

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

26 JUNE 2023

PRESENT

Councillor J. Bennett (in the Chair).

Councillors F. Hornby (Vice-Chair), D. Acton, S. G. Ennis, W. Jones, J. Leicester, and S. Zhi.

In attendance

Sara Saleh	Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources
Angela Beadsworth	Director of HR
Bev Norton	Head of HR Operations
Kate Sturman	Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence
Cal Aston	Resourcing Consultant
Daniel Knowles	Legal Assistant
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Babar and A.M. Whyte

1. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the Committee Membership for the 2023/24 Municipal year be noted.

2. COMMITTEE TOR 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the Committee Terms of Reference for the 2023/24 Municipal year be noted.

3. MINUTES

The Director of HR noted that the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources had been referred to as the Corporate Director of People.

RESOLVED: That, following the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held 20 February 2023 be agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

5. WORKFORCE UPDATE

The Director of Human Resources (HR) introduced the report and informed the Committee that the document was a work in progress and asked members to provide feedback on how they would like the document to be modified. Committee Members attention was then drawn to the data sets displayed within the report,

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which included the number of employees per grade. The Director of HR briefly discussed agency spend with a reminder that a more in-depth report would be considered later in the meeting.

The report detailed that the Council had been accredited as a real living wage employer. The Council had also become part of the Greater Manchester employment Charter which had been achieved by meeting standards relating to the 7 characteristics within the charter. It was hoped that the accreditation would be a good kite mark for the Council which would aid in recruitment. The Council had seen fluctuations in staff turnover during the last few years in response to covid and the great resignation. The Council's turnover figures had started to improve and it was hoped that being a real living wage employer and a part of the Manchester Employment Charter would see the trend continue.

The report contained rolling figures for the total amount of time lost to sickness over the last twelve months. The Council had seen a peak in time lost which had dropped down to 4.5%. The Director of HR informed the Committee of the support available to help staff members return to work as soon it was feasible for them to do so. The Director of HR provided a short overview on the Council's apprenticeship schemes and the use of the apprenticeship levy to upskill staff within the Council and reference the social work degree through apprenticeship that is being accessed by several staff members. The Committee were also asked to note the large amount of work that had been done within the health and safety space and the initiative being rolled out 'Your safety, Your wellbeing' to ensure that staff were supported to live a healthy and safe life.

The Committee were informed that a review of the Council's Hybrid working arrangements had taken place and that it was important to note that in working in this way, service delivery to residents and customers must remain a priority.

Following the introduction Councillor Hornby welcomed the new layout of the report and asked whether the next report could contain a breakdown of vacancies or where a service was under employed. The Director of HR responded to Councillor Hornby that her request would be taken away and the service would look at adding vacancy data from all directorates.

Councillor Ennis asked what progress Trafford Leisure was making towards being a real living wage employer. The Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources responded to Councillor Ennis that Trafford Leisure were on their real living wage journey with the aim of being a real living wage employer by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Ennis noted the excellent work done during the recent elections and celebrated the staff who had been involved in the election. Councillor Ennis then asked whether a survey had been done afterwards. The Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources responded that the Council did not do a survey, but they did receive feedback from the staff and she asked the Committee to note that the Council had a very strong core of staff who worked on Elections.

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Councillor Zhi asked whether there had been consistency in hybrid working across the Council and if there were agreed in office days. The Director of HR responded that the Council were conducting a review of the hybrid working scheme and would be able to report back to the Committee once the review had been completed. The Director of HR expressed that it's not possible to have a 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to hybrid working across the Council. We aim to empower service managers to work collaboratively with their teams on an approach that works for them and their customers.

Councillor Zhi then whether protected characteristics were recorded and the levels of pay by gender and people from ethnically diverse communities. The Director of HR responded that equality data is published and the Director of HR offered to share the link with the Committee along with the minutes and some of the information would be included within the next update.

Councillor Leicester asked whether the varying requirements of different services meant there was inequality in working flexibility between staff groups. The Director of HR responded that as a large organisation we will have different working practices dependent on service needs and that overall, there is a level of consistency albeit some staff work in a more agile way accruing flex, while other work more prescribed working patterns and accrue time off in lieu of any time worked over and above.

