

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

29 February 2024

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 3:00pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (ex-officio), L. Hacking, M.C. Legg, A.S. Mier (Substitute) and H.L. Timpe (Substitute).

Committee Members present remotely: Councillors S.J. Coleman (Vice-Chair) and Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Interim Deputy Chief Executive, Human Resources Manager and Democratic Services Manager.

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HR23/10. **APOLOGIES FOR ABESENCE AND SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeeawon and Prochak MBE.

It was noted that Councillors Timpe and Mier were present as substitutes for Councillors Jeeawon and Prochak respectively.

HR23/11. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interest or dispensations noted.

HR23/12. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That the press and public be excluded whilst matters containing exempt information, as prescribed by Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended and relating to Minute HR23/13, was under consideration. The report submitted in connection with this item and which contains information exempt from publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act shall remain confidential if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

HR23/13. **UNISON PAY AWARD DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

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Consideration was given to the confidential report of the Chief Executive and Interim People Programme Manager which set out the rationale and options for the Committee to agree in principle a revised pay offer proposal for 2023/24 to resolve the current Unison pay dispute. The current dispute had arisen following the HR Committee's

decision on 30 August 2023 to confirm a final pay offer of 3% with effect from September 2023.

Following this decision Unison undertook a consultative, then formal, ballot of Rother District Council membership and secured a mandate for strike action effective from 29 February to 14 August 2024. Intended dates of action were notified on 22 February 2024, with the first strike days planned for 7 and 8 March 2024.

The Staff side claim was to match the National Joint Council (NJC) claim and rejoin national pay bargaining, with pay awards implemented from April each year. To match the national pay award would create approximately £150,000 additional cost to the Council (on an ongoing basis).

An informal meeting with Unison had taken place on 23 February 2024, which sought to understand the key issues for the union membership and determine an appropriate proposal in an effort to avoid strike action, which could prove highly disruptive and reputationally damaging given the density of union membership in key public facing services.

The report provided Members with historic pay data which demonstrated that there had been unprecedented pay rises both in public and private sector in the past two years. The Office for National Statistics reported annual average regular earnings growth for the public sector was 6.6% in September to November 2023, and for the private sector this was 6.5%. It was reported that historic Council pay awards had not kept pace with NJC awards and there was a general view that pay was becoming increasingly contentious, impacting morale and driving staff turnover, primarily in professional/qualified roles.

The report gave details of a number of options for Members to consider which sought to minimise financial impact, whilst demonstrating a willingness to negotiate, rebuild trust and confidence within the workforce and move pay discussions forward, with a view to align future pay awards with the financial year. The details of the options, with a range of indicative costs, were set out in Appendix B to the report.

Members debated the options and authorised officers to proceed to negotiate with the favoured option. It was noted that dependent on the outcome of the negotiations, further financial approvals might be required from Cabinet and / or Full Council.

**RESOLVED:** That Officers negotiate the preferred option with Unison who would then review, and, if accepted, commend the proposal to members and suspend industrial action pending the outcome of a vote.

(This matter was considered exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended).

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 3:50pm

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