

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 8 JANUARY 2008 AT
4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D A A Peek (Chairman).
Councillors Mrs D Hone, M P A McMullen,
P A Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, M Wood,
C Woodward.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors L O Haysey, J O Ranger.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Shona Gray	- Principal Human Resources Officer
Judith Fear	- Interim Head of People and Organisational Services
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jane Sharp (UNISON)

443 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that this would be Judith Fear's last meeting. He thanked the Interim Head of People and Organisational Services for her valuable contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her well for the future.

ACTION

The Chairman congratulated Jane Sharp on hearing the recent news that she had become a grandparent.

RESOLVED ITEMS444 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 25 October 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

445 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services submitted a report seeking approval of a Member Development programme and to commit the Council to obtaining external accreditation for the programme through the East of England Charter for Elected Member Development.

Members noted the purpose of the programme which aimed to meet the Council's objectives. The key elements of the programme comprised:

- New Councillor Induction (following District wide elections)
- New Councillor induction (following by-election)
- Mandatory and advisory training
- Personal development training
- Developments in local government

The Committee noted that the Council had been successful in its bid for a £1,500 subsidy towards the cost of registering for the Charter for Elected Member Development.

ACTION

Councillor P A Ruffles thanked the Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services for the report and commented on the different perceptions on training by those who had been on the Council a long time versus new Members. He thanked Councillor L O Haysey for her perspective as a new Member elected following a by-election.

Councillor M P A McMullen commented on the three stage process in relation to licensing training. The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services acknowledged that more development training was available for Members in relation to licensing.

Councillor J O Ranger welcomed the fact that recognition of preferred methods of learning, including e-learning, would be taken into account. He felt that it was important that Members' different abilities to learn should be recognised with a programme tailored to meet those abilities.

Councillor J O Ranger commented that Broadlands District Council had been the first Council to achieve the Charter in the region and that there were now ten other Councils in the East of England with the Charter. He commented that the Government was continually placing new responsibilities on Councils and that Councillors needed to be properly trained to take on board those new roles.

Councillor J O Ranger commented that signing up for the Charter was a complex process which needed the commitment of all Councillors.

Councillor C Woodward commented on the induction process and that this could have been improved by faster installation of computers and training. The lack of a staff telephone directory and Council structure was also a cause of concern. The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services assured Members that this could be addressed at Officer level and undertook to facilitate progress on this matter.

ACTION

The Committee welcomed the report.

RESOLVED - that (A) the proposals detailed in the report be approved;

(B) the principles for Elected Member Development set out in the East of England Charter be supported and the Council's commitment to obtaining this Charter be confirmed; and

DIS

(C) as a consequence of the decision at (B) above, the Chairman of the Council, Chairman of Human Resources Committee and the Chief Executive be requested to sign, on behalf of the Authority, the commitment certificate associated with the East of England Charter for Elected Member Development.

DIS

446 LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2007

The Interim Head of People and Organisational Development submitted an update on the Local Government Workforce Strategy, its implications for people management and organisational development in the Council, including the Human Resources Peer Review Action Plan. The Committee noted the Schedule of Human Resources Policies recently agreed by the Committee.

The Interim Head highlighted the main themes of the Local Government Workforce Strategy set out in detail in the report now submitted. These covered:

- Organisational development
- Leadership development
- Skills development
- Recruitment and retention

ACTION

- Pay Awards

The Peer Review Action Plan had been updated to reflect the changes.

The Interim Head explained that the Council was making good progress in relation to the first three, but further work was needed in relation to recruitment and retention and pay awards. There was the suggestion of working with Manpower and Hertfordshire County Council in relation to recruitment and retention.

The Interim Head commented that in relation to pay awards, it might be prudent for the Council to seek advice from the Local Government Employers Association concerning the performance management appraisal processes and the issue of automatic incrementation.

Councillor J O Ranger commented on the importance of the Strategy which had the support of UNISON. He commented on the development of competencies which go up the pay scale. The Interim Head confirmed the present arrangement in relation to the competency framework which would be affected if an individual was going through a disciplinary.

