

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES - 17 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillor Emberson (Chair);
Councillors Brock, Lovelock, Page and Skeats.

Also Present: Teresa Kaine and Shella Smith; Alison McNamara and Miriam Palfrey and Kieran Magee.

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19 November 2020 and 27 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

10. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM

The Chief Executive submitted the proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 25 February 2021.

Resolved - That the proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting be received.

11. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Further to Minute 3 of the meeting held on 19 November 2020, the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report, presenting the Committee with twelve Employment Policies which had been reviewed jointly and agreed with the Joint Trade Unions. The following documents were attached to the report:

| | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix A | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy |
| Appendix B | Flexible Retirement Policy |
| Appendix C | Learning and Development Policy |
| Appendix D | Probation Scheme Policy |
| Appendix E | Reimbursement of Expenses Policy |
| Appendix F | Bullying and Harassment Policy |
| Appendix G | Disciplinary Policy |
| Appendix H | Managing Poor Performance Policy |
| Appendix I | Managing Sickness Absence Policy |
| Appendix J | Social Media Policy |
| Appendix K | Flexible Working Policy |
| Appendix L | Grey Fleet Policy |
| Appendix M | Equality Impact Assessment |

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development requested that, following a discussion with Trades Union colleagues at the Joint Trade Union Committee held on 17 March 2021, the Grey Fleet Policy (Appendix L), be removed from the list for approval. This would allow time for further work to agree the Policy with Trades Union colleague to reflect feedback about how the policy would operate at a practical level.

The report explained that all employment policies would be reviewed by the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development and submitted to the Committee for approval in July 2021, following consultation and negotiation with the Joint Trade Unions. The policies had been reviewed because they did not reflect current best

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practice or were out of date and hence put the Council at risk, were due to be reviewed in line with the two-year review schedule and had been updated with current job titles and gender-neutral language. The remaining new and residual policies which required review would be brought forward for approval in July 2021.

The report set out the principles that had been in mind when they had been written and stated that in future, all employment policies would be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation required it.

The report also included a table which set out in summary terms for each of the revised policies the issues which had been addressed together with additional key changes that had been agreed with the Joint Trades Unions. Once the policy review had been completed, hyperlinks would be added to the policies where they were cross referenced with other policies. The process for agreeing the policies with the Joint Trade Unions was set out in a table and a communications plan had been put in place to communicate the revised policies to managers and employees.

Resolved:

(1) That the following revised/new HR policies, as set out in in Appendices A to K attached to the report, be approved:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Flexible Retirement Policy;
- Learning and Development Policy;
- Probation Scheme Policy;
- Reimbursement of Expenses Policy;
- Bullying and Harassment Policy;
- Disciplinary Policy;
- Managing Poor Performance Policy;
- Managing Sickness Absence Policy;
- Social Media Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy;
- Grey Fleet Policy;

(2) That Appendix L, the Grey Fleet Policy, be amended, and following further consultation with Trades Unions, re-submitted to the Committee for approval at a later date.

12. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report providing the Committee with a Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22, for approval by Council on 23 March 2021. A copy of the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. 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.

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The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 had been updated as follows:

- To show the updated pay multiples in section 8;
- To reflect changes agreed by Council regarding the senior management structure of the Council (as set out in Article 12 of the Constitution);
- Annex B had been reduced and provided references as to where relevant information on the governance arrangements for pay and conditions of service for Council officers could be found in the Constitution (rather than including extracts lifted from the Constitution);
- Annex D (Council employees in salary bands) had been updated with data for 1 April 2020 and paragraph 10 (Pay Profile) had been updated to reflect this.

The report stated that further updates might be required to the Pay Policy Statement and delegated authority was sought for the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, to make these updates.

The report also provided an update on the Restrictions of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 which had taken effect on 4 November 2020 as it would have been necessary to reflect the new Regulations in the Pay Policy Statement.

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.

