

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY 2019

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs Boyle (Chairman), Salter (Vice-Chair), Mrs Banevicius, Cox, Greatorex and B Yeates

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Eagland and Rayner

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and signed as a correct record.

20 REVISED PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Members received a report on the Council's duties under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 regarding the preparation of a Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20. It was reported that its purpose was to be open and transparent about the distribution of pay to Officers. It was noted that it was a public document and would require approval from Full Council.

It was reported that pay negotiations for Officers below Chief Officer level were conducted at national level by the National Joint Council (NJC) and the settlement reached was mandatory and must be applied to the Council's employees. It was then reported that as part of the 2018 – 2020 National pay bargaining, the NJC agreed a new pay spine to future proof for the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and in turn increased the starting point for Lichfield District Council evaluated posts to a rate of £9 per hour. It was noted that work had been undertaken with Unison and the Council to understand the impact of the new pay spine and culminated in a joint impact assessment. It was then noted by the Committee that collective agreement had been reached locally on the assimilation process that would be applied to employees.

Members noted that under the heading of Definition of Chief Officer there were now three vacancies and this would be reflected in the document. Members also noted that the pay relationship calculation was based on January figures but this would be amended to reflect the situation as of April 2019 and would continuously be adjusted after this if required.

Members queried the number of essential car users and had concerns that this was a high cost to the Council. It was reported that it would be reviewed as part of the People Strategy however it needed to be noted that many areas of the Council did require employees to work outside of the Offices including Planning, Environmental Health and the Building Control partnership.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the Pay Policy Statement as set out in the report be noted and it be recommended to Council for approval.

21 RESULTS OF EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The Committee received a presentation on the results of the Employee Survey. The Head of Corporate Services reported that an Officer working group developed this survey in 2018 and responses were sought by the end of September 2018. It was then reported that the Staffordshire Intelligence Hub then collated and interpreted the results to ensure full independence and confidentiality was observed. The full report of the responses was delivered in December 2018.

Members noted the results and that also the response rate was lower than the last survey, was still considered high. The Head of Corporate Services then reported the higher measured results and lower measured results along with the next steps.

The Committee noted that the results showed that employees felt that work/life balance was not as good and queried whether this was due to reduced resources and how could this be tackled as it was unlikely to get better. It was reported that focus would be aimed at supporting staff and their wellbeing. Members noted that flexible working was being offered more widely, most notably in the joint waste service with good effect.

Members then discussed the reasons why it was considered in the responses that the management restructure had not had a positive impact yet other answers seemed to contradict this. It was reported that as part of the next steps, focus groups would be held where these sorts of questions could be posed and a deeper understanding sought.

Members asked how the low response rate from the joint waste service would be addressed and it was reported that Officers were already attending their meetings and training sessions to discuss this further. It was noted that feedback had stated that they felt the survey was too long and academic in nature. It was planned to consider this when carrying out questionnaires in the future.

The next steps were discussed further and Members felt that to ensure morale did not drop, an outcomes from the survey should be reported to employees. It was reported that further investigation of results was underway including the aforementioned focus groups and results would be fed into the People Strategy and a report ready in around six months. It was also reported that it was envisioned that in the future, the survey would be one of a catalogue of engagement methods.

Members discussed the results regarding engagement between Officers and themselves and it was felt it was difficult to have contact in all areas of the differing services in the Council especially when it was not required. It was reported that there was now a better understanding of the role of Members and the relationship of them and Officer due to clearer protocols and guidance from senior Officers. Members felt a question should be added to ask whether there was a requirement to have contact with Members in their role added in the future.

RESOLVED: That the information given be noted.

22 PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Committee received a presentation updating them on the People Strategy. The Head of Corporate Services reported progress made and the evidence base collected. It was reported that there was an equal mix of genders employed but the working pattern was slightly different. It was also reported that the age range was mainly over 45 but this was common for public sector.

The presentation then focused on the key areas and regarding employee wellbeing, it was noted that this was on the national agenda now and the Council had pledged to the Mind Time to Change initiative to raise awareness of mental health and was working with managers to spot concerns and support where possible. Other key areas included a terms of conditions review and learning and development priorities. It was reported that it was envisioned that the HR service would evolve into a strategic role that supports the overall business.

Members discussed apprenticeships and how it could aid attracting much needed younger people into the Council. It was reported that there had been a greater take up in the more manual roles including parks but not the office based roles. It was noted that the training frameworks for these areas were still focused on the private sector and it would take time for suitable public sector frameworks to be available.

The Committee then discussed succession routes and there was concern that with such a majority older workforce, there could be a mass retirement of staff with no trained replacements. It was reported that management was key and a skills audit was planned to truly understand what employees were capable of and use PDRs to find out what their aspirations were. It was also noted that it was an expectation now that younger people do not wish to remain in one organisation for long. It was reported that flexible retirement plans helped balance this to retain knowledge and skills.

RESOLVED: That the information received be noted.

(The Meeting closed at 7.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN