

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Services Committee held on 24 August 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Andrew Jefferies (Chair), John Kent (Vice-Chair), Kairen Raper, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Lynn Worrall and Ben Maney (Substitute) (substitute for Deborah Arnold)

Apologies: Councillor D Arnold

In attendance: Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Gavin Jones, Chief Executive, Essex County Council
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Steven Mair, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Patrick McDermott, Chief of Staff to the Thurrock
Commissioners
Jayne Middleton-Albooye, Assistant Director Legal
Elizabeth Roy, Senior HR Business Partner
Nicole Wood, ECC Best Value Commissioner
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

12. Minutes

Public Minutes of the General Services Committee held on the 27 June 2023 and 5 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

13. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

14. Declarations of Interests

There were no declaration of interests made.

15. Employment Matter - Senior Management Arrangements

Following the report presented on the 5 July 2023 to the General Services Committee with a proposed revised Senior Management structure that met the requirements of the Directions. General Services Committee supported the proposed structure enabling formal consultation to commence. This consultation took place between the 6 July 2023 and 5 August 2023. The report sets out the outcome of consultation, presenting the final Senior Management structure and the process and timescale for implementation.

The following points were raised by Members:

- The report was welcomed and were encouraged by the speed at which the consultation had progressed.
- Referred to the strategic objective of the post structure to increase the capability and capacity in the corporate core and questioned how this would be undertaken. Members were informed this would bring together the corporate responsibilities around the organising arrangements for the council such as human resources and member services. To integrate the approach to ensure a consistent practice and the right arrangements were in place for the provision of resources and providing the right level of professional support within the council.
- Members were informed this was the first phase of change and that a number of further phases would come over the next two or three years. This would be due to reducing the scale and size of the council as a consequence of the financial challenges and to redirect resources into the areas that were most important to the council.
- Requested the balance of the transformation fund as this was important for members to understand the size of this budget.
- The proposed restructure referred to a “single line of sight on delivery” which referenced when trying to bring about significant changes at a very quick pace. The challenge being that changes are planned but the execution would be become very dispersed which would come with risks.
- Questioned whether the restructure was lean enough at this level. Members were informed at this stage to develop and deliver the ambitions of the council against the challenges of intervention this was considered the right structure for this to work and that four of the roles were statutory posts and therefor required.
- Discussed whether there was any risk for grievance and/or Employment Tribunal claims as part of the new structure to which Members were informed nothing had been detected as part of the consultation process, advice had been sought from senior HR officers and from Essex County Council, the process had been open and transparent and had followed the Council’s policy which were written in accordance with employment legislation. In addition, there was an appeal procedure that would need to be followed which would help reduce the risk of any such claims.
- Questioned whether the proposed expenditure would be value for money, to which members were informed that when making changes of this nature the council was dealing within legal parameters on how change would be managed, following employment law. The council would look for best value, with a direct value assessment being undertaken to identify whether it was good value for money to release staff under the severance scheme.
- Discussed the number of assistant directors under the Executive Director Corporate Services/Monitoring Officer level to which Members were informed at this stage would offer the range of responsibilities required. With a decision on the National Investigation Service role being made in the future.

- It was noted that a specific recommendation had been made to commissioners to appoint Steven Mair as the S151 Officer.

ACTIONS:

- Balance of the transformation fund to be provided to Members – **Dr Dave Smith**

RESOLVED

General Services Committee:

1. **Approved the final Senior Management Structure.**
2. **Approved the voluntary redundancy request from the Director of Public Realm as set out at Appendix 3.**
3. **Noted and approved the dismissals of the Director of HR, OD & Transformation and the Director of Strategy, Engagement & Growth through compulsory redundancy as set out in Appendix 3.**
4. **Noted the recruitment and selection timetable for the new senior positions set out in section 6.**
5. **Recommended to Commissioners the appointment of Steve Mair as S151 Officer pending the permanent appointment of the new Chief Finance Officer (Section 151).**

At 7.34pm, Elizabeth Roy left the meeting.

At 7.34pm, Jackie Hinchliffe and Steven Mair joined the meeting.

16. Pay Policy 2023/24 - Senior Manager Pay

General Services Committee received a report on 27 June 2023 setting out options and risks relating to the 2023/24 pay award for Senior Managers. The outcome of the report was a recommendation of no increase for Senior Managers. Counsel has confirmed the Council had a contractual commitment to pay any increase recommended by the Annual Review. The recommendation of no increase would be in breach of current employment contracts. The report set out the position and the way forward to correct the award for the current year and confirms the review of arrangements for senior pay.

The following points were raised by Members:

- Member identified he would not be supporting.
- Member stated a consultation should take place with senior staff to accept a variation in pay award on a voluntary basis before any decisions were made.
- Member stated this was fundamentally the wrong thing to do and an insult to residents of Thurrock.
- Members noted the legal advice in the report.

At 7.54pm, this meeting went into exempt session.

At 8.10pm, this meeting went back into public session.

ACTIONS:

- Process to be reviewed – **Dr Dave Smith**

RESOLVED

General Services Committee:

1. **Noted the recommended Senior Manager Pay award of 4% as determined and by the independent assessment with effect from 1 April 2023.**
2. **Recommended the revised Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 5), incorporating the 4% award, to Council. Councillor Spillman voted against this recommendation.**
3. **Instructed the Chief Executive, as part of the wider Pay Review, to bring back to General Services Committee a review of pay and arrangements for determining on-going annual pay awards for Senior Managers.**

At 8.11pm, the committee went into exempt session.

17. Exempt Minutes of General Services Committee Meetings held on the 27 June 2023 and 5 July 2023

Exempt Minutes of the General Services Committee held on the 27 June 2023 and 5 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

18. Employment Matter - Finance Department Restructure

This was an exempt item.

The Public recording of this meeting can be viewed from the following link:

[General Services Committee - Thursday 24 August 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 8.18 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**