

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

1 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT:

Councillors Humphreys (Chairman), Barnett (Vice-Chair), Birch, Greatorex, Robertson, Silvester-Hall, Warburton and S Wilcox

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are recorded for Councillor Gwilt and Councillor Grange.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting as circulated were agreed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record.

33 APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE

The Committee received an update on apprenticeships. It was reported that there have been challenges in getting the programme up and running using the new frameworks. It was reported that the two main barriers to this are the limitations set by the frameworks as the public sector job requirements are not a priority for the providers. Lichfield District Council is a small council with limited capacity and small teams, which inhibits our ability to provide support to new entrants.

The People Strategy incorporates the targets outlined in the report and Lichfield District Council are starting to see an increase in appointment of these roles.

The possibility of using the apprentice programme to provide support to departments which experience issues recruiting and retaining staff was raised by the Committee, along with the option of increasing the financial remuneration of the apprenticeship to increase the incentive. There are departments, such as planning, which would benefit from additional resources, however, they require the appointment of experienced officers, appointing an apprentice would not fulfil the skill set required.

Only 11% of public bodies are achieving the 2.3%, this is due to the frameworks being designed for private sector organisations with large scale recruitment and more generic roles. It would therefore be beneficial to use the levy funding in alternative ways, such as to develop existing staff.

National rates and job evaluation scheme guide the rate of pay offered within the organisation, however where we have offered a salary rather than the national apprenticeship rates this has proved positive in recruiting staff.

The LGA have identified key services where there is a national shortage of staff within the public sector, such as planning, and they are addressing these nationally.

RESOLVED: That the information given was noted.

34 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

35 COVID 19 RESPONSE PAYMENTS

The Committee received a report highlighting the impact the pandemic has had on the workforce and the level of personal commitment and dedication of officers during this time. It is also important that members are aware and comfortable with the level of remuneration required to offset the flexible balances of officers who have acquired excessive hours undertaking the work required by the service during the pandemic. An example is the ICT team had to quickly set up equipment for all staff to be able to work from home in March as the lockdown become an inevitability and then a reality.

All officers have been asked to take leave to reduce their balance where possible up until the end of September 2020. While most have had capacity to significantly reduce their balance, there are some officers who have not been able to due to pressures within their service areas.

It was reported to the committee that as the report had to be prepared a couple of weeks ago, a new report was run on the 30 September 2020 and it is clear most officers have been able to significantly reduce their hours in this time. As a result of this the overall balance paid will be less than the predicted figure in the report.

This is for balances which have been accrued and officers have agreed to have this time paid at the normal hourly rate due to the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic. Their normal hourly rate detailed in the report includes the recently approved pay increase which has been backdated to April 2020.

Members highlighted their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of officers during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

Members of the committee approved the principle of the payments made to staff to buy out excessive hours caused due to Covid response and recovery.

Members of the committee approved the principle that if excessive hours are required to deal with further issues related to the Covid pandemic, similar payments may be authorised subject to an update report to the next Employment Committee in February 2021.

36 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY

The Committee received a report following a request for voluntary redundancy which has arisen due to the ongoing informal consultation with the governance and PA teams. It has become apparent over the pandemic that the need for PA support as it was provided has significantly diminished. One of the key work streams provided by the PA team before the pandemic was the proactive management of the TMS system, this is now a self-serve system and all staff are fully trained to maintain their own TMS balances.

It was also confirmed that other administrative work completed by the PA team (such as freedom of information and subject access requests) have become more legislative and therefore require a suitably skilled officer to complete the work and coordinate the responses.

RESOLVED: Members of the committee approved the Voluntary Redundancy application on the schedule attached at APPENDIX A.

(The Meeting closed at 7.02 pm)

CHAIRMAN