

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
4 DECEMBER 2013
7.30 - 8.55 PM**



Present:

Councillors McLean (Chairman), Mrs Birch (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Angell, Davison, Leake, Mrs Temperton and Worrall

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors

Also Present:

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Minutes from previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19 June 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Regarding Item 9: Pay Negotiations, The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that a 1% pay increase to all but senior staff had been accepted for the financial year 2013/14.

16. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

17. Minutes of Sub Groups

The Committee noted the minutes of the Education Employment Sub-Committee held on 16 July 2013, and the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 17 September 2013 and 19 November 2013.

Regarding the Local Joint Committee minutes 19 November 2013, Item 30, it was reported that the 'hot desking' and home working programmes being carried out by staff at Time Square were considered to be working successfully by staff.

18. Pay and Workforce Strategy

The Chief Officer: Human Resources updated the Committee on the Pay & Workforce Strategy 2013/16 and progress to date against the previous priorities and changes to the Strategy alongside Action Plans.

The Strategy was intended to demonstrate how Human Resources policies for the Council linked into departmental priorities taking into account local issues. It would

be used as an outline plan on priority HR areas for the Council to tackle in the next 1-3 years.

It was reported that the key local issues that could impact on the Council over the next 12-18 months included:

- Budget pressures which would continue to impact on how services are delivered.
- An increase in flexibility within the workforce.
- Constant monitoring of recruitment and retention with innovative approaches to service delivery and working practices.
- In line with the "Time for A Change" initiative, increased flexibility of staff.
- Improving management capability and management of performances.
- Peer Review outcome.
- The "Good to Great" initiative.
- Local impact of the national Public Sector Network (PSN) security requirements.

The following responses were made to members' queries:

- There were currently six apprenticeships offered within the Council.
- Due to an increase in grant funding there had been a positive impact on what is offered to social workers in relation to post qualification training.
- The majority of e-learning opportunities taken up by employees were carried out within the workplace.
- To enable the progress of the implementation of a new pay and grading structure a consultant had been used at a cost of £4000 in this financial year.
- The integration with Health Services was being carried out successfully. There were a small number of employees involved and those still on NHS contract terms and conditions were in the process of being harmonised with Council ones.

RESOLVED that the 7th Pay and Workforce Strategy be endorsed by the Committee for submission to full Council.

19. **Pay Policy Statement**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that The Localism Act 2011 required the Council to create and publish a Pay Policy Statement. This would be the third year the Council has provided a Pay Policy Statement, whilst there are some minor differences from the first Statement approved in February 2012, the basic details remain unchanged.

The Chief Officer reported that included in the Statement were clear policies on the appointment of senior staff and transparency on severance payments made to employees, all of which were in accordance with agreed Council policies.

It was requested the wording 'lowest paid employees' could be amended in the Pay Policy Statement as members were concerned that this could be considered a derogatory term. The Chief Officer: Human Resources explained that the wording was used to infer that all employees were treated equally and the Statement was based on a template previously provided. The guidance would be revisited regarding this matter and if appropriate an amendment to the wording would be considered for future Pay Policy Statements.

An error was noted on page 5 of the Statement that this should read "..., serving around 48,000 households and 115,000 people in the Council's area".

RESOLVED that the following be recommended to Council:

- 1 All appointments be made within the agreed senior salary structure outline as Appendix A to the report.
- 2 All severance payments be made within the agreed Severance Policy.
- 3 The Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15 attached as Appendix B to the report be adopted.

20. **Whistle Blowing Procedure**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Council's Whistleblowing policy would be updated in light of changes to the current whistle blowing legislation set out in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERRA),

The key changes which had been brought about by the ERRA 2013 were as follows:

- that whistle blowing by employees or workers had to be made in the public interest,
- that an employer could be held liable (vicarious liability) for any detriment inflicted on the Whistleblowing employee or worker by his or her colleagues.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources noted that Whistleblowing was a very rare occurrence at the Council.

It was queried how a Councillor should deal with a Whistleblowing claim by an employee as this was unclear in the policy. The Chief Officer: Human Resources would obtain advice from the Borough Solicitor regarding this matter and would bring this back to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the updated Whistleblowing Policy be approved.

21. **Workforce Monitoring - Information Item**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Council had a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations. It had an action plan to deliver on its equality objectives and had already met the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. It was reported that the Council had been compiling information for 12 years and were able to compare the data over a long period of time.

The demographic make up of Bracknell Forest was changing, the 2011 Census showed that 9.4% of the Borough's population was of Black or Minority ethnic (BME). The previous Census in 2001 showed only 5% BME residents.

The Bracknell Forest 2013 Schools Census showed that there had been an increase in ethnic minority pupils recorded over the past 12 years from 4% to 13.2%.

In response to Member queries it was reported that targets were set to measure and monitor the performance of the Council in specific areas. Members were concerned that the imperative to fulfil targets could affect the way in which employees were recruited. The Chief Officer: Human Resources assured the Committee that all appointments were made on merit.

22. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (4) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations, or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or Minister of the Crown and employees of, or officer holders under, the authority. (Item 11,12 & 13).

23. Proposed redundancies - Open learning Centre Creche

The Chief Adviser: Children Young People & Learning reported that a grant received from the Skills Funding Agenda (SFA) had been changed. As a result of this and the new Family Learning Strategy, it had been necessary to close the crèche and Early Years classrooms at the Open Learning Centre and four posts had been put forward for redundancy.

RESOLVED that the post holders, identified in the Exempt Appendix A to the report, be declared redundant with effect from 31 December 2013 in accordance with the terms set out in Appendix A.

24. Proposed redundancies - Landscape

The Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection reported that as part of market testing of Landscape Services all borough schools were asked if they wished to be included in the retendering process. Three schools decided to withdraw from the Ground Maintenance Contract. As a result of this there would be a loss of income and a review of resources had been carried out and two post holders within the Landscape Services team had been put forward for redundancy.

It was noted that the business model regarding the contracts had been streamlined to ensure productivity would match the reduced expenditure.

RESOLVED that the deletion of the posts identified in exempt Annex A and B to the report be approved with effect from 1 January 2014 and the post-holders be declared redundant in accordance with the terms set out in Exempt Annex A and B with the costs being met from the Structural Changes Reserves.

25. Flexible Retirement

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that an application had been received to ask the Council to agree to a flexible retirement which would have a one off cost to the Council of £3,449. It would allow the Council to retain the member of staff on a part-time basis and realise an annual saving of £17,947.

RESOLVED that the flexible retirement application of the post outlined in the exempt report to take effect from 31 March 2014 be approved.

26. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that an additional meeting of the Employment Committee would take place on 12 February 2014.

CHAIRMAN