Jane Sharp (UNISON) confirmed that the Union did not have a problem concerning individuals and progress through incremental scales. UNISON was concerned however, about objective evaluation of performance and monitoring.

The Director of Internal Services commented that it was necessary to have a broad range of competencies and abilities from which to select in terms of the specifics of the job.

The Interim Head provided an update of what the Council had achieved in relation to the Peer Review Action Plan. The Committee noted that many could not be completed as

ACTION

they covered ongoing issues eg impact of assessing learning and development. The Committee supported the suggestions that the Peer Review Action Plan should be submitted to Human Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED – that (A) the implications of the Local Government Workforce Strategy 2007 for people management and organisational development in the Council be noted;

(B) the updated Human Resources Peer Review Action Plan 2007 appended to the report now submitted be agreed; and

(C) quarterly updates of the Peer Review Action Plan be submitted to Human Resources Committee.

DIS

447 STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Interim Head of People and Organisational Development submitted a report on a Stress Management Policy and process which needed to be put in place in order to comply with Health and Safety legislation and regulatory good practice and guidelines. The draft Stress Management policy had been significantly amended based on discussions with UNISON. This revised draft was appended to the report now submitted. The Interim Head requested that any further amendments verbally reported and agreed should be incorporated within the amended policy.

It was suggested that the policy be implemented on a pilot basis and that any points needing further clarification or areas of concern be discussed at the next Local Joint Panel on 9 April 2008.

The Interim Head explained what further amendments were now being proposed to the Policy following consultation with UNISON.

ACTION

Jane Sharp (UNISON) commented that it was important to work together to prevent stress from becoming an illness. It was recognised that stress could be caused by circumstances outside the work of the Council. In terms of the "Introduction" she commented that UNISON was concerned about the impact on individuals and services. She explained what further amendments UNISON thought to be necessary and supported the draft as now proposed.

Members supported the introductory statement from UNISON.

The Director of Interim Services explained that the Council was now at a stage where there was agreement on the Policy from the Staff Side. It was acknowledged that there were some areas needing further discussion, ie the costs of stress and the role of the Trade Union Safety Representative and to agree a methodology around joint inspections.

Members supported the implementation of the Policy on a pilot basis and thanked Officers and UNISON for their work on the Policy.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Stress Management Policy appended to the report now submitted, be approved for implementation on a pilot basis, subject to further amendments agreed in discussions between UNISON and the Interim Head of People and Organisational Services being incorporated as verbally reported to this meeting; and

(B) the Policy be fine tuned as necessary following further discussion at the next Local Joint Panel on 9 April 2008;

ACTION448 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES: 11 DECEMBER 2007

The Committee noted the Local Joint Panel recommendations in relation to the matters detailed below made at its meeting held on 11 December 2007 (Minutes 23, 24, 25 and 26 refer):

- Leave at Christmas 2007
- Human Resource Business Continuity Policy for action in the occurrence of a Flu Pandemic
- Duty to consider extending employment beyond normal retirement age policy and procedure.
- Secondment Policy

The Committee agreed not to adopt the Panel's recommendation on granting an additional day's leave on Christmas Eve.

The Committee agreed to support the adoption of the Flu Pandemic Policy and that a link should be created to the NHS website.

The Committee agreed to support the adoption of a Policy for extending employment beyond normal retirement age and that it should be reviewed in twelve months or sooner, should case law merit an appropriate change.

The Committee agreed to support the adoption of the Secondment Policy.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 11 December 2007 be received;

ACTION

(B) the Panel’s recommendation to grant an additional day’s leave on Christmas Eve be not adopted;

(C) the Panel’s recommendation on the Business Continuity Policy for action in the occurrence of a flu pandemic be adopted;

(D) the Panel’s recommendation on the duty to consider extending employment beyond normal retirement age policy and procedure be adopted and that the Policy be reviewed in twelve months or sooner should case law merit an appropriate change; and

(E) the Panel’s recommendation on the Secondment Policy be adopted.

The meeting closed at 5.55 pm.

Chairman
Date