

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 28th January, 2010.

Present:- Councillors Bains (Chair), Grewal, O'Connor and Zarait (Vice-Chair)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor S K Dhaliwal

PART I

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September, 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September, 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

With reference to Minute 13, a Member queried whether the information requested by the Committee (a breakdown of employees' positions within the Council by gender) had been included in the current report. The Committee was advised that a breakdown of salary by gender had been provided in the report for agenda item 4, HR statistic review. Further information regarding the types of roles within the different salary bands could be provided during discussion on the item.

17. Job Evaluation, Pay Review and Harmonisation

The Assistant Director, Human Resources, presented a report to the Committee detailing the Council's final position in relation to the job evaluation, pay and harmonisation project. This project formed the Council's response to the Single Status Agreement which aimed to bring equality in terms and conditions to all workers across local government. An extensive staff consultation had been held during October, 2009, supported by staff briefings and HR surgeries to enable individuals to ask specific questions about how the harmonisation proposals would impact them personally. The number of staff suffering pay detriment as a result of this project had been minimised to c 14% of the workforce and the emphasis in finalising implementation had been in protecting those adversely affected.

Despite lengthy and detailed negotiations, a collective agreement regarding the project could not be reached with the Trade Unions and consequently, staff would be dismissed and re-engaged on new contracts based on new terms and conditions. This would be implemented on 1 April, 2010. Staff would be given the opportunity to sign a compromise agreement and receive a payment for accepting the changes to terms and conditions.

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As a result this action, the Council could receive a significant number of employment appeals and be required to process these within a limited period. To ensure that the necessary deadlines could be met it was proposed that the appeals resulting from this process be dealt with by Directors, supported by Human Resources and Legal and that these appeals be conducted in the same manner as those undertaken by the Employment Appeals Sub Committee.

The report had been circulated for consultation with trade unions, Corporate Management Team, the Disability Forum and the BAME Workers Group. Members were advised that comments had been received from the Disability Forum requesting that the current arrangements for appeals remain unchanged.

Members asked a number of detailed questions about the process that had been undertaken and the effect on staff. The Committee noted that the outcome of the scheme had been broadly in line with outcomes that had been achieved nationally. Committee Members were advised that general briefings and briefings for specific groups of staff were being organised and the Council would continue to offer advice and reassurance to all staff.

The Committee discussed the proposal that any appeals against dismissal arising out of this process be heard by Directors. Members noted that appeals against dismissal would normally be heard by the Employment Appeals Sub-Committee which consisted of three Members (from a pool of nine). Members acknowledged that if a significant number of appeals were lodged and they needed to be heard in a short space of time that this could cause difficulties and were anxious that no undue delay was built into the process. However Members were concerned that agreeing to the proposals would result in these appeals being treated differently to other appeals against dismissal. The Committee favoured retaining a consistent approach with member involvement. It was proposed and agreed that a decision on how any appeals against dismissal arising from this process would be deferred until such time as the number of appeals received was known and that a special meeting of the Committee be convened to consider this if necessary.

Resolved –

- (a) That the new standard terms and conditions detailed in the revised contractual terms attached at Appendix 1 to the report and summarised in paragraph 5.6 of the report be noted.
- (b) That a special meeting be held, if necessary, to review the process for employment appeals resulting from the Job Evaluation and Harmonisation process.

18. Human Resources Statistics Review

The Assistant Director Human Resources presented a report updating the Committee on the HR Statistical reporting for quarter 2 (1st July to 30th

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September 2009) and quarter 3 (1st October – 31st December, 2009). The key trends detailed in the report were highlighted for turnover, sickness absence and the workforce profile. The projected final turnover figure of 6.8% for the 2009/2010 financial year continued to demonstrate an expected downward trend in light of the current economic situation. Sickness levels per FTE had been slightly higher than quarter 1 and this had resulted in a projected end of year figure of 10.5 days per FTE. This was 0.5 days higher than the annual target. The most common reason for sickness absence for quarter 3 was infection, with an associated cost of £68,990. Costs for sickness due to stress continued to be high at a cost of £41,514 for quarter 3. Absence recorded as Swine Flu had drastically reduced in quarter 3, in line with the national trend of decreasing flu activity.

With regard to the work force profile, the number of staff from BAME backgrounds continued to show an upward trend and staff declaring a disability had risen slightly over the last two quarters. The gender breakdown of the staff remained stable at 29% males compared to 71% females and this was reflected in the breakdown of salary by gender provided in figure 1. The division between male and female staff evened out within the higher salary bands, which included positions such as heads of service and educational psychologists . The chart represented the actual earnings of staff and not the full-time equivalent and therefore, reflected the higher number of female staff working part-time.

In response to a query, members were advised that the HR statistical analysis did not include school staff as the Council did not hold the detailed information.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

19. Date of Next Meeting - 12 April, 2010

The date of the next meeting was noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.25 pm)