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EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING of the Employment Committee held virtually on Thursday, 20 January 2022 at 11.00 am

Present

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (in the chair)

Councillor Cal Corkery
Councillor Lewis Gosling
Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Jeanette Smith

Officers Present

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services
Andy Biddle, Director of Adult Social Care
Richard Lock, Procurement Manager
Richard Webb, Finance Manager
Susan Page, Finance Manager

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Simon Boshier.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Cal Corkery declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a both a member and paid official of Unison.

Councillor Jeanette Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a full time paid official of Unison Hampshire.

3. Living Wage Financial Update (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services, Susan Page, Finance Manager and Richard Webb, Finance Manager, introduced the report which provided the committee with a financial appraisal of the impact of adopting the Real Living Wage and seeking accreditation as a Living Wage employer.

In response to questions the committee was advised that whilst a number of larger contractors which provided services on behalf of the council paid the real living wage or in excess of the real living wage, adult social care providers were the least likely to. Of the 100 adult social care providers surveyed 50 had replied, with 50% stating that they paid the real living wage. At the time of the survey the real living wage was £9.50.

During the discussion it was explained that whilst some adult social care providers paid the real living wage the rate paid to providers by the council needed to be the same for all. Therefore, any uplift would apply to all providers regardless of whether they currently paid the real living wage.

In respect of the benefits of paying the real living wage, suppliers who responded to the survey had cited improved staff retention, more motivated staff and a reduction in agency costs to fill vacancies. Whilst the council had not analysed the benefits to staff, the Living Wage Foundation listed employee benefits on its website.

The Director of Corporate Services highlighted that some retention issues existed at the council even though it paid the real living wage and the Director of Adult Services added that a lack of parity of conditions with the NHS or a defined career structure were also factors which affected the retention of carers.

The committee discussed the impacts to the council as a whole of adopting the real living wage. Whilst there would be additional costs there might also be reduced benefit payments and increased council tax revenue if people were earning higher wages.

The provision of sick pay was also highlighted, with the committee noting that some providers only paid the statutory minimum.

Members of the committee suggested the potential for bringing adult social care services in-house and believed it important that those providing care were paid the real living wage and given adequate sick pay. It was also suggested that when awarding contracts, the assessment criteria could include a social value question asking whether the provider paid the real living wage.

The committee agreed the importance of the real living wage and the aspiration that that it is paid as a minimum to everybody delivering services on behalf of the council. Whilst the predicted costs of implementing the real living wage had reduced to £1.8m from over £3m last year, it was not believed that this shortfall could be found for the 2022/23 budget without there being a large number of redundancies or cutting services. Further work on the project and costings was encouraged, with a hope that the real living wage could be implemented for 2023/24.

Following the discussion the update was NOTED.

The meeting concluded at 11.08 am.

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Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Chair