Viv Ross, Barbara Blake and Charles Wright**

### **38. 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.

### **39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr McShane, for whom Cllr Blake was substituting, from Cllr Vanier, for whom Cllr Wright was substituting, and from Cllr Arthur.

### **40. URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Sahota declared a personal interest as a member of the GMB union.

### **42. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS**

There were no such items.

### **43. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **44. CHILDREN'S SERVICES, RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OFFER UPDATE PAPER**

The Committee considered the update report on the Children's Services recruitment and retention offer, as introduced by Sarah Barter, Business and Resources Manager, and Neelam Bhardwaja, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the definition of 'experienced' social workers as covered in paragraph 5.5 of the report, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care advised that this definition of 'experienced' (having practiced for at least three years after gaining a social work qualification) was set out by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), with whom all qualified social workers were required to be registered. It was proposed to clarify the definition of experienced social workers in the criteria for the recruitment and retention offer in order to avoid confusion and potential overpayments in future. In response to a further question from the Committee, it was confirmed that staff would not be eligible for payments as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report in the event that they were subject to suspension or statutory sickness procedures during the qualifying period.

The Committee considered the comparison of costs for social care agency staff with equivalent costs for permanent staff and noted that, while there was little difference for social workers, the difference in costs between agency and permanent staff was more significant for senior practitioners and team managers. Given the impact of the memorandum of co-operation in respect of the pay rate cap for agency staff, the Committee questioned the impact this would have on agencies supplying social care staff. The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social care, noted that the pay rate cap currently only covered the London area, and not all London boroughs had signed up to it, however it was acknowledged that agreements such as this may have an impact on social care agencies in the longer term.

The Committee asked about the policies in place to manage sickness within the Council, particularly in potentially stressful areas within children's social work. It was reported that the HR Business Partner was using sickness absence reports to identify areas of specific need and develop appropriate case plans, and that this was beginning to bring absence levels down in these areas. The Head of People and Change, Victoria Tricarico, also advised that HR was working proactively to support managers and staff in dealing with sickness issues, including stress-related sickness. An employee assistance programme had recently been introduced and take-up of this would be monitored on a quarterly basis – an interim report suggested that around 20 staff had been referred for counselling through the programme since its introduction.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding why it was not possible to quantify the number of claims for reimbursement of HCPC registration/renewal fees as set out at paragraph 9.2 of the report, it was reported that this was because the Council reimbursed such fees when staff were recruited, and not on an ongoing basis.\* The Committee asked whether staggered payments had been considered as an alternative to incentivising staff retention, and it was reported that this model had been considered but that in looking at neighbouring boroughs and their offers for social work staff it had been felt that starting at a lower level of payment may not have been sufficient to attract staff initially.

The Committee emphasised the need to keep this offer under review in order to ensure that changes in the market were being reflected in the Council's policy; it was agreed that a further report would be brought back to the Committee in six months' time. The Committee also noted the importance of ensuring that the offer did not constitute a breach of equal pay legislation, leaving the Council vulnerable to legal

challenge; Ian Morgan, Reward Strategy Manager, advised in response that the offer was classified as recruitment and retention and was therefore permitted under equal pay legislation, provided that there was supporting evidence, and it was confirmed that there was significant evidence to support the need for such an offer in these areas. This would be kept under review, however, to ensure that the offer remained appropriate and necessary.

The Committee welcomed the proposal to amend the eligibility criteria for the recruitment and retention offer to include the “*satisfactory* completion of probation” and “*satisfactory* completion of the programme of work at the end of the first 12 months”.

The Chair moved the recommendations of the report and it was:

## **RESOLVED**

- i) That the Committee note the implementation of the recruitment and retention monetary award as agreed by the Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015.
- ii) That the Committee agree the recruitment and retention monetary award as detailed in paragraph 5.5 of the report, to replace the recruitment and retention monetary award as agreed by the Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015, the recruitment monetary award to apply to staff appointed on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 and the retention monetary award to apply from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.
- iii) That the Committee note the steps taken by the Council to implement the Memorandum of Co-operation, to develop the workforce and to implement the further incentives and initiatives to enhance the recruitment and retention offer for social workers in Haringey as agreed by the Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

It was noted that a further review would be presented for consideration by the Committee in six months' time.

*\* Post-meeting note: Subsequent to the meeting on the 4th October following a question raised by the committee regarding the payment of HCPC registration fees (9.2 in the report) it was clarified that:*

*Any staff appointed on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 and all our current permanent members of staff who require HCPC registration by law and are in a post requiring registration, are eligible to request re-imbursment of the HCPC registration/renewal fee by submitting a claim for expenses. This is a bi annual registration and reimbursement of this will be reviewed alongside the other recruitment and retention incentives.*

*The renewal/registration fee is recorded on the HCPC website:*

*'The renewal **fee** is £180 for two years. If you are a new UK graduate from a **HCPC** approved course, the **fee** you will pay for the first two 'professional years' is reduced by 50 per cent to £90. The amount you are required to pay is indicated when we invite you to renew your **registration**'*

*It is estimated that the cost to the service will be approximately £36,000 over 2 years.*

#### **45. REVIEW OF HARINGEY HR POLICIES**

The Committee considered the report on the review of the Induction Policy, Recruitment and Selection Policy and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy, as presented by Julie Amory, HR Policy Development Manager. It was noted that these three policies came under the Getting and Retaining the Right People theme, and that the two remaining policies under this theme would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the new checklist within the Induction Policy, it was confirmed that this was currently paper-based, but that an electronic version was also being developed. The checklist would then be available in both electronic and paper form, in order to cover those staff without access to the Council's online systems.

