

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2009 AT
3.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D A A Peek (Chairman).
Councillors J Demonti, J Mayes, J O Ranger,
S Rutland-Barsby, M Wood, C Woodward.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors D Andrews and P Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Graham Mully	- Risk Assurance Officer
Jaleh Nahvi	- Human Resources Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jane Sharp (UNISON)

720 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Alan Madin, Director of Internal Services to the meeting.

With the consent of Members, the Chairman changed the order of the agenda to allow the Programme Director of Change to leave following the presentation of his report.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMS721 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 7 January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

722 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS OF C3W PROGRAMME

The Programme Director of Change submitted a report detailing an analysis of the traffic light assessment and outcomes of the 1:1 employee consultation process. It was noted that 98% of staff had been consulted and assessed. The traffic light assessment and how this had been applied was explained, together with the process to be adopted for those staff who did not agree with their traffic light assessment. It was noted that staff had been assessed and categorised as 224 Green, 85 Amber and 34 Red. It was noted that information obtained from the traffic light assessments would determine the order of Human Resources policies to be reviewed.

The Head of People and Organisational Services provided a statistical update of the traffic light assessment broken down into mobile working; travel; disability and caring, technology and other components of staff preferences. This was set out in the appendix to the report now submitted.

The Head of People and Organisational Services highlighted the importance of giving managers and employees training and support to support the C3W Programme. Based on feedback from the consultation, Human Resources would be developing a Home Working Policy and would be updating other policies within a specific timeframe, as set out in the appendix to the report now submitted.

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Councillor J Mayes commented on the lack of disabled car parking at Wallfields.

Councillor J O Ranger praised the report as being a thorough piece of consultation. He commented that it was important that staff were kept aware and understood what was likely to happen and how home working would work.

In response to a query from Councillor J Mayes about health and safety issues for home workers, assurances were provided from the Head of People and Organisational Services that health and safety assessments would be carried out.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward about home working and equipment used and owned by the Council, the Programme Director of Change outlined how the use and ownership of Council equipment could be managed.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward about staff accruing tax benefits as a result of working from home, the Programme Director of Change commented that the issue was not straightforward and that guidance would be provided in due course.

Jane Sharp (UNISON) commented that from information she had obtained, a number of Councils drew up inventories of equipment supplied by the Council which would be returned when an employee left the Council. She commented that it was unlikely that this method would work as there were very few staff who had a spare room, which they could dedicate for home working purposes and that most rooms would have to double up.

Councillor M Wood thanked Officers for the report. In response to a query about the traffic light assessment he was advised that the 13 "reds" were located in planning and building control. In response to a query about car sharing, the Head of People and Organisational Services

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commented that this was an option the Council needed to explore as well as policies on Green Travel.

Councillor J Mayes suggested that a multi-storey car park be built at Wallfields.

Members noted the report and supported the action plan to support the C3W Programme set out in the report now submitted.

RESOLVED - that (A) the report be noted; and

(B) the Action Plan be approved.

723 HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT

The Risk Assurance Officer submitted a report reminding Members of their statutory obligations regarding health and safety and the results of a review of health and safety practices. It was noted that the Council had commissioned Zurich, a risk Consultant, to undertake an audit of health and safety practices identifying strengths and deficiencies. This had been undertaken in September 2008 and had resulted in a comprehensive review of compliance. The consultant had identified areas where the Council needed to improve.

It was noted that the report from Zurich had been submitted to Corporate Management Team, Safety Committee on 26 January 2009 and to the Local Joint Panel on 18 March 2009. The action plan, attached to the report now submitted, had been updated following the Safety Committee to highlight what progress had been made and that Committee's comments.

The Risk Assurance Officer commented that he had been able to locate a booklet produced by the Institute of Occupational Safety and health (IOSH) which could be of interest to Members. He undertook to circulate an internet link so that Members could access this information.

