

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 16 JULY 2008 AT
4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D A A Peek (Chairman).
Councillors J Demonti, M P A McMullen (as
substitute for Councillor C Woodward),
P A Ruffles (as substitute for Councillor
S Rutland-Barsby), J O Ranger, M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Helen Farrell	- Acting Principal Human Resources Officer
Shona Gray	- Acting Head of People and Organisational Services
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services

155 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that he considered the item of business recorded at Minute 166 below to be of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration in order to prevent undue delay in notifying the Chief Executive of the Committee's recommendation on this matter.

156 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Mayes, S Rutland-Barsby and C Woodward.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMS157 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 24 April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

158 HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – JUNE 2008

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report on performance information relating to the Council's people management and human resources service.

The Committee noted the performance information appended to the report now submitted.

In response to comments from Members, the Director of Internal Services:

- confirmed that future reports on this matter would enable Members to track changes in performance;
- stated that Members were, with regard to the Council's corporate objectives, internal customers of Council's various services, and
- undertook to apprise the Corporate Management Team of the points raised with regard to standards for Officer response times to Member enquiries.

The Committee welcomed the service's vision for recruitment as set out in the appendix to the report, particularly those elements stating that it would deliver competitive advantage in the recruitment marketplace and provide better quality services at reduced costs.

ACTION

The Committee agreed to note the report now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

159 HUMAN RESOURCES PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN –
QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Head of People and Organisational Development submitted a report updating Members on progress to achieve the items identified within the Human Resources Peer Review Action Plan.

The Committee noted that a number of the actions identified within the Plan had been completed. These items would therefore no longer appear in future update reports.

The Committee further noted and supported the intention to produce a composite report on this matter and the subject matter detailed in Minute 158 above.

The Director of Internal Services advised that the acronym VDAG stood for “Valuing Diversity Action Group”.

The Acting Head of People and Organisational Services, responding to a question from a Member, advised that the review of the staff awards scheme was still on-going.

Councillor J O Ranger highlighted the need for the Authority to ensure it made sufficient budgetary provision for staff training. He expressed a view that staff training should be regarded as a “front line service”. He considered that an element of any efficiency savings identified by the Authority should be reinvested in staff training if necessary. He further commented that he felt that staff training budgets should be merged within one overall corporate budget.

The Committee agreed to note the progress on the items detailed within the action plan now submitted.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress on items detailed in the Human Resources Peer Review Action Plan now submitted be noted, and

(B) further updates on the Action Plan referred to in (A) above be reported as part of the Human Resources Quarterly Performance report and not separately as at present. DIS

160 SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW/DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES

The Head of People and Organisational Development submitted a report on the work-plan for reviewing Human Resources Policies. It was noted that a number of policies had been developed over the past 12 months. All policies identified were now in place.

The Committee noted that appended to the report now submitted was a schedule of Human Resources policies to be reviewed in 2008/09. The Committee supported the suggestion that the schedule, in future, should form part of the Human Resources Service Plan and therefore not reported upon separately. Policies currently under review would form part of the service performance report submitted quarterly to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to note the policy review timetable.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resources policy review timetable now submitted be noted, and

(B) further update reports on the review of policies form part of the service performance report submitted quarterly to the Committee. DIS

ACTION161 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS
2007/08

The Head of People and Organisational Development submitted a report on the out-turn figures for Human Resources performance indicators for 2007/08. Also detailed were proposed Management Data reports for Human Resources matters for the current and future years.

The Committee noted the statistical information presented in respect of staff turnover, sickness absence, training and development/performance management and equalities monitoring.

In response to a question from a Member, the Acting Head of People and Organisational Development explained that the phrase “voluntary leavers” related to those employees leaving the Authority for employment in another organisation.

Members questioned the basis of the proposed turnover target of 13.7% for 2008/09. The Committee agreed that before setting a turnover target, information on neighbouring councils’ targets should be obtained and reported to the next meeting.

In relation to sickness absence targets, the Committee requested that future reports should only detail performance figures which exclude long term sickness absence. It noted that performance figures for both long term and short term sickness absence would continue to be produced.

Councillor J O Ranger expressed concern on the progress of staff Personal Development Review Scheme interviews. He recognised that work was in hand to address the poor performance in undertaking such interviews but commented that he hoped significant progress would be seen by the time of the next Committee meeting. The

ACTION

Director of Internal Services outlined the measures being implemented to secure performance improvements in this important area.

The Committee approved the proposed reporting of Human Resources statistics, as detailed in the report now submitted, for the financial year 2008/09.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resources Management Statistics 2007/08 report be noted,

(B) subject to (C) below, the proposed reporting of Human Resources statistics, as detailed in the report now submitted, for the financial year 2008/09 be approved, and DIS

(C) before setting a turnover target, information on neighbouring councils' targets be obtained and reported to the next meeting DIS

162 ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR 'E'-MAILS

The Committee considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 18 June 2008 on an Acceptable Use Policy for 'e'-mails.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Acceptable Use Policy for 'e'-mails be approved; and DIS

(B) staff training be organised for the implementation of the Policy referred to in (A) above. DIS

163 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (IIP) ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 18 June 2008 on the Investors in People Action Plan.

RESOLVED – that the Investors in People Action DIS

ACTION

Plan be approved.

164 FINALISING THE STRESS POLICY

The Committee considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 18 June 2008 on finalising the Stress Policy.

The Committee noted that the Policy would be resubmitted to a future meeting of the Panel for the reasons now detailed.

RESOLVED – that, for the reasons now detailed, the Stress Policy be resubmitted to a future meeting of the Local Joint Panel for consideration.

DIS

165 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES: 18 JUNE 2008

In relation to Minute 8 – Working Arrangements – the Committee supported a Member’s suggestion that the phrase “hot desking” should no longer be used for the reasons now detailed. The Director of Internal Services undertook to ensure that, in future, the phrase “team tables” be used instead. The Director also outlined the communication strategy for the review of working arrangements, confirming that a multi channel approach had been adopted to ensure all staff were kept fully informed of progress being made.

In relation to Minute 9 – Retendering of Leisure Services – the Committee noted Councillor M Wood’s comments concerning the accuracy of the narrative. Councillor Wood stated that he believed that neither side could agree a position and therefore the matter was in dispute. In such circumstances it should come before this Committee for determination.

ACTION

The Committee noted Councillor Wood's comments. However, it would be for the Panel to determine the accuracy of the Minute at its next meeting.

Councillor Ranger undertook to obtain advice from the Regional Local Government Employers organisation on union involvement in the contractor selection process when a local authority seeks to outsource a service. He advised that he would pass on any advice obtained to relevant officers for consideration.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 18 June 2008 be received.

(See also Minutes 162 – 164 above)

166 INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Committee considered a motion proposed by Councillor Ranger concerning the methodology of calculating the amount of pay to be deducted from the monthly salaries of Council employees involved in any future industrial action.

The Committee noted that in early July, National and Regional Local Government Employers advice had been issued on this subject. Councillor Ranger's proposed motion was that the Committee should recommend the Head of Paid Service to take due consideration of this advice.

The Director of Internal Services detailed the current methodology for calculating pay deductions for employees on strike.

The Committee supported Councillor Ranger's proposal.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that the Human Resources Committee recommends to the Head of Paid Service that she takes due consideration of the National and Regional Local Government Employers advice on the calculation of the loss of a day’s pay for each day of strike action in the unfortunate event that further strike action is taken on the issue of pay.

DIS

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm.

Chairman
Date