

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 22nd December, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Ali (Chair), Bal (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, M. Bedi, Gahir, Grewal, Qaseem and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Basra

PART 1

19. Declarations of Interest

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

20. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th October 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

21. Gender Pay Gap Report

The Chair asked Members if they would agree to change the Agenda order so that the Update on Performance Management for Chief Officers (Agenda Item 5) could be presented and discussed as the last report on the Agenda (Agenda Item 7) in order to then move straight into Part II of the Agenda, as this Agenda Item contained exempt information. Members agreed to this.

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager introduced the Gender Pay Gap report, which presented Members with the 2022 Slough Borough Council statutory gender pay gap figures. It was explained that the figures provided in the report were based on a snapshot date of available payroll data on 31 March 2022. The annual gender pay gap figures for Slough Borough Council for 2022 had to be published by 30 March 2023.

Questions from Members mainly concerned the fact that although the Council's gender pay gap figures were positive overall, there was still a disproportionate number of men compared to women in senior management positions, and the recent and ongoing recruitment campaigns could and should be doing more to address this imbalance. Officers acknowledged that the gender pay gap increased as the age, and seniority, of employees increased, this was the case nationally across UK organisations. Nevertheless with the remainder of the senior management restructure, and other departmental restructures such as finance, there was the possibility that some of this balance may be redressed.

Members also asked about the opportunities for internal progression and career development support for existing Council employees. The Associate Director, HR, explained that the appraisal process was currently being

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overhauled with personal development plans for all staff recently launched and the Workforce Development Team would be putting together data and looking at the career development process, including at senior management level.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair and Members were appreciative of the work that had been done in this area, while also noting that the current senior management structure could be more representative of the community it served in terms of both gender and diversity.

Resolved – That the Committee reviewed and noted the Gender Pay Gap Report 2022.

22. Update on Temporary Workers

The Employee Relations and Policy Manager outlined the main points of the Temporary Workers report, which Members were requested to note. The report covered the Q2 period (1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022). Expenditure on temporary workers for this period was £4.81 million.

The Employee Relations and Policy Manager also clarified that the reference to 'section 14' in the last paragraph on page 29 of the report should read 'section 114'.

Concern was expressed by Members over some of the comments from Slough Borough Council leavers which were quoted in the report, as a number of these were very negative. Officers acknowledged and agreed that these should be noted and lessons learned where necessary, but also asked Members to bear in mind the circumstances of staff leaving in some instances, (eg in cases of dismissal) which could have a bearing on the tone of the comments.

Members asked what the Council were doing in terms of improving staff benefits and wellbeing, in order to try to prevent employees wishing to leave. The new Chief Executive's workshops for all staff were welcomed, but also questions raised on whether more junior staff would feel able to speak openly and freely in such forums. There were also concerns expressed by some Members that they were aware of staff and management conflicts which still existed in some instances. Officers noted these valid points, and explained that the Chief Executive would also be holding smaller, more informal sessions for staff. Staff surveys were also planned in order to try to get open and direct feedback from all staff, and that HR were already hearing from more staff at all levels of the workforce.

Other questions raised included queries on the budget figures given and the effect of the high number of agency staff reductions in Q2 on the directorates involved, and on residents. In terms of budget figures the Employee Relations and Policy Manager explained that while there had been an increase in spend on temporary workers in July 2022 due to specialist roles and customer

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service advisor roles, which were needed to meet high service demand. There had then been a decrease in agency spend during August and September. In terms of the effects of agency staff reductions on directorates and residents, the officer agreed to look at statistics for this and bring back further details to the next meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair thanked officers for the increase in detail and analysis contained in the Temporary Workers report.

Resolved – that the contents of the report be noted.

23. Pay Policy Statement Update 2023/24

The Associate Director, HR, outlined the main points of the report, which provided Members with an update of the Pay Policy Statement for the year 2023/24 as requested by the Localism Act 2011. The information on Remuneration of Chief Officers presented in the table in paragraph 2 of Appendix A of the report included new posts created in the senior management restructure in July 2022.

The Associate Director also clarified that the information given in paragraph 4, page 58 of the report, on the 'Relationship between the Remuneration of Chief Officers and our lowest paid employees' would need to be updated and this information would be provided in due course.

Members' main concerns were on the number of Chief Officers and senior staff positions which were currently covered on an interim or agency basis, at a very high daily rate, and suggested that getting these posts filled substantively should be a top priority. The Associate Director noted and acknowledged this, and confirmed that 2 of the positions were currently undergoing a recruitment process, and that the intention was to get all positions filled substantively if possible.

Resolved – That the Committee approved the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24, and to be formally approved by full council for publication. Also to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make amendments to the draft pay policy for submission to full council to reflect any new appointments to Chief officer roles.

24. Senior Management Restructure Report

The Associate Director, HR, introduced the report, which gave an update on progress made in recruitment to the senior management structure. The report detailed a number of senior appointments which had been made in the past 2 months. It also outlined that the two vacant posts of Chief Operating Officer and ED Strategy would be deleted (with no impact to staff as both positions were currently vacant) and merged to create a new Executive Director role called ED Strategy and Improvement.

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The Associate Director also drew Members' attention to the 'Commissioner Review' paragraph on page 1 of the report, highlighting that the comments made by Commissioners on the report showed that they shared some of the concerns previously expressed by the Committee, regarding the need to improve programme and performance management processes at all levels of the council in addition to the new senior management structure.

Some Members questioned where accountability would now lie with the new senior management structure and Chief Executive role. It was explained that this would be covered in the next report to follow; the Update on Performance Management for Chief Officers, with the appraisal process of the Chief Executive detailed within the report.

Resolved – That the Committee agreed to:

- Note the contents of the report
- Approve the changes to the chief officer structure proposed
- Recommend this to full council for approval and the constitution be amended accordingly
- Authorise the Chief Executive to make any further minor changes to the structure
- Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary consequential changes to the Constitution.

25. Update on Performance Management for Chief Officers

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which had 2 appendices, the first of which detailed exit arrangements for chief officers and would be dealt with in Part II of the Agenda. The second appendix detailed the appraisal process for the Chief Executive.

As set out in the report, the Chief Executive needed to be appraised to ensure that their performance was formally reviewed on a regular basis. The purpose of the appraisal was to help maximise the Chief Executive's job performance, and share the objectives agreed to relevant stakeholders.

Questions from Members mainly concerned the role of the independent panel member who would sit in on the appraisal process, why they were needed, what their exact role and background would be, and where accountability to Slough residents would ultimately lie. The Monitoring Officer and Associate Director HR explained that it could be advantageous to have an external person involved in order to be able to hold the Chief Executive to account by giving a sense of reality and wider perspective to proceedings, and keeping up with current best practice. In answer to the question on accountability, the Monitoring Officer explained that the appraisal panel would be chaired and run by Members, who represented all residents of Slough, which was why it would be important to also have opposition Members sitting on the panel. It was envisaged that the appraisal process would be annual, with regular reviews in between, the frequency of which could be decided by the panel.

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Resolved – That the Committee reviewed and approved the new appraisal process for the Chief Executive as set out in Appendix 2.

26. Attendance Record

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

27. Date of Next Meeting - 21st March 2023

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 21st March 2023.

28. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item in Part II of the agenda as it involved the likely discussion of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

The following is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda.

29. Update on Performance Management for Chief Officers - Appendix 1

Resolved – That the Committee reviewed and noted Appendix 1.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.26 pm)