

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 20th October, 2020.

Present:- Councillors Ali (Chair), Gahir (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Bains, Chaudhry, Hulme, Sabah, A Sandhu and Smith

PART 1

11. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd July 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

13. Temporary Agency Staff

The OD/HR Business Partner introduced a report that provided the Committee with an update on the Council's actions taken regarding the supply and control of temporary labour.

The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked if there was an ambition to fill temporary posts by residents of Slough. It was explained that vacancies were normally advertised internally first and if not successfully filled would be advertised externally; vacancies were open to anyone meeting the criteria to apply. It was agreed that a discussion would be held with the Council's contracted recruitment agency (Matrix SCM) to understand if there were ways of engaging more applicants from Slough.
- The Committee requested information regarding the number and job roles of all temporary workers earning over £75,000 per annum be provided in the next report. In addition, further information was requested regarding the specific job roles of all temporary workers. It was felt that a clear understanding of the skills shortage roles could be used to inform the Council's economic strategy.
- Concern was raised that temporary staff were contracted on a long-term basis (often 3-4 years). It was explained that during the Council's transformation period, a conscious decision had been taken to hold some temporary posts - this was to provide opportunities for any permanent staff that might be displaced as part of the restructure

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process. It was agreed that information regarding the temporary posts that had been held, be circulated to the Committee.

- Frustration was expressed that over the last three years there did not appear to have been a reduction in the number of temporary workers, despite the Committee having raised its concerns previously. It was explained that the situation was reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the Council's resources were being used effectively. It was reported that Phase 2 of the restructure would address the high level of temporary workers. However, it was highlighted that there would always be an element of spend on agency workers due to the national shortage of planners and social workers, and the need to cover some posts on a temporary basis due to maternity or long-term sickness.
- Concern was raised that a high percentage (47%) of workers had chosen not to state their ethnicity on monitoring forms. It was agreed that this would be raised with Matrix to discuss if the data could be improved.
- In view of the completion of the Phase 1 restructure, it was asked if there would be a reduction of spend on temporary posts in the Executive directorate. It was explained that the Phase 1 consultation had now been completed, however, there were four Associate Director posts that had not yet been filled, and in the interim these may need to be filled by temporary workers.
- A Member requested that data regarding the number of temporary post filled by staff displaced by the restructure be provided to the Committee. It was explained that this information would not be available for the January 2021 meeting, as the consultation process would not yet have been concluded. Therefore, the information would be provided at the April 2021 meeting.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the OD/HR Business Partner be requested to provide the following information in the next report to the Committee:
 - The total number and job roles of all temporary workers earning over £75,000 per annum.
 - Information regarding all the temporary posts that had been held as part of the Council's Transformation process.
- (c) That the OD/HR Business Partner be requested to discuss the following issues with Matrix SCM:

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- Means to encourage more Slough residents to apply for temporary posts.
- The high percentage of temporary workers who had chosen not to state their ethnicity on the monitoring form and ways to improve the data collected.

14. Policy and Guidance on Supporting Trans Employees

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager introduced a report that sought approval of the updated policy guidance to support transgender employees.

It was explained that the development of a diverse and inclusive workforce, where every employee felt valued and was able to achieve their potential was central to the Council's aims. The Council was proud to promote itself as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and the revised guidance had been developed in conjunction with best practice advice from Stonewall.

Consultation in respect of the revised Policy and Guidance had also taken place with trade unions, LGBT+ Allies staff group, the Employee Engagement Forum and the Corporate Consultation Forum.

Resolved – That the updated Policy and Guidance on Supporting Trans Employees be approved.

15. Revised Learning and Development Policy

The Head of Organisational Development introduced a report that sought approval of a revised Learning and Development Policy.

A summary of the main changes to the Learning and Development Policy were outlined in section 4.1 of the report.

It was noted that in light of Covid-19 the majority of training provision was being carried out virtually. Currently, 65% of staff had completed their mandatory training modules; 80% completion rate would be considered a good target. Employees unable to access online training were being provided with briefings via their managers.

The Committee thanked the Head of Organisational Development for the report and asked to be updated on staff training completion rates, as and when appropriate.

Resolved – That the revised Learning and Development Policy be approved.

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16. Employment Policies and Procedures

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager introduced a report that sought approval of the following policies: revised Disciplinary Policy and Procedure; revised Grievance Policy and Procedure; and an additional appendix to the Recruitment Policy and Procedure.

During the discussion it was reported that the disciplinary/grievance procedures did not apply to agency /temporary staff. If issues arose their contract would be terminated and the agency would be informed.

