

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Monday, 19 April 2021 at 6.00 pm

Digital meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Committee Members present: Councillor M. Bird (Chair)
Councillor N. Gultasib
Councillor A. Harris
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor A. Nawaz

In attendance: Ms K. Allward, Executive Director – Adult Social Care
(Item 8/Minute 30/21 only)
Ms D. Hindson, Interim Executive Director – Resources
and Transformation (Item 8/Minute 30/21 only)
Mr S. Neilson, Executive Director – Economy,
Environment and Communities (Item 5/Minute 27/21
only)
Ms M. Leith, Interim Director of Human Resources,
Organisational Development and Administration
(Items 6 and 7/Minutes 28/21 and 29/21 only)
Mr C. Close, Health and Safety Manager (Item 5/Minute
27/21 only)
Mr I. Sutheran, Human Resources Manager –
Recruitment and Transactional (Item 8/Minute 30/21
only)
Dr P. Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed the members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Members and officers confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

22/21 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor B. Allen.

23/21 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

24/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

25/21 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

Resolved (by assent):

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item set out in the private agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

26/21 **MINUTES**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 was submitted [Annexed].

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

27/21 **ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT COVERING THE YEAR 2019/20**

The annual Health and Safety report covering the year 2019/20 was presented to the Committee [Annexed].

The Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Communities, Mr S. Neilson, introduced the report, with it being noted that as it covered 2019/20, only one week of the Covid-19 pandemic at the end of March 2020 had been included.

The Health and Safety Manager, Mr C. Close, stated that this was the fourth report of its kind since the practice of producing an annual Health and Safety report had been reinstituted. Mr Close emphasised that health and safety was well managed in Walsall with good systems being in place to provide such assurance. During 2019/20, there were no significant changes, although the work being carried out with leisure centres regarding an increased reporting of accidents had of necessity been placed on hold during the pandemic. However, the impact of the pandemic on the Council's Health and Safety service would, it was anticipated, ensure that this would be reflected in the report to be made for 2020/21.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

That the contents of the annual Health and Safety report 2019/20 be noted, and that the report be shared as appropriate in order to help to promote a positive health and safety culture across the Council.

Mr Neilson and Mr Close left the meeting following this item of business.

28/21 SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

A report was submitted [Annexed] seeking approval for the revised Sickness Absence Policy (Appendix 1), and which had been endorsed by the CMT at its meeting on 1 April 2021.

The Interim Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration, Ms M. Leith, presented the report and highlighted the salient points. These included a number of revisions to the Policy, including the redesign of the Occupational Health contract and the cessation of the physiotherapy contract, and it was noted that within the Policy there was a greater recognition of the role of mental health first aiders.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

That the revised Sickness Absence Policy be approved.

29/21 HOW WILL WE WORK IN THE FUTURE – A BLENDING WORKING APPROACH

A report was submitted [Annexed] setting out the high-level considerations for how the Council will work in future and seeking approval for the first principles of blended working, which would be tested in order for proposals to be presented to the Cabinet on the future ways of working.

The Interim Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration, Ms M. Leith, presented the report and highlighted the salient points. It was reported that although the lockdowns were starting to ease, the pandemic continued to cause uncertainty and social distancing rules currently prevented a return to pre-Covid working conditions. Whilst there had been many aspects of working remotely that had been beneficial and had allowed the Council to capitalise on its investment in technology and finding different ways of working, it was also acknowledged that difficulties had been encountered by some staff. It was noted that other local authorities and similar large organisations were introducing their own blended working arrangements.

During the discussion, the Committee noted that as the legislation permitting virtual meetings was due to expire on 6 May 2021, a case had been brought to the High Court by the Local Government Association and other bodies in order to seek an extension to this legislation, and that the Court's decision on this was imminent. Members also recognised the lessons learnt during the pandemic but acknowledged that there had also been shortfalls in some areas and that these would also need to be considered. Ms Leith informed the

Committee that the Council's Staff Survey was to be launched and Members requested that a copy of this report be made available with the survey and posted on the Council's website.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

1. That the first principles of blended working, as set out in points 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the report, be approved;
2. That the Council's officers test these principles and prepare for the Cabinet proposals for the future ways of working via a blending working approach.

Ms Leith left the meeting following this item of business.

29/21 **PRIVATE SESSION**

Exclusion of the Public

Resolved (by assent):

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

30/21 **SENIOR RECRUITMENT**

A report on recruitment to the permanent positions of Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration and Director of Transformation and Digital, and to the recruitment of an external interim Director of Commissioning was submitted [Annexed].

The Human Resources Manager – Recruitment and Transactional, Mr I. Sutheran, presented the report, provided the background to the Committee and highlighted the salient points contained therein concerning the recruitment process, the alignment/revision of the delegations for long-listing and the carrying out of short-listing and final interviews for these positions.

The Executive Director – Resources and Transformation, Ms D. Hindson, advised the Committee of the necessity of revising the delegations in order to proceed to recruitment for these positions, which would then ensure that the whole of the Directorate suite would be complete.

The Executive Director – Adult Social Care, Ms K. Allward, explained the circumstances that had prevented an appointment being made to the position of Director of Commissioning previously and advised Members of the benefits that would accrue from appointing an external interim Director of Commissioning.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

1. That the officers be authorised to commence a recruitment process for a permanent appointment to the position of Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration;
2. That subject to resolution 1 above, the responsibility for long-listing for the position of Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration be delegated to the Executive Director – Resources and Transformation, with it being noted that the Personnel Committee shall have responsibility for short-listing and for the carrying out of final interviews;
3. That responsibility for long-listing for the position of Director of Transformation and Digital be delegated to the Executive Director – Resources and Transformation, with this amending the delegations agreed by the Personnel Committee on 22 October 2020 (Minute 90/20 refers);
4. That the officers be authorised to commence a recruitment process for an external interim appointment to the position of Director of Commissioning for a period of up to twelve months and with the option to extend for a further six months, if required, with this amending the decision of the Personnel Committee on the 7 May 2020 (Minute 47/20 refers);
5. That subject to resolution 4 above, the responsibility for the appointment of an external interim Director of Commissioning be delegated to the Executive Director – Adult Social Care, with this amending the delegations agreed by the Personnel Committee on 7 May 2020 that long-listing be carried out by the Executive Director – Adult Social Care, the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition, and with the Personnel Committee having responsibility for short-listing and final interviews (Minute 47/20 refers);
6. That the additional candidate selection activities, as detailed in section 3.11 of the report, and the timeline, as set out in section 3.12 of the report, be approved with it being noted that all dates being approximate may be subject to change;
7. That the officers be authorised to procure a recruitment consultancy for executive search and selection support.

(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 6.51 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....

