

Employment Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 27th June, 2024

Present:- Councillors Escott (Vice-Chair), Carter, Parmar, Rana and Satti

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bedi

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Terms of Reference

The Committee noted its terms of reference.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 April 2024

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4. Workforce Equality Data Report

The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Transformation introduced the report. The report provided the Committee with the updated annual Workforce Equality Data Report (March 2024) which included the following:

- An overview of the demographics of Slough (from Census 2021) and links to further Slough Insights Data.
- Links to Gender Pay Gap Reports, Equality Objectives and the Corporate Plan
- Information on how the Council's workforce profile compared with the Economically Active Cohort in Slough (by sex, disability and ethnicity).
- The Council's workforce profiles by equality characteristics and salary.
- The Council's workforce profiles by religion and sexual orientation.
- Further measures to support workforce equality and inclusion, including HR policies and staff engagement.

The Council had gone through an unprecedented period of organisational change over the past three years which had impacted on workforce stability and its capacity to collect and analyse workforce data. Following a wider public consultation on statutory equality objectives in December 2023, the Council approved two workforce specific equality objectives. These sought to give focus over the next two years to address the key issues of improved data-collection and evidence-based decision-making in Human Resources (HR) processes and practice and employing an inclusive workforce which was representative of the local Slough community.

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There remained significant issues with data quality and employee diversity declaration rates, particularly around disability and ethnicity. However, since the publication of the 2023 workforce report, additional work had been undertaken to analyse the more detailed ethnic groups category in Agresso (the HR and Payroll system, which contained all staff data).

The report set out the following actions that were being undertaken over the next three months to improve workforce data reporting:

- The HR Director and EDI Lead were reviewing the current diversity categories held in Agresso to ensure they were fit for purpose.
- Completion rates could be improved using the “prefer not to say” option, whereby it could be recorded as a conscious decision by the employee. This response could be analysed by HR to understand better the barriers for staff, such as access to and understanding Agresso and/or feeling uncomfortable to report.
- The HR Director would be exploring the current capabilities and resources within HR to analyse data across a wider range of HR metrics.
- As part of the Local Government Association Peer review in September 2024, staff would be encouraged to attend focus groups to share their experiences, the findings of which would help inform the development of an HR/Workforce action plan.

It was noted that when collecting and reporting on workforce data, the Council was required to comply with its data protection duties. Data about a person’s protected characteristics such as their ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion was classed as special category data under General Data Protection Regulation.

The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Transformation responded to Members’ questions/comments. These included:

- A review of HR data across the Council’s Agresso system was being carried out to analyse their contents and understand whether the diversity data could be captured more easily.
- Staff may feel reluctant to disclose special category data without knowing how the Council will use the data and how it will be protected. Therefore, a campaign about the data being secure and the importance of declaring was being planned.
- It was important for the Council to build trust with employees to ensure that they understood the reasons why the Council was collecting the data.
- There did not appear to be anywhere on the forms where it was possible to declare gender fluidity.
- The graphs on Page 10 of the Workforce Equality Data Report (Gender profile across salary bands) show an error on the seventh column (<£15000).

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- The gender pay gaps remained, with women being disproportionately over-represented in the salary bands under £19,99 and in the two highest salary bands. Staff network groups, coaching/mentoring and arranging for inspirational women leaders to speak at events could be considered.

The Committee welcomed the positive steps that were being undertaken over the next three months to improve workforce data reporting.

Action: The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Transformation to arrange for the graphs on Page 10 of the Workforce Equality Data Report (Gender profile across salary bands) (<£15000) to be corrected.

Resolved – That the Workforce Equality Data Report be noted.

5. Senior Management Restructure Update and Pay Policy

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Senior Management Structure and the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 which had been updated to reflect the changes. It set out two restructure changes proposed by the new Chief Executive as follows:

- An expanded role for the Executive Director - Finance and Commercial Services, moving the functions of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Human Resources (HR) under this post holder and amending the role title to Executive Director of Corporate Resources.
- Retaining the Director of Strategy, Change & Resident Engagement as a direct report to the Chief Executive and updating relevant parts of the Constitution to reflect that this post holder was a chief officer.

The proposed realignment of ICT and HR functions to report to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources aimed to optimise the Council's organisational structure while maintaining their critical importance to improvement and recovery plans. Given the critical nature of the role of Executive Director of Corporate Resources, the Council had engaged in the services of the executive search firm, Starfish Search, to assist in the recruitment process. The permanent recruitment would commence immediately with a view to interviews being held in early September 2024.

There were no changes to the grading of the posts and there was no need to conduct a formal consultation since the changes involved line management changes.

The report also provided an update on the recruitment to the Executive Director/Director posts, noting that all but one of the posts had been filled.

Appended to the report (Appendix 1) was a copy of the Senior Management Structure Chart. An updated version was tabled at the meeting.

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An updated cost analysis of the Senior Management restructure indicated an estimated total cost for new posts for 2023/24 of £2,483k; the estimated projected total cost for 2024/25 of £3,793k. The Council was continuing to review its approach to market supplements and appointments above the bottom of the scale.

The Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 had been updated to reflect changes in the senior management structure and included up to date pay details to reflect the recent appointments to director roles. These were set out in Appendix 2 (an updated version was tabled at the meeting).

Members were advised that the Commissioners had powers to make appointments to key posts, such as the appointment of the new Chief Executive, Will Tuckley, (whose position was currently interim).

The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Transformation responded to Members' questions/observations. These included:

- Whether the proposed restructure was likely to lead to a change in performance efficiencies – in response to this question the Councillor was advised that it was anticipated that the changes would help stabilise the business and help improve performance.
- All roles were recruited openly with a clear expectation that Senior Managers appointed to the role will be actively involved in supporting service delivery and efficiency.
- In respect of the pay policy, further clarification was sought as to whether the figures shown at paragraph 3.1.2 of the report factored in other costs such as day rates.
- What did market supplements cover and how were they reviewed? Officers responded to this question.
- How effective were the use of recruitment agencies in the selection process, given that there had been a high turn-over of staff in senior roles?

The Chair requested that further information be provided on the cost to the Executive and the cost of additional remuneration (if any) for Senior Management Team (SMT).

Actions:

The Director of Human Resources and Workforce Transformation and the Interim Finance Director:

1. To provide a report on the forecast of the cost of Senior Management Team (SMT) structure 2024/25 in line with the Q1 revenue report
2. To advise the Committee of the cost of additional remuneration, if any, for SMT.

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

Resolved –

1. That the update on the senior management restructure be noted
2. That the Employment Committee recommend to Council (25 July 2024) to:
 - a) Approve the new chief officer structure and the updated management structure at Appendix 1 to become a new Part 7 of the Constitution.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend Article 12 and Part 3.6 of the Constitution to reflect the new functions and new chief officer structure.
 - c) Approve the Updated Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

6. Date of Next Meeting - 19 September 2024

The date of the next meeting was noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.48 pm)