

## **JOINT STAFFING COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting - 26 March 2018**

Present:

R Bagge, I Darby, C M Jones, P Jones, N Naylor, D Phillips, M Smith and  
L Sullivan

Apologies for absence: T Egleton, B Harding and M Stannard

#### **36. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Joint Staffing Committee meeting on 18 January 2018 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **38. PAY AWARD UPDATE FOR STAFF ON HARMONISED CONTRACTS AND PAY AWARD OFFER FOR HEADS OF SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report to approve the final pay award for staff on harmonised contracts and also to agree the pay award offer to be made to Heads of Service whose pay is determined locally to be effective from 1 April 2018 and 1 April 2019.

##### Staff on the Harmonised Contract

At the last meeting the Committee agreed to make an offer of an increase of 2% in pay in April 2018 and 2% in April 2019. Members also agreed some proposed changes to the pay spine to ensure staff at the lower ends were paid in accordance with the national living wage.

Officers took that offer to UNISON and have since undergone a series of negotiations with them. UNISON initially put in a counter offer for 3% pay award in 2018 and 3% in 2019. They also wanted some guarantees that this Council would at least track the national agreement and strongly disagreed with the Council's position that had previously been agreed to move to local pay arrangements.

As a result of a series of discussions a position of common ground has been found which has been put in recommendation 1 of the report.

### Heads of Services

Members were asked to make a pay award offer to the Heads of Services which equates to that made to staff. Heads of Services are on locally agreed pay but the Council needs to be mindful of what is happening nationally. Nationally the Joint Negotiating Committee agreement is still subject to negotiation but it is likely it will match this proposal. The GMB Pay Claim asks for parity across all local government bargaining groups.

A Member asked why pre-determined conditions should be accepted with a local pay mechanism. The HR Manager reported that as good practice the Council would always track the national pay award and seek to match it if they were able to afford it and if not they would have to go back to the negotiating table.

Members agreed that it was helpful to link local pay with the national situation as far as possible and that this would help attract good staff to the Council and help retention but re-iterated the position that local pay was now in place.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the final pay award for staff be approved on harmonised contracts for 2018/19 and 2019/20 with the following terms:-**
  - 1. A 2 year pay award of 2% with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 2% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019;**
  - 2. Removal of 1A and 1B from the Harmonised Pay Spine (staff paid below that to move to 1C);**
  - 3. A commitment to go back to the negotiating table, within 3 months, if the NJC Agreement is higher in 2018 and/or 2019;**
  - 4. The Councils reserve the right to determine pay locally. The local pay mechanism is to come in to effect immediately;**
  - 5. The Councils' make the commitment to seek to pay the minimum of the NJC offer when determining future pay awards and would expect to at least match the NJC award in all likely and foreseeable circumstances. If there were exceptional circumstances at play and the pay award offer could not match the NJC award the Councils would commit to resolve this in discussion and negotiation with UNISON locally. If this could not be resolved locally a resolution would be sought through arbitration.**
  - 6. Future pay rises will be determined taking in to account inflation, local market conditions and the prevailing financial context.**
- 2 That a pay award offer be made to Heads of Services of a 2% pay uplift with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and a 2% pay uplift with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.**

- 3 That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the two Chairmen of the Committee, to agree the final terms of the pay award for staff on harmonised contracts and the final terms of the agreement for Heads of Services.**
- 4 That it be noted that the draft Council budgets for 2018/19 have been amended to reflect the 2% pay uplift for staff on harmonised contracts and Heads of Services.**

**39. 2017 STAFF SURVEY REPORT**

The Committee received a report on the results of the staff survey for 2017 conducted in December and January this year and the following points were noted:-

- 65% response rate.
- 6 themes, leadership, change, engagement, empowerment, management and work.
- overall the results were very positive
- There was a slight decline in the number of positive responses, compared to last year, in each category. The biggest decline in positive responses was in the Leadership category where 76% of respondents responded positively to the 7 questions compared to 83% in the previous year.
- However, when looking at the chart on page 19 of the agenda however which compare's results since the Council has undertaken the survey in 2014, overall there are very positive trends.
- Questions which sought to measure the Councils against stress standards indicate that despite the uncertainty with Unitary status etc. the stress results remain very positive.

