

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Monday, 1st February, 2016

Present: Cllr Ms S V Spence (Chairman), Cllr P F Bolt (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr Mrs S M Hall, Cllr N J Heslop, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr C P Smith and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, V M C Branson and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell and S C Perry

PART 1 - PUBLIC

GP 16/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

GP 16/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 5 October 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GP 16/3 MINUTES OF ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group held on 6 January 2016 be received and noted and the recommendations at Minute ER 16/3 be approved.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

GP 16/4 LOCALISM ACT - PAY POLICY

The report of the Director of Central Services advised that the Localism Act 2011 required local authorities to review their pay policy statements for each financial year. The report summarised the requirements of the Act and presented an updated Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17. It was noted that there had been no changes in the Council's remuneration policy and the substantive content of the updated statement was identical to that adopted by the Council in February 2012.

RECOMMENDED: That the Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 set out in Annex 1 to the report be commended for adoption by the Council.



*** Referred to Council****DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 3, PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION****GP 16/5 PAY AWARD 2016**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive which examined a range of factors relevant to the issue of a pay award for employees in 2016/17. These included prevailing economic conditions, comparative pay settlements, movement in the retail price and consumer price indices and the Council's budget position.

In introducing the report the Chief Executive made reference to the provision for a pay award in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the appropriateness of considering a measured award in recognition of the continuing efforts of staff. It was considered that the proposal for a 2% pay award over two years with the total increase "up front" was an appropriate response in the light of the forthcoming changes in National Insurance contributions for employees (the majority) within the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Chief Executive explained that any lesser award would result in many staff seeing an actual reduction in pay due to the removal of the pension scheme "contracting out" of SERPS. She also highlighted the current problems of retention and recruitment of staff given that over the past few years pay awards had been limited and had not kept pace with those elsewhere, particularly in the private sector.

Members were advised that employees had been fully informed of the financial challenges facing the authority through the Joint Employee Consultative Committee and Unison. The report set out an alternative pay claim submitted by Unison requesting a 3% consolidated increase, a lump sum payment of £500 and an underpinning hourly rate of £8.25 (Living Wage Foundation Living Wage).

During the debate Members commended the efforts of staff in challenging financial circumstances and their commitment to the Council and expressed regret that a higher award was not feasible. However, in order to have any impact for staff whilst observing the government's "cap", it was considered reasonable to make a two year front-loaded award of 2% thereby sending a positive message to current and future staff but remaining within budget.

RESOLVED: That a 2% pay award over two years from 1 April 2016 be approved with the next pay review not then due until 1 April 2018.

GP 16/6 ANNUAL REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the outcome of the annual review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and its consideration by the Audit Committee on 25 January 2016. It was noted that no substantive changes were proposed although the latter Committee had commended the Policy for endorsement subject to two amendments regarding encouragement to raise a concern even if unsure about the precise criteria for doing so and procedure for verbal complaints. The Chief Executive indicated that staff had been consulted on the Policy via the Joint Employee Consultative Committee and were content.

RESOLVED: That the Whistleblowing Policy set out at Annex 1 to the report be approved subject to the inclusion in paragraph 6.1 of advice to raise a concern even if unsure about the precise criteria for doing so; and the amendment of the third bullet point of paragraph 6.6 regarding verbal complaints to read: "...the employee is encouraged to write down any relevant information and date it."

GP 16/7 AMENDMENT TO THE STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

The report of the Director of Central Services presented an amended Staff Code of Conduct containing a new section 8 on Equality and Diversity in anticipation of the publication of a revised Equalities Policy and Equalities Objectives.

RESOLVED: That the amendment to the Staff Code of Conduct set out in the Annex to the report be approved.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**GP 16/8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE**DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 3, PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION****GP 16/9 ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES**

(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual)

The report of the Management Team presented for approval a number of establishment changes arising from the on-going operational management of the Council's services. It was noted that the proposals would result in net savings of £162,872, a proportion of which comprised "in-service efficiencies" reflected in the Revenue Estimates. New net savings of £15,407 would count towards future savings targets.

Members recognised the flexibility of staff in undertaking new responsibilities or working in different ways and requested that their appreciation be conveyed accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the proposals and establishment adjustments set out in the report be endorsed as follows with immediate effect:

- (1) the hours of post DV0103 (Health & Safety Officer, M9) be reduced from 37 to 22.5 hours per week;
- (2) Post DJ0906 (Senior Planning Officer M9, 30 hours) be deleted;
- (3) Post DF0526 (Compliance Officer, scale 3/4, 22 hours) be deleted;
- (4) the established hours of Post DF1001 (Benefits Officer, scale 2/3/4) be increased from 26 to 37 hours;
- (5) the hours of Post DF0522 (Training and Systems Officer, scale 5/6) be reduced from 32 to 30 hours;
- (6) Post DF0801 (Chief Internal Auditor, M5, 37 hours) be deleted;
- (7) the re-grading of Posts DF0804 and DF0805 (Internal Auditor, 37 hours) to scale 2/6 (career grades) be noted;
- (8) it be noted that the 'chief audit executive' responsibilities under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards are attached to Post DF0802 and the title of the post be confirmed as "Audit and Assurance Manager";
- (9) Post DR0004 (Senior Legal Officer, grade M9, 18.5 hours) be deleted;
- (10) Post DB0324 (Customer Services Support Officer, grade M9, 37 hours) be deleted;
- (11) the Legal Services temporary staff provision of £16,000 be deleted in the 2016/17 Estimates;
- (12) a new post of Solicitor (grade M6, 37 hours) be created;

- (13) Post DG1101 (Leisure Services Officer, scale 6/SO, 37 hours) be deleted;
- (14) a sum of £24,921 be ring-fenced from the overall savings accruing from the deletion of Post DG1101;
- (15) the post of Waste Services Officer DG2002 (scale 4-6, 37 hours) be deleted;
- (16) the re-designation of Post DG2003 from Waste Services Inspector to Senior Waste and Enforcement Officer be confirmed and re-graded from scale 4/5 to scale 6;
- (17) the re-designation of Posts DG2009 and DG2008 from Environmental Enforcement Officer to Waste and Enforcement Officer be confirmed and re-graded from scale 3/4 to scale 5;
- (18) the re-grading of Post DG2012 Waste Services Manager (Operations) from M9 to M8 be confirmed;
- (19) the re-designation of Post DG2007 from Waste Services Admin Officer to Waste and Enforcement Support Officer, the reduction of the hours of this post to 18.5 per week and the re-grading from scale 3 to scale 4 be confirmed; and
- (20) the creation of a new post of Waste and Enforcement Support Officer, scale 4 at 18.5 hours per week be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm