

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

21st April 2016 at 2.00pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Wollacott (Chair), Eddy, Joffe (substitute), Langley,

Officers in Attendance:-

Richard Billingham – Service Director, Human Resources, James Brereton – Human Resources Advisor, Louise deCordova – Democratic Services

Others in Attendance:-

Dominic Murphy – Chief Service Officer for Cities of Service Program, Nigel Donnelly – Unite, Lisa Middle – National Union of Teachers

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the attendees and introductions were made.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillors: Clarke, Gollop, Leaman

3. Declarations of Interest

None were received

4. Minutes – of 18 February 2016.

The minutes of the 18 February 2016 were agreed as an accurate record subject to the insertion of the word 'not' at Minute 33 para e) to read '*Due to ongoing pressures on costs, revisions to the pay framework would need to be cost neutral and would not be funded by work force reductions lower down in the structure.*'

5. Chair's Business

There was none.

6. Public Forum

The Committee received and noted the following questions and officer responses (these have been placed in the minute book (accessed via Democratic Services) and are available on the website):



PQ 01 - Lisa Middle, National Union of Teachers - Item 7: Volunteering and Employer Supported Volunteering

The Committee received and noted the following statements (a copy of the statement has been placed in the minute book (accessed via Democratic Services):

PS 01 - Stephen Paines, Unite - Item 6: Changes statutory disciplinary & dismissal procedures for protected officers, Item 8: Applied Programme, Item 10: HR Dashboard

The Chair advised that the submissions would be taken just before the item concerned.

7. Changes to the Constitution (Officer Employment Rules) relating to Protected Officers, (agenda item no.6)

The Committee received a report from the Service Director, Human Resources and considered the public forum statement by Unite in conjunction with this item. The report proposed how the Council should implement changes required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a. The new regulations had proved difficult to interpret and the Council had taken into account guidance issued by the LGA to address the ambiguities found in the regulations and draft the amendments required to the constitution.
- b. There was work on-going nationally between SOLACE and the LGA to determine what amendments should be made to the Model Disciplinary Process, which is contained within the Chief Executives Handbook.
- c. It was confirmed that any proposal by the panel to dismiss would be referred to Full Council, and was the final level, with no option to appeal. Unite's concerns had been noted with reference to this and the suggestion to utilise the appeals process offered by South West Councils would be explored. However, it was noted that constitutional difficulties may arise if an outside body were in a position to take a decision that could override a decision of the Full Council. **Action: James Brereton**
- d. It was confirmed that the Statutory Officer Panel would be politically balanced in line with the normal proportionality rules, and would include two Independent Persons. Officers to confirm how proportionality would work. **Action: James Brereton**
- e. A question was raised as to whether Independent Persons are employed on a fixed term or permanent basis. **Action: James Brereton.**
- f. The Chair proposed that the Human Resources Committee write to the Mayor to recommend that he raise concerns with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government about the complexity and lack of clarity around the new process. **Action: James Brereton.**

Resolved:- to note the report and actions arising.

8. Volunteering and Employer-Supported Volunteering (agenda item no.7)

The Committee received a report from the Human Resources Advisor and the Chief Service Officer for Cities of Service Program and considered the public forum question by the National Union of Teacher's and response from officers in conjunction with this item. The report briefed the



