

ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

4 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors Akbar (Chair), Abid, Adrees and Mead

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Hopkins (Vice Chair), Lovell and Wynn.

68. MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 3 October 2019 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

69. SHARED COST ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION SCHEME – AMENDMENT TO PENSIONS DISCRETIONS (REF: 7)

The Team Manager (Policy & Reward) presented the report (Ref: 7), seeking the Committee's approval to amend the council's pension discretions to enable the council to offer a shared cost additional voluntary contribution scheme for the benefit of employees and the council.

She explained that Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) were available to members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). She added AVC's could generate tax savings and were a tax efficient way for employees to save towards their retirement and pension pot, as contributions were taken from pay before tax.

Under the shared cost AVC scheme, the employee would opt to reduce their salary and the employer would contribute the equivalent amount to the employee's AVC arrangement. This would provide tax and National Insurance advantages to the employee and benefits the council as it would decrease employer's national insurance contributions and apprenticeship levy. Employees' pension contributions would not decrease and therefore there were no financial disincentives.

As an illustration, she explained that if 90% of current AVC members transferred to a Shared Cost AVC arrangement, the council could achieve an annual saving of £20,420 before charges, based on 14.3% employer saving from reduced employer national insurance contributions, plus apprenticeship levy

She informed the committee that some high earners and those who did not pay national insurance would not benefit from the scheme, nor would teachers and NHS employees, as their pension scheme did not provide for this type of arrangement.

She said the scheme was a valuable employee benefit, given the Council's ageing workforce.

She informed the Committee of a slight change in wording of in the last column of row 3 of the Table in the revised policy document at Appendix 1 to the report (Ref: 7), which had been approved the Beds pension. The words, '*on a case by case basis*' had been deleted and replaced by the words, '*in accordance with the scheme criteria*'.

She requested that the council's pension discretions be amended with immediate effect to enable the council to offer a shared cost additional voluntary contribution scheme for the benefit of employees and the council.

Following questions from the Chair, it was re-iterated that the Council would benefit from paying less national insurance and would have discretion to contribute to the scheme only where employees had elected to pay AVC by salary sacrifice.

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

Resolved: That the amendment to the Council's pension discretions to enable the Council to offer a shared cost additional voluntary contribution scheme for the benefit of employees and the Council be approved with immediate effect.

70. CAREER BREAK SCHEME (REF: 8)

The Team Manager (Policy & Reward) presented the report (Ref: 8), seeking the Committee's approval to for the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for the council's career break scheme, as set out in the report.

She informed the Committee the proposed changes to the career break scheme were intended to make the scheme more accessible, particularly to staff in social work wishing to undertake the 'Step up to Social Work' intensive, 14 month, full time programme for trainee social workers.

She highlighted the proposed changes as set out in the following table:

Eligibility	Current scheme	Approved amended Scheme
Continuous service requirement before an employee can apply for a career break	3 years' service	2 years' service with provision to consider application from employee with 1 years' service in exceptional circumstances
Other eligibility criteria	Current scheme is silent	Applicants must not be subject to live formal disciplinary warnings or formal performance procedures.
Notice period when requesting career break	3 months' notice for break of up to 6 months duration, 6 months' notice for career break of over 6 months' duration	3 months' notice for career break irrespective of length of break. Also recognition that there may be extenuating circumstances where it may not be possible to provide 3 months' notice. In such circumstances, Service Directors may consider and agree a reduced period of notice

Eligibility	Current scheme	Approved amended Scheme
Maximum duration of a career break	12 months	18 months
Period of continuous service between career breaks	3 years	2 years

She said that the Council had had difficulties recruiting qualified social workers and the current 12 months restriction meant trainee social workers wishing to embark on the 'Step up to Social Work' intensive 14 month, full time programme had to resign, with the Council potentially losing them when qualified. Also, as this national training scheme was funded through individual bursaries from the Department for Education (DfE) to trainees not earning a salary during the programme, career breaks would enable trainees to qualify for the bursary.

It was anticipated that making the change to enable them to maintain continuity of service would act as a positive incentive and help to improve retention rates once the employee was qualified.

