

Staffing and Appeals Committee Minutes

Date: 5 March 2024

Time: 2:40p.m. – 3:35p.m.

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors E Murphy (Chair), M Black (Vice-Chair), H Batchelor, P Coutts, K Reynolds and S Tierney

84. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors B Hunt and L Nethsingha (Councillor P Coutts substituting).

No declarations of interest were received.

85. Minutes – 31st January 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

86. Senior Manager Pay Data and Chief Officer Pay Policy Statement

The committee received a report reviewing data on senior employee remuneration between 1 December 2022 and 31 November 2023 to ensure compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Localism Act 2011. It also detailed the median and mean salaries for the organisation, which allowed for a calculation of the current ratio of the Chief Executive's salary to the median salary to be identified as 1:6.8.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Emphasised that the report was a statutory requirement and that the Committee was not being asked to either endorse its content or take any direct action as a response. Nonetheless, Members welcomed the transparency resulting from the report and noted the salaries and other financial information of private organisations that received public funding were generally not available for public scrutiny.
- Suggested that the data could be more useful if the paygrade bands were updated, although Members were informed that the government had given no indication that would occur.

- Established that when off scale salaries were in place, it was usually due to officers being transferred to work at the Council with a protected salary from their previous organisation that was outside the set paygrades. While this was avoided whenever possible, there were occasions when salary protection arrangements were required.
- Queried the reasons behind the slight increase in the ratio of the Chief Executive's salary to the organisation's median salary. It was clarified that the change to the ratio was due to a decrease in the median salary, rather than an increase to the Chief Executive's salary. Members queried why the median salary had decreased, although it was suggested that this could be partly a result of structural changes after the removal of shared posts with Peterborough City Council.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Recommend the Transparency Data and the Chief Officers Pay Policy Statement to Full Council in March for approval.

87. Pay Gap Reporting

The committee received a report reviewing data due to be published on the Council's gender pay gap (statutory reporting) and ethnicity pay gap (non-statutory reporting). In line with government guidelines, the data reported was as of 31 March 2023. The Council's mean and median gender pay gaps had increased, as had the mean ethnicity pay gap, while the median ethnicity pay gap had decreased. A detailed analysis of the data and actions that had been taken in response to findings was included in Appendix 1 of the report.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Welcomed the report and paid tribute to officers for collating and analysing the data, noting the importance of carrying out such a significant piece of work.
- Clarified that the data in the report represented a snapshot of the situation on 31 March 2023, rather than over a period of time, and confirmed that recognised trade unions were kept informed of the pay gap data via the Council's Corporate Joint Panel and were consulted on actions to address this as part of both the Council's workforce and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion strategies. It was queried whether reports in future years could also include information on the Council's disability pay gap.
- Expressed concern that the median pay gap had increased at the same time as the median salary had decreased and queried the reasons behind the increase, highlighting the importance of equal pay and equal value for roles across the organisation. Members were informed that work on the People Strategy, which was overseen by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, included looking to support equal pay to all groups across the organisation, such as gender and ethnicity, as well as the wider breakdown of data across directorates and their differing management or performance.

- Observed that salaries of senior officers could have a disproportional impact on overall data due to the larger pay gaps at the higher level and suggested it could be beneficial to also consider the data with senior posts excluded, or to use mean pay, rather than median pay. It was emphasised that the organisation continuously analysed and sought to improve pay and career progression across the Council.
- Noted the lower average pay levels of staff who had not identified their ethnicity, and acknowledged ongoing efforts by the Council to create an organisational environment where staff felt content to share information on their ethnicity.
- Suggested that it would be useful to schedule potential committee meeting dates or reserve dates, particularly for meetings that included items that were statutory or constitutional requirements.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend the Pay Gap Full Analysis Report to Full Council in March for approval; and
- b) Recommend the Pay Gap Publication to Full Council in March for approval and publication.

Chair