

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL ON 24 AUGUST 2023 FROM CABINET ON 1 AUGUST 2023

CAB26

### STAFF PAY AWARD 2023-24

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube](#)

Cabinet received a report which reminded Members that the Council's annual pay increase for all employees was locally determined, having regard to national pay and labour market information. This paper recommended the pay increase for 2023/24 and outlined the budget implications. The report set out background information on inflation figures, public sector pay offers and pay settlements and the current positions with national negotiations.

The need to balance financial probity and transparency with the need to recruit staff so as to be able to deliver the financial objectives was stressed. Attention was drawn to the difficulty recruiting staff to senior and professional jobs despite recruiting to higher in the grade and offering training, progress schemes, hybrid working and flexi scheme.

Comments from Unison were included in the paper.

Councillor Parish asked the following questions around the points raised at the Panel meeting:

- Why did the proposal retain the same figures for all staff this year when the previous year higher paid staff received less. Executive Director – D Gates responded that the reason was that the proposal equated to a 22% rise for lower paid staff compared to 9 % for higher paid staff. Inflation over the 2 years from April 21 to April 23 totalled 17.7% (CPI) and 22.5% (RPI). To propose less than 5% for all staff would be de motivating for staff given budget provision made.
- Could a response be given on the comment raised about the increase to the top of all pay scales being a 'ticking time bomb'. The Executive Director explained that without the increase staff on the tops of grades did not receive an increase on pay and only a one off payment in line with the prp scheme. It previously had meant that savings on budget provision had been made because staff were on the top of the grade and given no increase. It was anticipated that potential increase in prp payments would equate to less than £20,000 pa which would be within budget provision.
- Why was the proposal to increase the top of all pay grades not just those where there were recruitment difficulties. It was explained that particular difficulties were experienced recruiting to grades PG9 and above. The lower grades would be increased by smaller amounts as the staff were getting a larger pay increase. The proposals retained the differentials between grades.
- Why was the £750 not only being paid to lower paid staff. The Executive Director explained that it was being done to reflect the gap that all employees had experienced over the last 2 years in the cost of living verses pay awards. It reflected a higher percentage for lower paid staff.

- What would be the impact of only paying the £750 to those employees receiving the £1925 payment. It was noted that the impact on staff morale would be as previously outlined and that staff immediately above any 'cut off' point would be less favourably remunerated compared to colleagues just below the 'cut off'.

Under standing order 34 Councillor Blunt asked what percentage of staff fell within the two groups of the pay award to see if there was any opportunity of introducing upper limits. The Executive Director confirmed that 23% of staff would be above the £38,000 line of a percentage increase or lump sum. Councillor Blunt asked how some boundaries could be pushed to get the staff in post. The Executive Director responded that the need to be able to increase the grade bands as proposed was essential to attract and retain staff in the first instance, as the cost of recruitment was high, and the worst case scenario was having to use agency staff where high sums paid included agency fees.

Councillor Morley asked if Job Evaluation criteria had been updated over the years, to which it was confirmed that it was a nationally recognised evaluation scheme, and all new jobs and changes in job descriptions were considered by the Panel or benchmarked against it.

Councillor Morley also commented that the money saved previously was now needed for the award, but the same position didn't apply to Alive, the funding of which needed to be considered in the future.

Councillor Moriarty, under standing order 34, commented that the subject of staff retention in the planning department was under constant consideration.

Under standing order 34 Councillor Dickinson commented that she considered the pay award should be kept separate from review of salary scales. She thought there were more contributory factors to be considered in the review and did not consider there was sufficient information to make changes at this stage.

Councillor Beales drew attention to local determination of pay, which meant that it could be looked at in order to fill the gaps to try to reduce the use of agency staff. He also drew attention to the need to look at the provision for Alive. He supported the proposals set out in the report.

Councillor Ring commented on supply over quality issue and the need to look at the pay scales review. He commented on increasing salaries of staff threatening to leave.

Councillor Parish sought confirmation that if the proposals were agreed further work would be undertaken on grades etc. Councillor Squire requested that in reviewing grades the whole package being offered to staff be considered, this was confirmed along with the provision for Alive leisure. Councillor Parish commented that the bigger picture would be looked at to ensure the balance of wages and service was right.

The Executive Director conformed that the proposal to increase the top of pay scales was the first step on the journey to the wider piece of work to be done.

Councillor Parish informed Cabinet that Unison had asked him if the £750 could be paid as a lump sum, he reminded members that April to September would be paid as a lump sum. The Executive Director explained that payment of the whole lump sum would be making advance payments that would be recoverable if staff left. In response to a question it was confirmed that the sum reflected the gap in cost of living over the last 2 years, but the payment was part of the 23/24 award.

Councillor Beales supported the recommended proposal of part lump sum and the rest paid monthly. Councillor Morley suggested it be paid in 2 lump sums. On being voted upon it was agreed that the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.

The recommendations set out in the report were agreed.

