

Staff and Pensions Committee

Wednesday 22 November 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Chair)
Councillor Bill Gifford (Vice Chair)
Councillor Brian Hammersley
Councillor Sarah Millar
Councillor Mandy Tromans

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jan Cumming, Senior Solicitor and Team Leader, Commercial and Contracts
Laura Greenacre, Strategy and Commissioning Lead for Strategic Insight and Assurance
Bal Jacob, Director of Workforce and Local Services
Tina Riley, Senior People Practitioner – Strategic Insight and Assurance

1. General

(1) Apologies

There were no apologies.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There was none.

2. Pay Award for Warwickshire County Council Employees on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions 2023

Tina Riley (Senior People Practitioner – Strategic Insight and Assurance) introduced the report which sought approval for the pay award to employees paid on the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). She advised that there were no recommendations outside of the nationally agreed Teachers' Pay Award for 2023.

Tina Riley provided a brief overview, stating that the Secretary of State for Education had accepted the recommendations of the STPCD Report. The revised STPCD outlined the September 2023 Pay Award which encompassed a 6.5% increase to all pay points and allowances for both teachers and leaders, apart from a higher uplift for pay point M1 (the lowest pay point) on the main pay scale of 7.1%. All pay uplifts would be backdated to 1 September 2023.

In response to the Chair, members who had been present at the Committee's previous meeting to examine the Teachers' Pay Award in November 2022 stated that the recommendation that in future "only changes outside the nationally determined pay uplift and advisory pay points would be brought to the Committee for approval (with any changes within the nationally determined award being deemed approved)" had been ruled out to ensure that the Committee retained oversight of the implications of future pay awards.

Councillor Gifford stated that it was unlikely that the Committee would opt not to agree the recommendation of the report. However, there was a need to examine the potential implications of the annual pay award. For example, the Committee would wish to be sighted if there was any risk of cuts being made – for example, to the Warwickshire Music Service.

Councillor Hammersley stated that the School Teachers' Review Body Report provided an insight into issues affecting recruitment and retention within schools and touched on concerns that he had raised at previous meetings. It was encouraging that many of these concerns had been addressed.

Councillor Millar acknowledged that the pay award had been agreed by the Secretary of State for Education and that it was slightly higher than the originally proposed increase. However, she emphasised that the pay award was not proportionate to the increased cost of living faced by many households.

Councillor Millar stated that the pay award would support recruitment and retention of teachers. However, she highlighted commentary within the report that "where there is a shortfall, schools will have to make savings elsewhere and this will add to continued financial pressures and reduced financial stability across the school system." This would contribute to increased pressure on staff. She highlighted that many schools had based their financial planning on lower estimates of pay inflation than the 3.5% assumed by the DfE when calculating the need for additional funding. There would be increased pressure on these schools.

Councillor Millar highlighted the statement within the report that "due to the legal delegated financial framework... WCC does not hold extensive payroll information for Warwickshire's state funded schools, this means that we are unable to understand or model the potential impact on individual schools or on the sector as a whole." She emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be aware of any schools facing financial difficulty.

Tina Riley advised that Finance officers within the Council worked closely with schools and would be able to provide advice to any schools experiencing financial difficulty. She advised that it had been confirmed that Warwickshire would not receive any of the additional funding referred to within the report. An update would be circulated to members following the meeting.

Councillor Millar moved that the recommendation be accepted and was seconded by Councillor Hammersley. This was supported unanimously by the Committee.

Resolved:

That the Committee approves the application of the national pay award to Warwickshire County Council staff employed on the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document in line with the approach set out at Section 3 of the Report.

3. Future Meeting Dates

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting rose at 14.12.

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Chair