

COUNCIL MEETING

4 MARCH 2021 - 7.30.P.M.

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMONS

11. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE- 25 FEBRUARY 2021

a) Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

The Committee considered the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 'C' to the agenda. This statement was required by the Localism Act 2011. The Statement had to set out the Council's policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce and had to be published on the Council's website by 31 March 2021. Pay Policy Statements had to be prepared each financial year and had to be approved by Full Council. The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 would therefore be approved by Full Council on 4 March 2021.

Pay Policy Statements were intended to ensure that policies in relation to the pay and reward of the most senior staff were set out clearly in the context of the pay of the wider workforce and these relationships were set out as a series of ratios. The ratio between the lowest and highest paid salary was 1:7.85, a reduction from last year's ratio of 1:8.87. The ratio between the mean average earnings across the organisation and the pay of the highest paid employee currently employed was 1:4.98 and the ratio between the median earnings across the organisation and the pay of the highest paid employee was 1:5.17 – both of those ratios showed a small reduction from last year. There had been a steady improvement in these mean and median ratios over the last few years.

The current full-time salary ranges for Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer posts as defined under the Localism Act 2011 were noted. All of these posts were directly employed and the contract for one fixed term post would end on 31 March 2021. The Council's overall policies on pay had not altered since last year's Pay Policy Statement. The Statement was written for the financial year ahead but the pay data was based on the current year.

At present the jobs market was an employer's market due to the pandemic but following lockdown this situation should improve. In Surrey, there had traditionally been a competitive market particularly in areas of skills shortage. Filling certain types of professional roles remained a problem, although this had lessened at present as a result of coronavirus. The Council had adopted a different method for sourcing agency staff which should result in future savings for the Council (i.e. a whole authority Vendor Neutral contract).

The introduction of the National Living Wage on 1 April 2016 had had the effect of eroding away Scale 1 and Scale 2 of the pay structure. The National Living Wage for those 25 and over would rise from £8.72 per hour to £8.91 per hour from 6 April 2021 and would then apply to those aged 23 and above instead of those aged 25 and above. This meant that the minimum annual salary in Grade 3 would rise from £16,284 per annum to £17,189 per annum for those of 23 years of age and over substantially reducing the range within Scale 3. The effect of this rise would be to increase the base annual salary of 9 permanent and 17 casual employees to the new level of the National Living Wage.

Some Members of the Committee considered that the Council should be aiming to pay the National Living Wage to all Council employees who were aged under 23 years on the grounds that the Council should not be discriminating against staff on the grounds of their age. It was noted that the Council had an increasing number of staff aged under 23 years as well as a more ethnically diverse workforce than previously. It also employed a number of apprentices at better rates of pay than other local authorities. The question of potential remodelling of the bottom end of the Council's pay structure had been one that Members

had identified previously but had not yet been considered by the Human Resources Member Working Party as a result of other priorities. It was agreed that the Human Resources Member Working Party would receive a report on the cost of extending the National Living Wage pay rates to all Council employees aged under 23 years. The Working Party would then report to a future meeting of the Corporate Management Committee and it would be for the Working Party to decide whether it wished to make a recommendation that action be taken or a recommendation that the report be noted. It was agreed that the report to the Working Party would be circulated also to all Members of the Corporate Management Committee.

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL ON 4 MARCH 2021 that –

the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22, as reported, be approved.

(Councillor R King required that his abstention be recorded separately in the minutes as he was disappointed at the lack of progress in extending the National Living Wage pay rates to younger Council employees).

b) Adoption of Revised Equality Policy

The Committee considered a proposed revised Equality Policy, as set out at Appendix 'B' to the agenda. The Equality Act 2010 required public authorities to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty introduced by the Act. In order to meet the obligations imposed by the Act the Council required a clear policy which set out what its various obligations were and identified behaviour which was unacceptable in the modern world.

During 2018 issues had arisen in respect of acts of antisemitism. This had resulted in the Jewish Leadership Council writing to local authorities inviting them to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. Members had asked officers to consider such a course of action. Officers advised that to adopt such a definition in isolation would not achieve a meaningful outcome and could be counter productive because other groups would question why the Council was not adopting definitions of other types of unacceptable behaviour. Therefore, officers had used this issue as an opportunity to review the Council's existing Equality Policy with a view to incorporating the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism into a revised Equality Policy. Regrettably, the lack of resources at the Council and the impact of Covid-19 had meant this revision had taken longer than officers would have wished.

Whilst in its role as an employer and a public sector body the Council led by example, it was not an enforcement authority and could not undertake prosecution against discrimination which occurred in a community setting. The Council could, however, seek to promote good standards of behaviour by promoting a culture in its community that equalities mattered and that discrimination would not be tolerated. An Equality Policy was not a solution on its own to these important issues but rather acted as a foundation to be built on through other Council policies and procedures and acted as a guide to the local community as to the standards to which they should aim. It was noted that contractors were required to abide by all of the Council's policies including the Equality Policy.

The revised Equality Policy set out the context for the creation of the Policy, a clear set of definitions of behaviour which were not acceptable, the obligations the Council had as a public sector body and the need to consider equality matters in service delivery and the role that the Council played in promoting equality in the community it served. The revised Equality Policy would underpin the Council's compliance with its various legal obligations and enable it to discharge its role in promoting equalities in the wider community.

The Committee commended the revised Equality Policy which had been the subject of inter party Member Working Party discussion and considered that it should be supported by all Councillors regardless of their political affiliations. A suggestion was made by a Member that the section of the Policy that defined antisemitic unacceptable behaviour might possibly

be expanded to include certain types of criticism of the citizens of the state of Israel. It was noted that the Policy would be reviewed periodically and it was agreed that when the next review took place consideration should be given to whether the definition of antisemitism in the Policy should be expanded and, if so, in what way.

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL ON 4 MARCH 2021 that -

the revised Equality Policy, as reported, be adopted.