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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

27 September 2018 at 10 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Jon Wellington (Chair), Harriet Bradley, Richard Eddy, Gary Hopkins, Ruth Pickersgill, Jo Sergeant, Clive Stevens.

Officers in Attendance:-

Mark Williams (Head of HR), James Brereton (People & Culture Manager), John Walsh (Director: Workforce & Change), Mark Jefferson (Analytics Adviser), Allison Taylor (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 O'Rourke.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

Matters Arising.

1. Para 5 – Terms of Reference (ToR). It was noted that the ToR within the published Constitution still referred to the Employment and Remuneration Committee;
2. Para 13 – Work programme. The Organisational redesign savings was due to be considered in November and it was confirmed that this would include the cost of actual salaries so the Committee could see whether the proposed savings were being achieved;
3. Para. 11 – Public Forum. It was agreed to circulate outside of the meeting information on the control mechanisms for interim managers;
4. A separate briefing with the Head of Paid Service would be arranged for the Committee.

Resolved – that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 July 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Forum

None received.

6. Work Programme.

The People and Culture Manager, noting that the Work Programme was mostly unpopulated, requested member suggestions from the list of items. The following points were made:-

1. For November 2018 – Organisational Redesign Savings and Performance Management, the latter to be considered in May 2019 in order to track change;
2. For January 2019 – Avon Pension Fund. HR to make request to Cllr Pearce to attend;
3. Discussion took place regarding the analysis of exit interviews in order to establish and therefore address staff reasons for leaving. It was understood anecdotally that some areas of the Council were higher on staff turnover than others and this should therefore be recorded for analysis. It was also noted that the workplace pressure surveys might provide some insight into staff concerns. The Head of HR agreed to would compile an analysis and draw some conclusions for either the January or March 2019 meetings.

Resolved – that the Work Programme be noted.

7. HR Dashboard (Q1 2018/19)

The HR Analytics Advisor highlighted key points within the paper and the Committee questioned/commented as follows:-

1. With reference to Workforce Spend at Table 3, clarification was sought regarding why Agency Staff were being used instead of permanent or fixed-term contracts. There was concern that it had one of the biggest quarterly increases in costs. The HR Analytics Advisor replied that he did not have direct access to data regarding agency staff and they should not be considered as headcount but as placements. Concern was also expressed as to whether agency staff were doing the jobs they were supposed to do as Councillors often received complaints regarding workforce;
2. In response, the Head of HR replied that there had been a 50% reduction in agency staff in the last 3 years. Based on HR knowledge it was the agency staff who worked with a fresh mind and approach and were less likely to be complained about than employees. It was considered that some use of agency staff was appropriate; however, long term use should be looked at. The People and Culture Manager agreed to email this information to a Councillor so that he might report back to Resources Scrutiny Commission;
3. It was noted that recruitment and retention of lawyers was a challenge particularly as some areas of law were very niche and therefore expensive;
4. It was observed that the managing attendance figure had almost doubled from last year. This was because there had been increased attention from HR to Service Managers to properly apply the policy;
5. With reference to table 15, it was noted that interim staff had reduced but the cost had increased. In response, the Committee heard that the interim staff were covering higher positions and did include on-costs. HR noted a request for the committee to look at the roles of these staff at the November meeting;
6. The Head of HR agreed to share with the Committee the ONS annual report;
7. It was noted that 24% of posts were currently unfilled and anecdotally Councillors were aware of staff covering for more than one job;
8. Referring to Table 14, it was noted that the reason for absence category of anxiety/stress and depression had increased though it was acknowledged that this could be because of greater general awareness of mental health

issues allowing staff to open up;

9. It was noted that staff turnover was not significantly different to other benchmarked Local Authorities.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

8. Apprenticeships & Apprenticeship Levy – Progress Report.

The Committee heard from the HR Manager - Employment and Skills summarised her report and the Committee questioned/comments as follows:

1. The 'Other on site' referred to apprentices recruited on behalf of construction companies;
2. Calculations have been made for the level of recruitment needed for the next 3 years and this will be paid for from the Council's Levy account;
3. There had previously been no overall picture on apprenticeships but information now captured apprenticeships within the Council and those on construction sites;
4. It was agreed to supply the Committee with further information regarding the under-represented groups and whether they were representative of the local population;
5. It was agreed to send the Committee a dedicated flyer promoting apprenticeships within schools to hand out at schools within their wards.

9. Equalities report and Analysis.

The Committee received a presentation from HR Manager – Change and Performance and the Committee questioned /commented as follows:-

1. It was agreed to provide the Committee with the following:-
 - Data regarding the percentage of Bristol's population lived in deprived areas in order to compare it to the 6.5% of the Council's workforce;
 - A breakdown of groups with the BME heading and the intersectionality between gender and ethnicity;
 - Pay rates of disabled employees.
2. The importance of using the up to date census figures was noted;
3. It was noted that this Council was lowest than all the Core cities for BME teachers. BME staff in transport services was also low;
4. Diverse recruiters was a scheme available to all staff and involved 1 day per year training. The Council was working with jointly with Bristol University on the scheme and hoped to attract other organisations. Senior Officers were being encouraged to take part in the scheme. Training as also be given in assertiveness techniques so that unsuccessful candidates could question the decision of an interview panel. The scheme did not apply for Senior Officer roles as these were member led interviews.

10. Senior Coroner Remuneration.

The People and Culture Manager drew attention to the long running history regarding this matter within the report and reported that the Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services had reached agreement with the Senior Coroner to backdate her current salary to 1 December 2017 at a cost of £3.941.35 which was 40% of the full cost. A S151 Officer meeting was held with the three neighbouring Unitary Authorities who also agreed to the backdated pay. The Committee was asked to approve the backdated payment and to remove the Market Pay Supplement and Pension Supplement with effect from 30 November 2017 in light of previous JNC guidance and subsequent HR Committee decision to award the Senior Coroner an annual salary of £130,000.

There were no questions or discussion.

Councillor Eddy moved the recommendation as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Sergeant. On being put to the vote, it was:-

Resolved (Unanimous) – That the backdating of the current salary of the Senior Coroner to 1 December 2017 and the removal of the Market Pay Supplement and Pension Supplement with effect from 30 November 2017 be approved.

11. 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.

12. Update on Senior Management Structure – Briefing from Director – Workforce and Change.

This item was considered in exempt session.

Meeting ended at 12.00pm.

CHAIR _____

