

EXECUTIVE
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2017

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Marcus Franks and Graham Jones

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Robert O'Reilly (Head of Human Resources), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Mollie Lock, Councillor Alan Macro and Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: John Ashworth, Councillor Billy Drummond, Councillor James Fredrickson and Councillor Rick Jones

PART I

39. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

40. Approval for a Targeted Recruitment Payment (TRP) to be included in the advert for the post of Head of Children and Family Services

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 3) which sought approval of the proposal to add a "Targeted Recruitment Payment" (TRP) to the top of Grade N to allow the Council to recruit a suitable Head of Children and Family Services (C&FS). This would be included in the advertisement for this post so that it would hopefully attract a stronger field of candidates.

Councillor Graham Jones introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the union comments that had been tabled.

Councillor Jones commented that this proposal reflected the importance of this post and the need for it to be filled by a suitable candidate. Very good progress had been made in C&FS in recent years and it was important to maintain this momentum. He added that he understood the concerns raised by the unions in relation to recruitment and retention issues, but Councillor Jones felt that a TRP was appropriate for this post.

Councillor Lynne Doherty agreed with the importance of this post and the need to recruit a strong candidate. The current Head of C&FS had been instrumental in driving the improvements of recent years. While Ofsted had assessed the service as Good, there remained areas to improve upon and the positive momentum needed to continue.

Councillor Lee Dillon added his recognition of the importance of this post and commended the successes achieved by the outgoing Head of C&FS.

Councillor Lee Dillon referred to the criticism made of the Council by both the Unison and GMB Trade Unions. Both unions voiced concern at the Council using piecemeal solutions to resolving difficulties in recruitment and retention, and the development of a more appropriate Recruitment and Retention Policy was called for which needed to include a pay review across the Council. Councillor Dillon queried whether there were plans to implement such a review.

Councillor Jones asked Councillor Dillon for his view on the union comments. Councillor Dillon gave the view that TRPs were acceptable in some instances, but he felt that the Council should review some of the points made by the unions, i.e. whether West Berkshire Council was a low paying authority, to develop a wider understanding of

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whether there was an issue with recruitment and retention in West Berkshire as a result of the Council's pay scales.

Nick Carter advised that the ability to recruit and retain staff varied across the organisation. He acknowledged that there were difficulties in some areas of the Council, i.e. in Social Care, hence this proposal. He added that further TRPs could be utilised and he would be in acceptance of that in relevant cases. However, he would question a broader use of TRPs in those service areas where recruitment and retention were not particular problems.

Nick Carter went on to explain that the Senior Management Review (SMR) conducted in 2016 reviewed the pay of senior managers. Benchmarking conducted with other local authorities highlighted some issues with Corporate Director pay and for some Heads of Service and it was agreed, post SMR, to conduct further work on the pay for senior posts and this would be reported back in due course. Nick Carter added the point that many local authorities used a range of different salary scales for paying Heads of Service.

More generally across the Council, Nick Carter reported that he did not feel that pay was an issue. The Council had always followed the national pay award. Recruitment and retention across the majority of Council services indicated that the Council was not a low paying authority and was able to remain competitive with other local authorities. He added that flexibility was sought in recruiting and retaining staff and the Council did not have a 'one size fits all' approach, but it was the case that funds were limited. Councillor Jones added that the Council's budgets were declining and the limitations of this needed to be recognised.

Councillor Dillon then queried whether the Council would employ its standard recruitment processes in recruiting to this post or whether additional methods would be sought. In response, Councillor Lynne Doherty explained that the Council's standard practices proved successful when recruiting to this post previously. It was therefore the view that the same approach be repeated particularly when considering the improved position of West Berkshire's C&FS.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that the addition of a TRP to the top of Grade N would mean the new Head of C&FS would be paid in line with the South East average. He queried however whether this provided sufficient scope to attract the right candidates and whether there would be an issue with incremental rises if the post holder was being paid at the top of a grade. Councillor Macro also voiced a concern with the fact that when the TRP was added to this post, it would move its pay to the lower end of the Corporate Director pay scale.

Councillor Doherty was pleased that West Berkshire would be in line with the South East average and would be competing on a level playing field. In addition to this, West Berkshire had the advantages of being an attractive place to work, its C&FS had moved to a Good rating and the improvement journey continued.

RESOLVED that the Targeted Recruitment Payment (TRP) as set out in the report be approved.

Other options considered: To advertise on the normal Head of Service grade N. This was rejected because intelligence from South East Employers showed that the Council would not attract a strong field of candidates on grade N alone and the subsequent delay in appointing to this post would be detrimental to the interests of the Council.

(The meeting commenced at 5.34pm and closed at 5.44pm)

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CHAIRMAN

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Date of Signature

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