

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

27 JUNE 2022

PRESENT

Councillor J. Bennett (in the Chair).

Councillors D. Acton, R. Duncan, S. G. Ennis, M. Freeman and F. Hornby.

In attendance

Sara Saleh	Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy
Diane Eaton	Corporate Director of Adult Services
Ann-Marie Mohieddin	Interim Strategic Lead Adult Social Care
Bev Norton	Head of HR Operations
Kate Sturman	Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence
Emma Sharples	Solicitor (Corporate & Commercial)
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.M. Whyte and D.C. O'Sullivan.

1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED: That the Membership of the Committee be noted.

2. EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE 2022/23

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference be noted.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

4. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. ADULT SOCIAL CARE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care introduced the Presentation to the Committee. The Committee were informed of the work that was being done to improve the level of recruitment within Trafford with the Directorate taking a holistic approach to recruiting social workers. The approach involved looking at increasing pay as well as development opportunities and manageable caseloads to ensure that Trafford had a competitive offer.

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Councillor Chalkin asked how Trafford had got into this position where they were not paying as much as other authorities. The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care explained that an agreement had been in place across Greater Manchester to all pay the same amount across the conurbation. However, due to staff shortages authorities had started to increase their pay offers to attract social workers so Trafford was having to do the same.

Councillor Ennis asked a series of questions about the pay increase and the impact that inflation may have upon this approach. The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care responded that it was hoped that the increase would have the desired effect. The Committee were assured that recruitment would be closely monitored and a further report would be brought to inform them of the impact of the pay increase.

Council Hornby noted that the referral scheme had been very successful in recruiting people and asked whether this had been rolled out in other areas. The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care responded that it had been rolled out in Children's Services but was not sure whether it had been done elsewhere in the Council.

Councillor Ennis asked whether the Council offered any bursary support for trainee social workers. The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care responded that the service offered social care qualifications to social care assessors. The Council had been working with local colleges, which had started to offer a health and social care qualification, and further work was ongoing to encourage young people to get into the social care profession.

Councillor Hornby asked when the benchmarking had been completed and whether it was likely other authorities had done the same and so Trafford would start to slip down the rankings across GM once again. The Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy responded that the Council would continue to perform benchmarking exercises on a regular basis to ensure that Trafford maintained the more elevated position among GM authorities.

Councillor Duncan spoke about the need to have hands on experience to gain a social work degree and asked what the Council had in place to aid people to gain that experience. The Corporate Director of Adult Social Care stated that the Council had many opportunities available for people to gain experience within Trafford both with providers and within the Council's services. The Committee were asked to pass on any details of people looking for experience onto the service.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a further report come to the Committee detailing the impact of the wage increase.

6. PEOPLE UPDATE

The Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources introduced the update and gave an overview of the activities of HR since the last meeting. The Committee's attention was drawn in particular to the work of the Health and Safety team. The Team had been working on designing self-assessments for staff to use to monitor their workspace. The Team had also been working hard to ensure that the Council had an adequate number of first aiders in place within Council offices.

The Committee were informed that the Council's EPIC Manager Training programme was on its 20th cohort and feedback on the quality of the training remained strong. The Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources concluded the overview by informing the Committee that pay negotiations were expected to be protracted for the year's pay award and the panel would be updated over the course of the year.

Following the overview Panel Members were given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments but none were raised.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

7. AGENCY SPEND

The Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy informed the Committee agency Spend had increased in the previous year to over £6M. This was a significant increase of more than 40% during the previous 12-month period. The Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy went over the spend and showed the Committee how there had been a clear increase year on year since 2018/19. The main areas of spend were the Adults and Children's Directorates. There had been a decrease in consultancy spend. The Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy concluded by stating that 2020/21 had been another difficult year for social care recruitment and assured the Committee that the Council were focused on how to address this.

Councillor Acton noted it was very difficult to deal with address recruitment issues when the wages and responsibility for agency workers were much better than an authority was able to offer. Councillor Acton recognised that the Council were looking to do as much as they could, but the picture did not look good. The Chair Agreed that the outlook did not look good for all the reasons highlighted by Councillor Acton.

Councillor Chalkin asked how much of the agency spend was covering vacancies and how much was due to additional capacity required by the pandemic. The Corporate Director of Resource and Strategy responded that she was not sure of the full break down, but the majority costs had been for covering vacancies.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. EQUALITIES UPDATE

The Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence gave a brief overview of the report that had been circulated. The Committee were informed of the objectives of the strategy and that around 30% of staff had chosen not to share restricted characteristic information with the Council. The questions asked of staff to gather information had been recently reviewed to make sure they were up to date with the way people represented themselves.

The Committee were informed that the level of staff who considered themselves as disabled was below the level you would expect from the population. However, it was difficult to discern whether this was due to under representation within the workforce, the phrasing of the questions, or the large proportion of staff who chose not to share their information.

The Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence concluded the overview by informing the Committee of the introduction of a Staff passport. The passport was to be filled in with any adjustments made for staff to enable them to perform their role. The passport would then move with the staff member if they switched role or team and avoid them needing to reapply for support.

Following the Overview Committee Members were given an opportunity to ask questions, but none were raised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

The Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence informed the Committee of the national picture which had led to the passing of the domestic abuse act. Trafford had pledged to work against domestic abuse and that whilst we have had a domestic abuse policy for many years, it was felt it was time to update the policy. The Policy included up to five days special leave for those suffering from domestic abuse. The policy included the Rs which were a standard approach within domestic abuse documentation. The Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence explained the different forms of support available within the Council including the upskilling of the Mental Health First Aiders.

Councillor Acton welcomed the report and especially the training available to help people identify the signs. Councillor Acton asked whether the Council would signpost people to safe havens or providers. In response the Strategic HR Lead Policy for Reward and Intelligence informed the Panel of the support services available for staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY

The Head of HR Operations informed the Committee that 8 requests had been received in the last quarter. Of those 8 requests 7 were approved and 1 was declined. Of the requests 3 came from the Place Directorate with 2 being approved; 3 came from Children's Services and were approved; 1 came from Adult Services and was approved; and 1 was received from Finance and Systems and had been approved.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

11. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

Councillor Freeman spoke about the responsibility of Councillors to the workforce and asked whether it was possible to have a workbook made for Councillors to inform them of those responsibilities. Councillor Freeman informed the Committee of the need for all Councillors who were able to volunteer to be part of disciplinary appeals. The Head of HR Operations responded that work was ongoing with staff in the training team to develop some online resources along with some face-to-face sessions to address this and asked Members to encourage as many Councillors as possible to come forward.

The meeting commenced at 5:05 p.m. and finished at 6.28 p.m.