

Minutes of the meeting of Employment panel held at Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford on Monday 16 July 2018 at 10.00 am

Present:

Councillors: H Bramer, DW Greenow, RI Matthews, RJ Phillips and AJW Powers

Officers: Andrew Kerry, Alistair Neill and Tracey Sampson

Vice-chairperson RJ Phillips took the chair in the absence of the chairperson.

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor AW Johnson.

50. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Councillor DW Greenow substituted for Councillor AW Johnson.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

52. MINUTES

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting of 21 May 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

53. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

54. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

55. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT ROLES

The organisational development business partner introduced the report. The views of the panel were sought on proposals for flexible approaches to incentives for hard to fill roles. It was noted that there were a variety of reasons why the council might find it difficult to recruit to certain posts and to retain staff in those posts.

The head of HR and organisational development would determine which roles should be considered as hard to fill and retain to and advise on the application of enhancements to terms and conditions. The definition of hard to fill would include where a recruitment campaign had been unsuccessful or where data showed a lack of national supply of qualified individuals for a role.

It was noted that the council had looked at the practices of other councils and in particular those of neighbouring councils where Herefordshire would be in competition for staff.

Failure to recruit to roles resulted in increased use of agency staff and consequent increased costs.

The following points were raised in discussion of the report:

- the council had to respond to the market place;
- national agreements were in place around basic pay for social workers but not all councils were part of this national arrangement and some councils, including neighbouring councils, had added supplemental payments to boost recruitment;
- there were around 500 vacancies for social workers in the region at this time so there was a high level of competition for the same pool of people;
- care should be taken that enhancements to boost recruitment and retention did not impact on the morale of other members of staff;
- market supplement arrangements could be applied and removed as necessary;
- results of the regular confidential staff survey were reported to the management board and a link would be provided for members of the panel to the most recent figures;
- some standard questions were used in the staff survey for benchmarking, then additional questions were added depending on the focus for each survey, it would be possible to include questions to judge the impact of the policy;
- national benchmarking figures included turnover, vacancy levels and percentage of agency staff
- turnover was just under 17% in children's social care but was expected to rise when the latest figures were produced, percentage of agency workers was just below the national average, key metrics were reported to services on a monthly basis;
- there had been an increase in the number of CVs received for vacancies in recent months but the quality of applications had not been good;
- the policy was not expected to have significant resource implications, there would be an element of rebalancing within budgets as successful recruitment of permanent staff would result in savings on agency costs, specific additional funding for recruitment of social workers was previously agreed by cabinet;
- social work posts that this policy would apply to relate to statutory work so the council could not use other organisations, for example charities, to provide services;
- there had been an historical pattern of qualified individuals moving into agency employment due to higher rates of pay, Herefordshire was part of a regional agreement which capped rates paid to agencies, this had helped to manage

costs but councils on the borders of that region such as in Wales did not form part of that agreement.

It was requested that the implementation of this policy be reported to councillors and particularly to the employment panel on an annual basis.

Resolved:

the panel supported the implementation of the proposed policy subject to consideration of reporting mechanisms

56. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved that:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act (as amended) as indicated below.

This report is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 1 (information relating to an individual).

57. APPOINTMENT OF ACTING DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND PLACE

The Head of HR and Organisational Development outlined the purpose of the report and the process that was to be followed.

It was noted that there was no standard usage for the term 'interim' in relation to appointments in Herefordshire Council and it was agreed that for clarity the role would be titled Acting Director for Economy and Place as the term 'acting' was widely understood.

It was noted that recruitment for a permanent director was expected to start early in 2019 with an appointment to be made in late spring 2019, after the next set of council elections.

The chief executive gave a summary of planned structural changes which would impact on the post and how the role of the Acting Director would differ from that held by the current post holder. He confirmed that a suitably qualified internal candidate had expressed an interest in the role on an acting up basis and a CV and supporting statement from the candidate had been provided to the panel.

It was confirmed that in the event the internal candidate was appointed to the acting director role, arrangements would be put in place to backfill. The chief executive was confident sufficient capacity existed within the relevant teams but if necessary additional capacity would be brought in.

In discussion of the post it was noted that:

- the use of the word 'place' in the title did not necessarily convey the same meaning as 'communities' which it replaced but the term was widely used in local government;

- there should be an even playing field for other candidates in the event that the acting director applied for the permanent role;
- it was expected that there would be candidates for the permanent role, there were important projects planned for the next few years which would attract potential candidates;
- if the internal candidate chose not to apply for the permanent role or was unsuccessful then they would return to their substantive post;
- the grading of the acting director post would not change in light of the structural changes.

The panel adjourned at 11:08 and an interview of the candidate took place.

The panel reconvened at 12:06.

Having concluded the appointment process, which consisted of reviewing the candidate's CV and supporting statement and an interview it was resolved that:

(a) the assistant director for environment and place be temporarily appointed for up to 18 months to the role of acting director for economy and place.

The meeting ended at 12.07 pm

Chairman