

ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

3 OCTOBER 2019 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors Akbar (Chair), Hopkins (Vice Chair), Adrees, Mead and Wynn

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Abid and Lovell.

63. MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 9 September 2019 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

64. EQUALITY IMPACTS OF REDUNDANCIES BETWEEN APRIL 2018 AND MARCH 2019 (REF: 7)

The Senior HR Adviser presented the report (Ref: 7), informing the Committee of the outcome of the annual review of the equality impacts of redundancies between April 2018 and March 2019.

He highlighted salient points from the report as set out in the below paragraphs.

There were 14 redundancies in 2018/19, of which 9 were compulsory and 5 voluntary. One of the 5 voluntary redundancies was through the council's local Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS).

There were only 3 applicants for VSS during in 2018-19, considerably fewer than 13 applications received in the previous two years.

The Committee was informed the Voluntary Separation Scheme had now been withdrawn and the Flexible Retirement Scheme introduced, which allowed employees to access their pensions and continue working.

In relation to the profile of redundancies, the committee was informed that 71% were of employees of the age 51 or over, with 85% females, compared with the workforce gender break down of a 2:1 female to male. However, ethnicity breakdown was reflective of the wider workforce.

There were 401 leavers from the Council during 2018/19, 7 more than in the previous financial year, but the total workforce had increased from 3,032 to 3,077 (+1.5%), partly due to the council re-absorbing community centres staff from the Trust. In terms of age profile, 43% of the workforce was aged 51 or over. The ethnicity profile of the workforce broadly reflected of the diverse communities in Luton.

The number of leavers due to retirement (55 or over) increased from 48 in 2107/18 to 58 (+14.4%) in 2018-19. Four out of the 14 employees made redundant were also 55 or over, making the total number of employees of retirement age leaving the council 62 (15% of all leavers)

In terms of workforce ethnicity, 200 fewer employees described themselves as white, with the number of employees from BME groups only rising slightly by 37. Once again, 22.5% of employees chose the 'not known/ declined category'.

During 2018/2019 the total number of change programmes fell from 27 to 23, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of employees affected, falling from 499 the previous year to 234 employees in 2018-19 and also a significant reduction in the number of redundancies from 44 to 14.

Following questions and comments, key points were recorded, as set out in the below paragraphs.

The apparent disparity in the gender profile of redundancies (85% female to 15% male) compared with the overall workforce gender profile (67.3% female to 32.7% male), was due to the make-up of Adult Social Care services, the most affected group, being predominantly female, which skewed the figures.

On the issue of the ageing workforce and the number of young people leaving the Council, there was a concern about the number of young people age under 31 leaving quoting, *'Better Opportunities and Pay and Conditions'* and *'Career Change'*, despite creating career opportunities under the 'grow our own' policy. HR was working on a retention strategy to address this issue.

Exit interviews were provided for online. They were not compulsory, but strongly advocated to help others staying with the council. The number of exit interviews was improving.

It was believed that some of the managers leaving the council had been from the private sector and found it difficult to adapt to the local government culture.

More analysis was required to determine what the quoted reasons for leaving actually meant.

The reason for fewer redundancies was that fewer people were affected by the change process and more were able to be 'slot in' rather than put through 'ring fenced' interviews, thereby causing less disruption.

Reference to the number of disabled employees reducing in paragraph 66 of the report was in relation to the redundant work group, not in the overall workforce, in which the number of disabled employees had remained constant.

The Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer requested that the report be noted, until the next annual report in the following year, which would include progress of the retention strategy.

The Chair then moved that the recommendations in the report be approved, which was agreed.

Resolved: (i) That the report on the outcome of the annual review of the equality impacts of redundancies between April 2018 and March 2019 be noted;

(ii) That the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer be requested to submit a further report on the outcome of analysis of the equality impacts of redundancies at year-end 2019/20, to include progress of the retention strategy.

65. POLLING DISTRICTS-PLACES-STATIONS REVIEW (REF: 8)

The Democracy Manager presented the report (Ref: 8), seeking the Committee's advice and approval on the results and recommendations relating to the further enquiries about the polling station at Denbigh Primary School instructed to be carried out by the committee on 9 September 2019.

As set out in the comprehensive report, she advised that Britannia Estates was ruled out for the reason stated, but Venue Central was potentially suitable. The advantages and disadvantages of Venue central were set out in the report.

She went on to say that the three Biscot ward councillors had been consulted and would all prefer for the Polling Place to remain at Denbigh Primary School, a public building and a venue already familiar with voters

The Vice-Chair added that continuity was important and as the ward councillors were not keen on the idea, she also agreed that the Polling Place should remain at Denbigh Primary School.

One Member commented there was no reason to move and it would be too expensive to do so. The Committee was advised that whilst expense was noted, cost should not be the sole consideration in making a decision.

The Democracy Manager invited the committee to consider the recommendations in the report.

The Vice-Chair commented it was important for transparency that Members were clear about the reasons for seeking the move from Denbigh Primary School, i.e. lack of space, and for rejecting Venue Central as an alternative, i.e. high cost and it being on a busy main road.

The Chair moved that, for the reasons stated, the change to Venue Central be rejected, that the retention of Denbigh Primary School as the Polling Place be approved and that officers be delegated authority to make further changes to the polling place, if necessary, as requested, which was all agreed.

Resolved: (i) That, having considered the advantages and disadvantages of moving the Polling Place from Denbigh Primary School for the BCCS polling district to Venue Central at the Britannia Estates in Leagrave Road, the change is not approved;

(ii) That, given the committee's decision at (i) above, Denbigh Primary School be retained as the polling place for the BCCS polling district and the school be required to provide a suitable room for future elections use;

(iii) That the Electoral Registration Officer/ Returning Officer be authorised to make any further necessary changes in relation to Denbigh Primary School Polling

Place, if required, to enable the smooth running of the next scheduled election for the Police and Crime Commissioner on 7 May 2020 and any other unscheduled elections.

66. ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATION COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20 (REF: 9)

The Service Director HR and Monitoring Officer presented the report (Ref 9), which requested the Committee to plan and determine its work programme for forthcoming meetings.

She advised the Committee of items for the forthcoming meetings and proposed changes to the work programme.

Responding to a question on the People Plan for the 4 November meeting, she advised that recruitment and retention of social workers would be a key strand of the report. She also said that there would be an update on the ageing workforce, compared with what other local authorities were doing.

Given there were only two items for the 18 December meeting and the meeting's proximity to Christmas, the Vice-Chair suggested it could be cancelled, if the two items on the work programme were not time critical and could be moved either forward to the 4 November meeting or put back to the 25 February 2020 meeting.

This was agreed and a decision would be made, after consultation with the Chair.

Resolved: (i) That the committee's work programme be noted;

(ii) That the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer be requested to review the need for the meeting of the committee scheduled for 18 December 2019, if the two items on the work programme could either brought forward to 4 November or put back to the meeting on 25 February 2020;

(**Note:** After enquiries and consultation with the Chair, it was decided the scheduled meeting of the committee on 18 December 2019 was required to deal with a number of time critical items. Members were so informed)

(iii) That the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the work programme of the committee, as required, after consultation with the Chair, to include:

- Equality impacts of redundancies in 2018-2019, (including progress of the retention strategy) - Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer - October 2020

(The meeting ended at 6.20m)