

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 22nd September, 2011.

Present:- Councillors Bains (Chair), Dar, A S Dhaliwal, Grewal, Plenty and Stokes

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Coad, Dale-Gough and Sharif

PART I

10. Declarations of Interest

None.

11. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th June 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th June 2011 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

Councillor Stokes indicated that he had requested (through the chair) a Special meeting of the Committee to consider issues such as the number of posts in the Authority earning over a £100,000. This was a government recommendation and Councillor Stokes was concerned that the Committee would only meet when something was required to be considered by law. The chair advised that he would keep the situation under review and ensure that appropriate agenda items were included in the Committee's agenda.

It was noted that the copy of the response to the consultation on schools funding should be forwarded to all members of the Committee as agreed.

12. Arrangements for Temporary Workers

The Assistant Director of Professional Services, introduced the report and detailed the arrangements the Council had in place for the use of temporary staff. He advised that the Council may well see a rise in the use of temporary staff in the next savings round in order to protect staff who may become at risk as part of restructuring proposals and to safeguard future jobs. The strategy was anticipated to save the council money at the same time as safeguarding as many jobs as possible for existing staff. Members welcomed the report and confirmed that, whilst wanting to have permanent staff at the Authority, there were some specialist roles where the employment of a specialist contractor would be most cost effective. Members particularly supported the strategy for use of temporary workers as this would lead to the maximum opportunity for existing staff who may find themselves at risk to be considered for vacancies.

Councillor Stokes raised a number of concerns including the degree of involvement of staff representatives in developing the strategy, the amount of money a temporary staff member actually received via their agency and the

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correlation between use of agency staff and turnover. The Assistant Director advised that staff representatives had been involved and consulted through the normal forums. He advised that monitoring information was being compiled centrally and would be reported to Committee in due course and would include information on turnover. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 13th September 2011 and had requested that sessional workers be included in the monitoring.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the tight financial and approval framework that supports the decision making on use of temporary workers be noted.
- (c) That the business rationale that sits behind decisions to employ interims, contractor and temporary staff and how this supports the council to meet it's overall objectives be noted.

13. Redundancy and Retirement of Senior Officers

The Chair advised that there was a Part 2 element to this report that detailed 1st, 2nd and 3rd tier officers who had left the council between March and August 2011. The Committee agreed to consider this issue in Part 1 and not refer to any detailed information that could be classed as Part 2 in the discussion. Councillor Stokes argued that none of the information in the Part 2 papers was strictly Part 2 and that he intended to divulge it to his group members. The Committee was advised that the information in the Part 2 item included information on the reasons for each officer leaving which could be regarded as personal to those officers. The exemption requirements also required information to be excluded if the debate was likely to disclose Part 2 information. The Committee agreed to leave the Part 2 information in the confidential part of the meeting.

Councillor Stokes indicated his concern about senior officers retiring early and being re-engaged at some later stage. He believed the Committee needed to know the salary, pension and redundancy costs of the Officers.

Other members of the Committee were satisfied that salary bands were clearly published on the Council's website and payments had not been enhanced in recent years. It was noted that there was an overall saving being demonstrated by the early retirement of senior officers.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

14. Corporate Health and Safety

The Committee noted and endorsed the actions that had been taken by the Corporate Health and Safety Service since the Council entered into a section

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113 agreement with Reading Borough Council for a shared Health & Safety Management Resource.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

15. Local Pay Award 2011/2012 - Payment of £250 for Staff Earning Below £21,000 pa

The Committee considered a report seeking endorsement for those employees whose fulltime equivalent salary was less than £21,000 per annum being paid £250 as an additional local pay award for the financial year 2011/12. The Cabinet had considered this report at its meeting on 19th September 2011 and had endorsed the proposal.

In discussing the proposal members were concerned about how the policy would be implemented to ensure no-one earning less than £21,000 could effectively “leapfrog” over a member of staff earning £21,000. Officers gave an assurance that this could not happen as pay scales did not provide for a salary of £20,900. The Commissioner for Performance and Accountability welcomed the report as it would be taking care of lower paid staff in the authority which was a manifesto pledge. Members of the Committee indicated they were disappointed this was a one-off payment and was not being consolidated into salaries and Councillors Stokes and Plenty, whilst supporting the local pay award, requested that their dissent be recorded for this reason. Members were advised that the Cabinet had also recommended that school based staff be awarded the pay award and that this was being pursued.

Resolved – (Councillors Stokes and Plenty dissenting)

- (a) That the Council makes local pay award of £250 for all centrally employed staff whose full time salary is below £21,000 per annum.
- (b) That the operational details of arrangements for these payments be determined by the Chief Executive as Head of the Paid Service in consultation with the Director of Resources and Regeneration and AD Professional Services. The payments will be made using the established pay award arrangements and principles for dealing with starters and leavers and pro rata payments.
- (c) That the Cabinet’s recommendation that this be extended to school based staff be supported.

16. Date of Next Meeting

26th January, 2012.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm)