

Employment Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 16th April, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Zarait (Chair), Khawar (Vice-Chair), Bedi, Parmar and Qaseem

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Dhillon

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

21. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Zarait declared that his sister worked for the Council.

22. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th January 2024

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

23. HR Policies and Procedures

The Committee considered a report that set out the changes that had been made to four HR policies/procedures in line with the requirements of the HR improvement plan.

The four policies/procedures the Committee was being asked to consider were as follows:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Managing Sickness Absence Policy
- Internal Career Progression Procedure
- EDI policy statement

The Associate Director, Human Resources explained that following a review the policies were streamlined and condensed to enable managers to manage their staff more proactively, and reflect best practice. The policies had been reviewed in line with updated employment legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice.

Details of the key changes were summarised for Members consideration. It was noted that suspension within the Disciplinary Policy had been changed from being defined as a neutral act to a precautionary measure.

Although the time period for preliminary investigations within the Disciplinary Policy had reduced from 20 to 10 days, a Member queried whether this could be reduced further. It was clarified that 10 days referred to working days and

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this was considered reasonable to allow all parties an opportunity to attend/respond to issues.

Referring to the Managing Sickness Absence Policy, it was queried what support was given to employees to facilitate their return to work. The Committee was informed that the Council had an Occupational Health Scheme and Return to Work process which included meetings to ensure reasonable adjustments were made to support employees returning to work after an extended period of absence.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee agreed the revised policies and procedures.

Resolved – That the following amended policies/procedures, as set out in appendices to the report, be approved:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Managing Sickness Absence Policy
- Internal Career Progression Procedure
- EDI policy statement

24. 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report

The Diversity and Inclusion Lead set out details of the 2023 Gender Pay Gap report. It was noted that the Council had a statutory duty to calculate and publish its gender pay gap annually.

The main points were highlighted as follows:

- Nationally, analysis suggested that 79% of eligible employers who submitted their pay gaps in 2022 paid men more than women on average. Their overall average median pay gap for all sectors in 2022 was 9.4%.
- The Council had seen a reduction in both the mean and median gender pay gaps between 2022 and 2023. There was now a negative gender pay gap, which meant that women earned more than men on average.
- In 2023 the mean gender pay gap was -7.8% (compared to 0.7% in 2022)
- In 2023 the median gender pay gap was -3.0% (compared to 0% in 2022)
- The council employed more women than men overall and in all pay quartiles apart from the Upper Middle quartile.

It was highlighted that overall local authorities were good employers to work for with opportunities for flexible work which contributed to the relative figures compared to many other organisations.

A Member commented that the report did not include analysis of interim staff and therefore the figures calculated for the mean and median gender pay gap

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were not a true reflection. Whilst it was acknowledged that there was a high number of interim staff, it was explained that the calculations were based on the regulations and taken in March 2023. The figures did regularly change given high level of organisations change taking place in Slough Borough Council. The Committee also discussed the gender balance in senior positions, including the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). It was responded that when the posts were filled following the most recent restructure CLT would be evenly balanced with three women and three men in post.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That details of the 2023 Gender Pay Gap report be noted.

25. Senior Management Restructure Update

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report, updating on the senior management restructure that was consulted on and approved in September 2023 and highlighted the progress of the recruitment into the new posts created. Members' attention was particularly drawn to the arrangements that would be put in place following the resignations of two statutory officers – Head of Paid Services (Chief Executive) and Section 151 Officer. The report would also be presented to full Council later in the month to note the recent appointments Commissioners had made to senior positions.

In relation to the restructure it was noted that many appointments had been made to new director posts and the new staff would be joining the organisation within the coming weeks. A lengthy process of recruitment had been undertaken to identify the best possible candidates. Members were informed that an external recruitment partner had been appointed, through a procurement exercise, who were given a specific to attract candidates from a diverse background as part of the search process. They were successful in that, and the search outcome yielded a very good response to the various posts. An update was provided on the posts already filled and it was noted that Sukdave Ghuman would join the Council from 1 May 2024 in his role as Monitoring Officer. Members were informed that Council would be asked to agree that the Monitoring Officer would also be appointed to the statutory roles of Returning Officer, Acting Returning Officer, Local Returning Officer, and Electoral Registration Officer and that the incoming Monitoring Officer had election experience.

Members were reminded of the powers of the Commissioners to make appointments to key posts and the appointments of the new Chief Executive, Will Tuckley, and Executive Director Finance & Commercial / Section 151 Officer, Annabel Scholes, were noted.

A Member queried what, if anything, had been put in place to ensure the retention of individuals given the recent disruption to senior management and it was explained that Commissioners had met with appointees to provide assurance that Slough was a stable organisation; albeit there had been a certain amount of uncertainty as a consequence of the management

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restructure. In response to whether exit interviews were carried out, the Monitoring Officer outlined that due process was followed and exit interviews provided a valuable source of information with regards to taking on board feedback received and implementing improvements as necessary.

Consequential changes to the Scheme of Delegation in the constitution, reflecting the new management restructure would be put to Council to agree as set out in the appendices to the report.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was endorsed and it was agreed to recommend it to full Council.

Resolved –

That the Employment Committee:

- Note and endorse the contents of this report.
- Recommend the report to Full Council.

The following recommendations to full Council were noted:

- Note the appointment of Will Tuckley as interim Head of Paid Service with effect from 15 April 2024;
- Note the appointment of Christopher Holme as interim Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services – S151 Officer for the period 26 April 2024 to the 6 May 2024;
- Note the appointment of Annabel Scholes as interim Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services – S151 Officer with effect from 7 May 2024
- Approve the updated organisation chart at Appendix A, together with revisions to Article 12 of the Constitution and the Scheme of Delegation at Appendix B;
- Approve the designation of the statutory post of Returning Officer, Acting Returning Officer, Local Returning Officer, and Electoral Registration Officer to the role of Monitoring Officer; and Authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution, as necessary.

26. Draft Code of Conduct for Officers

The Committee received a report which set out the proposed changes to the current Local Code of Conduct for Employees. The draft Code had been subject to consultation with various stakeholder groups, which included trade unions, staff networks and staff in general.

Following review by the Committee, the draft Code would also be considered by the Member Panel on the Constitution and recommended for approval by Full Council in May 2024.

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Proposed changes to the code were summarised as set out in the report. Members attention was specifically drawn to the addition of a new section on standards of behaviour and appearance, including reference to not wearing clothing, badges or other items with political or offensive messages, wearing issued uniforms or protective clothing and only making alterations to such clothing after obtaining agreement from a manager.

Members considered the draft code and did not make any specific comments or proposed amendments prior to it being submitted to Council for approval. The Committee did agree to receive an annual report reviewing the effectiveness of the revised code.

Resolved –

- a) That details of the draft Code of Conduct be noted.
- b) That the Committee receive an annual report reviewing the effectiveness of the revised Code of Conduct, to maintain standards of behaviour and integrity at officer level.

27. Attendance Record

Resolved - That details of the Attendance Record be noted.

28. Chair's Remarks

The Chair placed on record thanks to the Monitoring Office and Associate Director, Human Resources, who would both shortly be leaving the Council for their help and guidance to the Committee and wished them well for the future.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.26 pm)