

Bristol City Council: Organisation Restructure
Trade Union Consultation – Section 188 Notice (August 2016)

This notice is issued under Section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULR(C)A 1992) to advise you of Bristol City Council's plans to:

- (i) Complete a whole organisation review and restructure and
- (ii) Identify required budgetary savings.

The combined impact of the above will result in proposals that will lead to a reduction in the Council's workforce. The intention of this notice is to consult with you on how we can mitigate, as far as practically possible, against compulsory redundancies.

1. Background

Bristol City Council is facing its most financially challenging period as a result of a significant budget 'gap' due to cuts in government funding and an increasing demand on our services. As a result, the Council needs to save a further £29 million by 31st March 2017.

The scale of budget gap means that we will need to take a fundamental look at all areas of the organisation. This involves redesigning services, refocusing resources for the areas that need it most, squeezing more from our commercial contracts and raising income. By doing things more efficiently and effectively we can redirect scarce resources to essential services.

Alongside this, the Council has commenced an organisation review and restructure which will lead to a reduction in the number of jobs we require. The proposals are likely to result in redundancies; we are however seeking to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

We anticipate employment savings of around £29 million by 31st March 2017. This notice outlines the Council's approach to reducing the whole workforce by 31st March 2017.

2. Proposals for Consultation

The Council's approach to staff consultation is set out below.

3. Consultation Obligations

The Council recognises it has a duty to issue this Notice, to inform and consult appropriate representatives of Trade Unions of any employee who may be affected. The Council seeks to reach agreement with the recognised Trade Unions on how to mitigate the need to make compulsory redundancies, considering any alternatives to this brought forward during consultation.

The Council will manage any required workforce reductions in accordance with our HR policies.

This notice does not apply to existing workforce reductions that are currently being implemented by the Council. They remain unaffected by the proposals contained within this notice.

4. Mitigation

Actions to mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies include:

Voluntary Severance

We propose making use of the Voluntary Severance Scheme to mitigate the requirement for compulsory redundancies.

We would anticipate that requests for voluntary severance will be actioned as soon as possible on or after 30th September 2016.

People and Non Pay Panels

These panels will continue to ensure strong governance in the control of establishment and general spend through:

- I. Ensuring effective establishment control
- II. Scrutinising all resourcing requests (both employed and contracted such as agency/self employed) to ensure we spend the Council's money responsibly and ultimately protect our employed workforce.
- III. Giving priority to redeployees at risk of redundancy
- IV. Targeted reskilling of employees at risk of redundancy
- V. Reviewing all requests for "non-people" spend to contribute to overall savings.

Flexible working requests

We will continue to consider requests for flexible working arrangements where this helps us to achieve the required reductions. We have already consulted on a new scheme to facilitate voluntary reductions in hours.

Managing Change/Redeployment

We will follow our agreed policies to support both managers and staff.

We will consult with staff and trade unions in relation to any proposed ring-fence arrangements.

We will support staff in a ring-fence scenario with advice and guidance on how to prepare for a selection process / interview.

Any employee under notice of dismissal will be provided with up to three months in the redeployment pool which will include their notice period.

Any Other Measures

The Council is open to considering any other measures identified and agreed upon, as part of consultation.

5. Consultation Period

Initial consultations took place on 29th July and 12th August. Consultation will continue on a weekly basis (Wednesday mornings) throughout the process. Given the need for savings to be made as soon as possible we hope to agree with the trade unions that volunteers for voluntary severance may leave by 30th September. We do not anticipate issuing any notices of compulsory redundancy before week commencing 10th October 2016, which allows a period of at least 45 days from 22nd August, when formal announcements will be made to staff and the public.

The Council intends to begin consultation on proposals to change service structures and the likely impacts on the workforce on 22 August 2016. We intend to run a rolling consultation period from this date for a minimum of 45 days. However, we may where appropriate begin to implement the changes where we have appropriately concluded consultation before this date although but no sooner than, except for consultation on Voluntary Severance, week commencing 10th October 2016 (end of 45 days).

6. Numbers and Descriptions of Employees

Currently, the number of employees that are considered as being potentially affected by the restructure is 6,970 employees (5,706.93 Full Time Equivalents - FTE) as at 30th June 2016. In addition, we engage approximately 405 agency workers on a monthly basis (361.19 FTE) subject to monthly fluctuation.

It is estimated that there will be a potential reduction of up to 1000 FTE employees.

The expectation is that much of the workforce reductions will be achieved by no later than 30th September 2016 using the voluntary measures identified in Section 4 and thus avoiding, wherever possible, compulsory redundancies.

The scale of budgetary reduction covered by this notice is £29m. We undertake to notify you of any changes to these figures as and when they occur.

7. Selection Method

If the Council does not achieve the required level of savings through a Voluntary Severance process and other mitigating measures, it will conduct service reviews in accordance with the Council's Managing Change policy. This will involve employees being placed into appropriate ring-fenced groups and may include a selection process. We will consult appropriately with individuals in this situation.

The proposed method for selecting which employees will be made redundant will also be based on the Council's Managing Change policy. Employees under notice of dismissal will enter the Council's redeployment pool.

8. Method of Carrying out the Dismissals

If, after meaningful consultation and after mitigating actions have taken place, compulsory redundancies are unavoidable, employees will be given notice of dismissal in accordance with the Council's agreed policy.

Employees under compulsory notice of dismissal on the grounds of redundancy will enter in to the Council's redeployment pool for a period of up to 3 months which will also include their contracted notice period.

8. Method of calculating the amount of redundancy payments

Any employees eligible for a redundancy payment will receive a payment in accordance with the Council's policy. The payment is based upon an employee's age, length of service and weekly pay. The weekly earnings limit is capped at £730. The maximum payment that can be made to any employee is £43,800 which is the equivalent of 60 weeks pay.

Different arrangements apply to any employees who transferred to the Council under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment Regulations.

An employee who is aged, 55 or over may be eligible for early release of pension if they are a member of one of the official pension schemes.

Stephen Hughes
Interim Chief Executive
22nd August 2016