

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

17 February 2022 at 5.00 pm



Members Present:

Councillors: Sarah Classick, Lorraine Francis, Farah Hussain, Steve Pearce, Tim Wye (Chair), Chris Windows (substitute for Cllr Eddy)

Officers in Attendance:

Mark Williams (Head of Human Resources), James Brereton (Human Resources Business Partner), Joanne White (Senior Programme Manager), Mark Jefferson (Reward and Workforce Analytics Manager), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services).

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

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

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Councillor Paula O'Rourke, Councillor Lesley Alexander, and Councillor Eddy (substituted by Councillor Windows). Councillor Lorraine Francis advised members that she would have to leave the meeting at 6pm due to another commitment.

Noted that Councillor Kerry Bailes was not in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no pecuniary declarations of interest received. Councillor Pearce declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 Pay Policy Statement as he was a Board member of the Bristol Waste Company.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved – That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 December 2021 be agreed as a correct record.



Matters arising

1. Minute 8 Apprenticeship Levy, unused funds – The Chair asked if members wanted him to write to the Government, on behalf of the Committee, to attempt to make progress on this. Members confirmed that they wanted this.
2. Minute 8 Apprenticeship Levy COP26 – the Chair confirmed he had written to Cabinet Members to ask for greater attention to be given to this matter but had not yet received a response.
3. Minute 10 Staff Led Groups – Head of Human Resources confirmed that an informal meeting between SLG chairs and HR Committee members would take place in March. The meeting would be held remotely.

5. Public Forum

No statements/petitions had been received from the public.

6. Trade Union Forum

No comments from the Trade Unions had been received.

7. Work Programme

The Committee received and noted the updated Work Programme for 2021/22.

8. Chief Officer and Chief Executive Pay Award 2021/22

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources seeking the committee's approval to apply the national pay award for the Chief Executive and delegated authority to implement the Chief Officers pay settlement for, Executive Directors and Directors with effect from 1 April 2021 once it was agreed nationally.

The Head of Human Resources updated the Committee regarding a letter that had been received from the JNC for Chief Officers for Local Authorities confirming that agreement had now been reached on the pay award and would be applicable from 1 April 2021. A copy of the letter had been circulated to members the day before the meeting.

Key points in the report were–

1. JNC Chief Executive and Chief Officers terms and conditions were determined by the Human Resources Committee.
2. The Committee was required to consider the implications of the JNC Chief Executive and JNC Chief Officers pay settlements and determine whether to apply the 2021/22 pay settlement locally.



3. It was proposed that the individual pay and pay ranges of the Chief Executive be uplifted by 1.5% and the Executive Directors and Directors pay be uplifted, now that the JNC pay award had been agreed at a national level between the employers and trade unions, to take effect from 1 April 2021.
4. If the Council did not implement the pay settlements, the job holders and/or their trade union representatives would have the right to make further representations to the committee.

Resolved -

- 1. That the application of the 2021-22 Chief Executives National Pay Agreement which would uplift the pay and pay band of the Chief Executive by 1.5% with effect from 1 April 2021, be approved.**
- 2. That the Head of Human Resources be authorised to implement national pay settlement for 2021/22 for Chief Officers to Executive Directors and Directors now that it had been agreed between the employers and trade unions nationally.**
- 3. That the Head of Human Resources be requested to provide a report to the HR Committee regarding the national pay settlement for Chief Officers, including information on the costs to the Council and any other associated matters.**

9 The Council's Pay Policy Statement for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources to consider the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23. The Localism Act 2011 required local authorities to agree and publish a pay policy statement annually before the start of the financial year to which the statement related.

Key facts emphasised in the report were –

1. As of 31 December 2021, the pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid employee was 1:9.36. This was an improvement on the pay ratio on 31 December 2020 which was 1:9.45.
2. National pay settlements agreed by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities and the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities to the Chief Executive, would be automatically applied to Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors as appropriate, subject to Full Council approval of the Pay Policy Statement on 15th March 2022.
3. The Real Living Wage was £9.90 per hour (40p increase) with effect from 1st April 2022, which equated to a minimum salary of £19,100 (based on a full-time week of 37 hours. Reducing the Council's top to lowest salary ratio to 8.98:1 based on current pay level. It also meant that the lowest paid had an increase of 3.5% in addition to the pending nationally negotiated pay settlement.

Following discussion and in response to Members questions the following points were raised/clarified:

4. Care workers employed outside of the Council were not legally protected in the same way as council employees however the Council strongly encouraged employers to align with the council



pay structures and took every opportunity to implement this when drawing up new contracts with external providers.

5. Regarding the pay ratio members asked if there was an ambition/target to get to 1:10. The Head of Human Resources explained that was not the case at the current time however the Council was aligned to the Government's Terms of Reference regarding the Will Hutton review (2011) which had suggested that no public sector worker should earn more than 20 times the lowest paid person in the organisation.
6. In pursuant of an improved pay ratio target the Head of Human Resources proposed that an amendment be made to the Pay Policy Statement and put to Full Council to explicitly achieve a target of a 1:10 pay ratio. An exclusion clause might have to be included regarding Chief Executive/Chief Officer posts. The draft amendment would be circulated to members for their input prior to the Full Council meeting in March. Members endorsed the proposal.
7. Members queried if the 'real living wage' had an impact on pay differentials. Head of Human Resources acknowledged that it did at lower pay levels however as there were fewer employees at that level and there was significantly more turnover the impact had been largely mitigated. Noted that this was a national issue amongst council employers not just Bristol City Council.

