

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM - 2 MARCH 2017

### Present:

Councillors Lovelock (Chair), D Edwards (in place of Councillor Page), Gavin, and Skeats (in place of Councillor Steele)

Ms J Boyd	National Union of Teachers (NUT)
Mr W King	Interim HR/Payroll Services Manager
Mr K Magee	Unite
Ms A Solera	UNISON
Mr M Popham	Committee Services

**Apologies:** Ms B Reynolds and Councillors Page and Steele.

### 1. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2016

The Proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 17 November 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 2. PAY POLICY

Warren King, Interim HR/Payroll Services Manager, introduced a Personnel Committee report on the development of the Pay Policy 2017/18, in preparation for its submission to full Council on 28 March 2017. A copy of the Pay Policy Statement 2017/18 was appended to the report. The report stated that Local Authorities were required under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) to prepare a Pay Policy Statement that articulated the Council's policy towards the pay of the workforce, particularly senior staff and the lowest paid employees.

The report explained that each local authority was an individual employer in its own right and had the autonomy to make decisions on pay that were appropriate to local circumstances and which delivered value for money for local taxpayers. Section 40 of the Act required authorities, in developing their Pay Policy Statement, to have regard to any guidance that had been published by the Secretary of State. This included Communities and Local Government guidance on Openness and Accountability in Local Pay and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency (as amended). The Act required Councils to produce a Pay Policy Statement annually that was accessible for council tax payers to be able to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration were fair.

**AGREED:** That the Pay Policy Statement 2017/18 and its subsequent submission to Personnel Committee for onward recommendation to Council on 28 March 2017 be noted.

### 3. NUT TEACHERS PAY PROGRESSION SURVEY

Joan Boyd, NUT, raised the issue of the statutory provisions on pay progression for teachers in local authority maintained schools. Pay progression was now related to

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performance and governing bodies were required to have a written pay policy, setting out the criteria and standards for pay progression. Warren King confirmed that decisions of governing bodies not to progress teachers were held locally by the schools rather than by the local authority. He agreed to investigate further to see if information could be provided to the NUT on the decisions taken by schools.

### 4. CHILDREN'S SERVICES - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor Lovelock reported that, in December 2016, Nick Whitfield, the DfE's appointed commissioner, had recommended to Edward Timpson MP, Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, that there should be an extension of the review period of the Council's Children's Services to the end of April 2017, and that this recommendation had been accepted. The Council would continue to be supported by the Commissioner throughout the extended time, during which he would carry on his assessment of the Council's ability to sustain long term improvements in Children's Services as well as look at possible alternative delivery arrangements, prior to making final recommendations to the Minister.

The Forum noted the difficulties in recruiting permanent social workers due to the high nationwide demand for their services and the uncertainties that remained about the future of Children's Services in Reading. However, the Forum was encouraged that there had recently been a reduction in reliance on agency staff with 67% of social workers now permanent members of Children's Services' staff.

### 5. TRADE UNION ISSUES

#### (a) Employee Assistance Programme

Warren King, Interim HR/Payroll Services Manager, reported that a saving of £32,000 had been accepted, as part of the Council's budget setting process, to discontinue the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) contract. The EAP service provided support to employees via face-to-face counselling, online help and advice, debt counselling, legal and financial services for employees, their families and elected Members. Since the decision had been taken to terminate the contract, the provider had approached the Council with an offer to continue an online and telephone only EAP service at a cost of £8,000 per year.

**AGREED:** That the intention of the Interim HR/Payroll Services Manager to accept the offer from the current provider to deliver an online and telephone only Employee Assistance Programme service at a cost of £8,000 per year be endorsed

#### (b) Equalities Act 2010 and Disability Policy

UNISON had identified an issue relating to some managers' lack of awareness of the provisions within the Equality Act 2010, which legally protected people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act had consolidated

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previous anti-discrimination laws within a single Act, with the intention of making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in certain circumstances.

The Forum asked that any specific incidences of discrimination that were not being properly dealt with by managers should be reported to the Interim HR/Payroll Services Manager to enable any necessary action to be properly targeted. Antoinette Solera, UNISON, said that she would liaise with Billie Reynolds to collate any detailed information received on this issue and report back to the Forum.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

### 6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Councillor Lovelock reported that the arrangements for meetings in 2017/18 would be to hold three, rather than four, Local Joint Forum meetings per year, each preceded by a meeting to agree the agenda, prior to the despatch of papers. It was also intended to reduce the number of scheduled Personnel Committee meetings from four to three and to hold meetings of LJF and Personnel Committee consecutively on the same day. The provisional dates for LJF and Personnel Committee were as follows:

Thursday 13 July 2017 - LJF (5pm); Personnel Committee (6.30pm);  
Thursday 9 November 2017 - LJF (5pm); Personnel Committee (6.30pm); and  
Thursday 15 March 2018 - LJF (5pm); Personnel Committee (6.30pm).

(The meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.00 pm).