



AGENDA ITEM NO 4

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

Thursday 11 September 2014

Human Resources Members Present:

Councillors Richard Eddy, Mike Langley, Naomi Rylatt, Mike Woollacott (Chair)

Officers in attendance:

Richard Billingham, - Service Director Human Resources, Shahzia Daya - Deputy Monitoring Officer, Alex Holly – People Business Partner, Shana Johnson, Democratic Services Manager – Bristol City Council, Helen Sinclair-Rose - HR Change and Performance Manager, Mark Williams, People Business Partner

Cllr Simon Cook – Assistant Mayor for Business Change, Resources and the Arts was also in attendance.

18. Apologies, Substitutions and Introductions

Apologies were received from Councillor Daniella Radice. There were no substitutions.

19. Declarations of Interest

None.

20. Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on the 3 July 2014

Matters Arising:

In response to a question raised about 'interim appointments' the HR Representative responded that there had been one interim appointment to a specific open data project.

In relation to a query raised at the meeting in July about care homes it was confirmed that there had not been claw back of shift allowances.

In relation to a question about security at Temple Street it was noted that as the Council is in effect the landlord at Temple Street and the provision of security to tenants would probably fall within that remit. 700 staff are now in Temple Street with increased security/facilities management provision.

Resolved: that the Minutes be agreed and signed as a correct record by the Chair

21 Action Sheet

Noted.

22 Public Forum

The following Public Forum items were received in relation to:

Agenda item 7 Settlement Agreements

Agenda item 8 Workforce Statistics

Agenda item 9 Workforce Restructure

Agenda item 10 – Living Wage

1. Written statement from Unison and question
2. Written statement from Unite
3. Question from Bristol NUT
4. Written Statement from GMB

It was agreed that these statements/questions be considered alongside the relevant agenda item.

23 The Role of HR Committee

The Deputy Monitoring Officer briefed the Committee on their role drawing attention to case Law relating to Doncaster Council and the role of an elected Mayor

The role of the executive, non-executive and full Council. The Mayor exercises Executive functions and delegations to officers are clearly set out in part 3.2 of the Council's Constitution. Non-executive functions are functions such as Licensing and other regulatory committees e.g. Development Control

In relation to issues around pay and conditions the role of the HR Committee is mainly advisory to full Council. This is a non-executive function in conjunction with the Head of Paid Service. Exercise of this function should therefore be agreed by HR committee and the Head of Paid Service.

Procurement issues are an executive function and lie with the Mayor. In relation to the Living Wage it is important to separate out the policy and procurement issues.

Agreed: that the Doncaster Case be circulated to all members of the Committee

24 Settlement Agreements

The Committee considered a summary report on the use of settlement agreements in Bristol City Council since 2013.

The Committee noted public forum statements from Unite and the GMB on this issue.

The Committee also noted the downward trend in settlement agreements with 12 agreements in the reporting period April 2013 to July 2014 which is fewer than the previous years which averaged 59 per year (April 2007 – March 2013)

In response to concerns raised about the number of settlement agreements in schools members asked for further clarification on whether the Council is confident that these are necessary. The HR Advisor explained that maintained schools receive advice from the Council on the use of agreements, but schools can decide to take their own legal advice. The HR Advisor also emphasised that settlement agreements are not a substitute for following relevant HR policies and practices where applicable.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

25 Workforce Dashboard/Statistics

The Committee considered an update on key issues in the HR Workforce Dashboard in particular relating to Workforce FTE and expenditure, Recruitment and Turnover and Sickness Absence.

The Committee noted the public forum statements from Union, Unite, the NUT and the GMB.

In relation to issues raised around compliance with HR procedures particularly around sickness and the responsibilities of managers the HR representative emphasised that sickness absence is part of the annual governance statement. The Council's sickness absence rate is below the national average for local authorities and similar to some private sector organisations. Current HR support systems are being replaced and the ambition is to be able to share more detailed information with the Unions to resolve any problems in this area. The Bristol manager scheme is under review and there has been a large amount of 'churn' in the management cadre and as a result there will be training in place around the use of HR policies.

The Committee also noted the importance of having support systems in place for employees, particularly in relation to absence as a result of stress, anxiety or depression. The HR representative confirmed that stress is the single highest cause of absence in all sectors and that there is an employee assistance programme to support employees.

In response to a question from the Committee the HR representative confirmed that the Council is still managing vacancies through the People Panel process and that this will continue following the restructure. The HR representative also highlighted that requests to the Panel are much more consistent now with clear business cases.

Resolved: that the report and additional information set out above be noted.

26 Organisation Restructure

The Committee considered an update on the restructure and proposed activities for the next phase.

The Committee noted public forum statements from Unison and Unite and in particular issues raised about pressures on staff. The committee also noted that HR had committed to include the information requested by Unison in the 'closure report'.

In relation to a query from the Committee over the use of consultants to assist in the restructure the HR representative confirmed that only one interim HR advisor had been used and he would provide information on costs within the final restructure report to the Committee. The restructure had been a council run process supported by internal officers.

Resolved: that the report and progress be noted.

27 Taking forward the living wage proposals – discussion item

The Committee discussed the reports going to Full Council on the 16th September. The Committee also noted the public forum statements from Unison and Unite.

Councillor Richard Eddy abstained from the debate.

In response to a question relating to schools obligations to implement the living wage the HR representative advised that all council maintained schools are fully aware of the proposals but ultimately the Governing Body has to agree to implement. In a situation of challenge to the Governing Body about non-implementation the Council would not offer support to the Governing Body. Evidence shows that maintained schools will be likely to comply with the proposals.

The Committee raised issues relating to accreditation by the Living Wage Foundation, contracts and financial impact, direction of travel and payment of the Living Wage to apprentices.

In response to the issues the HR Representative made the following comments:

To become accredited as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage Foundation the Council must not only pay all directly-employed staff the Living Wage but also have a plan in place to make paying it a requirement of all its service contracts within two to three years of accreditation.. The financial and legal implications of making payment of the Living Wage a requirement of the Council's contractors must be quantified before the Council can decide whether to seek Living Wage Employer accreditation.

The impact of paying a Living Wage to apprentices has been estimated at approximately 1m. The HR representative highlighted concerns that such an arrangement could be damaging to the scheme and there are issues about paying an unskilled person the same as a skilled member of the workforce.

Resolved: that the reports to Full Council be noted with the above comments.

28 Date of Next Meeting

13 November 2014

The meeting ended at 3.00pm

Chair