

Personnel Committee

Monday 12th June 2023 at 6.00pm

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor M. Bird (Chair)
Councillor A. Andrew (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Garcha
Councillor Gill
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor Nawaz
Councillor Parkes
Councillor Whitehouse

In attendance

Deborah Hindson – Interim Chief Executive
Michele Leith, Director – Human Resources, Organisational
Development and Administration and Business Support
Nicola Rickhuss – HR Manager
Julie Towers - PENNA
Fred Hancock – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Luke Cook – Assistant Democratic Service Officer

18/23 Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Gultasib.

19/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

20/23 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended):

Private session - Exclusion of public

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration item(s) set out in the private part of the agenda and for the reasons set out therein.

21/23 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2023, a copy having been sent to each Member of the Committee, be approved, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

22/23 Ways of Working (WoW) Policy and Right to Request Flexible Working Policy

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Committee received a report, which sought approval of the new Ways of Working Policy and the revised Right to Request Flexible Working Policy.

Members considered the report and sought assurance with regard to a number of issues, including:

- Whether there were any financial implications arising from implementation of the Ways of Working Policy. Members were advised that there were no additional financial implications arising from this Policy, as no additional equipment would be required over and above what would be required for staff working at home compared to the office. The only exceptions would be for exceptional circumstances and staff with disabilities who required reasonable adjustments. Such cases would be dealt with via Occupational Health and the Council may be able to claim some funding via Access to Work.
- Referring to the Remote Working Outside of the UK Guidance, Members queried if this could lead to a flood of requests from Officers seeking to work abroad for 3 months a year, what the expectations would be in terms of setting up their working environment whilst outside of the UK and whether the Policy was clear in terms of expectations whilst working abroad. Members were advised that approval to work outside of the UK would only be reserved for the most exceptional circumstances, such as medical conditions and visiting family who were unwell or had passed away etc. In terms of setting up workplaces whilst working abroad, this was covered within the Policy. IT support would still be available and there could be rare occasions where IT issues cannot be resolved remotely; e.g. where equipment was physically damaged etc. Finally, Members were informed that the Policy was clear in terms of expectations whilst working abroad. The new Policy was now robust and clear.
- Members sought assurance on where liability when working from home. Members were advised that the Council required staff to undertake a workplace assessment including DSE assessment when working from home.
- Members enquired about liability when staff worked from home. Members were informed that The Council was liable in terms of DSE requirements, but not, for example, if an employee tripped over their carpet and injured themselves.

A general discussion then ensued about expectations regarding the right balance of flexible working, including working from home and working in the office. It was noted that there were some posts within the Council where being in the Office was integral to the role. In addition, it was felt that the Council owed a duty to the Town Centre to encourage staff to attend the office, as staff would play their part in supporting local businesses by spending their money in the town centre when working from the office. Ideally, staff would be in the office as / when required, but also 2 – 3 days a week.

With the Pandemic now over, a better balance was required, and expectations needed to be refocused, taking into account that the Council was a flexible working employer, and a proportion of staff would have been appointed on such terms. Members also commented that expectations amongst staff also required readdressing, as Elected Members sometimes would require face to face meetings with Officers for certain matters instead of via TEAMS.

The Chair, in moving the recommendations within the report, requested that the Ways of Working Policy be reviewed in six months' time, and reported back to the Committee. Furthermore, that, as part of this review, feedback should include the involvement of Elected Members and Senior Managers in terms of their experience.

Resolved that: -

1. the Ways of Working Policy, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.
2. the Right to request Flexible Working Policy, as set out in Appendix 6, be approved, subject to (3) below.
3. the authority be granted to the Director of HR, OD and Administration & Business support to make the changes required to the Right to Request Flexible Working Policy, as detailed in 3.14 of the report, at the appropriate time when the Legislation changes.
4. that the following documents, which support the Ways of Working Policy, be noted:
 - Ways of Working Procedure, as set out at Appendix 2;
 - Remote Working Outside of the UK Guidance, as set out at Appendix 3;
 - Remote Working Outside of the UK Request Form, as set out at Appendix 4;
 - Remote Working Outside of the UK Temporary Agreement, as set out at Appendix 5;

5. in view of the fact that the abovementioned documents in (4) are covered within the Ways of Working Policy and are process or guidance, that authority be granted to the Director of HR, OD and Administration & Business support to make any changes / updates required on an ongoing basis.
6. it be noted that the Ways of Working Policy will replace the Agile Working Policy, Clear Desk and Screen Policy and Coronavirus Guidance, all of which will cease to exist when this new Policy is approved by the Committee.
7. That a review of the Ways of Working Policy be undertaken in 6 months' time and reported back to the Committee.