Responding to questions from the Chair, the Team Manager agreed there was a risk of inconsistent application of the scheme by managers, as approval was subject to the needs of the service. However, she said that employees who had their request refused had a right of appeal and that this should help to guard against inconsistencies and unfairness. She said, although the scheme was available across the whole of the Council services, it was suggested that applications from employees applying to the Step up to Social Work programme would be supported. Schools had their own scheme.

The Chair moved that the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for the council's career break scheme be approved, which was all agreed.

Resolved: That the changes to the eligibility criteria for the council's career break scheme, as set out below be approved:

- Reducing the continuous service requirement before an employee could apply for a career break from 3 years' service to 2 years, with provision to consider applications from employees with 1 years' service in exceptional circumstances
- Applicants must not be subject to live formal disciplinary warnings or formal performance procedures
- Notice period when requesting career break, changed from 3 months' notice for break of up to 6 months duration and 6 months' notice for career break of over 6 months' duration to 3 months' notice for career break irrespective of length of break. Also recognition that there might be extenuating circumstances where it might not be possible to provide 3 months' notice. In such circumstances, Service Directors might consider and agree a reduced period of notice
- Maximum duration of a career break changed from 12 months to 18 months
- Period of continuous service between career breaks, changed from 3 years to 2 years.

71. MODEL WHOLE SCHOOL PAY POLICY 2019 (REF: 9)

The HR Adviser Schools and Traded Services presented the report (Ref: 9), commending the Model Whole School Pay Policy 2019 to the Committee for recommendation to the governing bodies of schools with delegated budgets and for centrally employed teaching staff.

She advised the Committee to approve the Model Whole School Pay Policy, the annual report with the recommended uplift in teachers' pay proposed by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD), which was 2.5% across all teachers pay ranges and allowances.

She said Trade Unions had been consulted and agreed with this year's proposal. She added she was therefore seeking the Committee's permission to adopt the proposal, as set out in the report.

Responding to a question from the Chair, she said the proposal did not apply to academies.

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

Resolved: (i) That the Model Whole School Pay Policy 2019, proposing an uplift of 2.5% across all teachers pay ranges and allowances be commended by the Administration and Regulation Committee to governing bodies of schools for adoption;

(ii) That the Administration and Regulation Committee approved that the changes to teachers' pay should apply to centrally employed teachers.

72. RESTRUCTURE – ELECTORAL SERVICES TEAM (REF: 10)

The Democracy Manager presented the report (Ref: 10), seeking the Committee's approval to implement the proposed changes to the structure of Electoral Services section of the Democracy Team, to ensure it provided resilience and allowed personal development and succession planning opportunities.

She said that the current structure of the Electoral Services team lacked resilience and provided no personal development opportunities for current staff to support the Electoral Services Manager, given the large gap between his grade and the two Electoral Registration Assistants.

She added the proposal did not involve any additional staff and sought to convert one of the two L5 roles to provide a senior level post.

Responding to Members' questions, she confirmed there would be no additional recruitment involved and that it was expected that one of the two current officers would be appointed to the new role.

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

Resolved: That the proposed restructure of the Electoral Services Section of the Democracy Team, as set out in 'Appendix A of the report (Ref: 10) be approved, as follows:

- Restructure the Electoral Registration Section of the Democracy Team by the creation of a new (fte) post of 'Senior Electoral Services Officer', at the indicative grade of L7, subject to job evaluation;
- Deleting one of the two existing 'Electoral Services Officer' L5 (fte) posts.

73. PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSIONING SUPPORT AND CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED COMMISSIONS TEAM OCA (REF: 11)

The Service Director, Healthy Lives and Children's Integrated Commissioning presented the report (Ref: 11), seeking the Committee approval for the proposed changes to the Council's Public Health and Children's Integrated Commissioning services.

She reminded the Committee that Public Health was funded through the Public Health grant and said that the OCA for the proposed re-structure was designed to make the services fit for the future, based on evidence from reviews and guidance from NHS England. The proposals and ordering of the structure would allow for career pathways for staff, so that they did not have to move out of the organisation to progress their careers. The proposals would also align across the whole department, between Commissioning and Public Health and create gaps between grades to allow staff to move up and progress.

