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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

8 March 2018 at 10 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Kye Dudd (Chair), Paula O'Rourke (Vice-Chair), Harriet Clough (subst), Matthew Melias (subst), Mike Langley, Jo Sergeant and Jon Wellington

Officers in Attendance:-

Mark Williams (Head of HR), James Brereton (HR Consultant), John Walsh (Interim Director: HR, Workforce & Organisational Development), Mark Jefferson (Analytics Adviser), Husinara Jones (Lawyer), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Eddy and Hopkins substituted respectively by Councillors Melias and Clough.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2018

Resolved – that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Forum

Members noted a public forum statement from UNITE and agreed to consider it under agenda item 7.

6. Standing item - Training & Development issues for staff

Apprenticeship Levy/Apprenticeship Service – Chair said it was important to keep spend under close scrutiny and analyse what amounts had been spent, or not, and why. An update would be given to the next HR Committee meeting on progress in 2017/18 in terms of numbers of apprentices and spending of the Levy funds.

7. Standing item - Industrial Relation Issues

Proposed changes to redundancy and pay protection –

1. Statement from UNITE was considered and objection to the proposal noted;
2. Head of HR advised that negotiations were ongoing including with two other trade unions;
3. There was a meeting next Wednesday about this;
4. A report would be brought to the 26 April HR Committee once all views had been considered;
5. A briefing note showing comparisons between statutory redundancy, current Council redundancy policy and the Council's proposed redundancy policy to be circulated to Members in advance of the next meeting (Action: Mark Jefferson);
6. Members noted concerns of UNITE about the proposed lowering of the Council's pay protection period;
7. Head of HR reminded members that the full Council had agreed in February 2017 to make workforce policy savings but emphasised that the proposals to reduce the redundancy payment/pay protection should not be perceived as 'an attack' on employees conditions of service;
8. Head of HR confirmed that other options would also be considered and that the priority would be to look for the least impact on the workforce;
9. Grading structures were also being reviewed and progressed. A number of options were being considered.

8. Work Programme

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

9. HR Constitution - verbal update

The Committee was informed that a Constitution Working Group would be meeting in April to consider proposals to the Council's Constitution for recommendation to full Council at its AGM in May. The views of the HR Committee would be included for consideration by the Group. It was anticipated that Councillor Craig Cheney (Cabinet Member & Deputy Mayor – Finance, Governance and Performance) would submit a statement clarifying the position on the HR Committee terms of reference.

Councillor O'Rourke formally requested that Councillor Craig Cheney be asked to clarify the policy position, as soon as possible, in relation to the HR Committee's already agreed position.

10. Corporate HR Dashboard (31st December 2017)

The Committee considered an information report relating to the Council's workforce.

Serious concern was expressed about increasing levels of sickness absence and the notable decrease in the number of return to work interviews being done, or possibly not being recorded, by managers. It was acknowledged that this could be due to work pressures as all sickness ranging from a cold to stress/anxiety had to be recorded in the same way. It was considered that managers might have to be selective regarding which sickness absence cases were interviewed on return to work, depending on the status of the sickness versus work pressures.

Other points clarified during discussion –

1. Responsibility for initiating return to work interviews was with the manager and not the employee;

2. An extra column be included in the information to show number of working days lost and reasons why;
3. Managers would be made aware that Councillors were aware of the performance relating to return to work interviews;
4. Overtime costs had risen in some areas and this would be looked into as longer term extra work should ideally be converted into actual jobs, it was also noted that overtime was a cheaper option than agency staff;
5. The number of days for casework to be completed had risen and needed to come down significantly; this was acknowledged as a significant performance issue.

Resolved – that the report be noted and that a further report to identify and mitigate the key issues raised be brought alongside the next Corporate HR Dashboard to a future meeting of the Committee.

11. Head of Paid Service terms & conditions of employment and performance management

The Committee considered a report regarding the approval of the proposed terms and conditions of employment for the role of Executive Director: Resources and Head of Paid Service and to recommend the amended terms of reference, for the Performance Management Panel, to full Council.

Points clarified following questions on process and procedure –

1. Medical checks were only done once an offer of employment had been made;
2. Minimum three month notice regarding termination of employment was standard practice and in line with the JNC national agreement;
3. An externally appointed candidate would be subject to the standard six month probationary period;
4. It was noted that an internal candidate would not be subject to the standard probationary period;
5. The procedure relating to compensation payments in the event of the Head of Paid Service leaving was a matter of contractual law, however this issue would be further clarified by the Constitution Group. It was confirmed that any settlement must first come to the Human Resources Committee for consideration.

The recommendation of the report was then put to the vote.

There were four in favour and three abstentions.

Resolved –

- 1. That the proposed terms and conditions of employment for the role of Executive Director: Resources and Head of Paid Service be approved;**
- 2. That the amended terms of reference for the Performance Management Panel be recommended to full Council.**

12. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved – that under Section 100 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

13. Pay of Director: Community Services and Director: Educational Improvement

(Councillor Jo Sergeant was not present for this item)

The Committee considered a report proposing the payment of higher salaries to the Director: Community Services and the Director: Educational Improvement.

Resolved – that the annual salaries for the Director: Community Services and the Director: Educational Improvement be approved, as set out in the report.

14. JNC Chief Officer Case

(Councillor Jo Sergeant was not present for the vote on this item)

The Committee considered a report regarding the termination of a secondment to Bristol Waste Company and the dismissal, on grounds of redundancy, of the former Service Director of Environment and Leisure.

A statement from the former Service Director of Environment and Leisure was received by the Committee.

After careful consideration the Committee voted on the recommendation as set out in the report, on being put to the vote there were four in favour and two abstentions.

Resolved – That power to issue contractual notice of dismissal on grounds of redundancy to the former Service Director Environment and Leisure be delegated to the Interim Director: HR, Workforce & Organisational Development.

Meeting ended at 12.30

CHAIR _____