The Committee asked whether roles other than those involved in safeguarding required a DBS check, for example to identify applicants with previous convictions for fraud in relation to financial appointments. In response, it was confirmed that the Council was only permitted to run DBS checks for posts working with vulnerable groups, however applicants for all posts within the Council were asked to disclose details of any previous convictions, with an individual's contract of employment being invalidated where such convictions were found not to have been declared. It was noted in relation to the definition of 'spent' convictions as set out in section 4 of the DBS Policy that details of those convictions which could be considered 'spent' and need not be disclosed were set out in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

The Committee asked about the wording of the criteria for sensitive posts, as set out in paragraph 11.4 of the Recruitment and Selection Policy, and asked why this did not cover social media. It was noted that the Council had a separate social media policy, but that consideration could be given to making reference to that policy in this context. It was confirmed that the wording in the policy was taken directly from the legislation.

The Chair moved the recommendations of the report and it was:

#### **RESOLVED**

- i) That the Committee approve the Induction Policy, the Recruitment and Selection Policy and the Disclosure and Barring Service Policy attached at Appendices A, B and C of the report.

- ii) That the Committee authorise the Assistant Director Transformation and Resources in consultation with the Chair of the Committee to decide the implementation date for each of the policies.
- iii) That the Committee authorise the Assistant Director Transformation and Resources in consultation with the Chair of the Committee to make such amendments to the policies as he considers minor, any such amendments to be reported back to the meeting of the Committee following the making of the amendments.

#### **46. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT Q1 (APRIL TO JUNE 2016)**

The Committee considered the People Management Report for the period April to June 2016, as presented by Carole Engwell, HR Quality Assurance Manager. The Committee noted that the figure for spend on consultants in March 2016 as set out in appendix 1 should read £1,173,585 and not as set out in the report.

The Committee looked at the data for sickness absence, and asked whether work was undertaken to identify areas of the Council affected by disproportionately high rates of absence. The HR Quality Assurance Manager advised that Management Grip indicators gave a greater breakdown of sickness absence by service areas and were monitored by managers and HR Business Partners in order to identify areas which may benefit from specific pieces of work to address high levels of sickness absence.

The Committee asked whether there was a Council-wide policy in place on the use of consultants, and felt that there was a need to address the perception that consultants were engaged for unnecessarily long periods of time. The Head of People and Change advised that as part of the work to reduce the number of consultants engaged by the Council, a business case was required for the proposed engagement of any consultant and that each consultant contract was reviewed every three months to ensure that the post was still required. The Committee asked about the process for these business cases being approved, and it was reported that these were first signed off by the relevant Assistant Director, and then went to the Priority Finance Sub Group, which gave careful consideration to the business necessity of the request. Finally, all approvals were signed off by a group chaired by a Chief Officer.

The Committee noted the reduction in the number of contracts and the level of spending for consultants, and requested that for future reports the Committee be provided with further details of any consultant contract where the estimated total value of the contract would exceed £100k. It was agreed that additional information would be provided to the Committee for such contracts. The Committee also asked for the All Consultant Posts table to show the estimated cost for the duration of the contract rather than full year costs, as this was potentially unhelpful for contracts of less than a year's duration.

The Committee noted the workforce equality profile, and asked how this compared with the profile of the borough, it was agreed that this information could be provided. The Committee also asked about the process for dealing with a series of short sickness absences which individually did not trigger the six day target; the Head of People and Change advised that a return to work interview would be held after each

absence, and once the total amount absence exceeded six days within a rolling 12-month period, the formal sickness procedures would be instigated. It was confirmed that the focus was on cases where the six-day threshold was exceeded, however cases which did not necessarily trigger formal proceedings but where an unusual pattern of absence was identified would be looked at on a case by case basis. The Committee agreed that long-term sickness absence was the key area to address. For future reports, the Committee asked for comparative information on levels of sickness absence in previous years, and also the overall headcount for previous years.

**RESOLVED**

That the Committee note the content of the report.

**47. FORWARD PLAN REPORTS DECEMBER 2016 - 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. The Committee sought some clarification on the nature of the No Smoking Policy report, and it was reported that this would cover the Public Health aspects, practical guidance and details of the cessation support available to staff.

**RESOLVED**

That the Committee note the content of the report.

**48. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no new items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

CHAIR: Councillor Raj Sahota

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....