Resolved - That the draft Pay Policy 2021/22 be recommended to Council on 23 March 2021 for approval.

13. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report, presenting the Committee with an update on the work that was being done to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council. The report also presented the Council's Gender pay Gap Report for 2020 and, for the first time, an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which was also for 2020. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Gender Pay Gap Report for 2020
- Appendix 2 Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for 2020.

The report explained that on 19 November 2020 the Committee had received a report on the Council's Equality Audit for 2019/20 (Minute 4 refers) and on progress that had been made towards meeting the requirements set out in the Tackling Employment

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Inequality Motion that had been moved at the meeting of Council on 20 October 2020. Since that time, the following action had been completed to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council:

- Promotion of the Equality Audit for 2019/20;
- The Race at Work Charter;
- Equality, Diversity and inclusion Audit;
- Cultural Unity, Diversity and Inclusion Network;
- Healthy and Ethical Workplace - Support for the Directorate of Social Care and Health.

The report explained that the gender pay gap was calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men's earnings. Nationally, the gender pay gap had been declining slowly in recent years. In April 2020 for full-time employees only, it was 7.4%, down from 9.0% in April 2019 and among all employees the gap had fallen from 17.4% in 2019 to 15.5% in 2020. The gender pay gap was higher for all employees because women filled more part time jobs which had lower hourly median pay than full-time jobs and were more likely to be in lower paid occupations. The report set out the regulations an employer had to comply with in any year where they had a 'headcount' of 250 or more employees on the 'snapshot date', which for local authorities was 31 March each year.

The report set out the Council's mean and median pay gap for 2020, which showed an improvement since 2019. The report also noted that these figures compared favourably with the both the national figures for all employees and the 2019 figures for Local Authorities that had been produced by the Local Government Association, as set out below:

| Gender Pay Gap | April 2019 | | April 2020 | |
|-------------------------|------------|--------|------------|--------|
| | Mean | Median | Mean | Median |
| Reading Borough Council | 4.99% | 5.05% | 4.71% | 2.53% |
| National | | 17.3% | | 15.90% |
| All Local Authorities* | 6.1% | 4.00% | n/a | n/a |
| Unitary Authorities* | | 6.5% | n/a | n/a |

* Collated by the Local Government Association

The report stated that unlike the gender pay gap, large organisations were not yet legally required to publish their ethnicity pay gap. However, the Council believed it was important to be transparent so it had been decided to voluntarily publish data for the first time. The ethnicity pay gap was the percentage difference in the average hourly rate of pay of white and BAME employees and had been calculated using the same methodology set out in the Government regulations for calculating the gender pay gap. However, unlike gender the Council's ethnicity disclosure rate was not 100% and currently stood at 93.5%; any individual with undisclosed ethnicities had been excluded from the calculations in line with the Government regulations for gender pay. The pay gap report had been based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2020 when

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the mean ethnicity pay gap was 6.88% and the median was 0.28%. Nationally, in 2019 the median hourly pay for those in White ethnic groups was £12,40 per hour, compared with those in ethnic minority group at £12.11 per hour; a pay gap of 2.3%, its narrowest since 2012. The majority of employees at the Council (79.6%) were white and the proportion of BAME employees was 13.8%. There were more white employees than BAME employees at every pay quartile, with the highest proportion (16%) in the lower quartile. Pay grade RG10 had the greatest proportion of BAME employees (23.08%), which was higher than the overall proportion of BAME employees at the Council. However, the proportion of BAME employees at senior management level grades was low at only 3.13%.

The report explained that a Team Reading Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan would be created to enable more effective monitoring of progress towards increasing equality, diversity and inclusion at the Council and better reporting to management and Personnel Committee. It would be created using insights from the BITC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion audit findings, as well as the Equality Audit 2019/20 findings and the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports. BITC's findings and recommendations were expected in April 2021.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress made to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council be noted;**
- (2) That the Gender Pay Gap and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reports for 2020 be noted.**

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 6.47 pm).