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

8 October 2020 at 4 pm



DRAFT

Members Present:-

Councillors: Richard Eddy, Margaret Hickman, Gary Hopkins, Paula O'Rourke, Jon Wellington (Chair)

Officers in Attendance:- Mark Williams (Head of Human Resources), Mark Jefferson (Workforce Analytics Manager), Louise De Cordova (Democratic Services Manager), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

- a. 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.
- b. The Chair explained that this meeting was being reconvened from the 24 September 2020 Human Resources Committee due to a YouTube broadcast technical failure. This was required in order to comply with the statutory requirement for public access.
- c. Members were asked to note that the business in relation to Agenda items 1 to 7 had been concluded at the meeting on the 24 September 2020.
- d. The Committee was now required to confirm the two information items on the agenda and the Pay Policy as a decision item would need to be voted on again.
- e. The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Ruth Pickersgill and that Councillor Jeff Lovell was not in attendance.
- f. The Chair then referred to a late public forum question that had been received from a member of the public in respect of details of the process that would be followed to recruit and appoint a Project Director for the Temple Quarter Development.
- g. Members were advised that the timing of the submission of the Question fell outside of the formal public forum procedures for Council committee meetings so it had been forwarded to the Head of Human Resources who had since responded in full to the questioner.

8. National pay settlements for Chief Officers and Chief Executives

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources seeking its approval to apply the national pay settlement of 2.75% to the pay of the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors with effect from 1 April 2020.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. Concern was expressed that that too much money was focussed on the higher paid and not staff at lower levels in the Council. In addition those at higher levels in the Council had an opportunity to negotiate individual pay deals whereas those at lower levels did not;
2. The Senior Management team had provided significant value especially with regard to the Covid-19 crisis;
3. A pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers had not been implemented last year;
4. The pay increase had been recommended by a National Pay body;
5. It was considered to be a false economy to not give pay rises that had been recommended by a National Pay body, having regard to advertising costs for recruiting new senior officers;
6. The Committee had been previously advised that if it decided not to accept the recommendation to implement the Pay Award for 2020/21 the job holders and/or their trade union representatives would have the right to make further representations to the Committee. This was a matter of employment law and was open to any employee;
7. Members expressed a desire for the Council, in the longer term, to look at ways to close the pay gap between its highest and lowest paid employees, possibly considering flat rate pay increases. This issue could be raised at the National Joint Council during the National Pay Bargaining process.

It was then moved (Councillor O'Rourke) and seconded (Councillor Eddy) that the National Pay Settlement 2020/21 for the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors be implemented with effect from 1 April 2020.

On being put to the vote there were three in favour and two against, the motion was carried.

Resolved –

- 1. That the National pay settlements of 2.75% for Chief Executives and Chief Officers be noted;**
- 2. That the uplift of the individual pay and pay ranges for the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors in accordance with the JNC pay awards for 2020/2021 with effect from 1 April 2020 be approved;**
- 3. That the Pay Policy Statement, as updated to reflect the uplift in pay bands and the impact on pay ratios, be noted.**

9. Sickness - thematic review

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources updating on the latest sickness absence information for the Council and seeking the comments and observations of the committee on the report's findings.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. The Council was prioritising prevention of sickness absence through its Health and Wellbeing Plan and revised Workforce Strategy;
2. Overall sickness absence (excluding Covid-19) had reduced partly due to greater flexibility eg working from home and a willingness for employees to come forward for help eg, Employee Assistance Programme, regarding mental health issues.
3. Short term sickness eg, one day, could be monitored more closely and mitigation measures considered to further reduce sickness absence;
4. Sickness absence was higher amongst disabled and BAME staff, this would be closely monitored to identify underlying causes;
5. More work was needed in respect of sickness absence being higher amongst staff from more deprived areas and what extra support could be made available to them.

Resolved – That the work being done to reduce and manage sickness absence be noted.

10. Covid-19 – Recovery Plan

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources providing an update on the current workforce issues in respect of the COVID-19 recovery. It was noted that the information contained within the report was prior to the recent government announcement of further Covid-19 restrictions for the next six months.

Key points highlighted during discussion were –

1. The next six months were being given priority for work planning, longer term planning was not practical at the current time due to the volatility of the Covid-19 crises and continually emerging government policy to deal with it;
2. Council services with currently furloughed staff were under constant review however at the current time it was not known how long this would continue for. The priority was to retain as many jobs as possible;
3. Staff were being fully supported to work from home with equipment provision eg, computer screens and office style chairs;
4. Ongoing discussions were being held with trade unions about extended working from home during the winter months including fuel poverty arising from increased costs, all options for mitigation were being considered;
5. Connectivity issues for staff working from home in rural areas were being investigated.

Resolved – That the report be noted and a further update report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee on 17 December, 2020.

The meeting of ended at 4.23pm

CHAIR