23/23 Soulbury Pay Scale for Assistant Educational Psychologists (AEP) and Senior Educational Psychologists

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Committee received a report which sought approval to: -

1. adopt the national Assistant Educational Psychologists Soulbury pay scales (points 1-4) into the Walsall Council's Soulbury pay scales.
2. adopt point 2 of the national Senior Educational Psychologist's Soulbury pay scales into Walsall Council's Soulbury pay scales.

Resolved that approval be granted for the use of the national spinal column points within Soulbury Pay Scales (points 1 – 4) for Assistant Educational Psychologists, and the adoption of point 2 on the Senior Educational Psychologist's pay scale, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

24/23 Recruitment and Selection of Executive Directors and Directors

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Committee received a report which sought the approval of a revised recruitment process to be followed when recruiting Executive Directors and Directors.

Members considered the report. A discussion took place on the merits of whether the process for appointing interim Chief Officers should change in line with the proposed flowchart at Appendix 1 or remain as per the current established process. A number of Members felt the flowchart, as currently

set out, was unclear and did not accurately reflect what they thought the process was.

The Chair and interim Chief Executive explained that the purpose of the amendments to the interim appointment process was to expedite the process. Interim appointments, which could last up to approximately 6 months, were usually required urgently as some of the posts involved could likely be statutory posts required by Law. In such cases, the current process of writing a report and organising special Personnel Committee meetings added unnecessary time and delay to this process, potentially placing the Council at risk. The new process was seeking to expedite such interim appointments. The Leader reminded the Committee that for all Permanent Chief Officer Appointments, the process would remain unchanged.

Members discussed the proposed flowchart at Appendix 1 to the report and a request was made for the chart to be amended to reflect two changes, as detailed below:

- that at the longlisting stage, both the Leader and the Leader of the Opposition be involved.
- that, should any Member of Personnel Committee wish to see the Longlist, it be made available to them upon request.

Councillor Nawaz registered his concern in relation to the change of process, as he felt the original process was adequate and fit for purpose.

Resolved that: -

1. the content of the report be noted.
2. the revised recruitment and selection process for Executive Directors and Directors, as set out in appendix 1, be approved.

(Councillor Nawaz wished to have his name recorded as having voted against this resolution)

25/23 Establishment of Personnel Sub-Committees

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Committee received a report which sought approval to: -

1. establish Sub-Committees of the Personnel Committee, Employment Appeals Committees 'A' and 'B'.
2. agree the associated delegations for the Appeals Sub-Committees.

3. agree the Memberships of both Sub-Committees.

Resolved that: -

1. approval be given to the establishment of two Sub-Committees, Employment Appeals Sub-Committees 'A' & 'B', together with the delegations, as set out in Appendix 1.
2. the Membership of both Sub-Committees be approved, as set out in Appendix 2.
3. it be noted that Employment Appeals Sub-Committee 'A' meets on a Tuesday and Sub Committee 'B' meets on Thursday both at 10.30 a.m. on dates set out in the Council's timetable of meetings, and that meetings be cancelled when they are not required.

26/23 Private Session

Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That, during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, the Committee consider that the items for consideration are exempt information for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 and accordingly resolved to consider the items in private.

27/23 Recruitment to the posts of Chief Executive

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Committee received a report in relation to the recruitment process with regard to the Chief Executive post.

Resolved that: -

- 1) a shortlist of candidates be agreed.
- 2) the presentation topic for candidates be agreed.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (As amended)

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.25pm.

Chair

Date