She informed the Committee no roles had been identified for three members of staff in the proposed structure, one of whom had since resigned. The other two would be at risk of redundancy and would be placed on the re-deployment register. A rapid recruitment process would be undertaken and it was hoped they would be able to find suitable employment as other staff moved up in the proposed structure.

Responding to members' questions, she provided further information as follows:

- It was hoped the two staff at risk of redundancy would find other jobs within the Council
- One member of staff would be ring-fenced for the M7 vacancy
- Two M5 posts were currently vacant and would be advertised at M3 internally first and if not successful, outside the Council
- There was always a risk of any member of staff made redundant seeking redress through an employment tribunal, but everything that could be done had been done to mitigate that risk
- Trade Unions had been consulted and staff requesting one to one meetings were encouraged to bring a union representative or a friend. Most brought a friend, as not all staff were members of a Trade Union
- The consultation process had been very good, involving meetings with the whole team and weekly FAQs. All actions taken were set out in the report, as were some changes as a result of feedback received. The consultation ended with a team meeting, when the proposals for change were presented.

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

Resolved: That the implementation of the new staffing structure and the post deletions/creations in the Council's Public Health and Children's Integrated Commissioning services be approved, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report (Ref: 11) and reproduced from the OCA as follows for clarity:

The proposals are aimed at:

- Reflecting the current and future needs of the service areas
- Aligning staff structures across commissioning and public health
- Strengthening administrative and project support functions
- Increasing strategic leadership capacity within Public Health
- Balancing Consultant in Public Health work programmes
- Provide a personal/career development structure

Public health team proposals:

- The functional responsibilities remain unchanged between the Healthy Lives and Healthcare Public Health teams. The changes focus on providing stronger role definition, opportunity for development of specialist skills and career progression
- Service Director – Healthy Lives and Children's Integrated Commissioning will have capacity through reduced direct line management to undertake the Caldicott Guardian role. The Service Director – Healthcare and Adults' Commissioning will retain responsibility for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy/Board and Health Inequalities Board
- The teams will be led by Public Health Service Managers at grade M8, reporting to a Consultant in Public Health. These roles will take a more strategic leadership role, to enhance the specialist expert public health support to Luton and the wider system
- The Physical Activity and Culture team will report to the Public Health Service Manager, rather than Service Director – Healthy Lives and Children's Integrated Commissioning. This will support the equality of alignment of management structures and rebalancing of responsibilities at Service Director level
- It is proposed to delete the Civil Protection and Public Health Project Officer post and to subsume the health protection responsibilities into a wider post that leads on health protection at M3 within the Healthy Lives Public Health Team
- The team structure will be realigned to reflect clearer grade boundaries to support career development

Commissioning Support team proposals:

- The Commissioning Support Team will be disbanded, with the two current Commissioning Support Officers having the option to move to either the Adults or Children's Commissioning teams or can be considered for the new Public Health Project Officer L5 (indicative grade) roles. The public health funding will be used to directly support public health delivery with the general fund resources will be used to

support the project and administrative needs of the commissioning functions

- The L5 BCF-funded post will be line managed by the Programme Manager, Health & Social Care Integration

Children's Integrated Commissioning proposals:

- To realign the management of an M5 and M3 post to support current operational requirements in children's social care
- A sub-group of the Joint Strategic Commissioning, chaired by the Service Director – Healthy Lives and Children's Integrated Commissioning, will be established to ensure coherent integrated commissioning across health, public health and social care
- The Children's Integrated Commissioning Service Manager will undertake line management responsibility for the CCG employed Designated Clinical Officer and an M3 post from Public Health to undertake commissioning to support the NHS Long Term Plan, including sexual health and the Local Maternity System

The following posts will be deleted:

- Public Health Service Manager (M6) x 2 fte
- Commissioning Support Manager (M3) x 1 fte
- Civil Protection and Public Health Project Officer (M1) x 1 fte
- Lead Commissioning Support Officer (M1) x 1 fte
- Wellbeing and Prevention Officer (L6) x 1 fte
- Commissioning Support Officer (L5) x 2 fte

The following posts will be created:

- Public Health Service Manager (M8) x 2 fte
- Senior Public Health Manager (M5) x 2 fte
- Public Health Project Officer (L5) x 2 fte

The following posts will be re-designed and re-evaluated:

- Public Health Commissioning Manager (M3) x 1 fte (indicative grade M3)
- Public Health Development Officer (M2) x 2 fte (indicative grade M1)

74. PEOPLE PLAN ANNUAL REPORT (REF: 12)

The HR Business Manager (Strategy) presented the People Plan Annual Report (Ref: 12) to update the Committee on progress achieved since last reported in November 2018.

