

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

17 December 2024 at 10.00 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Kye Dudd (Chair), Paula O'Rourke (Vice-Chair), Zoë Peat, Jerome Thomas, Tim Wye and David Wilcox

Officers in Attendance:-

Steph Griffin (Director Workforce & Change), Mark Jefferson (Reward & Analytics Manager), James Brereton (Head of Human Resources) and Husinara Jones (Solicitor)

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and issued the safety information.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailes (Councillor Blake substitutes), Clark and Eddy.

3 Declarations of Interest

None received.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED The Minutes of the previous meeting 17 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

RESOLVED The Action Tracker was noted.



5 Public Forum

One question was received but was out of time.

ACTION SG OH The Chair asked officers to supply a response via email.

6 Trade Union Forum

There was one piece of Trade Union Forum which was NOTED.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Director of Workforce and Change has been in communication with colleagues and shares the concerns being raised about working conditions in Sandy Park. There is a health and safety meeting scheduled for the day after the committee. An updated action plan will be circulated tomorrow.
- Communication could be improved between central property colleagues and those in locality.
- There is an understanding about the difficult financial position facing the council but that basic interventions to improve conditions could be made.
- A health and safety / fire risk assessment should be in place in all BCC sites as it is a management duty. These will be reviewed urgently.
- Any health and safety issues related to human resources would be in the remit of the committee.
- Property colleagues will review the risks, potential liabilities and any possibility of transferring to alternative sites.
- **ACTION SG** The Committee work programme has a Health and Safety item for March. This could cover safety committees and specific issues of working in a listed building environment.
- It would be helpful to have a clear description of how Health and Safety Governance interacts with the Human Resources Committee. E.g. correct reporting channels.
- Risk assessments are carried out every 2 years if there is no material change. The action plans from the past two risk assessment reviews for Sandy Park will be urgently reviewed.
- **ACTION SG** The Director of Workforce and Change will provide an email update to the committee regarding the urgent Sandy Park actions.

7 Work Programme



RESOLVED the Work Programme was NOTED.

- The workforce strategy and corporate strategy are scheduled to go to Full Council for approval around May 2025
- The workforce strategy includes learning and development, especially apprenticeships. There is also a focus on doing the basics right, such as making sure inductions are effective and delivered.

8 Recruitment and Retention Report

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The Bristol City Council workforce has grown 5% over the past 12 months. Turnover has reduced to 9%.
- 47% of new starters come to BCC for career development and 33% leave for development.
- 31% of leavers have over 10 years' experience. Since Covid there has been a large amount of turnover and half of BCC employees have less than 5 years' service.
- BCC is struggling to attract disabled people, however this statistic is dependent on self-identification.
- HR is currently looking at improvements to recruitment, including more use of technology.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The hiring freeze was lifted around 18 months ago.
- 12 months is the default period used for these statistics.
- Some areas of the council experience difficulty in recruitment, e.g. planning. The head of service for planning has recruited people who are in the process of qualifying. Younger people coming in, which helps to reduce the backlog of routine work. However, experienced planners are rare.
- Other areas could learn from planning to address their own recruitment issues. This is a good area to focus on successes and share best practice.
- There was a discussion about the branding BCC has as an employer. This includes design, placement, content and values. The branding may differ based upon department, e.g. planners and social workers have different selling points. BCC does not have the marketing resources that other private sector organisation of comparable size would have.
- As BCC cannot compete on pay, it must concentrate on benefits such as flexible working and the living wage.
- With lack of career progression being the biggest reason for leaving, the leadership pipeline needs to be emphasised. Making it easier for managers to transfer between departments within the council would help.
- BCC could be more attractive for disabled people by providing the right support to flourish. There is a challenge to get people off long term sickness, especially mental health. The return-to-work programme is supportive.



- There has been improvement on long-term sickness over the past 2 years by focusing on manager / worker relationships. Keeping in touch with colleagues is important, long absences can be due to work and personal issues.
- There were concerns raised about exit interview processes that are conducted by the managers. This could potentially be a conflict of interest. Most exit interviews are self-surveys and some services (e.g. social work) conduct a 360 review.
- There is some stigma around occupational health referrals and they can sometimes be perceived as a first step to dismissal. **ACTION JB is meeting with the new supplier soon about improving communications and will update the committee on this.**

9 Pay Policy Statement

The Director of Workforce and Change introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- Each year the HR Committee must consider the Pay Policy statement and make recommendations to Full Council. This statement is in line with the Localism Act and Secretary of State guidance.
- The current pay ratio of highest to lowest staff is 10:1. This does exclude interims, however the committee has requested that this figure be included, so can be found in the report appendix. Including interim figures is beyond the statutory duty but improves transparency. The interim ratio is 12:1.
- Figures are usually taken as a snapshot as of 31 December 2025, but BCC did not have a permanent Chief Executive at that point, so both figures are supplied.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Cllr Eddy has long requested the interim figures and offers his thanks to the team for including these and will support the report on that basis.
- While members cannot predetermine the outcome of the Full Council decision, including interims would be considered positively.
- **ACTION JB** to add more clarity about the difference between interim staff and agency staff.
- Pension contributions are not part of the calculations. Interims receive higher day rate salaries as they receive less benefits. This makes it hard to compare like for like.
- The highest salary is the Chief Executive at £190k, which was agreed by the Selection Committee.
- Some contractors do not pay their agency staff living wage. For some areas such as agency care workers, BCC cannot afford to enforce living wage due to financial pressures. Care workers pay and conditions would ultimately be an issue for the Adult Social Care Policy Committee.

RESOLVED (unanimous) Committee recommends to Full Council the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26 to take effect from 1 April 2025.



10 Senior Leadership Recruitment Update

The Director of Workforce and Change introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The council has performed a detailed strategic housing review, which also considered leadership options. The recommendations of that review include the creation of a specific housing department and an executive director of housing.
- The review was considered at the Homes and Housing Policy Committee in November and the recommendations have the approval of the interim and permanent Chief Executives.
- The executive director role is currently being advertised with a closure date of January.
- This has considerable impact on the role of the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration. Recruitment for a new permanent G&R Director is coming soon.

ACTION SG to circulate the advice given to Trade Union colleagues as per paragraph 10 of the report.

RESOLVED the Committee noted the report.

Meeting ended at 1.00 pm

CHAIR _____