**RECOMMENDED:** 1) That:

- a) An increase of £1925 or 5% (whichever is the greater) be applied to all salary points.
  - b) A flat rate non-consolidated cost-of-living payment of £750pa (pro rata for part time employees) to be paid to all permanent employees and temporary staff (with a contract specifying a duration of 12 months or more) who were in post on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. This payment to be paid in 12 monthly instalments with effect from April 2023.
  - c) The top points of all grades (not individual salaries) are increased by the maximum applicable percentage increase (10.38%) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023. This will not have an immediate financial impact but will assist with future recruitment and retention.
- 2) That changes to annual leave and working hours are not implemented as part of the local Pay Award as any changes to terms and conditions that are negotiated nationally would continue to apply to our employees.

### **Reason for Decision**

To implement an annual pay increase for employees that balances the requirement to make financial savings with the need to recruit and retain good quality employees.

CAB28

## **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO INQUORATE PARISHES**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube](#)

The Assistant Monitoring Officer presented a report which explained that the Borough had over 100 Parish Councils in its area (Town Councils are treated as Parishes for the purpose of the report). The vast majority of those Councils collected precepts as part of Council Tax. In the event of those Parish Councils becoming inquorate, for example due to mass resignations or because an insufficient number of candidates submitted nomination papers to stand for election, this will render the Parish Council unable to take any decisions, including around the public funds that it holds.

The Local Government Act 1972 contained a provision designed to address this issue, providing that district Councils (i.e. the Borough Council) may appoint its own Councillors temporarily to make the Parish council quorate until there were a sufficient number of Parish Councillors, which will enable business to continue in the interim.

It was noted that the Corporate Performance Panel had supported the recommendations.

Under standing order 34 Councillor Dickinson commented that having attended Hunstanton Town Council's meeting they had problems attracting councillors so they were looking into reducing the number of councillors, and suggested that others struggling to co-opt should consider the same option.

The Assistant Monitoring Officer confirmed that community governance reviews were the way to kick start the reduction in numbers.

Councillor Parish informed Members that he proposed to hold a meeting with parishes to discuss issues they may be facing.

Under standing order 34 Councillor Moriarty expressed concern that sometimes people were not keen to put themselves forward could be the conduct of some members of the community towards them.

**RECOMMENDED:** That Council delegates to the Returning Officer the power to issue Orders under Section 91 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 appointing Borough Councillors temporarily to Parish Councils, when required, after consultation with the proposed Borough Councillor(s) and their Group Leader (where relevant).

### **Reason for Decision**

To streamline the process for making Orders under section 91(1), so as to protect public funds held by Parish Councils and to ensure ongoing governance of Parish Councils for the benefit of the residents of the Borough, in circumstances where a Parish Council within the Borough becomes inquorate

CAB30

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND - ROUND 2**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube](#)

Cabinet considered the report which provided information on the funding offered to BCKLWN in June 2023 through Round 2 of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). The programme had been established by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to support Local Authorities to acquire homes to accommodate households with housing needs who have arrived in the UK via Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes.

The Council had been offered grant to acquire 7 homes for Afghan households and 1 property for the council to use as temporary need to meet wider homelessness needs. This was subject to acceptance of terms by the Council through a Memorandum of Understanding. The purpose of the report was to seek approval to accept the grant, provide the required match funding and inform the Cabinet of the requirements of the grant funding and potential delivery options.

It was noted that the Environment and Community Panel had supported the recommendations.

Councillor Morley commented that the properties were unlikely to come back into the general stock as the occupants were likely to stay on. Councillor de Whalley supported the proposal.

Councillor Parish drew attention to an LGA discussion held where some areas did not have any suitable properties to purchase with large waiting lists. He asked where the match funding was to be taken from. It was noted that the report explained that section 5 of the report set out the arrangements for funding. It was noted that the detail of the proposed purchases was exempt information at this stage. Cabinet therefore proposed to move into exempt session. The decision was taken after that discussion.

#### CAB31 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube](#)

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business - 10 (part), 16 (part) and 18 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

#### CAB32 **LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND - ROUND 2**

Cabinet's attention was drawn to the financial information held in the appendix to the report.

**RECOMMENDED:** That :

- 1) The Council will enter a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1) with DLUHC based on the attached prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2 (appendix 2)
- 2) The Council will accept the total sum of £868,000 offered to the Council by DLUHC under the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver the programme understanding the match funding requirements as set out in the report and attached prospectus.
- 3) The Council will commit match funding of up to £952,000 to deliver the 7 homes.

- 4) The Council will seek to maximise the Flexible Housing Fund to reduce the overall match funding required from the Council.
- 5) Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing People and Communities to negotiate and agree the final terms of contract with DLUHC under which the grant will be accepted.
- 6) The Council will purchase up to 7 properties on the basis of a subsequent freehold transfer to West Norfolk Housing Company subject to agreement from West Norfolk Housing Company.
- 7) Authority is delegated to the Assistant Director (Regeneration, Housing and Place) and portfolio holder for Communities to provide grant funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund to Freebridge Community Housing in the event that they agree to bring an identified long term empty property back into use as detailed in the report.
- 8) The Council agrees to the principle of allocating 6 of the properties acquired through the fund to eligible Afghan households in accordance with the existing Local Lettings Plan. 1 property will be used as temporary accommodation.

**Reason for Decision**

The recommendations will ensure that the opportunity presented by the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver affordable housing in the borough will be fully realised and will help to relieve pressures on the council's homelessness services.