

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 FEBRUARY 2018

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman) and Councillors Barned, Mrs Blackmore, D Burton, M Burton, Cox, English, Harper, Mrs Joy, Perry and Mrs Wilson

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer and Mrs Ring.

21. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor M Burton for Councillor Mrs Ring
Councillor English for Councillor Mrs Grigg

22. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

23. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

24. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

25. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the correction of the following typographical error on page 3:

Apprenticeships – The drop off was due to the apprenticeship scheme being very competitive and the Council did not fair fare well as it did not pay very well.

27. PAY POLICY STATEMENT MARCH 2018

Mrs Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services, introduced her report setting out the Pay Policy Statement 2018. It was noted that:

- The Pay Policy Statement had been produced in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency 2014.
- There was a requirement to update the Pay Policy Statement on an annual basis and the Statement had to be agreed by full Council and published on the Council's website by 31 March 2018.

Mrs Sandher highlighted the main changes that had been made to the document approved by the Council last year as follows:

- Section 3.4 – Pay Protection and Redundancy Payments

Inclusion of reference to the Government's proposal to introduce legislation that would cap exit payments at £95k on the total value of the payment for public sector workers and introduce a statutory requirement to recover exit payments made to workers whose minimum salary was £80k at the point of leaving employment and returning to work with another public sector employer within a 12 month period. Council policies would be amended to incorporate these requirements once they had been finalised by Government.

- Sections 3.5 (Other Payments), 3.6 (Special Fees and Arrangements) and 3.7 (Other Employee Benefits) had all been updated to reflect the current situation.
- Section 4 (Monitoring)

An explanation was provided for the main difference in the Chief Executive's taxable pay during 2017/18; this being the payment of £13,536 for her role as Returning Officer at the General and Local elections and the progression of one incremental point on the salary scales.

- Section 5 - Trade Union Facility Time

Reference was made to the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 which required public sector employers to publish specified information relating to facility time provided by trade union officials.

Mrs Sandher also confirmed that before the Pay Policy Statement was published on the Council's website, the information would be updated to include the actual pay figures for the year ending 31 March 2018.

In response to questions, the Officers confirmed that:

- Gender pay reporting legislation required the Council to publish gender pay gap data annually. The information had to be published on the Council's website and a Government website.
- Career grades offered the opportunity of a path of progression which could involve seeking a professional qualification. Progression through the grade was assessed annually against agreed competencies and performance standards for the position. Objectives were set to stretch and develop employees to maximise their potential.

During the discussion reference was made to the need to correct a typographical error in the third paragraph of Section 3.4 of the Pay Policy Statement and it was suggested and agreed that the first sentence of Section 3 of Appendix 1(B) – High Performance Increments (HPI) – Grades 13-16 be amended as follows:

In addition to the standard incremental progression which is linked to fully meeting performance objectives, there are an additional three incremental points in grades 13 to 16.

Reference was also made to the requirement to publish details of senior salaries in excess of £50k within a £5k range. It was suggested that the way in which this type of information was presented in budget reports should be consistent with the Pay Policy Statement.

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to the correction of the typographical error and the amendment set out above, the Council be recommended to agree the proposed Pay Policy Statement 2018, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Head of HR Shared Services, prior to publication on the Council's website by 31 March 2018.
2. That the Officers be requested to seek to ensure consistency in the way in which information is presented in budget reports and the Pay Policy Statement.

Voting: Unanimous

Note: During the discussion, Mrs Alison Broom, Chief Executive, disclosed an interest on behalf of herself and the other members of staff present in the Pay Policy Statement 2018.

28. WORKFORCE STRATEGY UPDATE

Mrs Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services, introduced her report setting out progress against specific action areas that formed the Workforce Strategy 2016-2020. It was noted that:

- The Council had met the new legislative requirement to produce its Gender Pay Gap information well within the Government's deadline.

- In 2016 the appraisal template for all staff was changed and the “Developing Everyone” framework was introduced. This new approach reinforced the need for career and succession planning at all levels and helped to identify “rising stars” in the organisation to encourage a more structured approach to supporting their development for the future.
- The One Council summer session had been held for the first time at Mote Park. One of the sessions was a first taste of a development programme designed to encourage a growth mind-set. The programme was being piloted at the Depot and in the Revenues and Benefits Section.
- The annual staff awards and One Council update which would be held at Lockmeadow on 21 February 2018 provided an opportunity to recognise the contribution team members had made to achieving the Council’s objectives and delivering great services to the public.
- The Council had developed and rolled out Resilience Training for staff and managers as a direct response to the fact that stress and anxiety had been the highest causes of sickness absence for several years. The Council had also signed the “Time to Change” pledge which was a national initiative designed to change attitudes to mental health issues. The Learning and Development Officer was now an accredited Train the Trainer for Mental Health First Aiders.
- The annual Wellbeing Week had been arranged to take place from 19-23 February 2018.
- In October 2017, employees were asked to complete the Health and Safety Executive Stress at Work survey which was last run in 2011 and 2012. The results showed a fairly consistent picture across the three years. Two focus groups were being set up, one for managers and one for staff, to consider the results further and start to think about actions that could be taken to address any concerns raised.

During the ensuing discussion, the Officers undertook to:

- Circulate details of activities taking place during Wellbeing Week to Members.
- Circulate details of the One Council meeting and STRIVE awards ceremony on 21 February 2018 to Members to encourage them to attend.
- Include dementia awareness in mental health awareness initiatives and training.
- Make reference to the positive equalities impacts associated with the Workforce Strategy when completing the cross-cutting issues and implications section of future reports.

- Provide an explanation in future reports of the difference between the gender pay gap and equal pay, including analytical detail.

It was pointed out that at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee the previous evening, the Employment Committee had been asked to consider the support provided by the Council for staff with mental health issues and consider the causes of mental health issues in the workplace. This could feed into the Workforce Strategy Action Plan.

In response to a question by a Member, Mrs Sandher confirmed that reference was made in the Workforce Strategy to the IiP accreditation. This report was intended to provide an update on the current progress against identified actions. The update on IiP had been provided in the previous report to the Committee in relation to progress against actions at that time.

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to the actions identified during the discussion and set out above, the progress made against the specific actions set out in the Workforce Strategy be noted and the ongoing work be supported.
2. That arrangements be made for the Employment Committee to meet in January and July each year to receive updates on progress against the specific action areas that form the Workforce Strategy.

Voting: Unanimous

29. DURATION OF MEETING

11.06 a.m. to 12.03 p.m.