

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2023 - 3.30 PM



PRESENT: Councillor G Christy (Chairman), Councillor Dr H Nawaz (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor J Clark, Councillor A Gowler and Councillor S Imafidon

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs M Davis

Officers in attendance: Peter Catchpole (Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer), Nick Harding (Head of Planning) and Linda Albon (Member Services & Governance Officer)

EC14/23 **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 6 October 2023 were approved and signed.

EC15/23 **PLANNING TEAM RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - MARKET SUPPLEMENT**

Members considered the Planning Team Recruitment and Retention – Market Supplement report presented by Peter Catchpole.

Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Nawaz said that having read the report his reservations from the previous meeting have been answered and he was pleased to note a comparative cost analysis has been conducted and included within the report, the detail of which is to be commended. Referring to page 9 of the report, he asked why it mentions Fenland District Council and local district council and what the difference is between the two. He also asked what effect this has had on employees who do not work in Planning.
- Peter Catchpole responded that the report uses the generic term rather than naming councils individually because of confidentiality. Nick Harding added that it is not appropriate to name them openly in the report, but each local authority goes through a job evaluation process, which is the salary range indicated in the report. The job evaluation process does not consider issues of staff shortages or retention.
- Peter Catchpole added that the report shows the wide range of salaries, which offers flexibility. The top of FDC's range is not completely out of kilter but there is no comparing apples with pears, no two jobs are the same and each have different demands. He believes the market supplement is pitched at the right level, but time will tell if people are attracted to the roles. The work here has not been hidden, the Planning team has the most significant recruitment problems and there has been no negative or unfavourable response from other staff within the Council.
- Councillor Benney said the principal has been debated, the Council has a problem that needs to be put right and any separate pay issues can be dealt with as they come along. However, if the Council wants to recruit quality staff, they must be paid for. This is an investment which will help FDC's aspirations. He thinks this is a good report and time will tell if it resolves the problems or not, but ultimately this is about staff retention not a golden hello.
- Councillor Clark pointed out that as a former employer he knew the importance of creating a good working environment where staff felt valued and worked well as a team which increased job satisfaction. Just as an observation, noting there are eleven vacancies in Planning, he wondered if the Council is a happy place to work. He agreed with Councillor Benney but does

not think £5k will be the magic bullet that cures all problems; the offer being made now was made by Norfolk 12-18 months ago. What concerns him is that other teams are not reacting. With all the difficulties that some authorities have found themselves in over equal pay, he is concerned that there could be repercussions with some staff in other areas claiming unfair pay.

- Peter Catchpole responded that this is not the first time this has happened, and a similar exercise was undertaken for Environmental Health. Some Planning vacancies have only arisen because Peterborough ended the shared service arrangement on 1st April and certain roles were carried out under that joint working arrangement, there is nothing untoward going on in the Planning team. A council apprentice has just won a national award so the development side for staff is good. It is worth pointing out that nationally employees are being offered a lot of money to work in the agency market rather than for an employer and if the Council gets this right, it can save a lot of money on paying agency rates.
- Councillor Benney referred to Councillor Clark's concerns and commented that the Council cannot not do something because something else may happen. Councillor Clark said it was a fair challenge to ask if the Council is creating a good employment position to encourage people to work here and he felt it important to point out the repercussions that should the £5k be challenged it could potentially lead to thousands of pounds having to be added to the payroll. Having said that of course he would hope there would be no problems at all.
- Peter Catchpole responded that this is something that needs to be tried; nobody knows if it is the right or wrong thing to do but all options have been explored and the market needs to be tested. Planning is the Council's most challenging resourced area; the report has been through the union, and they have signed it off.
- Councillor Gowler said that members must not forget that this is an investment. Planning creates a significant income for FDC and the more efficiently it works, the better FDC can balance the books. It is a positive action to support.
- Councillor Benney said that at the previous committee meeting, he said his concern was that this measure did not go far enough, equally there is a need not to be over generous as this could highlight the situation that Councillor Clark has expressed concern about. The test for whether this proposal is any good will be the applications received. The proposal in front of members today is a start.
- Councillor Christy agreed the proposal is fair, justifiable and a good starting point and requested that the committee be kept informed of the progress of the planning recruitment.

Proposed by Councillor Nawaz, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and AGREED to approve the introduction of market supplement payments for new staff within the planning team at a cost of £50,500 in Year 1 and £50,500 in Year 3 dependent on the timing of new starters and to approve the introduction of market supplement payments for existing staff as set out in Appendix 1.

This item comprised EXEMPT INFORMATION within Appendix 1 which is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) but it was not necessary to go into confidential session.

4.09 pm

Chairman