

## EMPLOYMENT AND MEMBER STANDARDS PANEL

TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bateson, John Story, Samantha Rayner (Chairman), Lynne Jones, Del Campo, David Cannon, Simon Werner and Andrew Johnson

Also in attendance: Mr Duncan-Jordan (Unison) and Mr Roberts (GMB) for item 4.

Officers: Duncan Sharkey, Nikki Craig, Vanessa Faulkner and David Cook.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Shelim and Cllr Coppinger. Cllr Story and Cllr Cannon attended as substitutes.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Story declared a personal interest as his wife worked for RBWM, he had taken advice from the monitoring officer and had been told he could take part in the discussion and vote on items.

### MINUTES

**Resolved unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 be approved subject to Cllr Catherine Del Campo and Cllr David Hilton be recorded as being in attendance.**

Cllr Del Campo clarified that her comments on minute page 10 about concern regarding the senior leadership team questioner results was due to the fact she felt the question was not fair as a new structure had only just been implemented and she wished to offer her support to them.

### UNISON AND GMB PAY CLAIM FOR 2020/21

The Panel considered the report regarding the annual pay claim submitted by UNISON and GMB trade unions.

The Head of HR, Corporate Projects and ICT informed the Panel that their claim covers all staff on local terms and conditions, including the Corporate Leadership Team and Managing Director. Union representatives were in attendance to present their claim as detailed in appendix A. Table 5 of the report showed the implementation timetable of what would happen after this meeting regarding the pay claim.

Representatives from Unison and GMB thanked the Panel for the opportunity to present their pay claim on behalf of their representatives. Mr Neil Duncan-Jordan said he would not read out the whole pay claim as it was an appendix to the report but he wished to raise some of the more salient points.

The Panel were informed that it was Unisons opinion that the greatest asset of the council was its staff and thus how they were treated was how they were treated. Both unions representing had undertaken surveys of their members with key highlights being:

- 76% felt that they were now worst off this year than the previous year.

- 50% said they had to rely on a second job to supplement their income.
- More than a third said they had to claim for additional unsociable hours to increase their take home pay.
- Staff had a falling value in pay, as demonstrated in section 2 of their report that showed the increased cost of living and RBWM pay increases. It was felt that the cost of living had increased more than pay.
- RBWM had introduced performance related pay which had been unpopular with their members.
- Turnover was high and pay rates were an important factor.
- Moral had been hit with 47% of those surveyed saying their workload had increased over the last year, 41% saying stress levels had increased and staff were finding it difficult to have a work life balance.

The Chairman thanked the union representatives for attending the meeting and said that our staff were important and valued especially with the importance of their work for our residents.

Cllr Jones asked the union representatives when the surveys were taken as it may have been periods of transition and why performance related pay was unpopular. The Panel were informed that the surveys were undertaken late September / early October 2019. With regards to performance related pay they felt that it was an out dated methodology and that it could result in officers doing the same job being paid at different rates. Members also felt under pressure to work longer hours to achieve targets. The Head of HR informed that the authority had now moved away from target based performance related pay and it was now if staff were meeting expectations.

Cllr Werner mentioned that he was concerned about the results showing staff felt the need to work longer hours or take a second job, he felt that it was important to get a proper work life balance. The increased cost of living had resulted in the real value of a wage being decreased this could result in low moral and increased stress. He supported the union claims within the report especially as the borough was an expensive area to live in.

The Chairman asked how many employees were members of a union and how many took part in the survey. The figures were not known as both unions represented different members.

The Head of HR, Corporate Projects and ICT informed the Panel that there was a headcount of about 600. The RBWM staff survey had a response rate of 60% and over the past four years all responses were moving in a positive direction. Sickness rates were about 3.5 days which was low for any sector. Turnover was about 13% and this included Taped staff so it was expected to fall over time.

Cllr Jones asked mentioned that work life balance was not just about money and asked if the unions survey had shown any other areas that were important. Mr Roberts, representing GMB, said that other surveys had shown staff were using their holidays to get an extra day off per week so they could spend time at home, however the majority felt an increase in pay was important.

The Panel were informed that RBWM did have a good flexible working policy in place that allowed working from home, nine day fortnights and flexible working. There had also been a focus on wellbeing and mental health.

Cllr Story said the survey had shown over 35% of staff had considered leaving, he felt it would have been useful to have the numbers and reasons why.

It was noted that the unison surveys only included RBWM staff and no those working for AFC or Optalis.

The Chairman thanked the union representatives for attending the meeting to present their pay claims.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Employment and Member Standards Panel notes the report and:**

- i) Reviewed the trade union pay claim and the supplementary information supplied as part of the consideration of the annual pay review for eligible staff for 2020/21.**

#### FAMILY LEAVE POLICY - ADDITIONAL PAID LEAVE FOR FOSTER CARERS

The Panel considered the report regarding additional paid leave for foster carers.

The Chairman reported that this was a fantastic report that proposed to enhance the current arrangements by the addition of up to nine days paid leave for foster carers.

The Head of HR, Corporate Projects and ICT informed that if approved the proposals would be added to the current Paternity, Shared Parental and Dependent Care Leave policy, which would be renamed the Family Leave policy. AFC had already implemented the new policy and the Panel were asked to approve it also be introduced by RBWM to support our foster careers.

The proposed new provision was outlined in paragraph 2.4 of the report and provided an additional 9 days paid leave for foster careers in their first year of becoming a foster carer. The council current did not have any foster carers as employees but it was hoped that the new policy would help encourage and support future careers.

Cllr Johnson said he supported the report but asked why it had been decided to recommend 9 days rather than 10. Members were informed that this was based on the requirements for initial training and support required and to match AFC offer.

Cllr Del Campo said she supported the changes but recommended that consideration also be given to increase workloads of staff covering the additional leave as this was something that could not be budgeted for.

Cllr Jones reported that there was 9 days for the first year to allow 4 days of assessment so after that it was an additional 5 days per year. If this was what was required she supported the proposals and would like them reviewed in the future.

Cllr Werner asked what happened if a foster career already had a child and one of them were ill, did they have to use annual leave. The panel were informed that arrangements would be made when a child was ill as for any employee who had a family, this could be that they take leave if required.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Employment Panel notes the report and:**

- Approves the addition of paid leave for foster carers to the Council's Family Leave policy.**

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local**

**Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....