

MINUTES OF THE OXFORD LIVING WAGE REVIEW GROUP

Wednesday 1 November 2017

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COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Goff, Iley-Williamson, Ladbrooke (Chair), Lloyd-Shogbesan and Thomas.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Caroline Glendinning and David Hawkins (UNISON).

GUESTS PRESENT: Ruth O'Loughlin and Fiona Percival (Oxfordshire County Council), Martin Broderick (School Governor), Dr Joe McManners (Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group), Al Bell (Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau), Hannah Taylor (Oxford University Labour Club) and Peter Nowland (Parish Councillor).

26. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

27. APOLOGIES

Councillor Lloyd-Shogbesan for lateness.

28. EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND DISCUSSION

The representatives of Oxfordshire County Council spoke first and the Panel noted that:

- The County Council's lowest pay rate was £7.78 per hour which was paid to over 600 employees including school lunch supervisors and cooks. This cohort represented 1.6% of the total County Council workforce expressed in terms of full time equivalent posts. The attendees hadn't looked at the gender balance of these employees.
- In total 19% of the County Council workforce were paid below the Oxford Living Wage and 6% below the Real Living Wage.
- Social Workers and Social Work Assistants were paid well above the Oxford Living Wage. There were difficulties around recruitment and retention but a review had found that pay was not the central issue.
- The County Council paid £22 per hour for home care services. It was not possible to identify what was paid to individuals on commissioned services because the exact amount a member of staff was paid would depend on the business model of the provider.
- The County Council was not opposed to the aspiration of becoming a living wage employer but cost was a limiting factor given the funding

reductions and increased demand for statutory services. If pay differentials were factored in, raising pay to the level of the Oxford Living Wage would cost in the region of £20m per year.

The Panel noted a written statement provided by a representative of a community school alliance trust based in the city which said that:

- The lowest paid members of staff earned £8.19 per hour.
- The trust board had discussed moving to the Oxford Living Wage and were looking at the financial impact and exactly how they could do this and over what time period.
- The biggest issue is that school funding is not in line with increased costs for the sector.
- They face the issue of a widening gap between salaries and cost of living, which impacts staff on lower salaries. They try very hard to provide benefits for staff such as providing Pay Care to all employees which supports costs for medical and health care, and free use of the gym.
- They support the moral case underpinning the Oxford Living Wage campaign wholeheartedly.

The Panel spoke to a doctor from Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (and former councillor who proposed the original living wage motion), noting that:

- There was a need to make more progress in terms of recognising, supporting and accrediting employers paying the Oxford Living Wage.
- NHS commissioning was very complex and the main considerations were affordability and the level of activity, so it was difficult to raise this issue up the agenda as a key priority.
- There was a direct link between low pay and ill health.

In discussion with the City Council's UNISON representatives the Panel noted that:

- The council was outside of national pay bargaining and had just completed a 3 year local pay deal.
- The next pay deal would include a lump sum or percentage increase (whichever was higher), which would benefit lower paid workers more than a flat percentage increase while maintaining differentials.
- The lowest pay rate in April 2017 was £9.78 per hour.

A low paid worker addressed the Panel and the Panel noted that:

- Due to ill health he only worked 12 hours per week in a care home, earning £7.54 per hour.
- This earned him less than his monthly rent but because his wife also worked so they received no benefits.
- They had to watch every penny and it was a struggle to afford food and social activities.
- The working environment in the care home was very negative with a culture of fear, instances of bullying and workers dying through ill health. The HR department were not supportive and leaders believed what they were told.

The Director of the Citizen's Advice Bureau advised the Panel that:

- 10% of clients came to them with employment issues such as non-payment of wages, not being paid holiday leave, carers not being paid for breaks or travel, having to work unpaid overtime, etc.
- There were concerns in a range of sectors including hospitality, cleaning, education and retail.
- Some people in the city lived in dire conditions experiencing issues such as overcrowding, debt and mental health issues.
- The issue was wider than pay it was also about terms and conditions of employment.

A member of Oxford University Labour Club addressed the Panel to say that:

- Most university colleges were not accredited living wage employers but students wanted to get involved and push this agenda.
- Students had been out leafleting about the Oxford Living Wage at the new Westgate Shopping Centre.
- Gender was an important dimension and there were issues with migrant women in particular being exploited in the city.

29. CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Deferred.

30. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted.

31. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.00 pm