Councillor Leicester asked whether other flexibilities could be offered to those in the more rigidly structured positions such as having more carers leave to help them look after dependents at home. The Director of HR assured the Committee that we do have a great pay, reward and benefit package and that in overall terms is comparable and applies across all sectors of the workforce.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Update be noted.
- 2) That the next update in December include a breakdown of vacancies.
- 3) That the link to staff data be shared with the Committee.
- 4) That the next update include data around staff from ethnically diverse communities.

6. AGENCY SPEND 2023/24 Q4

The Resourcing Consultant provided an overview of the report and informed the Committee that the Council had seen a reduction in agency spend from the previous quarter, but it was of the same level as the same quarter in the previous year. The Committee were assured that all spend had been met within existing budgets.

The majority of spend within Children's services was for level 3 social workers to pick up complex cases. Those social workers were hired through Reed who were contracted with the Council, although there were other suppliers available if Reed were unable to provide the required staff. There were 77 active assignments within

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Childrens with the majority of positions being to meet gaps within the service due to maternity leave and long-term sickness.

The Resourcing Consultant informed the Committee that she was working closely with the strategic lead within Children's services and they were making good progress towards meeting the recruitment needs of the service. Work was ongoing to agree a Greater Manchester pledge, which would help to stabilise the costs of agency staff by setting a price between Councils rather than competing with each other. The Resourcing Consultant also informed the Committee of the Social worker paths available to Council staff through apprenticeships.

Agency spend within the Adults Directorate was all being met through Reed with largest amount of spend being on interim qualified social workers, although this had reduced from the last quarter. The Adults Directorate were also taking a "grow our own" staffing approach to Adult Social Care with training and qualifications available to staff. The Resourcing Consultant added that market supplements were in place for both adults and children's social workers to make Trafford's employment offer more competitive. The Council also had a programme of support in place for newly appointed social workers to help them settle into the role.

The overall spend within the Legal and Governance Directorate had reduced with most of the positions being for qualified solicitors to meet statutory duties. The Resourcing Consultant informed the Committee that the Council was having to compete with the private sector and so they were looking to advertise the additional benefits of working for the Council.

The Committee were informed that Trafford Council had the 5th highest level of agency spend out of the 11 Councils within GM. The Resourcing Consultant concluded the overview of the report by asking the Committee to note that the overall spend on consultants had reduced, but there were still four consultants in place within Children's Services.

Following the overview of the report Councillor Ennis asked how confident officers were that the GM Pledge to be in place by September. The Resourcing Consultant responded that she was pretty confident that an agreement would be reached as GM authorities had an inflated price and were paying more than some areas of London, which needed to be addressed. Trafford Council was paying an average £30 per hour for adult social worker and £35 for Children's social workers. The Director of HR added that the launch of the pledge had been moved back to October.

Councillor Leicester asked whether workers from Ukraine were able to work within the UK. The Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources responded that some funding remained which the Council could use to help support people from the Ukraine into employment.

Councillor Jones asked whether additional background information could be provided around agency spend. In response the Director of HR offered to meet with Councillor Jones to provide any additional information that was wanted.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Director of HR arrange a meeting with Councillor Jones to provide additional information relating to agency spend.

7. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY

The Head of HR Operations gave the Committee an overview of the Council's sick pay scheme, which gave staff members 3 months full pay and 3 months half pay and they could apply to extend pay beyond those limits.

The Head of HR Operations then updated the Committee on the current position regarding sickness exemptions. During Q3 there had been 8 exception requests from 4 of the Council's 6 directorates. Of those 8 requests 7 had been approved and one had been withdrawn. Of the 7 that were approved 6 had since been resolved either by returning to work or by accessing retirement and the other 1 was still ongoing. Within Q4 there had been a total of 11 requests made with all of them being approved. The majority of the requests were related to cancer and neurological conditions and all 11 had been resolved. The Head of HR Operations concluded the overview by informing the Committee that the Council had seen an increase in the complexity of the conditions staff were suffering from.

Following the overview Committee Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions but none were raised.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.10 p.m. and finished at 5.59 p.m.