

HR Committee

16th December 2021



Report of: Director of Workforce and Change

Title: Update on key HR matters

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Mark Williams, Head of Human Resources

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Recommendation

That the Committee notes the report.

Summary

Members have requested a regular update report on key HR matters that affect the workforce. The report provides an update on current HR policy consultations, national pay negotiations and the Senior Coroners Pay Settlement.

The significant issues in the report are:

- A new Travel Policy will be introduced from 1 April 2022.
- A COVID-19 Vaccination Policy is now in place which complies with the legal requirements for those working in Registered Care Homes to be fully vaccinated. The regulations will be extended to Care Quality Commission regulated activities from 1 April 2022.
- The National Employers have made a final pay offer of 1.75% from 1 April 2021. The GMB, UNISON and UNITE are currently balloting their members on taking Industrial Action.

Policy

1. The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service has the delegated authority to approve all the Council's HR policies. The Human Resources Committee determines whether to apply national pay settlements to the Chief Executive and Chief Officers.

Consultation

3. Internal

Not required because this report is for information only.

4. External

Not required because this report is for information only.

Context

5. Members have requested a regular update report on key HR matters that affect the workforce. The report provides an update on current HR policy consultations and national pay negotiations.

HR Policy consultations

6. The most significant consultation has related to reforms to our Travel Policy. There has been a wide-ranging consultation and this committee contributed their views on the initial proposals. The final proposals were subject to a period of consultation with stakeholders which ended on 10 December 2021. A summary is provided at Appendix A. Changes will be introduced from 1 April 2022.
7. A new COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for workers in Registered Care Homes which came into force from 11 November 2021 and requires them to be vaccinated. The new Vaccination Policy sets out the arrangements for existing staff as well as new joiners. The regulations will be extended to Care Quality Commission regulated activities from 1 April 2022. This will affect aspects of Adult Social Care services. The Government decided not to make Flu vaccination a mandatory requirement. We are continuing to encourage all employees to take up the offer of the vaccine through continued support from Public Health and our NHS colleagues.
8. We have refreshed our Probationary Policy following consultation. Proposals to revise our Code of Practice on Investigations received wide ranging and extensive feedback which has been beneficial. The updated policy will come into effect in the New Year.

National Pay Negotiations

9. The committee received a report on the status of the national pay negotiations at the last meeting of the committee. The national pay offers for Single Status and Craft Workers from 1 April 2021 have been rejected by the trade unions and they are balloting their members on Industrial Action as set out below.
 - GMB have conducted a consultative ballot to determine whether to proceed to a formal

ballot on Industrial Action. The consultative ballot closes on Monday 13th December 2022.

- UNISON have commenced an Industrial Action ballot on strike action which closes on 14 January 2022.
- UNITE will be commencing a ballot on Industrial Action on 14 January 2022 and this will close on 17 February 2022.

10. The offers and numbers of employees affected is summarised below:

- Single Status - 1.75% from 1 April 2021 (6,645 employees)
- Craft Worker - 1.75% from 1 April 2021 (302 employees)

11. The Council has paid the Living Wage Foundation rate of £9.50 per hour to all employees on Bristol Grades 1 to 4 inclusive – as well as apprentices – since 1 April 2021. This is a higher rate than the pay offer made nationally for the lowest earners covered by the national agreement. The Living Wage will be uplifted to £9.90 per hour from 1 April 2022.

12. Currently, through the Pay Policy Statement agreed at Council annually, the power to apply national pay settlements to the Chief Executive, Executives Directors and Directors is delegated to the HR Committee. When these national pay negotiations are concluded, the Committee will be asked to consider the matter.

Return to work interviews

13. At the last committee, Members raised a question in relation to the arrangements for recording of return to work interviews. Return to Work interviews can be recorded on the Council's HR system iTrent and managers are encouraged to do this. However, managers can and do conduct return to work interviews as part of routine 1 to 1s and supervision. We will be reminding managers of the benefits and importance of using the HR system in the New Year.

Proposal

14. That the Committee notes this report

Other Options Considered

15. None.

Risk Assessment

16. Not required because this report is for information only.

Public Sector Equality Duties

15a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

15b) Not required because this report is for information only.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Once the outcome of negotiations is known, it is within the Terms of Reference of the Human Resources Committee to determine whether to apply the JNC Chief Executives and Chief Officers pay awards for 2021/22.

Husinara Jones, Team Leader/Solicitor 13 September 2021

Financial

(a) Revenue

(b) Capital

The Council's budget for 2021/22 assumed funding of £0.5M for pay settlements in accordance with the government's pay policy for 2021/22. The pay offer of 1.75% for employees covers the vast majority of Council workers and will cost an additional £2.9M in 2021/22. Funding will need to be identified to meet these costs if the pay offer is agreed nationally

Michael Pilcher, Chief Accountant 15 September 2021

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Not required because this report is for information only.

Appendices:

A Travel Policy Proposals.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None.