She informed the Committee no decision was needed, as the report was to provide an update on progress for noting.

She said the People Plan, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, was the Council's well established organisational development strategy, setting out how the Council attracted, recruited, retained and developed its workforce to deliver its vision, through the Luton Investment Framework, against a backdrop of ongoing change.

She added the People Plan was a three-year plan, managed by a cross-functional People Plan Governance Board, led by the Chief Executive and included Corporate Directors, the Deputy Leader of the Council and a Union representative.

She informed the Committee the report summarised achievements, since the 3 year People Plan was first launched in 2016 and refreshed in April 2019, with a refreshed focus and new priorities for the next three years (2019-22), informed by contributions from Council directorates, Ofsted and Peer review assessments and the Local Government Association's Workforce Strategy.

She summarised key points for the report as set out in the below paragraphs.

The report reinforced the Council equality and diversity duties, demonstrating the embedded 'golden thread' of equalities, which run through everything done at Luton Council.

An immediate focus was on increasing the accuracy and completion of equalities data, with existing staff encouraged to update their data on i-Trent, to close the gap and improve data collection and recording and confidence in the evidence base.

More detailed analysis of equality data was needed to determine whether the reasons that people leave the Council could be linked to protected characteristics.

The leadership and management programme was under review and one focus area was to ensure that staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds were accessing this programme and other development opportunities within the council.

The Career Pathways programme developed initially in adult social care, had been extended to cover posts in housing, and customer services and a number of others service areas since January 2019. There was also a separate pathway aimed at developing core skills for employees within grades L1 to L4 to progress their careers within Luton Council. Participants on career pathways routes were gradually increasing and were proving a useful means to retain staff who might otherwise leave the Council for career progression elsewhere.

The Graduate Development Programme was now embedded within the Council and was attracting graduates both nationally and locally. The Luton programme has been recognised as one of the strongest in the country, with the nine graduates taken on since 2016. Four had secured full-time employment with the council, three were taken on in October 2019 and were doing their first placements and two had left the council.

There was a push to use the apprenticeship levy funding. The council is meeting the national target of apprenticeship 'new starts' at 77%. However, take up of apprenticeships in maintained schools was 16% of the national target. Work continued to reduce the gap to the target.

Recruitment and retention of social workers continued to be a challenge, with more work to do. There was some evidence that pay was not the only consideration. Lack of IT, poor induction at team level, lack of flexible working, insufficient support/mentoring and car parking were also key factors.

In terms of rewards, the revised Market Supplements Policy and Procedure was approved by the Committee in January 2019 and now covered a two year period, providing employees the option to access the payment as a lump sum or in monthly instalments with their pay. The scheme remained a key tool in social care recruitment and retention and was extended to a number of other service areas. Progress of the scheme would be reviewed and reported to the Committee in due course.

A guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers was launched in April 2019, but further work was required to prepare care leavers with applications, interviews and personal presentation skills.

In June 2019, the Salary Finance scheme was launched offering access to affordable loans, deducted directly from pay. The scheme also included financial education, e.g. savings planning and budgeting tools, to support employees' financial wellbeing, as it was recognised financial worries could affect mental and physical health and therefore impact productivity and absenteeism.

The rate of sickness absence had improved significantly to an average of 8.28 days per employee per year for council staff, down from 14.63 days in October 2016, believed to be due to more effective management of sickness absences, better promotion of Occupational Health support and ongoing employee wellness opportunities.

The Council had secured a new provider (Health Assured), for the Employee Assistance Programme, offering 24/7 confidential support to employees dealing with issues such as stress and anxiety at work or at home.

The introduction of the flexible retirement scheme, the revised career break scheme and the shared cost additional voluntary contribution pension scheme were strong points to attract and retain staff.

The annual Luton Excellence Awards scheme, which acknowledged and rewarded exceptional performance by teams and individuals, was considered a good practice, which a number of other councils were looking to emulate.

