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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Human Resources Committee (Annual General meeting)

21 July 2022 at 5 pm



Members present:

Councillors: Sarah Classick, Amirah Cole, Richard Eddy, Lorraine Francis, Farah Hussain, Tim Wye.

Officers in Attendance:

Stephanie Griffin (Head of Internal Communications and Organisational Development), James Brereton (Head of HR), Mark Jefferson (Reward and Analytics Manager), Laura Martin (Project Support Officer), Steve Gregory (Democratic Services)

1. Confirmation of Chair for 2022/23

The Committee noted that at its meeting on 24 May 2022, Full Annual Council appointed Councillor Lorraine Francis as Chair of the Human Resources Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

2. Confirmation of Vice Chair for 2022/23

The Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Farah Hussain as Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

3. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

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

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Councillor Lesley Alexander and Councillor Kerry Bailes.

Councillor Mohamad Makawi was not present.

5. Membership of Human Resources Committee 2022/23

The Membership of the Human Resources Committee for 2022/23, as set out below, was noted.

Councillors Lesley Alexander, Kerry Bailes, Sarah Classick, Amirah Cole, Richard Eddy, Lorraine Francis, Farah Hussain, Mohamad Makawi, Tim Wye.

6. Dates and times of meetings for 2022/23

The Committee agreed that all future meetings for 2022/23 would be held on the following dates and times:

22 September 2022

15 December 2022

16 February 2023

27 April 2023

The established time of 5pm was reconsidered and various alternative times were suggested but no decision was made. As three members of the committee were not present it was agreed that Democratic Services contact all members for their views after the meeting.

7. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

8. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 April 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

Matter arising – Minute No.8 Avon Pension Fund

The Committee was advised that the former Chair of HR Committee Councillor Wye had, as agreed at the last meeting, written to the Mayor and Chief Executive regarding consulting with BCC staff about their views on disinvestment of fossil fuel companies by the APF.

The Chief Executive had responded to explain that the APF had recently carried out its own survey on this and so it was considered that it would be more impactful to work with APF directly and seek to influence their next survey to all members. There would be little benefit from the Council conducting its own survey which may serve to mislead the Council's own employees as to the impact of a separate survey.

Further discussion with the Chief Executive had culminated in an offer to write to the APF requesting the Council be involved in the development of their next survey.

Members agreed with this approach subject to HR Committee members seeing the draft letter prior to it being sent to APF, and with the prior oversight of BCC's APF representative Councillor Steve Pearce.

Members noted that UNISON was doing its own consultation with its members regarding the APF investment strategy.

9. Public Forum

None received.

10. Trade Union Forum

UNISON made a verbal statement about its ongoing concerns regarding possible industrial action in the Housing service, suggestions of a further transfer of facilities management staff to Bristol Waste Company,

the proposed Travel Policy, and the emerging trade union facilities agreement. A ballot had been organised to ascertain UNISON members views to take industrial action on certain of these matters.

The Head of Human Resources (HR) updated members –

1. Two ballots for industrial action were currently underway: one in Hospital Education (relating to pensions) and Housing (relating to work pressures). HR was currently in touch with ACAS to seek resolution on these issues.
2. Regarding facilities management there were no new changes aside from those related to management of sites/cleaning and issues relating to the Common Activities Programme.
3. It was envisaged that a business case would be put together by BWC for consideration by BCC, at the current time there had only been engagement on this, and no proposals had been put forward. It was emphasised that the notion of seeking approval by Cabinet in September was ambitious.
4. Regarding comments from the trade unions on travel issues the suggested implementation date of 1 July 2022 had been paused. Consideration was being given to the points raised by UNISON.
5. A report on facilities management would be brought to HR Committee having regard to its remit under its current Terms of Reference and exempt information relating to personal information of employees.

11. Work Programme

The Committee received and noted the Work Programme for 2022/23.

Following requests for more information on interim staff at all levels in the Council, the Head of HR undertook to seek the views of members on the information being sought outside of the meeting.

12. HR Committee Annual Report for the Civic Year 2021/22

The Committee received a draft HR Committee Annual report (Appendix 1) setting out the work of the committee in the last civic year and would be considered at Full Council on Tuesday 13th September 2022.

