
To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 30 March 2023

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: **Harmonisation of Pay, Grading and Terms and Conditions of Employment for 'Building Services Craft Employees' to 'Local Government provisions'**

1. Summary

- 1.1 Building Services craft employees provide a range of essential facilities management services across the council's estate, including the delivery of a compliant repairs and maintenance service for all council owned properties in Renfrewshire, i.e., council housing, schools, public buildings, community halls and centres as well as carrying out the repairs and maintenance function of street lighting.
- 1.2 In 2020, the service commenced discussions with the relevant trade unions with a view to seeking agreement on the harmonisation of pay, grading and terms and conditions of employment for approx. 200 Building Services' Craft employees including apprentices, in line with the current local government provisions.
- 1.3 The trades involved in this harmonisation include approved and advanced plumbers, electricians and approved electricians, blacksmiths, general maintenance operatives, bricklayers, electrical technicians, facilities engineers, gas engineers, glaziers, joiners, painters, plasterers, maintenance operatives and slaters, all of whom provide essential front-line services to our local communities.

- 1.4 Harmonisation means these employees whose pay and grading and terms and conditions of employment which currently come within the framework of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Craft Operatives (SJNC - 'Grey Book') would assimilate over to those who come within the framework of the Scottish Joint Council (SJC for Local Government Employees - 'Red Book'), expanding the number of employees in the 'single status group' thus creating greater equality between staff groups.
- 1.5 Harmonisation will eradicate previous legacy arrangements for pay and grading and terms and conditions of employment for craft employees which have been in place since 2006, and will see craft employees being able to take advantage of incremental pay progression and the same annual leave provisions alongside thousands of other local government employees. Additionally, harmonisation mitigates the likelihood of any employee relations issues that may be caused by applying differences in pay and conditions of service whilst working alongside each other.
- 1.6 Following a period of negotiation between the council and trade unions last year, which was interrupted by a brief spell of industrial action from members of Unite the Union, and with mediation support from ACAS, a final proposal, accompanied with an equality impact assessment was balloted on and accepted during October 2022. Since then, Council officers have been working through an implementation plan to see the completion of this harmonisation project by the end of March 2023.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- Note the agreement reached and approve the harmonisation of pay, grading and terms and conditions of employment for Building Services Craft Employees to Local Government Provisions.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Council's People Strategy supports the continuation of the council's transformational plans, ensuring we can adapt our ways of working to meet the challenges of the future. It has underpinning themes of modernising how we work, supported by attractive terms and conditions of employment, health and well-being initiatives, inclusive communications and strong organisational development plans and aims to improve the workplace culture and staff experience by creating the right conditions for change, to deliver future modernised and sustainable services.
- 3.2 Whilst terms and conditions of employment are only one component of how we manage workforce change, attractive equitable terms and conditions are key to an engaged, skilled, and adaptive workforce equipped for the future.

- 3.3 A sustained period of negotiation with the trade unions took place to reach agreement with an offer, during which a short period of industrial action was taken by Unite the Union members in the first half of 2022. As discussions continued, the council throughout the spring of 2022 completed a job evaluation exercise whereby council officers evaluated the duties of craft posts within Building Services. This involved having extensive discussions through job evaluation interviews with craft employees, their line managers and trade union colleagues. This exercise was carried out over several months using the Scottish Joint Council's (SJC) Job Evaluation Scheme and allowed a grade and salary to be allocated to each post.
- 3.4 During the month of September 2022, all craft employees were then written to and provided with:
- A copy of their job evaluation results and revised job description.
 - Their own personalised pay and grading illustration showing the impact this proposal had on their pay year on year, back to 2020, with a right to appeal their job evaluation outcome
 - A copy of local government pay and grading model showing where each trade would be assimilated to.
 - A copy of the key local government terms and conditions of employment.
- 3.5 A week of information sessions were held in Paisley and Johnstone, whereby council officers were available to speak to craft employees on a one-to-one basis, which was well attended. This is all credit to the Environment and Infrastructure management teams encouraging employees to attend and seek clarification on the proposed offer.
- 3.6 During October 2022, council officers reached an agreement in principle with the trade unions, allowing a ballot of members to be undertaken, which resulted overwhelmingly in the council's offer being accepted. The offer included pay assimilation and annual leave being backdated to April 2020, with all other terms being effective from the completion date of the project.
- 3.7 As part of the offer, Craft employees will assimilate over to the local government pay and grading model, using the similar national approach the council took for other groups of employees back in 2006 for Single Status, to a grade and relevant pay step closest to their current hourly rate of pay. Each year, Craft employees will, if applicable, progress through each pay step until they reach the top of their grade. Based on the outcomes from the job evaluation exercise, assimilation will be **without any detriment to pay** and provides employees with a right to appeal the outcome of their individual job evaluation. This assimilation will see the council invest in our trade's workforce and our aspirations to support the recruitment and retention of key talent.
- 3.8 Council officers have been taking the steps to implement the offer since end of October 2022, with an anticipated completion date of end of March 2023. New local government rates of pay have already been applied and some interim payments based on 'accrued pay arrears' have already been made to c180 craft employees.

Council officers and trade union colleagues are currently exploring options to assimilate the small number of trade apprentices over to local government provisions using the same principles as outlined above, whilst ensuring the minimum rate of pay for any apprentice going forward is the Scottish Local Government Living Wage.

- 3.9 New contracts of employment are due to be issued in the coming weeks, along with an offer to attend training on local government pay and conditions of services, and how to effectively use the Council's Business World system to record planned and unplanned leave and claim relevant overtime and allowances.
- 3.10 On completion of the project, a collective agreement will be entered into by Council and Trade Unions, setting out the terms of this agreement.

Implications of the Report

- 1. **Financial** - The total cost of harmonisation is split into two elements, the first being the backdated pay, which is estimated at approx. £514k. The second element is the increased ongoing annual cost to the service (this includes basic salary, overtime, annual leave etc), which we are estimating at £150k. However, we will have actual figures once the payroll finalises at the end of March and agreement is reached on apprentices. This cost also takes into account the recent pay increase in LGE pay scales.
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** - As outlined in the report.
- 3. **Community Planning** – None.
- 4. **Legal** – As outlined above
- 5. **Property/Assets** – None
- 6. **Information Technology** – As outlined in the report.
- 7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only.

If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** - As outlined in the report.
- 9. **Procurement** – None.
- 10. **Risk** – None.
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
- 12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.
- 13. **Climate Risk** – None.

List of Background Papers

None

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