

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.34 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2024

**COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWER HAMLETS TOWN HALL, 160 WHITECHAPEL
ROAD, LONDON E1 1BJ**

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Bellal Uddin	-(Chair)
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	-(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	-(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	-(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)
Councillor Sabina Khan	

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Gail Simpson	-(Interim Head of Human Resources)
Catriona Hunt	-(Head of Human Resources)
Richard Penn	-(Advisor to Mayor Lutfur Rahman & CEO)
Carole S. Bowes	-(Employment Lawyer, Legal Services, Directorate Law, Probity and Governance)
Justina Bridgeman	-(Democratic Services Officer, Committees)

Officers Present Virtually:

Julie Lorraine	-(Corporate Director, Resources)
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1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 28 November 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

3. WORK PLAN

Noted.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Employee Relations Casework Policy Update 23/24 Q2

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director of Resources, gave the Committee an overview of the employee relations casework from 01 October 2023 to 31 December 2023. Members were informed that in regard to the Housing Options issue, Trade unions indicated to the Chief Executive that they would support a vote of strike action. A subsequent meeting with union members was conducted and written requests were made for a listening group facilitated by a director with staff, and consideration be given for a formal mediation with management and staff.

Other issues related to scheduled meetings after close of business, inconsistencies with paid overtime between service teams and flexi time concerns. A meeting has been scheduled for 11 March 2024 with Paul Patterson, Corporate Director for Housing and Regeneration, and the service Director. A consistent approach in addressing the trade unions will be held.

Committee members were informed that a manager who staff expressed concerns about has now left the organisation. The outcome of the collective grievance is expected shortly.

Further to questions from the Committee, Julie Lorraine, Gail Simpson, Catriona Hunt and Carole Bowes;

- Clarified that the increase in grievances relate to Tower Hamlet Homes cases received now back in-house. A trend analysis on Tribunals with quarterly comparisons can be submitted to the Committee for consideration.
- Observed that there are ongoing tribunal cases which began several years ago and details can be added to the Employee Relations Casework report going forward if required. A review of the Acas pre-conciliation process is currently being conducted.

- Clarified that changes in the top tier structure of the council account for data located in the former Place directorate and newly established Communities directorate. Future reports will specify where they initially come from.
- Confirmed that the waste services dispute has been resolved and approximately 127 temporary staff members are now permanent members of the council. The trade unions and HR staff were praised for their hard work in negotiations to resolve the matter.
- Explained that an independent specialist and the monitoring officer are currently reviewing all outstanding grievance cases.
- Noted that an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available for staff to discuss any work or wellbeing related concerns. Full details are available on the intranet.

Following the report, Committee members noted that a comprehensive approach to resolving staff issues is required.

RESOLVED that;

1. A trend analysis on Tribunals with quarterly comparisons to be submitted to the Committee for review.
2. The report be noted.

4.2 Update on Senior Recruitment

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director of Resources, introduced the report which provided the current senior recruitment positions to senior management vacancies and the interim arrangements in place. The report was submitted late due to the delay in obtaining confirmation of appointments and announcements regarding postholders. The required pie chart amendments were noted, although overall figures remain correct.

Following the report, Committee members requested a timeline of when senior management posts will be filled.

RESOLVED that;

1. Timelines on when senior management posts will be filled be submitted to the Committee for review.
2. The report on the current position on the recruitment to senior management vacancies be noted.

4.3 Update on Disciplinary Action Process for Statutory Officers

Richard Penn, Advisor to Mayor Lutfur Rahman and the Chief Executive Officer, submitted the report which outlined new procedures in regard to disciplinary processes for the Head of Paid Service (CEO), Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal Services) and the Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer). The report was delayed due to consultations with stakeholders.

Mr Penn informed members that the constitution does not currently have adequate procedures in place for dealing with statutory officers, if one of them was subject to disciplinary action. The Committee was asked to provide all three senior staff with the same special procedures and contractual entitlement that the CEO already has, to ensure a level of external independence within the process. The constitution would require amendments if it were approved.

The Committee were given a brief overview of the process, which would include the establishment of a politically balanced investigation and Disciplinary Committee, to examine any senior statutory officer concerns requiring disciplinary action. If it were deemed necessary, an independent investigator would then be commissioned and findings considered by the independent members of the Standards Committee. If a recommendation for dismissal was made, this would be taken to Full Council to give final approval.

A second request was made for an Appeal Sub-committee to be formed for recommendations other than dismissal. If a recommendation for suspension was made, this would be delegated to the HR Director in consultation with the Chair of the Investigation and Disciplinary Committee.

Further to questions from the committee, Richard Penn;

- Clarified that the constitution requires amendment, the revised processes are a contractual obligation for the Chief Executive and should be extended to the other senior statutory staff members. The Local Government Association has recommended councils adopt this procedure as a matter of course.
- Suggested that the wording of the recommendations be amended to 'Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support 'or equivalent and in consultation with the Mayor, to ensure this is reflected in the constitution.

Following the report, On a vote of 4 in favour 0 against and 1 abstention,

Committee members **RESOLVED** that;

1. The report wording is amended to 'Delegate to the Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support **or equivalent and in consultation with the Mayor** the Chair of the investigation and

Disciplinary Sub-Committee the power to suspend a Relevant Officer in cases of urgency’

2. The report wording is amended to ‘Agree that the Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support **or equivalent and in consultation with the Mayor** is delegated authority to make minor non-material changes to the procedures set out in Appendix 1, following consultation with the Chair of the Human Resources Committee before the final version is presented to Council for agreement.’
3. The report on the updated Disciplinary Action Processes for Statutory Officers be **AGREED** and noted.

4.4 Pay Policy 2024/25

Julie Lorraine requested members consider the draft 2024/25 pay policy statement and propose any changes. Members were also requested to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support, Chair of the HR Committee and Monitoring Officer, any minor amendments to the pay policy statement. The report was delayed due to an urgent policy recommendation for submittance to Full Council on 20 March 2024.

Ms Lorraine noted minor amendments in the report, primarily the wording associated with the threshold and lump sum, expanded the wording that relates to the benchmarking to include the wider market and amending the wording to ‘Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support or equivalent ‘

Following the report, the Committee requested;

- Amending the wording to ‘Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support or equivalent and in consultation with the Mayor, Chair of the HR Committee and Monitoring Officer, any minor changes to the 2024/25 pay policy statement’.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report wording is amended to ‘Delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Workforce, OD and Business Support, **or equivalent and in consultation with the Mayor**, Chair of the HR Committee and Monitoring Officer, any minor changes to the 2024/25 pay policy statement.
2. The report on the pay policy statement 2024/25 be **AGREED** and noted

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

1. That in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the remaining agenda item contained information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting ended at 7.44 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Bellal Uddin

Human Resources Committee