

## REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Wednesday, 15 January 2025 commencing at 10.10 am and finishing at 11.00 am

### **Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak

Councillor John Howson

Councillor Kieron Mallon

Councillor Nigel Simpson

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer; Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer; Jo Pitman, Strategic Pay and Reward Manager; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Manager

*The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and additional documents, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **3/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda No. 1)

There were no apologies.

### **4/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE**

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

### **5/25 MINUTES**

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were approved.

### **6/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda No. 4)

No requests were received.

### **7/25 GENDER EQUALITY AND ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORTS 2024**

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee was asked to note the Gender Equality and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports and to consider recommending that Council note them ahead of being submitted to the Gender Pay Gap Reporting Service, and made available to the Council's employees, and on its website by 30 March 2025, in accordance with statutory requirements.

Jo Pitman summarised the reports. She explained that the Gender Equality data and report was limited to those employees who are male or female in accordance with the Government reporting requirements. She further explained that whilst it was permissible to exclude those who did not identify as male or female no-one had been excluded from this report. She also reported that whilst the Council's gender equality pay gap had widened from 1.2% in 2023 to 2.95% in 2024, the council performs very well against its peers, regionally, same size employers, and within the public sector. The Committee was assured that Officers were not complacent about this and would continue to focus on continuous improvement in line with the commitment to being a high performing council.

In the Ethnicity Pay Gap report, the percentage difference in mean hourly rate between white employees and employees who identify as Black, Asian, or of minority ethnicity background was 2.59% (51p per hour). This represented a significant increase from 0.22% in March 2023 (4p per hour).

Officers were considering how to provide more regular data / performance reports on this subject which could enable them to take action at an earlier stage.

In response to questions from Members, officers replied as follows:

- The figures did not include employees of maintained schools.
- Those on maternity leave were not counted as leavers.
- The lower figure of 1.3% in 2023 may have been related to a change of the council's workforce profile. Officers would look into that further.
- Employees who leave the council are offered exit interviews but not all take up the offer.
- The increased frequency of gender equality and ethnicity pay gap performance reports will be agreed with the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) but quarterly had been suggested.
- There was a range of ways to influence positive change:
  - Working with key partners, including the REACH and Women's Networks, which was in the process of being put in place.
  - Sharing information more widely amongst the HR and Cultural Change Service, senior leaders, and managers on a more regular basis to ensure a joined-up and collaborative effort towards continuous improvement.
  - Training
  - Using the organisation redesign programme (restructure) as an opportunity to appoint or promote females and candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds to vacant senior leadership roles.

- Increasing awareness of possible bias in shortlisting, and making greater use of Tribepad, the Council's new digital applicant tracking system (launched in September 2024) to screen role profiles and job advertisements for unconscious bias.
  - Making greater and more effective use of the data being progressively built into Tribepad.
- The emphasis in recruitment is always on getting the best candidate.
  - Apprenticeships were seen as an opportunity to move in the right direction by the Committee and more information on that area was requested.

The importance of objective criteria for selection was emphasised as there could be a tendency to be influenced by one's own past experiences.

Members welcomed the very useful report and expressed thanks for how well it had been presented. There was general support for the suggestion of providing reports to SLT on a quarterly basis.

The following was requested by Members of the Committee:

- Information about the journey of progression within the council to support the council's commitment to growing our own talent and inclusivity (focussed specifically on women, and colleagues who identify as Black, Asian, or of minority ethnicity background).
- Information on the number of apprentices and their progression within the council based on age, gender, and ethnicity.
- A better understanding of what the qualitative data arising from exit interviews is telling the council and what is being done about it, particularly amongst women and colleagues who identify as Black, Asian, or of minority ethnicity background.

The recommendations were put to the Committee and were approved.

**RESOLVED to:**

**a) Note the 2024 gender equality and ethnicity pay gap reports.**

**to RECOMMEND COUNCIL to:**

**b) Note the council's statutory gender equality pay gap report of 2024 and approve it for onward submission to the Gender Pay Gap Service by 30 March 2025.**

**c) Note the council's voluntary ethnicity pay gap report of 2024.**

The report before the Committee dealt with the Council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011 for all councils to agree and publish a pay policy statement every financial year, and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency (updated in 2014) that councils publish prescribed information on senior pay, jobs, and organisational structures.

Jo Pitman summarised the report and highlighted changes from the previous year, notably:

1. Presentation of the information to be more transparent about the council's total reward package.
2. The Statement reflected the new senior leadership structure, specifically the statutory and non-statutory Chief and Deputy Chief officers, including the Chief Fire Officer, and naming those with remuneration of over £150k per annum.
3. That the council pays above the national minimum wage, but slightly below the Oxford living wage and real living wage by association with the national pay bargaining arrangements and pay structure, and that this was being reviewed.
4. Improved transparency about the job evaluation schemes used by the council.
5. Improved transparency about the council's senior leadership pay arrangements, including:
  - how the Chief Executive's pay is determined and when it is reviewed
  - the collective agreement with UNISON for a local pay structure and move away from automatic time served increments
6. That the gap between the highest paid and lowest paid employees had reduced.
7. Clarity about the Council's position in relation to the re-employment of former employees who have received severance pay from the council, setting a minimum period of two years before they could be re-employed by the council as part of its commitment to demonstrating value for money and effective use of the public purse in all aspects of its work.

Members expressed concern at the difficulty faced by schools and the home care sector of recruiting into lower paid positions with competition from the retail sector, and the impact it has upon encouraging people to join the local government sector.

In response to a question, officers explained that an independent assessment of the size of the council's Director roles and pay benchmarking had been conducted by Korn Ferry Hay, which had led to a new pay structure and two levels of pay for Directors. This had created a more consistent pay structure compared to the previous position, which had been influenced by historical variances.

The recommendations were put to the Committee and agreed.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Approve the 2025 / 26 pay policy statement**

**to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL to:**

**b) Adopt the 2025 / 26 pay policy statement and agree to its publication on the council website and intranet.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....