

Minutes of a Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY, on Monday, 17 March 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Theo Butt Philip (Chair)

Cllr David Fothergill
Cllr Andy Kendall
Cllr Graham Oakes
Cllr Faye Purbrick
Cllr Mike Stanton

Cllr Mark Healey
Cllr Liz Leyshon
Cllr Emily Pearlstone
Cllr Leigh Redman
Cllr Tony Grimes

60 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Sarah Wakefield
Councillor Tony Robbins

61 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2

It was resolved that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 13th January 2025, being proposed by Councillor Emily Pearlston and seconded by Councillor Andy Kendell to be a true record of the meeting.

(Vote: unanimous)

62 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were none.

63 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were none.

64 Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 - Agenda Item 5

The Strategic Manager HR Business Partner introduced the report and highlighted:

- The annual pay policy statement is a legal requirement, effective from April 1, 2025, for the 2025-2026 financial year.
- The key amendments in the pay policy were:

1. **Corporate Leadership Restructure:** Changes to senior leadership roles

(Section 2).

2. **Clarification of Legal Definitions:** Inclusion of deputy chief officers (Sections 3, 4.3, and 12).
3. **Legal Reference Update:** Correction of outdated legislation date (Section 6).
4. **Salary Pay Data Update:** Reflecting the 2024-2025 pay award (Sections 7, 8, and 9).
5. **Professional Subscriptions Exceptions:** Clarifications for lawyers and employee retention cases (Paragraph 10.4).
 - The proposed amendments were shared with trade unions and no feedback had been received.
 - The national pay awards for 2025-2026 were pending.

It was confirmed that where it stated in section 5 of the pay principles, that Somerset Council was being compared with Councils of similar size, such as Cumbria, that this referred to spend. It was explained that salaries were compared with the market. It was further confirmed that when the Local Government Association (LGA) share their data at the end of this financial year, a more realistic comparison could be done.

It was pointed out that primarily Councils that were previously County Councils of similar size were the basis for comparison as the data set still had not been updated. That would take about 2-3 years.

Additionally, Somerset Council compared with similar Councils within their Family Group, such as Buckinghamshire, Dorset, and Wiltshire, to assess comparable pay levels. Once the new data set was obtained, the Council would have their new family group and then they would have the ability to compare against that too.

It was confirmed that if the pay award was agreed, section 8 (or any other section that related to pay) of this policy would be updated but this would depend on the timing of the pay award. The redundancies that would be coming into being from the 1st of April or a little while after that, would change the median salary points. Legally this only had to be done once a year but it would still be determined at a later stage when this would happen but when it did the change would be made.

After further deliberations around the benchmark from LGA regarding salaries and the direction of travel in relation to the gap between the lowest paid employee and the Chief Executive, Councillor Theo Butt Philip proposed to approve the Pay Policy Statement, noting it would have effect from 1 April 2025, which was seconded by Councillor Graham Oakes, to:

1. Recommend that the Chief Executive submit the Pay Policy Statement for 2025-26, to Full Council for approval subject to the deletion of the second paragraph of 10.4, as well as incorporating information relating to the direction of travel between the highest and lowest paid members of staff in future versions of the report.

2. Note that the Pay Policy Statement will require in-year amendments to reflect the 2025/26 pay awards once agreed.

Resolved:

To:

2. Recommend that the Chief Executive submit the Pay Policy Statement for 2025-26, to Full Council for approval subject to the deletion of the second paragraph of 10.4, as well as incorporating information relating to the direction of travel between the highest and lowest paid members of staff in future versions of the report.
2. Note that the Pay Policy Statement will require in-year amendments to reflect the 2025/26 pay awards once agreed.

(Vote: Unanimous)

(The meeting ended: 14:42)

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CHAIR