In relation to Grievance Policy and Procedure, it was explained that the Council trained and retained a pool of Investigating Officers. Therefore, if any conflicts of interest arose an alternative officer could be asked to take over the case.

Resolved –

- (a) That the revised Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.
- (b) That the revised Grievance Policy and Procedure, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.
- (c) That the additional appendix to the Recruitment Policy and Procedure, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.

17. Members' Development Programme 2020/21 Update

The Organisational Development Officer introduced a report that provided an update on the current work of the Members' Development Task and Finish Group.

In July 2020 a survey had been circulated to Members to gauge their learning and development needs - 70% of Members had submitted a response. The findings of the survey indicated that the training programme should be tailored, depending on the role, experience and learning needs of each councillor. Members had also indicated that they would find a mix of learning styles and training delivery beneficial.

The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

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- Members were keen for progress to be made to establish a training programme and concern was raised that any unspent training budget would be lost if not used.
- It was noted that Members were due to receive new IT equipment and it was asked if any training would be provided. It was confirmed that an external organisation would be providing IT training to Members and the cost would not be taken from the Members' training budget.
- Concern was raised that the Council's transformation process had delayed the roll out of Member training. It was noted that the Local Government Association Peer Review had highlighted the importance of a robust Member training programme to support councillors to fulfil their roles.
- It was requested that a variety of training methods be used to engage Members, rather than information being delivered solely via PowerPoint presentations.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

18. Our Futures Programme - Workforce Update

The Associate Director - Customer introduced a report that provided an update on the progress of the Council's 'Our Futures Programme'.

It was reported that the consultation period for Phase 1 (senior leadership team) of reorganisation had now concluded. All of the Executive Director posts had been filled through the consultation process. 8 of the 12 Associate Directors had been recruited, with 4 posts being advertised externally.

Phase 2 (formation of a new operating model – affecting all staff below the senior leadership team) of the reorganisation had been delayed and was now planned to be launched on 4th November 2020.

The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Clarification was sought regarding the term 'consultation period'. It was explained that during Phase 2, some roles would be job matched and some roles would be altered. The consultation period fulfilled the legal duty to consult, as set out in section 188 of the 1992 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, when an employer proposed to make 20 or more employees redundant. It was explained that a mapping exercise had been undertaken across the entire workforce to inform the design of

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the new Council structure. Trade Unions had been involved in the job evaluation process.

- A Member highlighted that at a number of Scrutiny Panel meetings officers had reported a backlog of outstanding works due to staff shortages; namely the parking and housing departments. It was explained that in March 2020, it had been agreed that an additional parking engineer post would be created, however there had been a delay in the recruitment process and the advertisement for the role had only recently been published. The Associate Director, Customer agreed to provide the Committee with additional information, following the meeting, to clarify the reasons for the delay.
- Concerns were raised regarding the closure of Landmark Place, the Council's customer service centre and how assistance would be provided to those residents unable to access online services. It was agreed that additional details of the Council's locality hub strategy would be provided in the next report to the Committee.
- It was noted that Phase 2 aimed to deliver a £4.3 million saving to the Council, and that most of the savings would be achieved by efficiencies. A Member asked for an indication of the number of job losses anticipated during the Phase 2 process. It was explained that the aim was to secure permanent staff in posts currently filled by temporary or agency staff. Some vacant posts were currently being held as potential roles for those staff displaced through the consultation period, in order to reduce the number of redundancies. It was recognised that this was an anxious period for staff and the Council was offering support via various workshops and training.
- Referring to the diagram provided in section 5.2 of the report (the 'inverted triangle') a Member asked for details regarding the estimated number of residents who would 'self service' and use the Council's online service portals rather than seeking face-to-face services and information. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to the Committee.
- A Member asked if there was a moratorium on recruitment during the consultation period. It was explained that there was no recruitment freeze, however all recruitment was currently being monitored by the Corporate Management Team. Some vacant posts were being held as potential suitable roles for staff either displaced or facing redundancy through the transformation process.
- It was noted that the Council had not yet recruited a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) officer and it was asked why there had been a delay recruiting to this position. The Associate Director, Customer agreed to provide a response to the Committee following the meeting.

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Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Associate Director, Customer be requested to circulate the additional information requested, as detailed above, to the Committee.

19. Members' Attendance Record 2020/21

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

20. Date of Next Meeting - 21 January 2021

Resolved – The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 21 January 2021.

Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 6.34 pm and closed at 8.42 pm)