

PRESENT: Councillors: Taylor (Chair), Adigun-Harris, Bradnack, Hughes, C Rosenstiel, Smart
Liz Brennan (Unison), Maggie Hendricks (Unison), Kevin Roberts and Richard O'Leary (GMB).

Head of Human Resources, Human Resources Manager, Director of City Services, Head of Customer Support, City Services.

1. MINUTES – 2 November 2004

The minutes of the meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Councillor Adigun-Harris said he had not yet received a satisfactory answer to the matter he raised at the November meeting. The Head of Human Resources apologised that she had not been in touch with him as agreed and that she would do so.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Liddle.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests: Councillor Smart as a member of ATL, Councillors Adigun-Harris and Bradnack as members of NUT, Councillor C Rosenstiel as a member of Amicus and Councillor Hughes as a member of NATFHE.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

6. ORAL UPDATE ON SINGLE STATUS

The Head of Human Resources tabled a short summary of progress since the last meeting of the Forum on 2 November. She highlighted the following:

Job Evaluation

- Job evaluation is now only being undertaken for new/changed jobs prior to advertising.
- All outstanding evaluations from the main JE exercise were completed by the end of November. Letters to confirm their JE score, City Pay Band and right of appeal have been sent to those staff affected. Provisional appeals panels have been set up.
- Jobs that have changed significantly since they were last evaluated are starting to be addressed (no more than 30 jobs). These are prioritised with evaluations for new jobs.

Pay progression on City Pay Bands from April 2005

This will no longer be automatic. It will be linked to the Performance Review Scheme where each individual employee sets objectives linked to the section's Service Plan and the Council's Medium Term Objectives. The following have been arranged to put this in place:

- Workshops took place from 3-8 November with managers and Trades Unions stewards to test out proposals/highlight issues.
- The scheme uses the existing performance review scheme that has been in place for many years but revised from January 2002 but adds in an additional dimension of a recommended 'rating' that determines the number of increment to be awarded (i.e. 0, 1 or 2).
- A strong moderation process will mean that issues about equality, consistency and affordability will be raised and addressed by HR with Heads of Service and Directors (i.e. Departmental moderation) before corporate moderation via Corporate Management Team. No increment will be paid until the corporate process is complete.
- The programme of briefings for managers, trades union stewards and staff start on 13 January. During January and February there will also be refresher workshops for managers on: Objective Setting, Giving Constructive Feedback and undertaking performance reviews (new managers only).
- All related documents will be on the intranet from 17 January. Transparency, equality, consistency and affordability are all key objectives.
- The Council's honoraria scheme has also been revised to provide managers with the ability to pay one off payments to staff who have taken on additional or particularly onerous responsibilities, provided they have not already received payment for this via incremental progression, special responsibility allowance or other allowance. Payments have to be agreed with the Head of Human Resources so that consistency checks can be made. Payments can be made at any point during the year and should be as close to the end of the piece of work as possible.

Work has also started on most of the following:

- Fully document all recent agreements made with the Trades Unions during 2003/4 for joint signature – these to be signed in January/February 2005.
- Review of any outstanding allowances, including standby and call-out has been rescheduled to take account of available resources – now due to be complete, agreed and implemented by April 2005.
- Review of casual worker pay rates to address equal pay and contractual issues. Implementation is scheduled for 31 March 2005.
- Review pay line post appeals to check on cost, consistency and equality issues – this will be addressed as part of an Equal pay Audit in mid 2005.

Councillor Hughes asked if all staff were eligible for career development opportunities and for training.

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that they were and also said that the fact that the unions had attracted funding from outside the council for learning and development was very helpful in optimising the opportunities for staff.

7 TRADES UNION PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Head of Human Resources said that Single Status had partnership working with the unions as part of the Agreement.

On 17 December 20 union stewards had attended a Joint Workshop with Human Resources about a number of key policies – the disciplinary procedure, Dignity at Work etc. A number of actions had arisen from that workshop and these would be circulated to the Forum. The next step was to work with managers to understand what partnership working is and how it works.

Kevin Roberts (GMB) and Liz Brennan (Unison) said it had been a very helpful workshop especially for new stewards.

8 OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICE PLAN

The Head of Human Resources introduced the Service Plan. The Council was going through considerable organisational change which necessitated work on a number of broad strategic fronts such as workforce planning. However, as they were a small team, operational issues had to take priority over strategic ones.

There were 2 bids relating to recruitment - £2,000 so that the City Council could have a stand at the Recruitment Fair in the Corn Exchange on 26 January and one for joining the Graduate Recruitment Scheme in partnership with other authorities which could bring cost savings to the £30,000 for the first year and £60,000 for subsequent years.

Councillor Bradnack asked whether the Best Value Fundamental Service Review (BVFSR) due in May would have implications for the current Service Plan.

The Head of Human Resources said that terms of reference and a timetable for the BVFSR had yet to be agreed and, along with the fact that she was going to be on sickness absence from 24 January to April meant that work on this would be somewhat delayed.

Councillor Bradnack also asked whether it would be accurate to say that the difficulty in meeting targets was because the Head of Human Resources was not in control of budgets?

The Head of Human Resources said that as most of the work was done at the operational level, they were able to have an influence; the problem was getting the strategic work done. She thought that a key piece of work for the forthcoming BVFSR was to provide clarity about what the Council wanted its Human Resources department to do.

Councillor Hughes asked about progress in the first two policy and performance target areas.

The Head of Human Resources said there were action plans in place for those relating to legislative changes. In relation to the Occupational Health Service she indicated that there had been issues with the new provider's ability to provide the administrative information required by the Council and that more preventative work was desirable.

Councillor Bradnack asked about the targets for BVPI's 11a (Percentage of top 5% earners that are women) and 11b (Percentage of top 5% earners from BME communities). He suggested that rather than the target remaining the same over the next five years, there should be annual incremental targets.

The Head of Human Resources said that these indicators did need to be continually reviewed and that it did take time for the action plans in place to produce a measurable effect.

Councillor Hughes commented that many people from BME groups often did not apply for jobs as they did not think they would be successful. Was that contributing to the slow progress with BV11b?

Councillor Adigun-Harris said that the statistics did show a disparity between the numbers from BME groups applying and those actually being appointed to posts.

The Head of Human Resources acknowledged the truth of these comments and said that outreach work was being done with community groups to try and change the perception of the Council in this regard.

The meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.

Chair