

## Personnel Committee

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 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**

- Michele Leith – Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration & Business Support
- Mark Burrows – Group Manager (Fostering)
- Jivan Sembi – Head of Service – Children in Care
- Fred Hancock – Senior Democratic Services Officer

### 8 Apologies

No apologies were received.

### 9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 10 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended):

**Private session - Exclusion of public**

**Resolved**

That, where applicable, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration any items as set out in the private agenda for the reasons set out therein.

### 11 Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023, a copy having been sent to each Member of the Committee, be approved, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **12 Update on the Recruitment & Retention Activity in the Fostering Service**

A report was submitted.

[see annexed]

The Group Manager (Fostering) presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

The report provided the Committee with an update on the on work which had been undertaken to date in respect of Walsall being a Foster Friendly Council and whether this had resulted in any expressions of interest in becoming a foster carer. In addition, the report provided an update on the on work which had also been undertaken during 2023 by the Fostering Service on the Council's recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Members considered the report and asked a series of questions in relation to how / where the Foster service had been advertised and queried the methods currently utilised to promote the service.

In particular Members requested that: -

- a progress report be brought back to Committee in due course;
- the Council's Marketing and Communications Teams be consulted to try and ascertain the best and most viewed methods of advertising to ensure that the most successful areas of recruitment are utilised to the best of the Council's ability to help provide value for money;
- Foster Carer stories be promoted on webpages and advertisements alike;
- BAME communities, partners, local radio and the private sector (big employers within the Borough) be further targeted to promote the Fostering service.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) the Fostering Friendly Employer status be promoted to all employees within the Authority.
- 2) the Fostering Friendly Policy be included as part of the Corporate Induction.
- 3) the Fostering Friendly Policy with other Employers within the Borough.
- 4) the Fostering Friendly Policy be kept under review so that the Council's offer to current and prospective foster cares remains competitive.
- 5) An update report be brought back to Committee around the end of the Financial Year.

## **13 Amendment to pay policy to increase flexibility in the use of Honoraria**

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Director of Human Resources, Organisation Development, Administration and Business Support presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

The report sought approval from the Committee for the proposal to amend the Pay Policy in line with the details as set out at Appendix B to the report.

Members considered the report and the Chair referred to the fact that allowances paid to the Statutory Officer Posts had not been reviewed since 2005, according to his research. The agreed rates had now fallen below associated market values at other Local Authorities. In view of this, he was concerned that Statutory Officers at Walsall Council were not paid competitive rates for the additional duties and unique responsibilities of the Statutory roles. In addition, he was also concerned that not paying competitively, compared to other Local Authorities, could affect the Council's ability to retain, or avoid, such Officers from being tempted or poached by other Local Authorities paying more competitively for similar roles. He had been made aware that Statutory Officer posts at other Local Authorities were being paid at a significantly higher rate and he wanted to ensure that staff in such roles at Walsall felt valued for their excellent work, and that good staff were retained for the benefit of the Council and citizens of the Borough.

The Chair, therefore, requested that the Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration & Business Support be authorised to undertake an urgent review of the allowances paid to Statutory Officer posts, including the Deputy roles at a proportionate rate to the substantive posts, to recognise the additional and unique work and responsibilities of the roles. He requested that the review and implementation be carried out as soon as possible and that the Council should be looking suggested rates of between £15k - £20k.

The Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration & Business Support advised that she would undertake the review, as requested, but highlighted that the new Chief Executive was due to start in October and may wish to have an input into this review and the proposed increase in allowances. In addition, she advised the Committee that there would be some complexities which she would need to investigate in greater detail, and seek advice on, in undertaking this review. Whilst some elements of the review were simpler in nature, and could be implemented relatively quickly, other elements such as Deputy Officer allowances were more complex and would require longer to review and implement. Any proposals and recommendations would need to be properly costed and brought back to a future Committee for consideration and approval.

Councillor Nawaz clarified that he fully supported the Chair's proposal regarding the urgent review of Statutory Officer allowances.

Members commended Walsall's Legal and Finance Teams in particular for the good work undertaken in keeping Walsall safe and effective.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) the amendments to the Pay Policy, as detailed at Appendix B to the report, be approved;
- 2) the Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration & Business Support be authorised to undertake an urgent review of the allowances paid to Statutory Officer posts, including the Deputy roles at a proportionate rate to the substantive posts, to recognise the additional and unique work and responsibilities of the roles, And
- 3) report back to Committee as soon as possible with recommendations on establishing appropriate allowances for such posts which are competitive with other Local Authorities, taking into account that the new Chief Executive will be taking up post in October 2023 and may wish to have an input into the report back to Personnel and the recommendations contained therein.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.52pm.

**Chair** .....

**Date** .....