

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE - 21 January 2020

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillors: K Meeson, M Brain, S Caudwell, I Courts,
T Richards OBE, G Slater and R Sleigh OBE (Chairman)

Officers: Adrian Cattell – Head of Human Resources
Andrew Kinsey – Head of Legal Services
Joe Suffield – Democratic Services Officer

Apologies: Mrs M Hurt

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mrs Hurt.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

3. **QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

No questions or deputations were submitted.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 were presented for approval

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record

5. **APPLICATION FOR MARKET FORCES SUPPLEMENT**

The Legal Services Manager outlined the report which highlighted that legal services has found it more difficult to retain and recruit children and social care team solicitors. There were two vacancies which had not been recruited to, and would be advertised again subject to the approval of the Committee. The difficulty to recruit stemmed from a competitive market, which included a surge in solicitors who would choose to work locum rather than a permanent role.

The Legal Services Team went out to recruit in Autumn 2018 for three vacant Band F solicitor posts. There were two applications, with only one which met

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the shortlist criteria and was appointed. This left two vacancies. As a result of this, the Resourcing Team were asked to review comparable roles at that point. Compared to similar roles available at that point, Solihull's role had the lowest starting pay range.

The decision proposed would enable Solihull to remain competitive with the rates offered by neighbouring authorities. The decision recommended to the Committee was for all eight Band F solicitors, which included the two vacancies within the team.

Members raised the following questions and observations:

- A Member asked about the role of locums and whether more could be done to maximise their input on the team. In response the Legal Services Manager explained that the locums would pick up a case of work which would be the equivalent for a full time member of staff. Also, the team have started to train legal assistants to attempt to alleviate the problem. Members supported the emphasis on training current staff, and recognised that it was part of the solution to the problem.
- A Member asked what impact the reduced staffing levels had on the service. The Legal Services Manager outlined that experienced members of the team had to take on more difficult cases, and the team had to be more resilient to the challenges that they faced.
- A Member stated that the Council had a statutory duty to ensure that safeguarding was sufficiently covered within legal services, and provided a high quality service.
- A Member enquired about how the increased costs would be covered. It was explained that this would be through the existing legal services budget. Another member asked whether the locum pay included the wider benefits of working for the Local Authority. In response, it was highlighted that this included oncosts.
- A Member asked about the difficulties of recruiting students who want a training contract, and whether legal assistants could be used in place of a solicitor. The Legal Services Manager outlined that they had created a training solicitor post, however the diverse cases that solicitors in the team manage meant that it was difficult to create a workload which had continuity that would enable the programme to work effectively. Also, it was highlighted that neighbouring authorities had experienced difficulties where courts had recently not accepted cases presented by a legal assistant.

The Head of Human Resources also outlined that changes to off-payroll working (IR35), may make working as a locum less desirable in the future. The pay increase was put at an equivalent level to Sandwell.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the application of 3 market forces increment to the solicitor posts in legal services.

Members noted the wider work that was on-going to recruit and retain solicitors and legal assistants.

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Members requested that the decision would be reviewed in 3 years to examine the effectiveness of the increase.

6. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020

The Head of Human Resources presented the report which outlined the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2020. As a result of the 2011 Localism Act, it became a requirement to present the Council's Pay Policy. It does not include teachers and is based on April 2019 pay rates.

The major changes in the report were the regarding statements and the changes to the pension admission arrangements. The pension arrangements would move from a fully funded model to a pass through arrangement, which involved a standard rate being paid, and any deficit or surplus later calculate being passed on to the Council or school. The key reason for this was the administrative burden and prevented a number of surpluses going to the contractor. This was mainly for contracts done through the school.

There was an update on the difference between the Chief Executive and the lowest paid employee. It remained the same as last years report. The multiple for the median full time salary and the Chief Executive, which was 1:5.5, which was down from 1:6 in 2018. The number of posts at Director 1 had increased from 3 to 4 as a result of a regarding for a Director.

Members raised the following questions and observations:

- A Member asked whether the pass through would only be for employees whose roles were transferred from another company, and were there any legacy contracts. It was confirmed that it would only be for individuals who were in this position, and there were no legacy contracts which would affect the Local Authority.
- A Member asked about the risk for the pensions after a school was turned into an academy. It was identified that the risk would shift from the Local Authority to the academy.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the contents of the report and **RECOMMEND** the Council's Pay Policy Statement for approval by Full Council on 4 February 2020.

The meeting finished at 4.35 pm