

AGENDA ITEM NO: 4

To : Members of the Human Resources Committee

Councillors : Steve Comer, John Bees, Barbara Lewis, Michael Popham, Anthony Negus

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Will Godfrey, Strategic Director; Resources
Minute Book, DSO, ISO, Spares x 15
Linda Fitton, Liz Jones, Sally Ansell, Mark Williams

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 February 2010

PUBLIC FORUM STATEMENTS

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BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**THURSDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2010****COMMENTS OF UNISON****AGENDA ITEM 6, “REDUNDANCY FRAMEWORK”**

UNISON holds the view that the issue of redundancy notices to employees should only be served when all efforts through the City Council’s “New Opportunities Policy (NOP), have been exhausted in securing alternative employment for employees deemed to be at risk.

UNISON members who are at risk are always encouraged to apply for vacant posts where they have been matched against, even if the member themselves consider the post unsuitable as support/ training is normally provided. This is in accordance with the provisions of the NOP.

Provided the Managing Change Policy makes it clear as to how the City Council will deal with employees at risk, UNISON notes the report of the Head of Human Resources and Workforce Strategy.

**AGENDA ITEM 7, “PEOPLE (WORKFORCE) STRATEGY 2010 – 2015 :-
PROGRESS AND CONSULTATION**

UNISON notes that consultation on the draft strategy has yet to be concluded and that a final report for approval will be brought back to the HR Committee for approval and implementation. This is particularly significant, as UNISON has concerns in respect of the following matters:-

Appendix 7(a)

The 2009 Employee Satisfaction Survey indicates that 73% of the workforce indicated that employees were satisfied with their post. From a negative side, this could also mean that some 27% of the workforce were less than satisfied with their job. Bearing in mind that this figure represents some 4,700 employees, UNISON considers this alarming because what the report does not indicate are any of the reasons as to why such a high percentage of staff feel dissatisfied with their post.

In any strategy being put forward to improve the services and the employment conditions of the City Council’s workforce, all concerns raised by employees and their representatives must be analysed and assessed, even if the City Council disagrees with the comments from its workforce.

There is still strong evidence that the PMDS reviews are not being conducted at regular intervals in some services, as reported at a previous HR Committee. UNISON believes that the workforce strategy must put forward clear protocols to be followed

by all service directors, in ensuring PMDS reviews are conducted by managers at regular intervals.

The report highlights the devolution of power to Neighbourhood Committees. UNISON would point out that although there have been partnerships with local community groups over several years, the consultation with the trade unions on the establishment of the Neighbourhood Committees has only been recent. UNISON holds the view that all stakeholders (including the trade unions), must be consulted from the outset of any future proposals which could have implications for the workforce.

UNISON would challenge the report in respect of “Business Transformation is delivering better outcomes at better value for our customers and our employees as One Council”. Firstly, the City Council has a current vacancy management in an effort to reduce costs. This has been caused by Business Transformation where (a) displaced managers have been given specific projects adding to on costs and (b) the move to Somerfields House by a large number of staff has highlighted poor public transport, petty minded issues raised by managers against employees causing unnecessary stress and anguish. There is no evidence in the report to suggest the services of Bristol City Council has improved because of Business Transformation.

Whilst the City Council has set out its goal the vision of the future workforce, UNISON believes that there is plenty of work ahead if the authority is to achieve just a fraction of that goal.

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20th January 2010

**GMB SUBMISSION TO BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL HR COMMITTEE
25th FEBRUARY 2010**

1 HR DISPUTE HEARING – 5th JANUARY 2010

The GMB is dismayed that following the HR Dispute Hearing against Health and Social Care heard on 5th January 2010 the core issue of ring fencing – leaving staff working in the three homes to the end of the process (Hayleigh, St Peters and Maesknoll) appear to be still in place. The GMB does not recall the Service Director, Strategic HR and Workforce Strategy stating this. As members of the Disputes Hearing will recall the core rationale for the dispute was to highlight the inequality and unfairness of the prescribed method of ring fence for these groups of staff (most of them having been transferred to Maesknoll and Hayleigh from the closure of Hollybrook) without their knowledge they would be subjected to this 'secondary' treatment by the City Council.

The GMB would like to raise at the HR Committee our concern that the Managing Change Policy challenged by the GMB at the Dispute Hearing is still being implemented. At a meeting regarding Residential Futures on 11th February it was again stated that vacancies would be held and filled by agency/temporary staff if not immediately filled.

Management are visiting homes across the City over the next few weeks to ask for expressions of interest in the vacancies for the Resource Centre at Westleigh but surely these vacancies should be accessible to all staff throughout the process – not just one opportunity and then closed until the end of the process in 'x' years time?

The outcome of the dispute hearing was quite specific that travel costs should be paid to those staff needing to claim. Yet we are at the end of February and it is only now (after the GMB has had to keep raising this issue with management) that staff have been informed they will receive their six month travel payment from mid November 2009 – May 2010. Many of our members have had to pay for their travel costs without any financial support which was promised at the beginning of this initiative by elected members and

officers. The travel forms raise concerns as it is only the actual amount that is recorded for car usage not mileage (a completely different form from the Council's own travel assistance form) – why?

