

Feedback: Departmental Bargaining Chamber

Remunerative benchmark

As members are aware, the remunerative benchmark is a long outstanding issue that the PSA has been pursuing at the Departmental Bargaining Chamber (DBC) for some time. The employer has only reported little progress on the matter since 2019. This led to the PSA invoking clause 17 of the GPSSBC Governance Rules. Clause 17 requires the GPSSBC General Secretary (GS) to facilitate issues between parties to prevent a dispute. In an event that the facilitation process fails to resolve issues between parties, the aggrieved party may declare a dispute.

Pursuant to the above process, the PSA submitted to the facilitator that the employer has displayed very little commitment to finalising the remunerative benchmark process. It was only after the PSA invoked clause 17 that the employer submitted the long-outstanding business case to the Minister of Home Affairs for approval. The Minister requested the GPW to prepare a presentation to take him through the business case. The employer committed that the meeting with the Minister will take place before the end of February 2021 and once the Minister has approved the business case, it will be submitted to the Department of Public Service and Administration for further approval. The PSA indicated that should the employer fail to ensure that the process does not get halted again, it will declare a dispute and mobilise its members for industrial action.

Recruitment: Cleaners

As previously reported, the PSA has declared a dispute of unfair labour practice after the employer failed to renew contracts of all Cleaners at GPW who were on contract and further failed to consider them for permanent appointment after advertising the positions. Arbitration was held on 9 December 2020 where the employer indicated that there was a possibility of settling the dispute without arbitration. A draft settlement agreement was compiled by the PSA and sent to the employer for consideration but the employer refused a peaceful settlement of the dispute. As a result, the Council has scheduled the matter for arbitration on 15 February 2021. The PSA will do everything in its power to ensure job security for members.

Compliance: COVID-19 regulations

The employer reported that there are about 25 cases of employees who were infected with COVID-19 and one employee passed away as a result. Although, the department experienced a loss of some employees recently, it was only one fatality as a result of the corona virus. It was further reported that employees are now working on rotation since the country moved back to lockdown level 3. The PSA

noted the employer's report, but raised concerns regarding some sections where rotation of employees is not done on a full five days-in and five days-out. As in other units such as Human Resources, the first group of employees report for three days and the other group for two days in the same week. The PSA indicated that since employees share common spaces such as kitchens, lifts and bathrooms, the midweek rotation may expose both teams to infection when a positive case is discovered. The PSA demanded that the employer should rather limit potential exposure by rotating employees on a five-day basis. The employer committed to investigate.

Organisational structure review

The employer reported that the structure review is at its final stages and has already been submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). The Minister provided inputs on the structure, which were implemented by the GPW. The DPSA indicated that the structure must be costed before it could be approved. It submitted all positions that must be evaluated on the structure for the DPSA to assist with evaluation and grading of such positions to enable the structure to be costed. The PSA requested a copy of the structure and indicated that whilst it welcomes the initiative of adding positions to the current structure, especially in areas such as Examination where employees have been appointed on contract and casual basis for years, the PSA warned against creating unnecessary positions and having a top-heavy structure that may be unaffordable for the organisation. The employer committed to send a copy of the structure to the PSA and indicated that some of the inputs by the Minister were to address the concerns of the structure being top-heavy and amendments were made accordingly.

Salary discrepancies: Drivers and Driver Assistants

As previously reported, the PSA raised a concern with the employer regarding salary discrepancies between Drivers and Driver Assistants in that they perform the same duties but are remunerated at different levels. The employer and the PSA held meetings where the employer submitted that the position of Driver is graded at salary level 3 by the DPSA. Therefore, Drivers at the GPW who are on salary levels 4 and 5 are earning above the graded level. The employer agreed to the translation of Delivery/Driver Assistants to Drivers, however, will retain their salaries at level 3 as the approved level by the DPSA. After consultation with members, the PSA agreed with the employer on issuing letters to the Deliver/Driver Assistants to translate them to Drivers. Nonetheless, the PSA reserved the rights of its members as far as salary levels are concerned. The employer committed to issue the letters of translation before the end of February.

Uniform: Security Officers

As members will recall, the PSA tabled a concern regarding the non-provision of uniforms for Security officers. Security officers are expected to be at work everyday dressed in full uniform, but the employer has not provided such uniform to them. All Security Officers are continuing to purchase uniform from their own pockets, which is not in line with the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act*. The PSA has demanded that the employer should reimburse all Security Officers who have used their own funds to purchase uniform for all the years they have done so. The employer reported that a tender for securing a service provider that will assist with the provision of uniform for Security Officers will go out on 5 February 2021. The PSA welcomed the report but indicated that an agreement should be reached on the reimbursement of those who have bought uniform with their own funds. The employer requested an opportunity to seek a mandate on the issue of reimbursement.

Relocation of Bosman Office to new premises

The employer reported that the specifications for the tender of a service provider that will assist with the relocation of offices to the Absa building have been finalised. The tender will be advertised on 5 February 2021. Once the service provider is appointed, it will be tasked with implementing the project plan of relocating staff to the Absa building. The PSA indicated that to ensure that inputs of employees are considered when drawing up the relocation plan, labour should form part of the relocation committee. The employer agreed that labour will be included in the relocation committee when the process of relocation commences.

In relation to the current Bosman building, the PSA indicated that the employer has not shown commitment in ensuring that the safety of employees in the workplace is not compromised. A letter was sent to the Department of Employment Labour by the employer after demands from the PSA that it should evaluate the status of the Bosman building and identify all potential safety threats that may be harmful to employees. After such a letter was sent, the employer made only one follow up in 2019 and has since left the matter. The PSA demanded that the employer should write another letter to the Department of Employment and Labour to follow-up on the matter.

Members will be updated on developments.

GENERAL MANAGER