

## **Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Wednesday, 12th October, 2022.**

**Present:-** Councillors Ali (Chair), Bal (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Basra, Gahir, Grewal, Qaseem and Smith

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor M. Bedi

### **PART 1**

#### **12. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Bal declared that his daughters worked for Slough Borough Council.

#### **13. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th June 2022 and Extraordinary Meeting held on 12th July 2022**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

#### **14. HR Policies and Procedures: Menopause In the Workplace Guidance**

The Chair asked members if they would agree to change the Agenda order so that the Menopause In the Workplace Guidance could be presented and discussed first. Members agreed to this.

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager introduced the report which set out the rationale for producing guidance to ensure employees going through the menopause were fully supported in the workplace. World Menopause Day was approaching and the subject was in the national press. Like most local councils, Slough Borough Council employed more women than men, at around 62% of the permanent workforce. The menopause was a workforce health and well-being issue, and as an employer SBC could make adjustments in the workplace to help and support staff.

A technical query was raised on the Version Control labelling detailed on page 24 of the report, and whether this was being applied correctly. The Diversity and Inclusion Manager noted and agreed to check on the labelling.

Other questions raised were on reasonable adjustments and whether statistics were available for how many staff in Slough Borough Council had resigned or whose work was affected by menopause symptoms, and on staff training. The officer explained that although the menopause was not a protected characteristic, any organisation had a duty to make reasonable adjustments where they could, although there was no specific budget for this. On statistics the Diversity and Inclusion Manager explained that collecting data was not always easy due to the sensitive nature of the issue, and the approach suggested was about asking colleagues what would work best for

## **Employment & Appeals Committee - 12.10.22**

them. The first stage was education and raising awareness for all staff around the policy rather than formal training. Other possible support could be peer-lead or informal support, and feedback would be sought from staff on this.

At the conclusion of discussions the Chair and members stated their approval that the Council was being proactive on this issue.

**Resolved** – That the Committee reviewed and approved the Menopause In the Workplace Guidance.

### **15. Senior Management Restructure Update**

The Associate Director Human Resources introduced the report. At the previous Committee in July the Executive Director Corporate Resources and the Monitoring Officer had taken the Committee through the proposed senior management restructure and why it was needed, this was now an update on progress so far on the restructure and recruitment at senior management level. As proposed there was a new directorate structure in place and a number of appointments had been made at senior level including Chief Operating Officer, Monitoring Officer, Head of Communications and Resident Engagement, and several Executive Director positions.

One correction was noted by the Associate Director Human Resources; that page 10 of the report stated that the vacant role of AD Community would be deleted and a new role of Head of Service, Community created. This was incorrect, as the AD Community role would continue and there would not be a new Head of Service, Community role created.

Some members expressed concern that while recruitment had taken place, some of this was on a temporary or seconded basis and there was still frustration that full recruitment of all positions had not been achieved. The AD HR explained that this update was being brought to the Committee to show how much progress had been made after just 3 months, whereas it had initially been stated that an update would be provided after 6-9 months. Recruitment had so far gone well in a difficult labour market, and senior managers hoped to continue with this success.

Concerns were also raised by members that recruitment was needed at lower levels of Council structure as well as senior management, as this was where residents interacted with the Council and recruitment and improvement was needed here too. The AD acknowledged the point made and outlined that work was already underway on this with finance and ICT restructuring which had covered all levels. Members also requested more information on recruitment and more support being available for members in the scrutiny function of the Council, and the AD HR agreed to find out more information about recruitment on this, and also agreed that there may be a need to bring back a more general report on recruitment at all levels to a future Committee.

Another concern for members was the funding for some of the new positions, which was only in place for the next two years, the Chair asked the AD HR to

## **Employment & Appeals Committee - 12.10.22**

note members' concern about this, and that more thinking needed to be done with regard to the funding situation beyond 2024.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

**Resolved** – that the contents of the report be noted.

### **16. Temporary Workers Report**

The Employee Relations and Policy Manager outlined the main points of the report, which members were requested to note. The report covered the Q1 period (April – June 2022), spend for this period on temporary workers was £4.1m. This showed an increase in spend due to the high number of staff leaving during this period, and May being a 5 week month..

A question was asked regarding the contract the council had for temporary workers, and it was explained that a review exercise was due to be undertaken to ensure value for money, and in terms of scrutiny of the contract this was subject to the council's procurement rules and procedures. Further details were requested on the figures for agency workers appointed during the reporting period, at what level they were appointed and also on the key activity to reduce agency spend. The Employee Relations and Policy Manager agreed to provide further detail on these points in the next report to the Committee.

Concerns were also raised by some members on the cost to the Council of training temporary workers, with figures on directorate-specific costs of training requested, and also the need to have a better perspective on the overall appointment of agency staff from one quarter to the next.

In terms of progress it was outlined that there had been a focus on recruiting full-time staff, and the council had made good progress on this in a difficult market. There had also been much work done on procurement and contract management, with around £1.5m having been made in savings.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

**Resolved** – that the report be noted.

### **17. Members Attendance Record**

**Resolved** – That details of the Members Attendance Record 2022/23 be noted.

### **18. Date of Next Meeting - 22nd December 2022**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.28 pm)