Again the GMB have had to keep raising the issue of taxi fare being paid by the home and not the individual. We have now achieved this at last for one of our members who was told she would have her bus fare deducted from the taxi fare payment. She walks to work and only gets a taxi when finishing work at 10.00 pm (as stated in the policy). We have sorted this issue out for her but there are others who inform us they have to pay their fare up front and then claim it back through the form – the GMB was at a HR Committee meeting on 19th November 2009 when this issue was debated and agreed that taxi contracts would be incorporated into paragraph 4.2 of the travel policy. We also recall requesting that if contracts were not in place Homes would pay for the taxi upfront so as not to cause our members even further financial hardship – this did not happen even after the Dispute Hearing in January 2010.

We would therefore ask the HR Committee to consider it's role in a dispute hearing and what it's remit is as clearly it has been ignored in this instance.

2 **Employees Replaced by Volunteers**

The GMB noted with interest when a volunteer policy was brought to this committee some time ago and stated at the time was this the 'new culture' of the Council. Please find attached a copy of the latest advertisement for volunteer groundworkers, rangers and visitor centre assistant at Ashton Court Estate. Our members read about their jobs now becoming volunteer posts recently. Ashton Court Estate already has volunteers **supporting** the work undertaken by paid employees so why has the Council decided to 'advertise' in this manner?

Is this really the way in which the vacancy board are proposing to replace paid employees it discards – how many more 'advertisements' have been placed in other places to take on volunteer work across the council?

If the Council is looking to work more closely with the community why not identify these posts as paid Future Job Fund Workers (young long term unemployed) who get paid the minimum wage and work for six months with a view to being taken on permanently with the organisation, or offer it out as an apprentice opportunity, rather than moving towards unpaid volunteers replacing our members jobs. As an aside this was done without any consultation with the GMB and as we have the significant majority of membership within these three areas we are slightly surprised to read about it via the advertisement!

3 **Redundancy Framework/Approval**

The GMB stated at the time these were 'hollow' promises and it gives us no satisfaction to find out that we were right. What will happen to the five on notice at the moment?

Who advised the three Executive Members they could make these public statements to the media and staff and why did officers support this when they must have known this was not possible?

It is not acceptable after staff have been given assurances over the past two/three years their employment rights were safe to say it is not correct – why wasn't this highlighted at the beginning?

The GMB is therefore requesting the HR Committee investigate why this very serious error has occurred and been allowed to continue.

4 **People (Workforce) Strategy 2010-15: Progress and consultation**

The GMB is concerned at the lack of consultation with the trade union before it is brought to the HR Committee. There appears to be a thread running throughout the City Council at the moment – reduced or no consultation with the trade unions – how does that equate to the statement 'embedding the right skills, attitudes and behaviour in our people' especially in relation to the previous report on redundancy!

The GMB is very keen to find out the '**how**' the separation of 'transactional' and 'strategic' HR will improve the service and result in savings of £450k plus per annum)!

Our understanding is that the pilot sickness absence (telephone line) has been abandoned! How much sickness absence reduction did it achieve before it ceased?

The GMB would be keen to know exactly how many posts have been reduced through the 2nd and 3rd Tier Review – how many officers are in 'supernumerary' posts or on project work and exactly how much financial savings have been achieved in relation to the anticipated savings.

Why is there not an over arching Equalities Impact Assessment produced for this strategic document? The GMB's concern is that if this is left to each initiative it may not be undertaken as comprehensively as it should.



Submission for Human Resources Committee Thursday 25 February 2010

Agenda item 6 Redundancy Framework/Approval

Paragraph 3.2 states that employees are at risk of redundancy following the closure of Hollybrook. It's disappointing that the largest employer in the South West cannot secure alternative employment for the affected employees and therefore comply with the no compulsory redundancies statement. I am confident we would not have a permanent garden leave situation with the number of agency staff in HSC.

Hollybrook will reopen following refurbishment so it makes no sense to serve redundancies if the Authority will be recruiting staff in the future. Residential Futures has been progressing for some time since the original Cabinet decision. The Residential Futures change programme should be managed to facilitate staff transferring into alternative job roles.

Agenda item 7 People (Workforce) Strategy 2010-15: Progress and Consultation

Paragraph 4.2 of the report refers to the council wide review of first to third tier officers and the reductions that have been achieved. This followed the June 2008 Cabinet who approved the Transforming Bristol report which included streamlining management structures. Where in the Workforce Strategy does it make reference to reviewing management structures below third tier to ensure consistency across the Authority and to implement the KPMG recommendations?

In appendix 7A on page 2 acknowledgement is given to the Single Status harmonisation that has been implemented. So why on page 4 does it state there is a need to modernise pay structures in order to become a high performing organisation?

On page 8 of appendix 7A there is no reference to the Learning Agreement and also the contribution Learning Reps make to employee development.

Steve Paines

Convenor