

Ringwood Town Council

Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 1AT

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STAFFING COMMITTEE

Dear Member

12th March 2020

A meeting of the Staffing Committee will be held in The Forest Suite, Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood on **Wednesday 18th March 2020** at 6pm.

Mr C. Wilkins
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There will be an opportunity for public participation for a period of up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2019

5. PENSIONS ELIGIBILITY POLICY

To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Report A*) and, if thought fit, to approve the draft Policy annexed to it

6. PREPARATIONS FOR INTRODUCTION OF THE GOOD WORK PLAN

To receive a verbal update from officers

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider exclusion of the press and public from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2), to transact business for which publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (staffing matters)

8. REVIEW OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR THE INFORMATION SERVICE

To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Confidential Report B*)

9. OFFICE STAFFING MATTER

To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Confidential Report C*)

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk on (01425) 484720 or email chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk.

Committee Members

Cllr Tony Ring – Town Mayor

Cllr Jeremy Heron – Chairman of Policy and Finance Committee

Cllr Philip Day

Cllr John Haywood

Cllr Gloria O'Reilly

Copied by e-mail to other Members for information

Officers

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

STAFFING COMMITTEE**18 March 2019****Report on Pension Eligibility Policy****1. Introduction and reason for report**

- 1.1 Further to the discussion of this issue at the committee meeting on 19th June 2019, a draft Pension Eligibility Policy has been prepared in accordance with the directions then given by members.

2. Background information, options, impact assessment and risks

- 2.1 The report prepared for the earlier meeting mentioned is attached as Annex A.
- 2.2 The draft policy is attached as Annex B.
- 2.3 Members' attention is drawn to paragraph 2.4 in particular. Whilst it represents a departure from practice to date and will result in a modest increase in overall pension contributions, it seems neither rational nor fair that, for example, pension contributions are presently paid for an employee who holds two different roles with the Council, in one role but not in the other. Disaggregating employees' roles also complicates the payroll process and this change will help to align our records with those of our payroll provider.

3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

Do members feel able to recommend to the Council that the draft Pension Eligibility Policy prepared by officers be adopted? (*RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval*)

For further information, contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Direct Dial: 01425 484720
Email: chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
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STAFFING COMMITTEE

19 June 2019

Report on Pension Eligibility Policy

1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 Uncertainties have arisen about eligibility of some new employees for enrolment to the Council's chosen pension scheme on which officers need guidance from members.

2. Background information, options, impact assessment and risks

- 2.1 Like any other employer, the Council is required to comply with legal obligations to enrol employees in a pension scheme, commonly called "auto-enrolment". It has also adopted as policy that all employees will be engaged on the standard terms of employment commonly called the "Green Book". In 2013 the Council resolved (by way of confirmation of previous decisions) to enrol all "eligible" employees in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) as administered by Hampshire Pension Fund.

- 2.2 "Auto-enrolment" specifies certain classes of staff who must be enrolled and others who may ask to be. The Green Book and staff contracts are silent on the subject of eligibility for enrolment. Accordingly, staff who must be enrolled under auto-enrolment must (as matters stand) be enrolled into LGPS. However, LGPS does not define which employees are "eligible" for enrolment, leaving this to the discretion of the Council. Because, apparently, this point was not appreciated in 2013, the Council currently has no written policy on the subject.

- 2.3 The position has been complicated further by two classes of employee:

- 2.3.1 those transferred to the Council with prior entitlements; and

- 2.3.2 those recruited on terms that do not specify fixed or even minimum hours.

This has led to some variation, inconsistency and even uncertainty. (Some employees holding more than one role are enrolled for one but not the other.)

- 2.4 The Council has three options: offer to enrol the holder of every post into LGPS from day 1 of their employment; align LGPS enrolment to auto-enrolment or create a bespoke LGPS enrolment policy (meeting minimum auto-enrolment requirements).

