

Minutes of Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee

**Thursday 21 October 2021 at 10.00 am
in the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor R Singh (Chair);
Councillors Crompton, L Giles, Hartwell, I Padda and Simms.

Also present: Neil Cox (Director – Business Strategy and Change) and
Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager).

21/21 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

22/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

XX/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 23, 24, 25, 30 March, 1 April, 16 and 21 July, 5 and 26 August and 22 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.



23/21

Urgent Business

There were no urgent items to consider.

24/21

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to any individual.

25/21

Arrangements for the Appointment of an Interim Director of Human Resources

Consideration was given to proposals to extend the current interim arrangements for the post of Director of Human Resources.

In August 2019, West Midlands Employers had been approached to secure the services of an interim human resources professional to undertake a review of the HR policies and procedures at the Council, in light of a review that was being undertaken by the Local Government Association, as well as various historical cases involving employees. An Interim Director HR had subsequently been recruited for an initial period of 12 weeks with the option to extend for a period of up to a year should the demands of the role require it.

Subsequent extensions to the role had been approved in accordance with Chief Officer Scheme of Delegations, in order to address a number of significant human resources and employee relations matters including the departure of two senior members of staff from HR, the senior leadership restructure and the organisation's response to COVID 19. The current contract was due to expire on 31 October 2021.

Pending the recruitment of a Head of Human Resources, which had been advertised in September, it was decided that contact would be made to secure the services of an external recruitment consultancy to undertake executive search activity as only one suitable candidate had been identified at this stage.

The final appointment to this role was a matter for Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Sub Committee. It was anticipated that it may take up to 4 months to fill the vacancy if it was an external appointment and the successful candidate had to give 3 months' notice.

It was therefore proposed to extend the post of Interim Director – HR for a further 6 months.

The Committee, in considering the proposals, raised a number of issues and concerns as follows:-

- why it had taken so long to bring a report to Committee on the extension when the current contract was due to expire in 10 days' time;
- what measures had been taken to appoint to the vacant Head of HR post;
- why an acting up arrangement was not deemed suitable in the interim;
- the cost of the current position if an extension was approved.

Whilst the Committee was minded to approve the recommendation, members asked that:-

- consideration be given to changing the criteria for appointing a Head of HR to enable a wider pool of suitable candidates to apply;
- the extension of the Interim Director HR be considered for a period of up to six months only and for the post holder to consider working reduced hours to minimise the cost to the Council;
- the extension commence from 21 October 2021;
- the Chair of the Committee be kept updated on the latest position so as to reassure the Committee that the matter has been resolved as quickly as possible;
- the previous extension reports undertaken using officer delegations, be submitted to the Chair.

Resolved:-

- (1) that Sue Stanhope be appointed to the role of Interim Director of Human Resources for a further period of up to six months, with effect from 21 October 2021, with the option of working reduced hours;

- (2) that the Director Business Strategy and Change:
- considers changing the criteria for appointing a Head of HR to enable a wider pool of suitable candidates to apply;
 - updates the Chair of the Committee on the latest recruitment position so as to reassure the Committee that the matter is being resolved as quickly as possible;
 - provides copies of the previous extension reports approved via the use of chief officer delegations for the interim HR arrangements to the Chair of the Committee.

Meeting ended at 10.59 am

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