

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

5 March 2020 at 10.00 am



### **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Vacant, Richard Eddy, Gary Hopkins, Paula O'Rourke, Ruth Pickersgill and Jon Wellington

### **Officers in Attendance:-**

Mark Williams (People Business Partner), John Walsh (Director: HR, Workforce and Organisational Design (Interim)), Mark Jefferson (HR Analytics Adviser) and Steph Griffin (Head of Organisational Development and Internal Communications), Jeremy Livitt (Democratic Services)

## **1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

The Vice-Chair Councillor Paula O'Rourke (acting as chair in the absence of Councillor Jeff Lovell due to sickness) welcomed all parties to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

## **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeff Lovell.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Paula O'Rourke and Councillor Ruth Pickersgill declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 Avon Pension Fund Annual Report 2018/19 as they both received Teachers' Pensions.

## **4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 16th January 2020**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the resolution of Minute Number 7 (Pay Policy Statement) being altered to record the fact that Councillor Richard Eddy and Councillor Gary Hopkins voted against this decision.

**Action: Alter Minutes as above - Jeremy Livitt**

Staff Led Groups – Update and Work Plan



It was noted that the informal meeting between members of the HR Committee and members of the staff led groups had not yet happened and needed to take place urgently.

**Action: Mark Williams to fix the above meeting urgently and an item to be added to the Work Programme for the next meeting on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020.**

#### Action Sheets

It was agreed that Action Sheets should be prepared to keep track of actions arising out of HR Committee meetings

**Action: Steve Gregory**

### **5. Public Forum**

It was noted that one Public Forum Statement had been received as follows:

Councillor Martin Fodor – Agenda Item 7: Avon Pension Fund

### **6. Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Work Programme for future HR Committee meetings.

### **7. Avon Pension Fund Annual Report 2018/19**

Steve Pearce gave a presentation on this item and made the following comments. He also responded to questions from Committee members as follows:

- The Investment Strategy continued to be reviewed with a series of workshops that had taken place over the last 6 months – a final decision would be made on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> March 2020
- The process for 2019/20 was being reviewed
- There were over 400 participating employers in the scheme, nearly half of whom have a small number of employees
- Academies were not currently represented at meetings. Therefore, if more schools became Academies, representation needed to be increased to reflect this
- 2018 Interim Valuation indicated that the funding deficit had improved significantly. 2018/19 had been a significant year for the pooling of investment assets
- £4 Billion remained to be transferred into the Brunel Fund and would be the main activity over the coming years
- More money was being put into low carbon investments. The Board had now accepted the moral argument as the economic argument for this was self-evident. Many industries that purely



specialised in fossil fuel industries ran the risk of going out of business and therefore many were diversifying.

- Many Pension Funds were de-carbonising their assets rather than divesting them completely. It was noted that building infrastructure would require some products that led to carbon increase ie cement. The Avon Pension Fund was a leader in de-carbonising
- The Avon Pension Fund needed to engage with businesses such as EXXON and get them to change their approach
- Most large businesses with cash flow are energy companies – there were not yet enough other companies involved in wind or solar farms and battery storage
- The fund is using electronic technology to communicate with its members in order to save money
- The attention of Committee members was drawn to Tables 10 to 16 in the report setting out staffing levels, the number of members and employers in the fund and the costs and savings of the pooling of assets
- Steve Pearce advised that his role was to influence where assets were invested, to ensure the maximising of income while reducing risk, The fund had accurate cash flow predictions over 100 years
- It was challenging that Bristol only had one representative on the Pension Fund although it had the largest investment. However, BANES operated under regulations. If Bristol administered the fund, it would have more representation. Carla Denyer was the nominated substitute for Steve Pearce and had attended on a small number of occasions over the last three years
- A large number of academies transferred out of Local Authority control but many of their existing employees retained their pension rights and therefore the number of employees who were members increased
- Whilst the Risk Register indicated that it was difficult to recruit skilled labour, the pension sector remained strong in Bristol and attracted pension professionals.

Officers advised that BANES employed Pension Fund staff. However, since the Bristol area was a major financial centre, it would be difficult to recruit staff in this area of work at the market rate.

Committee members made the following comments:

- The switch to ethical investments was part of a market drive towards more sustainable solutions, many of which were more successful than the average stock market investor
- Committee members expressed confidence in the way the scheme was being run. The performance had significantly improved over the last few years

#### **Action:**

- (1) That a letter be sent to BANES expressing concern at the lack of representation for Bristol City Council as such a major investor in the Avon Pension Fund – Mark Williams**
- (2) That the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England are contacted to see if they wish to specialise in pensions – Councillor Steve Pearce**



- (3) That a further update report be provided for the next meeting of the HR Committee once the Investment Strategy consultation period has finished and to include information concerning addressing the issue of rates of pay for employees who work in this area – Councillor Steve Pearce/Mark Williams**

## **8. Organisational Improvement Plan – Year Review**

Stephanie Griffin introduced this report and made the following comments:

