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Bristol City Council Human Resources Committee



15 December 2022 at 5 pm
Public and TU Forum Items

Questions (Jeff Sutton GMB Secretary Avon and Wessex Branch)

Q1 . The GMB would like an update on its request for an investigation into the closure of South Bristol Rehab, the way in which the closure was undertaken and the way staff were treated, especially those off sick who had no support at all through the closure process. The GMB sees this investigation as separate from the lessons learnt exercise. This needs to be an independent investigation.

Answer

The Committee acknowledged the statements made by GMB at its last meeting and requested a lessons learned report be prepared and brought to its next meeting. Information has been received from the project team, and the next step is for the Head of HR to review this, make further enquiries as necessary and prepare a report for HR Committee. Unfortunately more time is needed for officers to prepare the report and it will now be brought to the Committee's meeting in February. Trade union colleagues and HR Committee members were advised of this delay on Wednesday 8 December.

Q2. Why the Head of Social services was involved in the 'Lessons learnt' meetings, when clearly there is a conflict of interest.

Answer

The meetings held as part of the conclusion of the project rightly included key stakeholders on the management and employees' sides. The final report will be prepared by the Head of HR following consideration of all evidence collected.

Q3. The GMB would like to know why, as of 9th of Dec., it has not received a copy of the notes of the meeting its members were involved with in the lessons learnt process. Also, how many meetings were held and who were involved. The GMB believes this is in BCC ethos of honesty and openness and inline with its values.

Answer

Two meetings took place. Notes are available on request from the Programme Manager, as will the project closure report in due course.

Q4. The GMB would like to know why, despite being told the contrary there are around 30 vacancies for RSA's but these posts don't seem to be advertised. Is this to allow SIRONA to take over the service and remaining BCC staff to act as 'bank' staff for SIRONA?

Answer

Advertising of all vacant positions is subject to the dispensation process, which is in place in response to the Council's budget situation. 4 vacancies are currently advertised for South Bristol. For North Bristol, 14 vacancies are about to be advertised. For Central Bristol, 12 vacancies are about to be advertised. Any future arrangement with partners in the health and social care system would be the subject of consultation with those potentially impacted.

Statements

	Name	Subject
1	Jeff Sutton GMB	Agenda items 8 and 11
2	Jeff Sutton GMB TU item	Real Living Wage

Number 1

Agenda item 8 - Potential workforce implications of the 2023-24 budget saving proposals

The GMB notes the following -

1 - Workforce consultation continues as necessary in relation to savings approved in previous budgets and for any required by local issues (eg, pressures within existing service budgets).

2 - Provisional estimates indicate up to 300 redundancies (voluntary or compulsory) are possible. The spread of redundancies across and within directorates, services and teams will be variable depending upon the availability of vacancies that can be deleted and turnover rates.

3 - The number of redundancies required will be minimised through the deletion of vacancies arising from natural turnover, the use of the Succession Planning Policy (as appropriate) and the return to a pro-active approach to redeployment.

1. The GMB is concerned that the lack of progress in implementing savings in previous budgets has exacerbated the amount of savings needed in the 23 -24 budget. The GMB welcomes any opportunity to further discuss these issues and to still look at other ways of making these savings such, procurement, service delivery improvements, sleeker management structures, ect.

2. The GMB is aware that to mitigate some redundancies it is possible that over 100 agency staff will be replaced with BCC staff. The worry for the GMB is, are these jobs permanent? If so, why were expensive agency staff filling them and if not will staff redeployed into them be made redundant in the future?

Regarding Redundancies, the GMB hope that any made will be voluntary rather than compulsory. Also, that this round of redundancies is targeted to those areas where savings are identified rather than has happened in the past when people were let go willy nilly until the required number was achieved. Also, the GMB would like to see money allocated to allow the 55 – 60 age group to be considered for VS, rather than just deeming them too expensive. BCC needs to look and retaining younger staff who can grow talents with new workings of BCC

3. The GMB believe that the Redeployment team needs to step up its game. To more actively look for jobs for those who end up in the pool rather than leaving it to individuals. There has been incidents in the past where, staff at risk of redundancy were not contacted to sometime into their allotted time in the pool, so may have missed job opportunities and ended up being dismissed.

Item 11 – HR Dashboard and Sickness review.

The GMB is surprised that under ‘Legal and Resource Implications’ – Revenue and Financial’ no information was required. Surely high levels of sickness have a great financial implication to a service, especially if overtime or agency staff are required to help maintain service levels.

The GMB is not surprised that Adult Social Care has the highest rate of absence due to stress, anxiety and depression, nearly 50% higher than the next work group. We have had meetings with large numbers of staff in Reablement and stress, anxiety and depression have been a major issue. The GMB have discussed this with management, who are aware of this, but seem unable or

Number 2 (TU item)

GMB - Real Living Wage

The GMB wishes to raise an issue that has only become apparent due to the latest NJC pay rise agreement.

As a rule of thumb all staff received a £1 and hour increase, which BCC paid at the end of November backdated from 1st of April.

The GMB like its sister Unions was surprised to find that this £1 an hour wasn't paid to all staff members. Those lowly paid members of staff who are on the Real Living Wage only received a 60p pay rise. Everybody got a pound an hour apart from the lowest paid!!

Having checked the Real Living Wage Foundation it was found that in September the RLW rose to £10.90. After discussions with the Head of HR we were told that the increase is not paid until 1st of April 2023.

The RLW foundations asks subscribers to pay the increase, announced 22/9/22, as soon as possible.

The GMB asked the Head of HR again, who did enquire about paying the increase earlier, but was told ‘NO’.

The GMB is perplexed as to why the pay of this group was increased from the 21/22 RLW of £9.90 by 60p to £10.50 and the other 40p withheld.

BCC in paying the RLW not NLW, have recognised that those on the lowest pay deserve more but in the GMB's opinion are acting like Scrooge and withholding the other 40p.

The GMB is asking that the increase in the RLW be paid from the 1st of November every year rather than the 1st of April.