

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM - 24 FEBRUARY 2022

### Present:

Councillors Brock (Chair), McEwan and Stanford-Beale

P Kenny	Unison
M Palfrey	Unison, Branch Secretary
A Solera	Unison
S Smith	Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development
R Woodford	Committee Services

### Apologies:

Councillor Page

K Magee	Unite
A McNamara	National Education Union (NEU)

### 1. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2021

The Proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 25 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 2. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisation Development submitted a report, that would be submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 March 2022, providing a Pay Policy Statement, attached at Appendix 1, for 2022/23 for approval by Council on 22 March 2022.

The report stated that the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 had been updated with the following changes:

- Paragraph 5.2 had been updated to reflect the current status of the national pay negotiations for 2021;
- Section 7 had been updated to reflect the new Living Wage Foundation hourly rate which had increased to £9.90. It would be implemented at the Council from 1 April 2022. It might be necessary to pay a Living Wage supplement to staff below this rate, depending on the outcome of the national pay negotiations for 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- New pay multiples in Section 8;
- Annex D (Council employees in salary bands) had been updated with data from 1 April 2021 and Section 10 (Pay Profile) had been updated to reflect this.

The report stated that the majority of employees had not received a cost of living increase since April 2020 as the national pay negotiations for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were ongoing. The National Employers had made a full and final pay offer in July 2021 for a 1.75% increase for Local Government Services staff and Craftworkers and 1.5% to the Chief Executive and Chief Officers. The increases would be backdated to 1 April 2021. The three local government unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) had conducted consultative ballots on the employers' offer which had run through to the beginning of October 2021; all three unions had received resounding majorities in favour of rejecting the employers' final offer. In mid November 2021 UNISON had

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announced it would be conducting a formal national strike ballot that would close in mid January 2022. GMB had announced it would be conducting another consultative ballot (in order to determine whether there was support for a subsequent strike ballot) that would close in mid December 2021. Unite had announced a later timetable: its formal strike ballot would close on 25 February 2022. The result of UNISON's ballot had been 70% in favour of strike action. However, turnout had been 14.5%, short of the minimum 50% required for any industrial action to be lawful. GMB had not proceeded to a formal strike ballot. Unite was still conducting its ballot. In February 2022, the joint Negotiating Committees for Chief Executives and Chief Officers had announced that they had reached agreement to award a 1.5% increase from 1 April 2021.

The delay in agreeing the cost of living pay award for 2021/22 would also impact on the timetable for the 2022/23 pay talks. The three unions were not expected to begin to consult their members on the content of their 2022/23 pay claim until at least March 2022, which meant it was not expected to be tabled until at least April 2022, which would be beyond the usual pay award implementation date of 1 April 2022.

The report explained that the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 would need to be updated once the pay negotiations had been conducted for 2021/22 and updated again when they were concluded for 2022/23. The report sought delegated authority for the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, to update the Pay Policy Statement which would require changes throughout to reflect the pay awards in addition to: paragraph 8 to show the new pay multiples and Annex F, the new pay scales.

The Forum discussed the report and specifically the delay in agreeing the cost of living pay award for 2021/22 and in respect of recruitment it was suggested that the Council need to be better at emphasising the benefits of working for the authority such as the local government pension, holiday entitlement and terms and conditions.

**AGREED - That, subject to Personnel Committee's consideration of the report at its meeting on 16 March 2022, the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 would be recommended to Council on 22 March 2022 for approval, be noted.**

### **3. EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE**

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisation Development submitted a report for onward submission to Personnel Committee on 16 March 2022, providing an update on the work being done to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council since the previous update that had been submitted to Personnel Committee in March 2021. A copy of the Business in the Community (BITC) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Audit report - October 2021 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the BITC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Audit recommendations which had been implemented or were in progress as at February 2022 was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report detailed the findings of an Equality, Diversity and inclusion Audit which had been carried out for the Council by BITC and the work that was being done to implement their recommendations. It also provided an update on the Healthy and

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Ethical Workplace programme which was being delivered in the Directorate of Adult Social Care and Health, in partnership with Ethical Reading which had focused on achieving a vibrant, values based and ethical culture.

The report explained that the findings from the BITC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Audit would be used alongside the findings of the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports for 2021 and the Workforce Profile for 2020/21 to inform the development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Council. It would be co-created with input from a range of stakeholders, with support from an external partner who would be appointed soon.

The Forum discussed the report and Councillor Brock asked that any thoughts on how to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council be shared.

### **AGREED -**

- (1) That the report be endorsed for onward submission to Personnel Committee;**
- (2) That any thoughts on how to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Council be shared.**

### **4. GENDER AND ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORTS FOR 2021 AND WORKFORCE PROFILE REPORT FOR 2020/21**

The Assistant Director of HR and Organisation Development submitted a report for onward submission to Personnel Committee on 16 March 2022, presenting the Council's Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports for 2021. A copy of the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2021 was attached to the report at Appendix 1, a copy of the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for 2021 was attached at Appendix 2 and a copy of the Workforce Profile Report for 2020/21 was attached to the report at Appendix 3.

The report explained that the mean gender pay gap was 2.06%, meaning that women earned 2.06% less per hour, on average, than men. The median gender pay gap was 4.91% and the mean ethnicity pay gap was 4.26%, meaning the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees were paid 4.26% less per hour, on average, than White employees. The median ethnicity pay gap was 5.69% and the report provided a further breakdown of ethnicity pay gaps for different ethnic groups.

The report also presented the Workforce Profile for 2020/21 which provided a summary of equalities monitoring data and trends over time. It covered data on the protected characteristics of the current workforce and job applicants in 2020/21 and compared it to the previous two financial years (2018/19 and 2019/20) where relevant.

The findings from the Workforce Profile for 2020/21 and the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports for 2021 would be used alongside the findings of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Audit that had been carried out by BITC to inform the development of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Council. This would be covered in a more detail in a separate report submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 March 2021 which would provide an equality, diversity and inclusion update.

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The Forum discussed the report and specifically the growing number of people who did not want to disclose their ethnicity or if they had a disability. S Smith reported this was a particular issue around job applications where someone who had a disability, but met the requirements of the job, would be guaranteed an interview and yet people were still not making the declaration. An explanation was now being given as to why this information was needed. The need to do more training in respect of neurodiversity had also been identified, explaining what this meant and the positive benefits of employing someone who was neurodivergent.

**AGREED - That the report be endorsed for onward submission to Personnel Committee.**

(The meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.34 pm).