The Council is responding to the survey as follows:-

- A staff survey working group has been set up to look at the results;
- Heads of Services were developing actions plans.
- In order to help staff manage stress, the Council would be running a series of workshops for managers run by Mind help raise awareness about stress and how to manage staff effectively.

Whilst Members found the results very encouraging, despite the uncertainty around the unitary decision (which had been picked up in the recent Peer review) they highlighted the following issues:-

- Reference was made to the three questions where the overall rate of agreement fell below 70%. One of these related to the senior management team communicating a clear and consistent plan for the future which fell by 18% from 2016. Members asked that this issue be addressed within the action plan. The Chief Executive reported that this had been an issue in the past and as a result they had set up regular staff briefings with the Senior Management Team and the Leaders of both Councils. The Chief Executive said that they would need to discuss this further with the Staff Survey Working Group, particularly in light of the briefings that were already taking place. There was a lot of uncertainty amongst staff because of the unitary decision and this response may be because all staff were unclear what the future would look like. A Member suggested that the Senior Management Team should try and 'walk the job' to provide further interaction with staff.
- In terms of the question 'I feel I am treated fairly and with respect by elected Members' this had fallen by 1% and Members hoped that this did not indicate a downward trend.
- Members recognised that whilst there were high level summaries there was also further data analysis at service level. If the feedback was not in line with the trend this would be brought to Heads of Service attention.
- Members expressed surprise at some of the feedback with all the work being carried out on developing positive unwritten ground rules. The HR Manager reported that she was surprised considering there were regular meetings with the UGR champions and lots of team building work being carried out within both Councils. This would be discussed further with the Staff Survey Working Group. It could be that this related to the higher response rate which was bringing in a wider viewpoint from staff.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the results of the 2017 Staff Survey and the actions being taken in response to the feedback given be noted.**

### **40. HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE REPORT**

The HR Manager provided an update on the following key points:-

The leavers, sickness and recruitment figures show nothing different from that reported at the last Committee meeting in January. In terms of sickness absence the Council is still experiencing higher than wanted absence levels and have put a number of initiatives in place to tackle this.

Project work

- All on-going projects have been reported on previously.
- The main update which will be of particular interest is the work the Council is doing around recruitment and retention in Planning and Economic Development. The Council is currently consulting with the staff in this area to get their feedback on these ideas and initiatives and it is something that will be a particular focus for officers over the next couple of years not just in planning but across all services.
- The HR Manager was keen on the Recruitment Introduction Fee for existing staff when they introduce employees to roles.
- It was important to keep staff motivated over the next two years with the uncertainty around the unitary decision.
- The second cohort of the Middle Managers course had recently started. The first cohort were completing their learning logs and should be able to apply for their ILM certificate.
- A trailblazer degree level apprenticeship in Town Planning is currently being developed and alongside this the Council is considering using apprenticeships to offer development opportunities to existing staff.

The Committee welcomed the initiatives being undertaken, particularly the work on apprenticeships and the Middle Managers Course. They also welcomed the collaborative working with Wycombe District Council on coaching and mentoring in order to make savings through economies of scale. Concern was raised about the sickness levels still being too high. The HR Manager reported that these figures could be skewed as a phased return to work was still recorded as time off sick and the sickness policy should be amended to provide a clearer picture.

A Member asked whether the Council had a formal succession policy. The HR Manager reported that they did not although they expected to see this addressed in personal development plans. There was also a Workforce Planning Framework which included information on competencies and skills and the Service Planning process.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

The meeting terminated at 6.35 pm