ACTION

In response to a query from Councillor S Rutland-Barsby regarding driving for work purposes and the implications of not using cars up to a specific standard, the Risk Assurance Officer commented that Line Managers were required to check an individual's licence, motor insurance and MOT annually. He recommended that this should be carried out more frequently although he was happy that the checks in place were sufficient.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding the use of mobile phones in cars, the Risk Assurance Officer commented that this was a feature of the Health and Safety Policy and that a risk assessment would be undertaken.

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger about the provision of a Health and Safety Policy Statement and a Safety Handbook, the Risk Assurance Officer commented that the Policy Statement matter would be reported back to Safety Committee in six months.

Members noted the report and supported the action plan appended to the report now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted; and

(B) that the action plan be approved and adopted.

724 HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – APRIL 2009

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a quarterly report on performance information relating to the Council's people management and human resources service. In addition to providing staff statistics between the period 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009, the report outlined what management actions were being taken to mitigate the pressures on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 to 2012/13. It was noted that Human Resources were

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working with Unison and Senior Management Group to take all possible steps to avoid redundancies or to keep the number of redundancies to a minimum. A summary of the courses of action being explored and in progress was set out in the report now submitted.

A summary was provided in relation to:-

- Corporate Training
- Management Development Programme
- Investors in People (IIP)
- Workforce Plan
- PDRS
- Policies
- Equalities and Diversity
- C3W Programme
- Unison Recognition and Procedural Agreement.
- Expenses and claims

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding the flexibility of market supplements, the Head of People and Organisational Services commented that Human Resources was reviewing this at the present time in terms of whether it was still difficult to employ planners and of an intention to review terms and conditions.

In response to a query regarding the Local Weighting Allowance of £550, he was advised that this figure was set nationally. Jane Sharp referred to the deficit in the budget and commented that the budget funding gap must have been helped by the fact that the pay award 09/10 had been

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proposed at half a per cent when the Council had budgeted 2.25%.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding measuring outcomes, the Head of People and Organisational Services commented that this would be addressed in the Corporate Training Plan.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward about changes to the grievance policy, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that the report had been submitted to the Local Joint Panel. She commented that she was satisfied that the Council's current policies addressed the recent changes but were currently being updated to address the ACAS guidance and best practice and would be submitted to Human Resources Committee.

Councillor J O Ranger, in respect of terms and conditions, commented that it was preferential to the Council to have local determinations as this offered greater flexibility, rather than being constrained by the NJC Agreement.

RESOLVED – that the quarterly performance report be noted.

725 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS
2008/09

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report updating Members on Human Resources management information 2008/09 and HR targets for 2009/10.

The report and the appendix to the report now submitted, detailed statistical information covering:

- Turnover
- Sickness absence

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- Equalities and monitoring
- Disability Status
- Ethnicity

In the main, the Council had made significant progress during 2008/09 in the areas of turnover, sickness and training. Equalities monitoring issues would be addressed in 2009/10 as current data was out of date for in depth analysis.

Councillor J Mayes commented on recruitment practices and their advertisement, and suggested a minor change to the wording, i.e. “most” rather than “all”. In response to a query concerning long term absences, the Head of People and Organisational Services explained that the figures were shown in this way for comparative purposes.

In response to a query from Councillor J Mayes concerning the new PDR process, the Human Resources Officer explained that the Council was working on this with the intention of encouraging managers to focus on the quality of the PDR process and training for managers.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward about recruitment and gender, the Human Resources Officer explained that the offer of part time employment was historically attractive to females. There was however, a need to ensure that at a higher level, the workforce was more representative.

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger regarding mentoring and coaching, the Head of People and Organisational Services commented that there had been “pockets” of mentoring and coaching in 2008/09.

Members noted the Management Statistics as presented but were of the view that the targets needed to be reviewed

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in more detail before being approved.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resource Management Statistics for 2008/09 be noted; and

(B) the targets be submitted in more detail to the next meeting of Human Resources Committee.

