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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee (Annual General meeting)

2 July 2020 at 10 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Richard Eddy, Margaret Hickman, Gary Hopkins, Jeff Lovell, Ruth Pickersgill, Paula O'Rourke, Jon Wellington

Officers in Attendance:-

John Walsh (Director: Workforce & Change), Mark Williams (Head of Human Resources), Mark Jefferson (Workforce Analytics Manager), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services)

Also in attendance - Hilda Bertie (Interim Head of Equalities and Inclusion); David Weaver (External Consultant)

1. Confirmation of Chair for 2020/21

The Committee noted that at its meeting on Thursday 21st May 2020, Full Annual Council appointed Councillor Jon Wellington as Chair of the Human Resources Committee for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

2. Confirmation of Vice Chair for 2020/21

The Committee noted that at its meeting on Thursday 21st May 2020, Full Annual Council appointed Councillor Paula O'Rourke as Vice Chair of the Human Resources Committee for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

3. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and introductions were made. The Chair set out the process with regard to the meeting being held via Zoom technology.

4. Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received.

5. Membership of Human Resources Committee

The Membership of the Human Resources Committee for 2020/21, as set out below, was noted.

Councillors Richard Eddy, Margaret Hickman, Gary Hopkins, Jeff Lovell, Ruth Pickersgill, Paula O'Rourke, Jon Wellington.

6. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference as approved at Full Council on 17 March 2020 were noted.

7. Dates and times of meetings for 2020/21

The Committee agreed that all future meetings for 2020/21 would commence at 10 am on the following dates:

24 September 2020;
17 December 2020;
18 February 2021;
29 April 2021.

8. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 April 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

Matter(s) arising

Minute No. 7 PPE equipment – Head of HR confirmed that he had met with the Trade Unions and would circulate notes of the meeting to Members;

Minute No. 10 Exempt staffing matter – Agreed that party leads would receive updates as necessary regarding Projects and their related costs.

10. Public Forum

None received.

11. Work Programme

The Committee received and noted the Work Programme for 2020/21.

Party Leads to consider if an interim report was necessary in respect of the Avon Pension Fund Performance at the next agenda setting meeting.

12. Staff Led Groups

The Committee received a report from the Interim Head of Equalities and Inclusion on the refreshed arrangements for staff led groups which had been approved by the Corporate Leadership Board.

Members noted in particular that –

1. The role of staff led groups within the organisation had been reviewed and new terms of reference and work priorities had now been agreed, this was as set out in the report;
2. The review of the staff led groups had been undertaken by an independent consultancy as part of wider work on how the Council could improve Equalities and Inclusion throughout the organisation. This had included the effectiveness of staff led groups.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. Previous tensions associated with some SLG's had largely been mitigated by dialogue and improved communication. This had led to a smooth transition following the identifying of key issues and priorities;
2. Concern was expressed that the SLG Terms of Reference did not appear to mention a safe space to work and bring up issues. Members were assured that Section 4 did address that point, however to allay any concerns going forward this would be emphasised still further that SLG's would be a safe space to work and raise issues including a more critical and challenging input from all members involved;
3. Confirmed that there was a budget for SLG's and this was overseen by senior managers in line with the requirements as identified;
4. Regarding a relationship directly with HR Committee members, informal meetings between Members of the HR Committee and SLG's would be programmed in. An annual report would be brought to the HR Committee summarising progress and bringing attention to ongoing issues;
5. There would be an annual joint celebration event consisting of all stakeholders to share positive outcomes;
6. SLG stakeholders would be asked, at the forthcoming informal meeting, if they wished to attend formal HR Committee meetings as part of the overall process.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the annual report be added to the forward plan.

13. Gender/Ethnicity/Disability Pay Gap

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources in respect of information on the gender, race and disability pay gaps in the City Council for the period to 31 March 2019 and the work the Council was doing to address any pay gaps.