- The staff survey for 2020 had just started and 750 responses were already being received
- There were a number of key themes arising from 2019 survey and work had been carried out for each of these
- 3,200 responses had been received on 2019 survey
- A great deal of work had taken place concerning organisational values in relation to embedding workshops with key staff and the use of employee touchpoints. Each week there had been a Celebrating Success competition
- There was a leadership development programme involving Team Leaders and Team Managers
- The Internal Communications had been refreshed. New channels were being used to reach employees including follow-up surveys
- Technology was being used to help colleagues improve their skills was
- Supported internships were being developed for staff with learning disabilities. Whilst the previous target had been a bit ambitious, there had been 9 last year which were very positive success stories
- Performance and Talent Management – there were a lot of drop-in sessions to support in developing talent management
- Measures were being put in place to develop work force planning. As it was acknowledged that these were being inconsistently applied, work was taking place with the LGA to ensure good practice
- Apprenticeships – 270 were needed to sustain the intake
- Workforce and Well Being – First Aid Training and the introduction of a line manager with responsibility for mental health had been introduced. A very positive response had been received to these measures
- Emotional Resilience – there had been an increased focus on menopause support groups
- Structure Pay and Policy – the organisation’s values were underpinned by its policies. HR policies had been renewed
- Brand and Recruitment – online recruitment had been linked to I-Trent
- Social Media – BCC’s presence was being increased on social media
- Retention of Staff – it was acknowledged that further work was required in this area. Improved succession planning was one area which needed greater work. Creative ways were required to help staff develop their career, including attachments to projects and secondments to avoid losing talent. The Bristol Leadership Challenge identified staff who might take part.



- Individual officers had been given responsibility for all the different streams of work. All the different work streams had been brought together in this document

In response to questions, officers made the following comments:

- A provider had been commissioned to help training staff on disability and equality **Action: Stephanie Griffin to advise HR Committee Members of details**
- Officers would investigate the possibility of internships for people with learning disabilities such as at the Vassal Centre Café **Action: Stephanie Griffin to investigate**
- It was noted that there would be a review of key HR policies for 2021/22 Work Programme **Action: Mark Williams to add to the Work Programme**
- Senior Leadership Recruitment needed to include equality of diversity. This was something that could be given a priority now that the SLT team was in place **Action: Mark Williams/John Walsh to investigate**
- Hard copies of all staff surveys had been submitted to remote locations. In addition, road shows and targeting of front line staff were also being used to ensure people outside the City Hall were reached. It was important to encourage people to set aside time to complete the survey, particularly on the front line
- For statistical reasons, the 2020 survey was largely the same as 2019 except for some areas, such as whistle-blowing
- Measures were being put in place to ensure that staff were properly supported since 2019 survey showed that 50% of staff did not feel supported
- In order to address staff concerns about confidence in responding to issues they raise, SLT had acknowledged the need for increased visibility. A great deal of work had been carried out with teams. All divisions had been requested to produce action plans concerning this. A weekly blog had been created. Generally, line managers indicated that they felt well supported.

**Action: a letter to be sent to all the HR team thanking them for their work on this survey – Stephanie Griffin**

## 9. Report on Exit Payments

The Committee noted the costs associated with early termination payments to employees for compulsory and voluntary redundancies. It was noted that details would appear in the annual accounts. Members' attention was drawn to Paragraph 10 which set out where the change had occurred.

Members noted the following:

- There had been 9 confidential agreements made in 2019. All of these were made on a very narrow basis and didn't affect the ability of employees to whistle blow
- People who left on the grounds of voluntary redundancy were prohibited from applying for Bristol City Council jobs for 12 months



- Most compulsory redundancies were for school crossing patrol staff and cleaning staff. Compensation had been at twice the statutory standard

Following concerns raised by a Committee member about one particular case of redundancy, the Chair advised that it would not be appropriate to discuss this issue in open session and without a written report providing any details. Any information should be presented to the Chair (or Vice-Chair in their absence) to consider whether or not it would be appropriate to discuss at a future meeting.

## **10 Terms of Reference for Human Resources Committee**

The Committee considered a report recommending revised Terms of Reference for the Human Resources Committee to Full Council on 17th March 2020.

It was proposed that the terms of reference for Human Resources Committee be revised to reflect the constitutional arrangement for setting the pay of Executive Directors and Directors set out in the proposed Pay Policy Statement 2020/21. In addition, additional updates were proposed for the HR Committee to reflect more clearly its roles and responsibilities.

Members also requested that a full review of the Terms of Reference was added to the 2020/21 Work Programme to assess whether the current TOR fully reflected the breadth of responsibility required by this Committee.

**Resolved (unanimously) – that the revised Human Resources Committee Terms of Reference be approved by Full Council on 17th March 2020.**

**Action: Sam Willcock/ Mark Williams – refer to Full Council, Mark Williams to add to the 2020/21 Human Resources Committee Work Programme**

## **11 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved – that the press and public be excluded from the following items by virtue of paragraph 1 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.**

## **12 Salary of Director Post**

The Committee considered whether or not approve the annual salary for a Director Post. They received a brief presentation from the Director concerned and then asked them to withdraw from the meeting to make their decision.

**Resolved – that the Committee approves an annual salary of £120,000 for the Director in question.**

**Action: Mark Williams**



### **13 Senior Staffing Verbal Update**

The Committee expressed concern about the way a member of staff had been re-employed to a separate project following their previous role coming to an end. In particular, they were extremely concerned that the Human Resources Committee had not been advised about this arrangement.

Members expressed particular concern that due process had not operated which would enable other members of staff to apply for the job in question.

**Resolved – that a report is provided to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 meeting of the Human Resources Committee setting out the following:**

**The Terms of Employment of the member of staff concerned to their new post**

**The Involvement of the person who employed them as a contractor**

**A Timeline Setting Out the Events concerned, including who made each decision during the process and when, including what information was made available for 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019 HR Committee**

**And that the Head of Paid Service is requested to attend this meeting**

**Action: John Walsh**

### **14 Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held at 10am on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in a Committee Room, City Hall, College Green, Bristol.

Meeting ended at 12.55pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