There was a change in the way staff performance was monitored and managed, with the introduction of the 'Check-in' scheme, whereby employees had more regular checks on a quarterly basis and not annually. The new scheme would be reviewed in due course and feedback provided to the Committee, as it was still early days since its introduction.

The new three year People Plan 2019-22 had been positioned alongside the Luton Investment Framework and would focus on 3 priorities: Attraction, Recruitment and Retention, Digital Workforce and Leadership, culture and performance, each supported by a number of project themes, as set out in the report, to move the council forward over the next 3 years.

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

Help with debts was assured through the Employee assistance programme.

To improve the exit interview completion rate, a range of options for staff to complete were being considered, including anonymous responses and an on-line facility.

Currently, some exit interviews were conducted by the line manager or with an HR representative. Some staff just completed the exit interview form without speaking to anyone.

Data on exit interviews were provided to the Committee in September 2019. An update on the equality characteristics of the workforce would be provided to the Committee on 31 March 2020.

The Equality and Diversity Group had been re-launched to look at career progression of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees. The group had been in being for a long time, but not active. Information from the group would, in due course, be fed into the People Plan Governance Board and a short report on the work of the Equality and Diversity submitted to the Committee.

Graduates on the Graduate Development Programme needed to get a range of experience in front line and strategic work and during the two year programme, would undertake 6 month placements in each of their preferred work areas to benefit from working across different departments. At the end of the two years, the objective would be for them to apply for and secure permanent employment within the Council.

The Graduate Development Programme was managed nationally by the LGA. However, local promotion of the programme was more successful in attracting graduates locally.

There was a graduate on the programme working in HR undertaking a project looking at work experience, which Luton Council did not currently provide. She was expected to finish the project before April 2020 when she moves to her next placement. There was also a graduate working on the new Heritage Strategy with Cllr Castleman, gaining experience working with Members.

The Chair moved that the report be noted and requested a further update in a year's time, which were agreed.

Resolved: (i) That the progress of the People Plan to date be noted;

(ii) That a further People Plan Annual Report be submitted in a year's time (November 2020);

(iii) That a short report on Exit Interviews be submitted to committee on 31 March 2020, to specify completion rates, issues raised by leavers and work completed to address any identified trends;

(iv) That a six monthly review of the equality characteristics for the workforce be submitted to the Committee on 31 March 2020, to focus on the breakdown of the workforce and progress towards improving data collection across groups with high levels of 'declined to specify/unknown';

(v) That a report from the Equality & Diversity Group to cover their work plan, outcomes and recent achievements be submitted to the Committee on 31 March 2020.

75. ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATION COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20 (REF: 13)

The Service Director HR and Monitoring Officer presented the report (Ref 13), which requested the Committee to plan and determine its work programme for forthcoming meetings.

She advised the Committee the meeting of 18 December 2019 was going ahead as scheduled, due to the Scale of Charges being a time critical item. She further informed the Committee of items for the forthcoming meetings and proposed changes to the work programme, as set out below.

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

(iii) That the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the work programme, as agreed by the committee, to include the following items:

- Revised Market Supplements Policy - Progress Update - Ann Davies/ Angela Claridge – Date to be confirmed;
- The new 'Check-in' Scheme - Progress Update - Ann Davies/ Angela Claridge – Date to be confirmed;
- Update on Exit Interviews (to specify completion rates, issues raised by leavers and work completed to address any identified trends) - Andrew Williams & Sarah Mellor - 31 March 2020;
- That a short report on Exit Interviews be submitted to committee on 31 March 2020, to specify completion rates, issues raised by leavers and work completed to address any identified trends;
- Six month review of the equality characteristics of the workforce (to focus on the breakdown of the workforce and progress towards improving data collection across groups with high levels of 'declined to specify/unknown' – Denise Morgan - 31 March 2020;
- Feedback on the work plan of the Equality and Diversity Group (to include, outcomes, recent achievements and future work programme - Nikki Middleton and Maureen Drummond - 31 March 2020;
- People Plan Annual Report - Ann Davies/ Angela Claridge – November 2020;
- Organisational Change procedure – Ann Davies - 18 December 2019

(The meeting ended at 6.58pm)