Members noted in particular that –

1. The mean gender pay gap was 4.08% and the median gender pay gap is 8.9%;
2. The City Council was one of a small number of employers in the UK to publish the ethnicity pay gap. No employers had been identified who publish the disability pay gap;
3. The reported ethnicity and disability pay gaps relied on holding equalities information for all employees. 91% of the workforce had disclosed their ethnicity. 90% of the workforce had disclosed whether or not they had a disability;
4. The mean ethnicity pay gap was 12.06% and the median pay gap was 17.56%;

5. The mean disability pay gap was 1.97% and the median gender pay gap was 3.25%;
6. Clear plans and targets were in place to reduce the pay gaps in future years.

Members welcomed the report noting the positive progress that had been made.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. More granular detail was needed to show the differences within the ethnic and disabled groups. The Workforce Analytics Manager confirmed that this could be done and would be included in future update reports. Noted that the information would also be reported to Full Council;
2. It would be useful to compare the information in the report with educational achievement to help address inequalities;
3. Employment offers/opportunities information in respect of deprived communities in the City was based on City Wards and postcodes. Members noted that the Performance Target for this was 6.5% with current performance running at 5.5%;
4. Comment was made that council wards were sometimes diverse comprising both wealthy and poorer communities. Members were informed that the Council's Educational Skills team helped with this work and that this was supported further by information from a deprivation index produced by the Office of National Statistics to take account of the diversity within council wards;
5. More work was needed and would be done to mitigate the pay gap in BG6 administrative roles whilst recognising that in many cases this was driven by part time employment with corresponding higher turnover rates as well as career progression;
6. The current ethnicity target of 11.75% would be reviewed in the near future to become more ambitious level;
7. Training for managers would be given greater emphasis specifically highlighting areas of work where minority groups were under represented;
8. The Council's website would be reviewed to make it more welcoming and inclusive to BAME and other minority groups particularly for better paid jobs;
9. The BAME median trend would be included going forward;
10. Regarding disability groups it was noted that there was a reliance on employees being open about their disabilities as there was no obligation for any employee to give such information, however the Council proactively encouraged them to do so. Current disclosures were 91% but it was recognised that there was more work to do in this area;
11. It was noted that a large proportion of part time work was by women (79%) and how this made it more difficult to close the pay gap. This would be looked at in more detail in future reports as it was understood how the structure of employment had a significant impact on the pay gap.

Resolved – That the report and the work that was being undertaken to close the pay gaps be noted.

14. Covid-19 – verbal update

Members received a verbal update from the Head of HR regarding the ongoing Covid-19 situation.

1. 220 employees had been redeployed to other roles which was just over 3% of the workforce who were unable to work, not including schools;
2. A casual worker retention scheme had been introduced with 400 colleagues being offered assistance, 201 had so far taken advantage of it;
3. A job retention scheme as advised by the Local Government Association had been implemented with 336 employees being successfully furloughed;
4. Currently, nationally 78 local authorities had accessed the Furlough scheme as of 12 June 2020;
5. Schools had also been supported by the Furlough scheme;
6. Development work had been undertaken around staff groups at extra risk from Covid e.g., medical or BAME, a joint letter to TU's and SLG's had been sent round and in addition a bespoke counselling service was being provided to BAME staff in the short term;
7. Support was also being given to staff who were vulnerable and working in front line services;
8. Continued to have weekly meetings around secure buildings making sure that they were Covid secure and all support given where it was necessary for staff to use the building. Noted that the priority remained that where staff could work from home they should continue to do so;
9. H&S teams and trade unions were helping in schools regarding a safe place to work and taking positive action when and where necessary;
10. Normal work continued with the majority of staff working from home;
11. Shielded workers would be supported to ensure that the relaxing of the shielding rules from the 1 August. With regard to staff who could not continue to working from home, support would be given and nobody in such a position would be put at risk;
12. Noted that of staff working from home other household members could be shielding and where this affected employees this would be looked at on a case by case basis and with full support as needed.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am

CHAIR