Resolved –

That Full Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, to take effect from 1 April 2022 subject to an additional clause being included to achieve a target pay ratio of 1:10 as soon as possible.

10 Update on Council Wide Change Programmes

The Committee received a report from HR Business Partner and Senior Project Manager setting out progress in relation to a connected and co-ordinated set of council wide change programmes.

The Common Activities Programme was informing areas where the number of management roles could be rationalised through the Management and Capacity Review, as well as services where capacity needed to be retained, talent promoted, and diversity improved through application of the Succession Planning Policy. Taken together, the initiatives were reducing duplication, improving efficiency, reducing the overall number of managers across the Council, and ensuring that organisational capacity was focused on the Council's top Corporate Strategy goals.

Key facts emphasised in the report were –

1. The Common Activities Programme was reducing duplication and improving efficiency across the organisation. The programme was designed to deliver savings of £1m over three years (2021/22-2023/24) without a need to make compulsory redundancies.
2. The Management and Capacity Review was reducing the overall number of manager roles across the Council, removing vacant positions in areas where capacity could be reduced and



retaining/shifting capacity in areas delivering on key Corporate Strategy priorities. This programme of work would deliver savings of £2m in 2022/23 and a further £3.5m in 2023/24.

3. A Succession Planning Policy had been introduced for employees to create opportunities to promote talent and improve diversity at higher grades whilst reducing the number of manager roles. The Succession Planning Policy was adopted in 2021 and enabled staff to be invited to apply to leave the council with a severance payment or early release of pension benefits, provided a position (preferably a managerial role) was deleted in return.

Following discussion and in response to Members questions the following points were raised/clarified:

4. Most applications to date had come from employees at Bristol grade BG13 and above although it was anticipated that other applications would soon follow at BG12 and below.
5. Employees would be invited to apply subject to a post being identified by the service and preferably with line manager support.
6. Concern was expressed that not all roles would be suited to this policy. Members were assured that robust mechanisms were in place to ensure only the correct roles were managed through the Programme as the Council wanted this to succeed, if any disagreement or discord became apparent then mitigation would be sought via a Performance Board of Directors and the Chief Executive and would include full consultation with the trade unions.
7. Emphasis would be on a flexible conversation between management and staff as there was no one size fits all plan. Compulsory redundancies would not be sought as most deletion of posts would be from currently held vacancies.
8. The Programme implementation was set to end in December 2022.
9. Members suggested that Service Managers and staff be invited to discuss with Human Resources Committee members about their experiences with how the programme was working from their perspective.

Resolved – That the update on Council Wide Change Programmes be noted.

Councillor Lorraine Francis left the meeting at this point.

11. COVID Recovery and Update

The Committee received a report from the Head of Human Resources updating members on the COVID-19 workforce and return to workplaces work that had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee on 16 December 2021.

Members noted that –

1. Social distancing measures in workplaces and a requirement to wear face coverings when moving around remained in place and would be reviewed again in March 2022. The review would consider infection rates, the advice of the city's Director of Public Health and obligations to employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act.



2. The risk of exposure to COVID-19 remained high in workplaces especially given the Omicron variant. The Council would continue to manage the risks in accordance with current best practice guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
3. Having regard to the COVID-19 pandemic now moving into an endemic phase the Council would be reviewing guidance and advice in relation to sickness absence with trade unions taking into consideration the advice from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Members asked that the Council keep in mind those members of staff who had limited resources to work from home and ensure that office space was available to them.

Regarding government proposals to end free Lateral Flow Tests members were informed that where necessary, employees working in care homes or similar could have such tests included as part of their PPE equipment and costs would then be borne by the Council.

Resolved – That the COVID-19 workforce and return to workplaces work that had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee on 16 December 2021 be noted.

12. Update on key HR matters

The Committee received a report of the Head of Human Resources providing updates on key Human Resources matters that affected the workforce. The report provided an update on HR policy activity and national pay negotiations.

Key facts emphasised in the report were –

1. On 31 January 2022, the Government had announced that the regulations requiring staff to be vaccinated in Registered Care Homes and Care Quality Commission regulated activities would now be revoked, subject to public consultation and Parliamentary approval. Until the regulations were revoked, current COVID-19 Vaccination Policy would apply.
2. National Industrial Action pay ballots had taken place and the status of pay negotiations was as set out below -
 - GMB had conducted a consultative ballot to determine whether to proceed to a formal ballot on Industrial Action. The consultative ballot closed on Monday 13th December 2022. GMB had decided not to undertake an Industrial Action ballot.
 - UNISON balloted their membership on Industrial Action and although the ballot was in favour of Industrial Action, the turnout was below the threshold of 50%. Therefore, UNISON would not be taking Industrial Action.
 - UNITE had commenced a ballot on Industrial Action on 14 January 2022 and this would close on 17 February 2022.



Resolved – That the update on key Human Resources matters that affected the workforce be noted.

13. Exclusion of the Press and Public That under s.100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act.

14. EXEMPT Appendix C to agenda item 10

Members were advised of proposed changes to the Council's senior management structure which included two Director posts being deleted from the establishment, other cases were also being considered, in accordance with the Succession Planning Policy.

The proposed management structure changes were currently in draft form and sought to ensure that Directorates were better aligned with linked working and avoiding 'silo' styles of working, in pursuit of the 'One Council' operating objective.

Meeting ended at 6.30 pm

CHAIR