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726 CORPORATE TRAINING PLAN 2009-11

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report identifying learning and development priorities for the Council in 2009-11. It was noted that the Council's total budget on learning and development for 2009/10 was £165,330 broken down within the sections of Corporate Training £62,700, Professional Training £59,620 and £43,010 Service Training. The benefits of corporate training were set out in the report now submitted including supporting the corporate training priorities for C3W, Service Plans and the PDRS process. It was noted that a further report would be submitted to Human Resources Committee in July 2009 on Training and Development 2008/09.

In response to a query from Councillor J Mayes, the Head of People and Organisational Services explained the differences in types of training staff might need.

Councillor J O Ranger welcomed the budgets identified for training provision. In response to a query about what other Councils spent on training, the Head of People and Organisational Services commented this would be included in the annual review report on how East Herts compared to other Councils on training.

Members supported the Corporate Training Plan for 2009/11.

RESOLVED – that the Corporate Training Plan for 2009/11 be approved.

ACTION727 WORKFORCE PLAN POSITION STATEMENT: APRIL 2009

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report showing what the Council was doing to build its workforce capacity in order to achieve its own strategic priorities. The appendix to the report now submitted detailed the five priorities areas in relation to:

- Organisational development
- Leadership and Managerial Development
- Skills Development
- Resourcing, recruitment and retention
- Pay and reward

The workforce plan position statement had been developed to help the Council demonstrate workforce planning during the 2008/09 assessment and specifically in terms of its assessment of the Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) 3.3 “Does the organisation plan, organise and develop its workforce effectively to support the achievements of its strategic priorities?”

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding skills development and whether this worked jointly, with larger towns or in partnership, the Head of People and Organisational Services explained the process of identifying training and development. Town and Parish Councils were not included in this initiative.

Members noted the Workforce Plan Position Statement for April 2009.

RESOLVED – that the Workforce Plan Position Statement for April 2009 be noted.

ACTION728 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (liP)

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report detailing the arrangements for the liP's Assessor. The appendix to the report now submitted showed what areas needed to be reviewed following the review of April 2008. The appendix also detailed what progress had been made subsequent to the April 2008 review.

It was noted that the liP Assessor had confirmed 21 and 23 April to progress the review. The report detailed which staff the Assessor wished to interview and what supporting paperwork would need to be submitted before the assessment.

The Head of People and Organisational Services commented that she was confident that the liP action plan had been achieved.

Members noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

729 HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974

The Committee considered a report reminding Members of the Council's statutory obligations regarding Health and Safety and of the action taken in relation to a review of health and safety practices.

RESOLVED – that the Acton Plan be approved and adopted.

730 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES: 18 MARCH 2009

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger concerning a "temporary ban on recruitment", the Head of People and Organisational Services explained that recruitment was being managed, i.e. where posts needed to be filled, then a Head of Service now needed to prepare

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a report to Corporate Management Team.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 18 March 2009 be received.

731 SKILLS PLEDGE

The Chairman had agreed that this item could be considered as an urgent item of business in order to facilitate the business of the Council.

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report outlining an initiative promoted by the East of England Regional Assembly. The purpose of the Skills Pledge was to ensure that employees were skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the Council. As a first step the Leader and the Chief Executive needed to sign a statement of intent supporting the initiative.

Councillor J O Ranger commented that where this initiative was most needed was in relation to developing new IT skills and people returning to work. He commented that the initiative, as presented, only related to literacy and numeracy and as such, might be of little benefit to staff. He commented on the positive role which could be played by Union Training Representatives in identifying training.

Jane Sharp commented that UNISON was still trying to secure a Unison Learning Representative but of the difficulties delaying this process, since many staff worked full time and had no spare capacity.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward about the possibility of working with Thurrock Council and strategic partners, the Head of People and Organisational Services said that this could be explored.

The Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that the Council did not have any records about people's levels or skills and there was an assumption that

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they had achieved a certain level of education. How this information could be secured had not been established and would need to go to Corporate Management Team

Members approved a commitment by the Council to a Skills Pledge.

RESOLVED – that a commitment to the Skills Pledge be approved.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm.

Chairman
Date