Members noted that this was the Committee's first Annual Report and that the report summarised the work of the Committee in the last civic year and the key issues that it considered.

A table mentioned in the draft report regarding committee membership, in paragraph 3.1, would be included in the final report.

Regarding paragraph 4.8 a member asked that a sentence be included about how the Council had significantly changed the pay ratio from 1:20, lowest to highest paid, to 1:10.

Resolved – That, subject to the minor amendments as discussed, the Annual Report be approved for consideration at Full Council on Tuesday 13th September 2022.

13. Staff Led Groups Annual Work programme

The Committee received an updated Annual Work Programme provided by Staff Led Groups outlining their work programmes for the year. New Chairs had been elected in April 2022 (election still pending for embRACE) which enabled them to spend their first quarter understanding their new roles. A positive start on new and ongoing initiatives had already been made.

Councillor Eddy left the meeting at this point (6pm).

Members discussed the SLG work programme and key points highlighted were –

1. Regarding LGBT policy, the importance of equality and inclusion was strongly emphasised and how to progress diversity in higher levels within the Council's employee structures.
2. Members noted that significant improvement had already started on this via pay gap work where employees at all levels were being reached out to eg, succession planning, holding staff forums and working collaboratively to achieve ambitions and remove obstacles to progression.
3. To ensure robustness and achieve real change, members were advised that SLG's reviewed and scrutinised progress and where necessary met with HR officers to ensure that all voices were heard, to facilitate this confidential and safe spaces were provided so that feedback could be clearly given to senior management.
4. Priority was being given to removal of barriers to progression and social mobility eg the language commonly used in job descriptions and adjustments at interview stage for disabled people.
5. Members noted that the work of the SLG's was done by volunteers and that they were effectively the 'eyes and ears' of the organisation and could bring to the attention of HR officers matters that were both systemic and individual and therefore provided a real opportunity to change long standing issues.
6. It was suggested that the information provided by the HR dashboard could potentially support work on identifying access to employment and training. The Head of HR agreed to investigate this.

Resolved – That the Staff Led Groups Annual Work programme be noted.

14. Annual Pay Gap Report

The Committee received a report about the work that was being undertaken to close pay gaps in the City Council. The report provided information on the gender, race, disability and LGB pay gaps for the City Council at the report date of 31 March 2021, and the progress being made to address the pay gaps.

Members noted in particular that –

1. The mean gender pay gap was 4.55% and had increased from 4.26%. The median gender pay gap had also increased by 0.8% to 9.33%.
2. The City Council was one of a small number of employers in the UK to publish the race pay gap. Few employers had been identified who publish their disability and LGB pay gaps.
3. Other than gender, pay gap reporting was reliant on employee disclosure. 92% of the workforce had disclosed their ethnicity. 86.8% of the workforce had disclosed whether they had a disability and 76.1% had disclosed their sexual orientation.

4. The mean race pay gap was 8.74%. The pay gap was closing and had reduced from 15.06% in 2016.
5. The mean disability pay gap was 2.82% and had increased from 1.37% in 2020. The median pay gap had also increased due to an increase in the number of disabled employees in the lower and lower middle quartile.
6. The LGB pay gap is 2.94% and the median pay gap is 6.05%.
7. To help the organisation better understand its pay gaps it had sought to develop a dynamic report which allowed users to track progress against pay gaps on a monthly rather than an annual basis.
8. Clear plans and targets were in place to reduce the pay gaps further in future years.
9. The Council's Succession Planning policy would encourage and facilitate lower grade staff into middle and senior management roles.
10. In the autumn of this year a trial would take place regarding a voluntary reduction of working hours scheme, which it was hoped would contribute to addressing pay gap issues.
11. Core cities approach to pay gap issues could be investigated to see if any positive measures could be learnt from them.
12. Bristol Waste Company was separate from Bristol City Council so would be responsible for its own work regarding pay gaps, however BCC could provide support to BWC so that comparisons could be drawn.

Resolved – That the work being undertaken to close the pay gaps be noted.

15. Items discussed that were not on the published agenda

1. An informal briefing would be set up for HR Committee members regarding the recruitment freeze and facilities management.
2. Regarding the pending Chief Executive post vacancy, a report would be brought to a future HR Committee for consideration.

The meeting ended at 6.35 pm

CHAIR