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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee (Remote/Virtual Meeting)

24 September 2020 at 10 am



DRAFT

Members Present:-

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

Officers in Attendance:- John Walsh (Director: Workforce & Change), Mark Williams (Head of Human Resources), Mark Jefferson (Workforce Analytics Manager), Stephanie Griffin (Head of Internal Communications and Organisational Development), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services)

1. 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 facility.

The Chair requested that agenda item 10 be taken after agenda item 7 to accommodate one of the Members having to leave the meeting early, this was agreed.

2. Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 July 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

Matter(s) arising

In relation to Minute No.12 the Chair confirmed that an informal meeting between HR Committee Members and Staff Led Groups had taken place on 23 July, 2020, it was considered that the meeting had been very valuable and productive.

5. Public Forum

None received.

6. Work Programme

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

7. Draft Workforce Strategy

The Committee received a detailed report from the Head of Internal Communications and Organisational Development seeking comments and observations from the Committee on the draft Workforce Strategy formerly known as the Organisational Improvement Plan. The Strategy's purpose was to define the actions the Council was taking to achieve its vision to become an inclusive, high-performing, healthy and motivated work place and become an employer of choice.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. During the Covid-19 lockdown period a staff survey revealed that 80% of staff felt they could work effectively from home. Equipment and wifi dongles were provided to those who needed additional equipment or have broadband connectivity issues;
2. Management was currently considering the long term effects of working from home based on emerging empirical evidence and would listen to all viewpoints from staff and trade unions having full regard to best practice and any changes to current positive feedback with regard to working from home;
3. A further staff survey would be undertaken in October and the results would be published. It was noted that a recurring theme from staff was that they wanted to remain fully connected with colleagues. Some methods were already being piloted to achieve this eg, some meeting rooms at City Hall were being used for a limited number of in person meetings subject to covid-19 safety protocols;
4. Members emphasised the importance of fully understanding and integrating into future Council policy, issues such inequalities of wealth, poor living conditions and higher anxiety levels particularly amongst some of the lower paid employees;
5. The Committee was assured that staff surveys would include a bottom up approach and would have regard to issues such broadband connectivity issues and costlier winter heating bills associated with extended periods of working from home.

The Committee welcomed the Strategy and thanked officers for their work. Members were invited to submit any further views and questions outside of the meeting, areas of interest expressed included areas such as equalities, intersectionality for disabled and BAME staff, recruitment audit and positive action initiatives.

Resolved – That the actions being taken to achieve the Council's vision of an inclusive, high-performing, healthy and motivated work place and becoming an employer of choice be noted.

At this point of the remote/virtual meeting a technical failure in respect of the live link to Youtube occurred which prevented public access to the remaining items on the Agenda. In accordance with the Council's commitment to transparency and openness the meeting was reconvened on 8 October, 2020 at 4 pm to ratify the discussions and decisions that took place at the meeting, on 24 September 2020.