

COUNCIL MEETING

12th NOVEMBER 2012

ORAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. From Pam Remon to Councillor Graham Arthur, Resources Portfolio Holder

The Equality Trust web site tells us that closing the income gap between rich and poor is good for everybody. So, will Bromley Council reconsider setting up a Fairness Commission in the light of the high rate of pay for Bromley executives and, also, agree to pay the London Living Wage for its directly-employed and contractor-employed low paid workers?

Reply:

Pursuant to the Localism Act 2010 the Council has a Pay Policy Statement and a key element of the Statement is the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid employee (the Chief Executive) and the remuneration of the lowest paid employee, commonly referred to as the pay multiple. The Council's current pay multiple of 1.13, or 1.6 (based on median salary) is within the range recommended to the government by Lord Hatton, following a comprehensive review of fair pay in the public sector.

Tonight the Council will consider the recommendation from the General Purposes and Licensing Committee to implement a localised merited pay framework, thus enabling the Council to link pay increases with performance for all staff across the organisation except teachers. It also means that the Council will withdraw from the national and regional pay negotiating frameworks and replace these with a local process by democratically elected Councillors at Full Council meetings. It will enable the Council to innovate and flex its reward strategies to reflect local circumstances with a view to maintaining competitive pay rates and conditions of employment in order to recruit and retain a well motivated quality workforce. Hence there is no need for a formal policy on the London Living Wage and the Council has no authority on the matter as far as third party employment relationship with their staff is concerned.

Supplementary Agenda

Mrs Remon did not consider that the response addressed the issue of fairness as many London Boroughs were beginning to address the inequalities in their pay structures. She asked if the Portfolio Holder considered it FAIR that the highest paid member of Bromley Council should be earning £97.00 per hr for a 40 hr week and the lowest paid worker should be earning £7.00 per hr for a 40 hr week?"

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder would be happy to discuss this further with her after the meeting and said that these issues would be looked at in the future as we went forward with the introduction of the Pay Policy.

2. From Onay Kasab to Councillor Graham Arthur, Resources Portfolio Holder

The Council should be aware that Veolia has dismissed four employees on the grounds that they removed unauthorised waste despite no money changing hands. Can the Council confirm that they have played no part in influencing the disciplinary process with a view to ensuring that the four are dismissed and remain dismissed?

Reply:

The questioner will I am sure be familiar with the T&G's *National Recognition and Procedural Agreement 2006 for Municipal Services' Operation* agreement with Veolia, and in particular Section 9, which deals with Gross misconduct.

Within section 9.1, under the heading Corruption it states that:

“Unlawful receipt of money, goods or favours or of excessive hospitality in respect of services rendered (this includes unauthorised waste removals regardless of whether payment is received or not) but this does not include the receipt of unsolicited gratuities.”

It is clearly for Veolia to determine the seriousness of the allegation and the appropriate disciplinary action.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Onay Kasab questioned how it could be fair for an employee of Veolia to go through a disciplinary process and not be disciplined or dismissed and yet the Council had waived the 'red card' and said that the employee should not continue to be employed by the Company. He thought that if the Council wished to retain that level of influence it should have considered that when originally deciding to privatise such services. He also commented that with all the various issues going on at the moment including an industrial dispute with your own workforce it would be far better for the Council to keep out of the matter and let Unite and Veolia sort things out between them.

Reply:

Councillor Smith responded that the Council had not interceded and not handed out red cards and any allegations that they had were simply not true. Referring to the issue raised about fairness he stated that the facts were that a crew had been caught 'red handed' taking some 60 litres of garden waste

including 2 full hippo bags and 2 car seats and refuted protests from the gallery that this was not the case.

The Portfolio Holder also thought that it was wrong that officials purporting to represent/recruit staff had circulated letters saying that the only reason the men had been sacked was for taking some garden waste away at the request of a householder which was not the truth.