- 2.5 Offering enrolment of every post-holder into LGPS from day 1 would be the simplest and clearest policy but it would add to the payroll expense. It would also potentially involve a lot of work for no material benefit in those cases (few but not insignificant) where employees start on very limited hours and/or relatively low pay and do not complete their probationary period or leave soon after for other reasons.

- 2.6 Aligning LGPS enrolment to auto-enrolment would be significantly more complicated. Auto-enrolment rights and duties depend on whether pay thresholds are exceeded in each pay period (so an employee with fluctuating pay may have to be enrolled one month but not the next). It might still result in an employee with more than one role being enrolled for one but not the other (and this might make it harder to attract applicants of the desired standard for certain roles).

2.7 Creating a bespoke eligibility policy would allow greater flexibility and scope to simplify matters. It would have to meet auto-enrolment obligations, so it could not be used to avoid or defer enrolling employees who have to be enrolled under auto-enrolment. However, as an example, it could say that all employees earning more than a certain amount become eligible three months after their start date (the maximum postponement allowed under auto-enrolment). This would avoid the need for time-consuming re-assessments every month and reduce the trouble and expense associated with failed probationers. It requires the most work preparing and agreeing a policy now but saves time and money in the long run. Accordingly, this is the option that officers recommend.

3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

Do members feel able to recommend that a draft Pension Eligibility Policy be prepared by officers and, if so, are members content to approve the principles of universal eligibility (above a *de minimis* pay threshold) and maximum postponement of enrolment? (*RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval*)

For further information, contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
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Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
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Ringwood Town Council

Pensions Eligibility Policy

Adopted on: *[insert date of member approval]*

1. Introduction

This Policy supplements the decision made on 20th February 2013 by the Policy and Finance Committee that “the existing policy that allows all eligible employees to join the Local Government Pension Scheme be continued” by defining which employees are to be treated as “eligible” for this purpose and clarifying some related issues.

Throughout this Policy the terms “worker” and “workers” shall have the meanings specified in workplace pensions legislation.

2. Workplace pension scheme

2.1 The Council will meet it’s legal obligations to its workers, in respect of a workplace pension scheme, by encouraging and enabling them to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Nothing in this Policy shall in any way derogate from or diminish the workplace pension rights of Council workers nor is it intended to discourage any worker from exercising those rights.

2.2 When enrolling workers into LGPS, the Council will offer whatever options LGPS makes available at the time (including participation in the 50/50 Section rather than the Main Section) provided such options satisfy the minimum contribution requirements provided by law. The Council will respect any subsequent changes made by workers to such options or requests to leave LGPS altogether but will never encourage workers to make such choices.

- 2.3 The Council will treat all workers as eligible to join LGPS (whether they fulfil the statutory definitions of “Eligible jobholder”, “Non-eligible jobholder” or “Entitled worker” or none of the these) if they have qualifying earnings payable by the Council that equal or exceed the lower level of qualifying earnings (from time to time, calculated on a monthly basis).
- 2.4 Where a worker has more than one contract with the Council the Council will, with effect from 1st April 2020, treat the contracts together for the purpose of determining pension eligibility.
- 2.5 Once a worker has joined the LGPS, the Council will pay contributions (the employer’s in addition to gross pay and the employee’s by deduction from gross pay) monthly in accordance with the scheme even if the worker’s pay for that month or other pay reference period is less than the amount required to trigger auto-enrolment or eligibility to join LGPS under this policy (save that no contributions will be paid in respect of any month or other pay reference period in which the worker’s pay is nil).
- 2.6 The Council will re-assess any workers not enrolled in LGPS every month and:
- 2.6.1 any worker who was not previously eligible to join LGPS but has become so will be enrolled if required by law and invited to join it if not, as soon as practicable; and
- 2.6.2 any worker who is eligible to join the scheme but who opted not to do so or who left the scheme will be invited to consider joining (or re-joining) the scheme at least every year.
- 2.7 Enrolment of a worker in LGPS may be deferred in accordance with any lawful “postponement” (as defined in workplace pensions legislation) which the Council is entitled and chooses to apply provided that the worker is given notice as required by such legislation and any other procedural requirements are met.