

Item 3

At a Meeting of the **HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2022** at **10.00am** in the Mayor's Parlour, City Hall

Present: -

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Chequer, Farthing, Hartnack, Haswell, K Johnston, McKeith, Stewart, Williams and P Wood.

Also present: -

Patrick Melia	-	Chief Executive
Jon Ritchie	-	Executive Director of Corporate Services
Tracy Palmer	-	Acting Assistant Director of People Management
Julienne Collinson	-	Senior Manager, Law and Governance
Kate Kirton	-	Principal Governance Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Potts.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

7. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 18 November 2021, Part I be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Statement of Policy on Discretions – Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Page 3 last paragraph) to read 'Councillor Hartnack suggested that the Committee receive a further update in the future on the costs of the scheme to ensure that these remained neutral'.

The resolution was therefore amended to include:

- (iii) an update on the costs of the scheme be reported to a future meeting of the Committee to ensure that these remained cost neutral.

Pay Policy Statement 2022/2023

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report to recommend that Human Resources Committee approve for publication, after agreement by Council on 23 March 2022, the Pay Policy Statement for 2022-23.

Members were reminded that the Localism Act 2011 included the requirement for local authorities to produce a Pay Policy Statement which is to be kept updated, approved by full Council and published annually on the Authority's website. The Pay Policy Statement therefore now needed to be updated, approved by Council at its meeting on 23 March 2022 and published by 31st March 2022.

Members were referred to the Pay Policy Statement 2022-23, as appended to the report.

Councillor Haswell referred to the pay market supplements which may be necessary to attract and retain employees with particular experience and skills, and questioned what governance arrangements were in place for reporting this back and whether percentage limits were also applied.

In addition to this, Councillor Haswell also asked, when looking at market comparators, whether this included both public and private sectors and whether consideration was also given to pension contributions. Councillor Haswell then went on to ask for clarification in relation to what succession planning was in place when market supplements had been applied.

The Acting Assistant Director of People Management clarified that market supplements were only used where necessary, using data sources within the relevant sector both regionally and nationally in order to attract and retain employees with particular skills and experience.

In relation to succession planning, the Chief Executive explained that people leaving the organisation was always a risk therefore this was something that the Council kept a close eye on with succession planning in place where possible.

Councillor Hartnack referred to the governance arrangements in relation to market pay supplements and questioned who made these decisions.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services responded by advising that it depended on the seniority of staff within the organisation in that both himself and the Chief Executive had certain delegation limits, however for senior members of staff and Executive Officers, this was determined by the Human Resources Committee.

Councillor Hartnack asked for further clarification specifically in relation to the 4 Executive Directors currently receiving a market supplement and was advised by the Acting Assistant Director of People Management that this decision was taken at the outset by the Human Resources Committee and that market supplements were increased in line with pay awards.

Councillor Hartnack then questioned whether the election fee for the Returning Officer was included within the salary for the Chief Executive and was advised that this was a separate payment driven by national regulations.

Councillor Wood also referred to the market pay supplements and asked how long that these had been used to attract or retain staff and was advised that the Pay Policy Statement had been in place for a number of years now.

Councillor Williams referred to the posts which were paid a market supplement to give a spot salary and questioned whether this was increased with performance management. Councillor Williams was advised that this salary point remained constant (although pay awards would be applied).

8. RESOLVED that approval be given to the publication of the Pay Policy Statement for 2022-23, after agreement by Council on 23 March 2022.

Recruitment Process

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report to provide an update to Human Resources Committee on the Council's recruitment process.

Members were advised that the recruitment process had in recent months undergone some changes and improvements under the Council's transformation programme – "Thinking Operating Model" (TOM). The Council's recruitment process was one of the first customer journeys to be reviewed under this programme.

The review process identified opportunities for improvements, taking on board feedback from managers who carried out recruitment, the HR team and employees new to the organisation.

During the review it was identified that some improvements could be made to the process, with the majority of changes being made to the internal process which was followed by the recruiting manager, panel members and the HR recruitment team and also some changes and improvements were made for prospective applicants, as detailed within section 4 of the report.

The Acting Assistant Director of People Management outlined the benefits which had been delivered as an outcome of the developments and advised that the new recruitment process became live on 1 October 2021.

The Council's Transformation Project Team were now working with Sunderland Care and Support to implement the same recruitment process and a demonstration of the new system had also been given to Together for Children (TFC).

Councillor Farthing questioned what the impact of changes were on posts regarded as 'hard to fill' and was advised that a negative impact had not been seen with the

number of applications remaining steady. In addition to this, other means of submitting an application could be used as outlined in Section 4.3 of the report. Councillor Haswell welcomed the report commenting that it simplified the recruitment process however expressed his concerns in relation to a 16 page application form for a School Crossing Patrol Officer and therefore suggested that the process be referred back for further consideration to simplify the application process for certain jobs within the Council.

Councillor Hartnack asked what feedback had been received from applicants and was advised that with the criteria being simplified, the feedback to date had been positive and further feedback would continue to be sought.

Councillor Stewart welcomed the report and commented that the financial benefits in terms of a streamlined process were already being seen, adding that it was just how the applicants viewed the process which may need further consideration.

Councillor Farthing referred to the hard to fill vacancies, in particular School Crossing Patrol and suggested that consideration be given to job redesign whereby it could be married up with another post to make it more attractive.

The Chief Executive commented that this was a useful suggestion which would be considered given the widespread challenge for many years in recruiting to this post. In addition to this, feedback in relation to the experience of applicants would also be sought and if some pages within the application form were not deemed necessary, consideration would be given to removing them.

Councillor Haswell moved a reference back, and it was unanimously agreed that a further update would be given in the Autumn once feedback from a sample of applicants had been received. The Chief Executive added that this would also outline the support given to applicants, for example those with literacy issues.

Councillor Williams questioned whether SCAS and TfC would be included within the review and was advised that SCAS and TfC did not fall under the remit of the HR Committee however a discussion would take place with both companies to try and compare and contrast.

9. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) An update report be submitted to the Committee in the Autumn.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

At the instance of the Chair, it was: -

10. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to a particular individual or which was

likely to reveal the identity of an individual or which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual and any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council and its employees. (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Signed) G MILLER
Chairman

Note: -

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.

