

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

14 December 2023 at 5.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Lesley Alexander, Richard Eddy, Lorraine Francis and James Crawford

Officers in Attendance:-

Steph Griffin (Director Workforce & Change), Mark Jefferson (Reward & Analytics Manager), James Brereton (Head of Human Resources) and Louise deCordova (Democratic Services Manager)

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Wye, Kerry Bailes, Farah Hussain, Sarah Classick and Amirah Cole.

It was noted that Cllr Crawford had joined the Committee membership.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Chairs Business

The Chair advised Committee that a concern had been raised regarding the Council's communication methods and notice periods to end temporary or casual contracts. The Chair sought assurances that the



matter would be reviewed and stated that it was important that all employees felt welcome and valued whichever contractual terms of employment they held.

- (a) Officers were investigating an instance where a service had to stop the use of casual and agency workers due to vacancy controls resulting in an urgent communication to those concerned; and would report back to Committee in due course.
- (b) Zero-hour contracts referred to a type of contract that is not used in the Council; where there is an imbalance of rights between employer and employee in that the employer has no obligation to offer work but the employee is obligated to undertake any work that is offered by the employer.
- (c) The Council instead operates casual and bank arrangements in a range of services. In circumstances where a service require a colleague at short notice, they would go through a list of casual employees to establish who was available to work.
- (d) Alongside this a service may also utilise agency workers. In these circumstances an agency worker is not a Council employee in a legal sense and a week's notice on either side is standard practice, with agency workers being paid weekly whilst casual workers are on a monthly payroll.
- (e) It is possible for casual/bank and agency workers to go on to be appointed to permanent or fixed term roles, always providing a proper, competitive process is followed, which will fully recognise the value brought in their casual/bank/agency capacity.

5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 21st September 2023

RESOLVED; That the Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

6 Public Forum

There was no public forum received.

7 Trade Union Forum

There was no trade union forum received.

8 Avon Pension Fund Annual Report 2022/23



It was noted that Cllr Pearce as the Council's Avon Pension Fund representative, had been unable to attend the meeting and it was agreed that the item be deferred to the February meeting where Cllr Pearce would be invited to attend.

RESOLVED; that the item be deferred until February 2024.

9 Pay Policy Statement

The Committee received the report of the Director: Workforce and Change and Head of Human Resources to consider the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25. Members were asked (subject to amendments agreed at its meeting) to recommend to Full Council the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 to take effect from 1 April 2024.

The Head of Human Resources asked Members to note the following key points:–

- a. The Pay policy statement needed to be agreed by 31st March
- b. The Council is a Living Wage Employer and in line with previous custom and practice the Council would adopt the new rate of £12 per hour from 1st April 2024
- c. Local government employers were finding that successive pay awards had resulted in the pay spine gradually compressing, eroding ability to compete with rates of pay offered by other employers
- d. The pay points specified in the draft pay policy statement would apply at the date of publication but would be updated to reflect pay awards agreed from 1st April.
- e. A chief officer can be placed at any salary within the relevant range. From an administrative perspective it would be less burdensome if we had specific points within that range. It wouldn't reduce flexibility but would provide more of a framework. Annual pay progression for chief officers on a time-served basis was not recommended (as per the 2011 Will Hutton review); instead it should be reflective of performance in role.
- f. In reference to Paragraph 9 of the report it was confirmed that colleagues ("interims") not directly employed by the Council attracted significant salaries. It was suggested that the ratios in the pay policy statement should include interims where they are included in the Council's Statement of Accounts and/or where they were engaged for a period of 12 months or longer as at the reporting date (which is 31 December each year).



- g. With reference to para 12 of the pay policy, returning officer fees, it was confirmed that the fees paid for national polls were set by government and local election fees had not been revisited for some years. Officers sought agreement to use the sum paid for the police and crime poll (which was set by government) pay policy as the sum to be paid for Bristol City Council local elections.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- h. Cllr Eddy advised that although he broadly supported the improvements made to the pay policy statement, he still had concerns regarding the interim recruitment strategy as most interims were paid more than 10 times the least paid, and on that basis expressed concern about accuracy of figures and advised that he could therefore not vote for it.
- i. Cllr Francis requested that introductory paragraph 1c of the pay policy was reviewed to clarify that whilst Councillors were responsible for recommending the implementation of the pay policy statement they did not directly make decisions about pay, and the current wording inferred that they did.
- j. Officers clarified that when recruiting a chief officer, the Selection Committee set a salary within the given band after reviewing benchmarking information and consideration of any market factors.

Action: Officers to amend paragraph 1c to include the points at which councillors can change, amend or decide pay.

- k. It was confirmed that at paragraph 3 of the pay policy statement, (Pay of the highest paid employees), the ranges had been determined by the Human Resources Committee based on previous external recommendations (from Korn Ferry (a job evaluation and pay benchmarking company) and the Local Government Association).
- l. Paragraph 8 of the report references a performance related approach to spinal column points progression, which would require good governance.
- m. Any recommendation to take a similar approach forward would require consultation with those affected and potentially a variation to the terms of reference for committee.
- n. There was general support of the principal to tie the Returning Officer fee for local (BCC) elections to that in place in respect of the Police and Crime Commissioner poll. Members requested further details.

Action: Officers to confirm the schedule of Returning Officer fees for the various elections.

On being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED that (subject to the above amendments) the Committee recommends to Full Council the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 to take effect from 1 April 2024.



10 HR Dashboard - Agency Workers - Presentation

The Reward and Analytics Manager introduced the item and started by sharing some general data on staff absence and turnover, followed by sharing a presentation on the HR dashboard and the HR Analytics Power BI data.

Key highlights were as follows:

- a. The system had moved to a new version which updates overnight providing real time information.
- b. There had been a downward trend in external turnover. Internal movement included promotions and employees swapping careers which demonstrated a developmental organisation.
- c. Sickness trends for the last 12 months showed a downward trend for average working days lost from 12.2 days – 9.6 days. It was confirmed that the downward trend could be seen across all directorates.
- d. Members were made aware of the functionality within the system to drill down into divisions and then services and team level.
- e. It was confirmed that agency, interim and consultancy spend was mostly through the Council's appointed supplier (currently Guidant Global). Data for the low number of placements procured outside of this arrangement is not currently included in this report.
- f. It was necessary for a large organisation to have the flexibility offered by a contingent workforce. The current contractual arrangement assumes agency workers are paid the BCC rate for the job, unless there is a recruitment and retention reason to pay a higher rate.
- g. It was confirmed that the current contract for the supply of agency workers and interims is due to come to an end in May 2024 and officers are working to procure a new supply contract.
- h. The council services where agency workers are most often utilised are currently business support, social work and project management.
- i. A significant change experienced in the last 12-18 months was the increase in the requirement for agency social workers.
- j. It was confirmed that managers who have agency workers of 13+ weeks' duration actively consider if those workers can be employed directly by the Council.



- k. The demographics of agency workers could be explored at a future meeting.

Action: Officers to add the exploring the demographics of agency workers at a future meeting.

- m. Work had commenced on a partnership international recruitment exercise for social workers to permanently fill vacant roles and reduce reliance on agency workers.

11 Work Programme

The Head of HR introduced the Work Programme. Members noted that the Avon Pension Fund item had moved to February and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing item had moved to the April meeting.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was Thursday 15 February 2024.

Meeting ended at 6.20 pm

CHAIR _____

