

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2008 AT 2.00 P.M.**

- A Councillor Comer
- P Councillor Bees (Chair)
- P Councillor Eddy
- P Councillor C. Price
- P Councillor Wright
- P Councillor Havvock

**HR
46.11/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Comer, Councillor Havvock substituted.

**HR
47.11/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**HR
48.11/08 MINUTES – HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 16th
OCTOBER 2008**

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 16th October 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**HR
49.11/08 PUBLIC FORUM**

AGENDA ITEM	AUTHOR OF STATEMENT	SUBJECT(S) OF STATEMENT	No.
N/A	Ian Scott	Grievance Procedure	1

6	Steve Paines UNITE	Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure	2
7		Building Futures Programme	
6	Rowena Hayward/Liz Bebbington GMB	Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure	3

The public forum items were heard prior to the agenda item to which they referred and considered during the Committee's discussion.

In response to the comments raised that were not covered on this agenda (public forum item 1), the following comments were made:

Amendments had been made to the Grievance Policy and Code of Practice and a chronology of all investigations and reasons for any delay were now provided. A scheme was being presently piloted with the Health and Social Care Directorate whereby coordinators would maintain a matrix to ensure all actions were followed through according to the guidelines. If successful this would be rolled out across the Council.

Resolved: that a report outlining the matrix for the investigation process for grievances be brought to the January meeting of the Human Resources Committee.

HR

50.11/08 IRREGULAR HOURS - WORKING ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources (agenda item no. 5) discontinuing and deleting the Irregular Hours Payment from the Working Arrangements Policy with effect from 31 December 2008.

The Employment Relations Manager presented her report and highlighted the following points:

- There were no employees in receipt of Irregular Hours Payments within the Council.

- The provision of flexible working within service provision meant that the need for irregular hours of work was no longer required.

RESOLVED - that the Irregular Hours Payment be discontinued and deleted from the Working Arrangements Policy with effect from 31st December 2008.

HR

51.11/08 MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources (agenda item no. 6) adopting the revised policy.

The Committee received the public forum items presented for this agenda item. The Chair commented that:

- Sickness absence was a major issue for the Council. The policy was not punitive against employees but set out to eradicate gratuitous sickness absence and provide a consistent approach to sickness absence across the authority.
- The Council wished to medically redeploy employees that wished to work within the Council.

The Employment Relations Manager presented her report and highlighted the following points:

- There was now a three stage process for short term sickness absence with a separate process for long term absence.
- The trigger points in the process were now more generous.
- Information regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme - ill health pension had been clarified. Further clarification to the Policy and Procedure would be made to ensure it was clear that the 8 week redeployment period was in addition to the contractual notice period.
- The document clarified senior managers' responsibilities within the process. It also spelt out more clearly the role of Occupational Health.
- Work with the trade unions would continue and any further clarification would be added to the frequently asked questions section.
- The longer assessment period would make it easier to make decisions with regard to ill health retirement.

The following comments were made in response to the points made in the public forum statements and those made in the presentation of the report

- Job Search Support Programme staff were not expected to make medical judgements, the issues raised during public forum would be investigated.
- This policy had been before the Human Resources Committee on several occasions and had undergone several improvements. Managing absence was a big issue for the Council and the Auditors had commented that an improved method of operation was required. This was not a negative policy.
- A new Competence Procedure to include improved management training in man-management and financial issues would be presented at the next meeting of the Human Resources Committee.
- A section on the managing of the attendance of disabled employees had been included which set the standard for the Council as a whole to follow.
- The inclusion of the Health Initiatives Section was evidence of the Council's attempt to assist employees to improve their health. The Council paid two thirds of the cost of the voluntary health checks (employees contribution was £10).
- A section relative to pregnant women had also been included.
- Case conferences were designed to make sure advice was available to managers to ensure the Council acted in the best interests for the Council and employee and to provide clarity and support. The term 'case conference' could be misleading. The appropriate paragraph would be amended to read 'management may request a meeting with OHCS and HR to obtain specialist advice on how to proceed in managing a case'. There were times when employees were invited to attend these meetings.
- The separation of short term and long term absence was seen as a positive step forward.
- Although comparator information would have been useful, it was acknowledged that it was not easy to find a similar workforce scenario to that of the Council.
- The forthcoming pilot for the absence reporting phone line scheme had proved successful elsewhere and hopefully it would lead to improvements across the Council.
- It was noted that the GMB did not support the policy.
- The Head of Human Resources advised the Committee that

it was not appropriate for HR staff to give medical opinions about an employee's suitability for alternative posts without Occupational Health and Counselling Team advice

RESOLVED - that the revised policy, with the amendments noted above be adopted .

HR

52.11/08 BUILDING FUTURES PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources (agenda item no. 7) noting the report which is given in response to an earlier committee resolution and gives a progress report on this initiative.

The Committee received the public forum items presented for this agenda item. The Head of HR made the following comments in response.

- The £1000 charge to departments taking part in the programme was levied to cover the cost of the programme for which no civic budget funding had been provided.
- A review of the programme funding would be undertaken as part of Business Transformation. A commitment had been made that some funding would be set aside from the BT savings to fund this programme centrally.

The HR Manager presented her report and highlighted the following points:

- This report was brought to the meeting at the request of the Human Resources Committee.
- The HR Manager reported that Building Futures is the corporate programme to address the diversity issues within the Council specifically the age profile as there was currently only 4.2% of the workforce under the age of 24.
- The Building Futures programme has recruited 46% of trainees from disadvantaged areas. 21 trainees were employed to date.
- The youngest trainee is just 16 and the average age of all trainees is 20. 18% of trainees are from the BME community and 18% are DDA. This demonstrates the success of Build Futures in targeted recruitment.
- The initiative was a great success. However, the present vacancy management situation meant that administrative and

finance post to which most trainees were suited could not be filled.

- Placements within the transport section had been particularly successful with trainees ranging from school leavers to graduates.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:

- This initiative made a start in addressing the age balance of employees in the Council at the present time and was the right way forward,
- Officers involved with the programme were thanked for their work to date in moving the scheme forward.

RESOLVED - that
(1) the report be noted.
(2) all members of the Committee supported the scheme

INFORMATION ITEM

HR

53.11/08 NJC CIRCULAR: SINGLE STATUS PAY AWARD

RESOLVED - that the NJC Circular: Single Status Pay Award be noted.

(The meeting ended at 3.00pm)

CHAIR