Committee on work to update and refresh the Council's approach to volunteering. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. It was clarified that the policy would only apply to schools if specifically adopted by them.
- b. The National Union of Teachers were concerned that parts of the curriculum would be squeezed out, which would result in some subjects being taught in a club environment.
- c. There was an understanding that volunteers in schools would have received some pedagogical training.
- d. Some council services already had robust processes in place for volunteering such as within the Youth Offending Team, and the review was intended to provide a framework to share and enhance existing good practice.
- e. Clarification was sought on the current position for treating Army and Sea Cadets as volunteers. Unite confirmed they were not covered by Reserved Forces legislation. HR confirmed that the current Leave Policy covered the Territorial Army, and would need to be review in relation to cadets. **Action: James Brereton**
- f. The trade unions requested that reclassification of roles did not result in paid work being replaced by volunteers.
- g. Guidance would be produced for managers on what volunteering could be supported. There was a desire to encourage teams to use team building for undertaking specific tasks in the community. There were good examples which could be used as case studies from local authority colleagues in Barnsley, who have had their own employer-supported volunteering schemes running for some time.
- h. Whilst the additional benefits for employees was seen to be a positive thing, Unite had reservations that staff were being publicly-funded to undertake 3 days volunteering, and it was important to ensure that activities were ethical and were not activities that the Council had grant funded other organisations to do.
- i. It was confirmed that the volunteer website asked that organisations did not put up opportunities that replaced paid work, and that all advertisements/requests for volunteers were vetted prior to publication and challenged where necessary.
- j. Members requested that equalities be engrained within the policy to ensure equal opportunity and accessibility for all.
- k. Concerns were raised regarding the additional burden on managers of managing volunteers as well as paid staff. Officers acknowledged that different management skills were required in the management and motivation of volunteers as opposed to paid staff. There was a bank of experience in some areas (such as museums) that could and should be shared for others to learn from, and training would be developed to ensure managers were equipped with the skills to succeed in their changing roles.

Resolved:- to note the report and actions arising.

9. Applied Programme (agenda item no.8)

The Committee noted the Public Forum submission PS 01 received from Stephen Paines, Unite.

The Committee received a report from the Service Director, Human Resources and considered the public forum statement by Unite in conjunction with this item. The report outlined the ambition, approach and next steps for the Applied Programme. During the discussion, the following points were raised:



- a. Concern was raised that the Applied Programme presentation was not clear on the impact for staff. It was confirmed that the 2013/14 restructure had resulted in 650 employees leaving the Council at a saving of around £21m. The emerging financial picture between now and 2020 meant it was inevitable that there would be further reductions in the Council's workforce. The Applied Programme had been developed to recognise that there was as yet no consensus or requirement to stop services. It offered a more nuanced approach to enable different approaches to be used to reimagine delivery of services using digital technology.
- b. 58% of calls to the contact centre were a result of callers being unable to find or transact their service online. Digital transactions cost substantially less than handling a telephone enquiry.
- c. There was a need to confirm how customers wanted to access services – ie, to challenge assumptions made by service providers. Moving to an appropriate digital solution this removed costs from the operation of services in the right ways. There was a duty for the Council to be efficient before any services were stopped, building in support for people where it was most needed. Changed services would require fewer staff, and workforce costs would therefore be lower.
- d. A councillor raised a concern regarding ICT illiteracy in the city and suggested libraries should be used to provide help to citizens with this. It was noted that ICT was becoming more available to people through smart phones, for instance.

Resolved:- to note the report.

10. Employment matters – proposed and contemplated Government reforms (agenda item no.9)

The Committee received a report from the Service Director, Human Resources. The report updated the Committee on proposed and contemplated Government reforms in the area of employment. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a. Members identified 'The Fluency Code' as an area within the report that they may want to explore in further detail in the next municipal year. **Action: James Brereton to add 'The Fluency Code' to the 2016/17 work programme.**

Resolved:- to note the report, comments and actions arising.

11. HR Dashboard (agenda item no.10)

The Committee received a report from the Service Director, Human Resources and considered the public forum statement by Unite in conjunction with this item. The report updated the Committee on key HR metrics.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- a. Concerns were raised regarding current agency spend in light of the redundancies that had been made. The Service Director confirmed that a new agency firm had been contracted, which would result in significant savings.
- b. In response to a concern regarding the vacancy rate, it was confirmed that it was difficult to keep this data up-to-date. It was hoped that the new HR and payroll system (that will be linked to the finance system) would ensure that future reports accurately reflected the position.



- c. Councillors stated it would be useful to have data/pie charts showing the previous year's results for comparison where appropriate. **Action: James Brereton to incorporate suggested amendments where possible.**

Resolved:- to note the report, comments and actions arising.

The meeting finished at 3.20pm

CHAIR _____

