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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

9 May 2019 at 10 am



HR Committee members present:-

Councillors: Jon Wellington (Chair), Harriett Bradley, Richard Eddy, Gary Hopkins, Ruth Pickersgill, Paula O'Rourke, Jo Sergeant

Audit Committee members present (by invitation):-

Councillors: Clive Stevens, Anthony Negus, John Goulandris (substitute for Councillor Radford)

Key officers in attendance:-

John Walsh (Director: Workforce & Change, Mark Williams (Head of Human Resources), Mark Jefferson (Analytics Adviser), Steph Griffin Head of Internal Communications and Organisational Development, Helen Sinclair-Ross Diversity, Inclusion and Employee Initiatives Manager, Steve Gregory (Democratic Services); Tim O'Gara - Director - Legal & Democratic Services; Husinara Jones - Senior Practitioner (Solicitor)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

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

The Chair welcomed Audit Committee members who had attended, by invitation, for agenda item 9.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Afzal Shah (Audit Committee member).

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved – That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 March 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matter arising – Councillor Eddy asked the Chair if he had written to Councillor Cheney regarding the implementation of the Top 10 Actions to achieve maximum Apprenticeship Levy spend. The Chair confirmed that he had not written at the current time.

The Director: Workforce & Change informed the Committee that the appointment process was currently

underway for three posts, Director of Education and Skills, Executive Chair of the Holding Companies and Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration. TMP had been contracted to work with the Council on the appointment process.

5. Public Forum

Statements

None received.

Questions

Four written questions, and answers, in respect of agenda item 9 (Senior Executive remuneration review) were circulated to members of the Committee prior to the meeting in accordance with Standing Order CMR 9.8 (*held on record by Democratic Services section*).

A supplementary question was asked in respect of the former City Director and if the HR Committee should be aware of when a senior officer takes on additional roles. The Committee was informed that this type of issue should come to the HR Committee and that the updated ToR's would encompass this.

8. Diversity and inclusion work programme

The Committee received a report and presentation on the equalities and inclusion work programme and the work of Staff Led Groups. The Diversity and Inclusion work programme was aligned to commitments in the Organisational Improvement Plan and Equality and Inclusion Strategy and covered key areas of structure, governance, policy and strategy, learning and development and employment opportunities.

Key points clarified/emphasised were –

Equalities and Inclusion

1. Part time workers had been helped by work/life balance policies in respect of external commitments;
2. The number and gender of the council's part time workers was well known for monitoring purposes however other factors were taken into account eg, gender stereotypes, raising and supporting families;
3. Employee structures reviewed to tackle restrictions on mobility eg, 'dead men's shoes';
4. Benchmarking would be used to measure and track progress and fed into the Action Plan and senior leadership team programmes to resolve blocks to career progression/mobility;
5. Greater emphasis should be given to geographical areas of lower economic wealth and class divisions regarding encouraging engagement with the employment process. Recent data had indicated that there had been some improvement in these areas;
6. Consideration be given to involving outside organisations to review processes in an unbiased and unrestricted way and to identify areas of unconscious bias;
7. Greater emphasis was being given to improving Equalities Impact Assessment's through refresher training, other processes were also being looked at. An update report would be brought to the HR Committee in due course.

Staff Led Groups

1. A high number of complaints had been received in relation to the recruitment process specifically

unfair practices. These had been passed onto the Human Resources team although the Committee was reminded that recruitment was a management responsibility and further training courses were being implemented to mitigate areas of poor practice;

2. More work needed to be done to include geographical/poorer economic areas to mitigate exclusion from the recruitment processes.

Resolved – that the report and presentation be noted.

9. Gender Pay Gap

The Committee received a report regarding the latest gender pay gap analysis, the work the Council was doing to address the ongoing difference and the work to close the gender pay gap.

The Committee noted that the Council's mean gender pay gap was significantly lower than that of the national average, which was currently 17.4%. The median gender pay gap was also significantly lower than the national average of 18.4%.

Key points clarified/emphasised were –

1. It was considered that it would be useful to compare Bristol City Council's performance with best practice elsewhere;
2. Some Members expressed the view report bogus and report should have included the salary of the Interim Director for Growth and Regeneration;
3. Emphasis to be given to areas where gaps were largest such as transport and engineering sectors and report back to HR Committee to advise of progress. Noted that agency staff not included but long term interim staff should be;
4. The Committee was informed that when calculating the Gap agency staff and interim contract employees were not included;
5. Considered important to tackle culture and education to reduce the Gap still further;
6. Noted that evidence showed that inclusive employers operated more efficiently, an example of this was the TUC;
7. Important to be aware that women on lower pay feeds into lower pension incomes in retirement also.

Resolved – that the report and the recommended actions be noted.

10. 2019 Employee Engagement Survey

The Committee received a report and a detailed presentation on the survey results of the 2019 employee survey and the action planning process.

Key points clarified/emphasised were –

1. Improved rate for training and development was welcomed;
2. More work was required to improve response rates from front line staff;
3. Noted that staff were given time to respond to the survey and that managers were fully engaged in the process;
4. More work was required on Directorate team and what level of management would be looking at this, noted that engagement with SLT was already underway with associated tools and techniques to enable them to better contribute to the process;

5. Where possible it would be useful to track comparisons between teams/sections both now and a few years ago, it was acknowledged that this might be difficult to do but all efforts would be made to do this;
6. Noted that the process would be an annual event in order to ensure best practice.

The Committee was invited to submit further questions or ideas to the Head of Internal Communications and Organisational Development outside of the meeting.

Resolved – that the report and the action planning process be noted.

11. Senior Executive remuneration review

The Committee received a report recommending that Full Council approve an addendum to the Council's Pay Policy Statement and amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Human Resources Committee, which included delegation to the Human Resources Committee the power to approve severance payments in respect of the Head of Paid Service.

The Committee discussed the addendum to the Council's Pay Policy Statement (PPS) and amendments to the Terms of Reference (ToR's). No alterations were proposed for the PPS.

Alterations to the ToR's proposed were -

1. Include in 'Terms and Conditions of employment including remuneration' a sentence stating ' Oversight of contracts of employment for chief officers and deputy chief officers';
2. Include in 'Other matters' a requirement for the Committee to determine the Annual Work Programme;

On being put to the vote this was unanimously endorsed.

Resolved – that Full Council be recommended to approve the addendum to the Council's Pay Policy Statement and update to the Terms of Reference of the Human Resources Committee, as amended, including delegation to the Committee the power to approve severance payments in respect of the Head of Paid Service.

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.

The Chair reminded members that the HR Committee had been tasked with reviewing progress made in relation to the recommendations in the BDO report and the action plan, regarding the departure of the former Chief Executive, and to provide feedback and to the Head of Paid service.

Significant points highlighted were –

- i) The External Auditors had not considered all of the matters that the Audit Committee had raised;
- ii) The audit trail and documentation relating to decision-making should be improved;

- iii) The control of documents (version control, draft documents) needs to be improved;
- iv) The legal service should have greater oversight of any future arrangements, including the commissioning of external legal advice;
- v) A request for further investigation by the External Auditors.

It was agreed that the findings captured during the debate would be made available to the Head of Paid Service.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm

CHAIR