

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

20 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT

Councillor J. Bennett (in the Chair).

Councillors A.M. Whyte (Vice-Chair), D. Acton, S. G. Ennis and F. Hornby

In attendance

Angela Beadsworth	Director of Human Resources
Kate Sturman	Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence
Nina Kijowski	Interim Head of Resourcing and Development
Carolyn Aston	Resourcing Consultant
Pelumi Coker	Legal Assistant

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Duncan, M. Freeman and D.C. O'Sullivan

1. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

3. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Director of Human Resources (HR) introduced the report to the Committee and explained the rationale of the report being brought to the Committee. Members were asked to note the new measures around special severance payments within the report. The measures outlined that payments of less than £100,000 were applied by the Chief Executive and anything above that amount was to be submitted to the Committee and full Council for approval. The Committee were informed that the measures were similar to the Council's existing approach, which was laid out within the constitution. The report detailed that the pay ratio of the Chief Executive to the median paid worker was 6.85:1 and 9.08:1 with the lowest paid member of staff. Members were asked to note that the ratios fell well within the boundaries set out in the Hutton review on fair pay.

The report contained figures on the gender pay gap within the Council's workforce, which had to be published on an annual basis. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward and Intelligence provided details of different comparisons and breakdowns contained within the report and informed the Committee that it was based upon data as of March 2022. The mean and median overall pay gap was 9.68% and 12.93% respectively and both were in favour of men.

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Following the overview Councillor Acton asked whether the Council was falling foul of the legislation due to the level of the gender pay gap. The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that the Council was not in breach of any legislation.

Councillor Chalkin asked whether this information could be included within workforce updates and include how the gap impacted the service and staff. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward and Intelligence stated that the gender pay gap work was based on data from 2021/22, which meant it did not reflect the current circumstances including the living wage work which had been done over the course of the year, which would be captured in the following years report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the pay policy statement be approved for submission to Council.

4. Q3 AGENCY SPEND REPORT

The Resourcing Consultant presented the report to the Committee and informed members that the level of spend was close to that of the same period in the previous year. The Committee were notified of the work that was ongoing across the Council around recruitment, retention, and development within the workforce to ensure that staff stayed and grew with the organisation. Work was also ongoing to develop a northwest pledge to agree a set price for agency workers across the region.

The level of agency spend in Quarter 3 had increased since quarter 2, which was in large part due to funding for an adult social care contract which enabled residents to be discharged from hospital. Member's attention was drawn to the Legal and Democratic department where a large amount had been spent locums to ensure the Council could meet its statutory duties. The total spend for the quarter was just over a £1M and the Committee were assured that the Council continued to use a robust vacancy management programme. When Trafford's agency spend was compared to the other GM authorities, they were the 7th Highest out of 10.

Following the introduction councillor Hornby asked whether there was anything that could be done to offer staff more flexible contracts, as she had only heard about people being allowed to work full or half time contracts. Interim Head of Resourcing and Development responded that the Council offered a whole range of flexible working options for staff and noted that it had been some time since this was communicated across the Council and they would look at re-communicating the options.

Councillor O'Sullivan asked whether people who came from Ukraine would be able to work as social workers in the UK. The Chair answered that it was a statutory position and staff needed to have a degree to be able to do the job,

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which had led to issues in the available workforce with Council's having to compete with agencies for the limited number of qualified professionals.

Councillor O'Sullivan knew of one resident was qualified to teach English in Ukraine. The Director of Human resources responded that it depended on whether qualifications were transferable between the countries and assured Councillor O'Sullivan that she would investigate whether that was the case for people from Ukraine.

Councillor Acton asked about the work of the agency staff focus groups and the make-up of those groups. The Resourcing Consultant responded that any agency staff employed for over 13 weeks could come across to work for the Council without penalty. The groups were made up of agency staff who had worked with the Council for a prolonged period but had not decided to switch to work for the Council. The work of those groups was to identify what the barriers preventing them from becoming Council staff. Councillor Acton asked that the information from those groups on why they did not want to switch to work for the Council be shared with the Committee.

Councillor Ennis asked if there were any timescales for the completion of the GM work. In response the Director of HR informed Members that the work was being driven by the combined authority and that the Committee would receive a detailed update once a timeline was available.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5. REAL LIVING WAGE

The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence introduced the report. The Committee were informed that so far 4 GM authorities had real living wage accreditation. The current real living wage was £10.90 and the Council had two bands paid below that level. A supplement had been paid to those staff to bring them up to the real living wage. Going forward the Council would agree a supplement for any staff who fell under the real living wage after the pay awards and real living wage calculations were set each year. The Council were also working with external staffing providers to ensure those staff were also paid the required rate.

