

Report to Joint Consultative and Safety Committee

Subject: Current staffing issues (Standing Item)

Date: 27 August 2024

Author: Director of Transformation (acting Assistant Director- Workforce)

1. Purpose of the Report

This is an information item highlighting to the Committee, any issues of particular interest that relate to the Council's workforce.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note this report.

3. Summary of current issues

3.1 Local Government Pay 2024

On 29 February, UNISON, GMB and Unite (the "Employees' Side") lodged their pay claim for NJC staff (this is the negotiating body that covers all of our posts other than Chief Officers):

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points
- Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government
- A two-hour reduction in the working week, with no detriment
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes (with term-time only staff also receiving a full day rather than a pro rata amount, that they can use at any time, including term time)
- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible

During March, councils in each of the nine English regions, Wales and Northern Ireland were consulted at very well attended virtual pay consultation briefings; in total, more than 650 councillors and senior officers attended. The National Employers met initially on 16 April to discuss the key themes to come out of those briefings. They then adjourned for private political discussions before reconvening, in person, on 16 May.

The Employers have made a cash offer (rather than a percentage pay rise) and recognise that a third consecutive year of a cash offer, albeit at a lower level than agreed in 2022 and 2023, will receive a mixed reaction as there is no proposal that satisfies everyone. However, the view of the Employers' Side is that the advantage of a cash offer is that it gets the bottom rate of pay to a level that will maintain headroom from the 2025 National Living Wage (based on the current forecast) and preserves existing differentials between the spinal pay points, which should avoid the need for adjusting grade structures at local level.

The National Employers also considered it important that their offer, as set out below, should provide certainty from the outset to the unions' national committees and all union members, the wider workforce and local employers, that it is the maximum they are able to make.

Conscious of the usual implementation date of 1 April and concerns raised by employers and employees alike when previous Agreements have been delayed, the National Employers therefore agreed that their offer should be full and final.

The National Employers met and agreed by a majority to make a one-year (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025), full and final offer to the unions representing the main local government NJC workforce. The main affects for this Council locally would be:

• **With effect from 1 April 2024, an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive**

• **With effect from 1 April 2024, an increase of 2.50 per cent on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer** (*in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4*)

This offer would achieve a bottom rate of pay of £12.26 with effect (backdated) from 1 April 2024 (which equates to a pay increase of 5.77 per cent for employees on pay point 2) and everyone on the NJC pay spine would receive a minimum 2.50 per cent pay increase.

The offer, if accepted, would increase the national pay bill by 4.03 per cent. The National Employers acknowledge that the increase to local pay bills will vary from place to place, according to the profile of the local workforce and the number of employees on the lower pay points and recognise that this may not correlate with existing budget provisions in all cases. The increase to the local pay bill for this council would be 4.05%.

This offer means an employee on the bottom pay point in April 2021 (then earning £18,333) will have received an increase in their pay of £5,323 (29.04 per cent) over the three years to April 2024. For an employee at the mid-point of the pay spine (pay point 22), their pay will have increased over the same period by 18.68 per cent and for those on pay point 43, at the top of the national spine, 10.78 per cent.

The current position in terms of national consultation is that:

- UNISON members have voted to reject the pay offer and the union has announced its intention to conduct a ballot for industrial action. The ballot will run from 4 September to 16 October.
- GMB's consultative ballot which closed on Friday 5th July with the result being that a majority of GMB members who voted, voted to accept the employers' pay offer
- Although the Unite union is not recognised locally, it is one of the three unions recognised nationally for the purposes of pay bargaining. Like Unison, Unite will be conducting a ballot for industrial action that will run from 27 August to 15 October.

The national bargaining for Chief Officers and Chief Executives is conducted separately. Although we still wait to hear about the award for Chief Executives, the national award for Chief Officers has been agreed at 2.5% and has now been applied, backdated to 1 April.