

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 31 AUGUST 2006

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

7. INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT LAW –
TRAINING FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: NONE

'D' RECOMMENDATION – that

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 Council has established the Human Resources Committee to ensure that it has a process by which elected members can engage with and monitor our Human Resources activity on a regular basis; which enables it to feel reassured that its Human Resources (HR) practices are sound, and that it is doing the best it can to attract and retain the quality of staff it needs to continue to provide excellent services to the local community.

1.2 To enable members of the committee to carry out this role effectively it is suggested that they plan training for the committee in key areas, which will provide the committee with an understanding of the framework, which HR operates within. During the first year it is suggested that training in five areas be prioritised:

- Discrimination
- Change management – HR implications (including fair and unfair dismissal, redundancy and redeployment)
- Recruitment and Selection
- The legal implications of managing absence
- Health and Safety

1.3 There are various ways these training sessions could be run, the options include:

- Full day or half day training course covering all three topics in some depth
- Written materials

- Online learning
- Short 'bite size' training events linked to HR Committee meetings (possibly to run for an hour before the meeting)

1.4 It is suggested that it might be most effective for 'bite size' training to run immediately prior to the meeting itself. Members are asked to discuss and agree how they would prefer this training to be delivered.

1.5 Given current organisational priorities it is suggested that the training is delivered in the following order:

- Change management
- Recruitment and Selection
- Discrimination
- Health and Safety
- Legal implications of managing absence

The external facilitator identified for those events could deliver sessions on 26 October and 9 November. Members are asked to advise of their availability on these dates and to agree suitable timing.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation

3.0 Background

In establishing this committee we have realigned HR as a key resource within the Council and provided a process that enables members to be involved in the activities of the function on a regular basis.

4.0 Report

4.1 As this is a newly formed Committee it is suggested that the membership be provided with some training and information, which provides them with a framework for the HR function.

4.2 As Members of this Committee it will be necessary to consider some sensitive resource issues such as early retirement and redundancy. Therefore, it is imperative that Members receive regular updates in terms of employment law.

4.3 The newly formed VDAG (Valuing Diversity Action Group) will also report to this Committee in connection with diversity and equality issues affecting staff. Therefore, members will need an up to date understanding of legislation affecting this area.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 This report does not need to be sent to the UNISON for consultation.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 In the current employment climate of skill shortages and increasing employment legislation it is important that organisations have robust HR processes and procedures. The HR Committee provides an additional platform for the Council to ensure that it is meeting its legal obligations in this area.

6.2 Members of the Committee will receive training in their legal responsibilities as an employer.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are costs associated with delivering this training. Such costs can be met from the existing members training budget.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 As set out above.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 Failure to ensure that HR procedures and processes comply with latest Employment Law will leave the Authority open to challenge at Employment Tribunals which may be costly and damaging to our reputation. This is becoming increasingly evident.

9.2 Currently for unfair dismissal awards may range from £8,400 to £68,400. Additionally, for refusal to comply with a reinstatement order, a further award of between £7,280 and £15,680 can be made. Awards against unlawful discrimination can be unlimited.

10.0 Conclusion

The Committee is invited to consider and agree its training requirements in the areas of HR practice and employment law and how to proceed with training.

Background Papers

None

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