Councillor Chalkin asked whether the money for school staff came from the school or the Council and whether school staff were all paid the real living wage. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence responded that school staff were paid through each school's budget, but she was not certain of the figures and would check.

Councillor Ennis asked whether the situation with Trafford Leisure and whether it worked against Trafford for gaining accreditation. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence responded that it did not work against Trafford in achieving the accreditation.

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RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the necessary work as detailed in the report undertaken to prepare Trafford Council to make a Real Living Wage (RLW) Accreditation application be noted.
- 3) That the associated expenditure of circa £25,000 in 2022/2023 which will be split 50/50 between the Council and schools be noted.
- 4) That the proposal to submit a RLW Accreditation application in February 2023 as detailed in the report be approved.
- 5) That the uplift to pay via a Real Living Wage supplement and pay for agency workers to the RLW rate of £10.90 per hour be supported by the Committee.

6. CYCLE MILEAGE RATE

The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence introduced the report and informed the Committee that this policy aligned with the Council's priority around reducing carbon. The report detailed the aims of the policy to encourage people to choose using a bike instead of a car or public transport.

Following the introduction Councillor Hornby noted the small amounts of money and asked whether it was easy for staff to claim. The Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence answered that it was easy for staff to claim as it was done in the same way as all other claims through the MiTrent System.

Councillor O'Sullivan asked about coverage for staff cycling to work. In the same way as all other claims informed the Committee that this had been discussed with Health and Safety colleagues and the risk was minimal to the Council.

The Chair welcomed the report and the policy.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee agreed to support the policy.

7. PEOPLE STRATEGY REFRESH - UPDATE

The Interim Head of Resourcing and Development introduced the report. The Committee were informed that the Strategy was launched in 2020 and had been shaped by discover sessions held in 2018 and 2019, which had helped to co-produce the epic values. The updated strategy was around four pillars of Attract and recruit, engage and retain, Grow and Develop, and Sustain which mirrored the journey of Council staff. There was a need to review the strategy to ensure it remained fit for purpose and that it was able to engage and develop staff to enable them to flourish.

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The review of the strategy was being conducted utilising data from the Be Heard survey, sickness data, and by engaging with staff groups and forums, trade unions, and through listening exercises. Those groups were asked to identify what was working well under each pillar and what could be improved. There was one final session to be held with CLT before the data gathering was concluded then the data would be collated and the review would move to the next stage.

Councillor Acton asked whether Members would be engaged with. The Director of Human Resources responded that she had planned to ask the Committee for their views on whether Councillors would like to be involved in the process and how they would like to be involved. Councillor Chalkin agreed that all Members should be involved and that the engagement with them should be done in several different ways to ensure they all had opportunity to be involved.

The Chair asked about the timeline for the completion of this work. The Interim Head of Resourcing and Development responded that a timeline would be drawn up once all the data from the engagement sessions had been collated and reviewed.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

8. WORKFORCE UPDATE

The Director of Human Resources went through the update and how it covered the work done by each team within HR. The Committee were asked to provide feedback regarding the update on whether Members would like to receive additional information. The work of the Health and Safety team was highlighted as they had recently launched the initiative “your safety your wellbeing”. The initiative was focused upon the needs of staff to look after themselves to protect their Health and Wellbeing. The Health and Safety Lead had met with senior managers to discuss the support they required from the Health and Safety team to support the initiative.

Councillor Acton asked about the improved visitor arrangements at Council buildings and whether those arrangements could be shared. The Director of HR responded that the Health and Safety Lead would provide the information in the next Health and Safety report. The Committee were informed that the review of the safety arrangements had identified the need for investment to deliver some enhancements within the Council buildings.

Councillor Chalkin noted the Health and Safety initiative and asked how the service ensured it was not just a tick box exercise. The Director of HR responded that initiative was about developing a culture across the Council of understanding that everybody is responsible and ensuring Health and Safety was built into the fabric of the way that the organisation conducted its work.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted

9. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY

The director of HR informed the Committee 5 requests for exemptions had been received and all five were approved. Of those five, one colleague was due to return to work soon, two had already returned to work, and two had on going conditions.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 p.m. and finished at 6.05 p.m.