

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Services Committee held on 16 January 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Mark Coxshall (Chair), Deborah Arnold (Vice-Chair), Barry Johnson, John Kent, Fraser Massey, James Thandi and Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
John Jones, Director Law & Governance, and Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

40. Minutes

The minutes of the General Services Committee meeting on 4 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

41. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

42. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Pay Policy - report to follow

The Director of HR, OD and Transformation introduced the report stating that the recommendations sought a decision from the committee on amending the pay policy (which was agreed in February 2022) mid-year following the finalisation of the National Joint Council (NJC) pay award. Thurrock's negotiations with trades unions over the current pay policy had been complex but were agreed. The NJC Award had been finalised in November 2022 and trades unions at Thurrock had formally requested its implementation. Officers highlighted that in the context of the recently announced Section 114 notice this additional spend, if the amendment was agreed, would put further financial pressure on providing a balanced budget. It was highlighted that the amended increase did not apply to senior management pay scales.

The Committee had three options:

1. To implement the amendment and back date it to 1st April 2022.
2. To defer the amendment.
3. To partially implement the amendment.

Cllr Coxshall was of a view that deferment was not an option and staff were not to blame for the current financial situation the Council found itself in. Cllr Kent agreed that neither deferment or partial implementation were appropriate and staff had been waiting a long time. Cllr Arnold felt implementation was the morally right choice and deferment would simply kick the issue down the road.

Cllr Massey said he thought a partial implementation might be possible but in his opinion would not be fair to staff and agreed with the views of other Members.

Officers highlighted that deferring the issue would create complex negotiations in the future and a partial implementation would require further negotiations with unions on clauses within the current procedure and rules, which in themselves would be complex and may not be successful.

Following a question from the Chair officers confirmed that the Council was not late in implementing this amendment. The NJC award had only been finalised in November and although some councils had implemented the amendment in December 2022, considering Thurrock's current situation, a January implementation was reasonable. This was the first time Thurrock's pay policy, which was collectively agreed with unions, had been significantly different to the NJC award figure.

Members discussed the third recommendation of the report and Cllr Kent noted that the Committee was not being specifically asked to agree a review of pay and staffing costs. Officers explained that Commissioners expected the Council to review all areas of spend in light of the budget deficit, which included staff costs. The Council had already reviewed and implemented new pay scales in 2019 and expenses had been reviewed a couple of years ago too. Members did not want to endorse any review or its findings without first knowing the detail. Members and officers agreed that a detailed terms of reference for any review would be brought back to the committee for consideration. Members acknowledged that a review may be required under the terms of the intervention.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. The Committee agree option 1, to implement the in year amendments to the pay policy.**
- 2. The Committee recommend to Council to revise the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement.**
- 3. The Committee note that the commissioner recommends a full review of pay arrangements is carried out before any future agreements are made; this needs to include a review of policies for increments and all other pay allowances to ensure all opportunities for mitigating the pay growth are considered.**

The meeting finished at 6.37 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**