

MINUTES OF A (RECONVENED)
MEETING OF THE HUMAN
RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, PEGS LANE, HERTFORD
ON MONDAY 18 JANUARY 2010 AT
3.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	-	Committee Secretary
Claire Burton	-	Human Resources Officer
Tinu Olowe	-	Interim Head of People and Organisational Services

483 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J O Ranger and S Rutland-Barsby. It was noted that Councillor M P A McMullen was substituting for Councillor S Rutland-Barsby and P A Ruffles for J O Ranger. Apologies for absence were also submitted from Alan Madin, Director of Internal Services, Jaleh Nahvi Human Resources Officer and Jane Sharp (UNISON).

484 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed Tinu Olowe, Interim Head of People and Organisational Services to the meeting.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMS485 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 15 October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

486 NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME AND SKILLS FOR JOBS RECRUITMENT SCHEME

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report on the introduction of an Apprenticeship Scheme at the Council and the introduction of the Skills for Jobs Scheme.

It was noted that the Government was backing a National Apprenticeship Scheme creating 35,000 new places with at least 21,000 places to be provided by the public sector. On the job, an apprentice would work with a mentor, learning skills on site and off the job, the apprentice would work with a learning provider, towards and NVQ qualification (National Vocational Qualification) at Level 2 or 3 or BTEC qualification. Funding arrangements and age restrictions relative to the scheme were set out in the report now submitted.

It was noted that at a conference held by the East of England National Apprenticeship Service, Hertfordshire Councils discussed the possibility of representatives from the National Apprenticeship Service attending the Hertfordshire HR Partnership Group to promote a countywide approach towards apprenticeships in Hertfordshire. Officers explained that working collaboratively across all 10 District Councils, would add value to the scheme and increase the diversity of work and opportunities available. This would also support the Pathfinder Initiative. Opportunities might also exist for apprenticeships working with the Council's contractors to

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increase opportunities.

The Council intended to re-introduce business and administration apprenticeships and Customer Service Apprenticeships. Officers suggested that where vacancies arose for lower graded jobs, Heads of Service would consider whether the role would be suitable for an apprenticeship as part of the recruitment process.

The Skills for Jobs initiative, was designed to help people not currently in employment and was supported by the Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund. How the process worked was set out in the report now submitted. The Council could receive up to £1000 for employing someone through the scheme, over 25 years of age and unemployed for over six months.

In response to a query from Councillor J Mayes concerning qualification levels, it was noted that apprentices would work towards NVQ Levels 2 or 3, BTEC or City and Guilds levels but that this would depend on the job. Each situation would have to be reviewed on a case by case basis. Councillor Mayes stressed that it was very important to ensure that the Council had people with the right minimum qualifications applying and to ensure that it was not an opportunity for poorly qualified people applying via the "back door".

Councillor P A Ruffles commented that people usually experienced five career changes during a lifetime and queried the value of apprenticeship schemes. The HR Officer explained that the apprenticeships would be offered in IT, customer services and business administration. Successful applicants would be placed in a department to learn a specific discipline. She stated that the apprenticeship scheme was a Government backed initiative and referred to similar schemes offered by other local authorities, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

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Councillor J Mayes referred to the need to value existing staff in terms of filling vacancies. The HR Officer explained that it would be for the Head of Service to determine whether a post could be filled by an apprentice or whether it required someone with more experience. The process for advertising vacancies was explained.

Councillor C Woodward welcomed the proposal in principle and sought assurances that the disciplines for the apprenticeships matched the individuals and that close partnership working be encouraged.

Members supported the report as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the introduction of the Apprenticeships and the Skills for Jobs schemes be approved;

(B) a countywide Apprenticeship and Skills for Jobs Scheme be progressed under the Pathfinder initiative through the Hertfordshire HR Partnership Group and; DIS

(C) Contract Managers be requested to pass details of the National Apprenticeship Scheme and Skills for Jobs to the Council's Contractors DIS

487 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS
APRIL - NOVEMBER 2009

The Interim Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report in respect of Human Resources Management Statistics for April to November 2009.

The Committee was advised that turnover was 3.75% against a projected turnover of 4.99% and below the proposed target of 12%. Voluntary leaver's rate as 2.39% against a project rate of 3.19% - again below a target of 8%. The difference between the overall turnover rate of 3.75% and the voluntary rate of 2.39% was accounted for

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by retirements and fixed term contracts ending.

In response to a query from Councillor N Wilson concerning changes to the way the Council worked and possible staff dissatisfaction levels with hot desking, the Interim Head of People and Organisational Services commented that it was difficult to anticipate staff responses and how this would affect turnover. She assured the Member that monitoring and close liaison with Heads of Service would take place and that staff would be supported throughout the process. Exit interviews would take place to establish why staff left the Council's employment.

Councillor C Woodward commented that it was not healthy to have low levels of turnover. He suggested that turnover would fall once home working was introduced and of the difficulties in managing home workers. He referred to the improved return levels of PDRs and sought assurances that the PDR process was qualitatively carried out. The Interim Head of People and Organisational Services agreed that there should be a healthy balance of people leaving for the right reasons and commented that the Council might lose staff it wanted to retain. In response to PDRs and non-performance, the Interim Head commented that if staff were not performing, this would be addressed through appropriate HR procedures.

In relation to training and development and in response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding sanctions from those staff who do not return their PDRs, the Interim Head of People and Organisational Services hoped that 100% of the PDRs would be returned. She stated that Human Resources would be monitoring the quality of those returns to see that objectives set supported smarter ways of working. If PDRs were not returned, then steps would be taken to establish why the process had not been followed.

The Interim Head stated that it was important that Managers and staff recognised the benefits of the process in terms of what the individual achieved and to ensure that

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they had the skills to achieve that end. She confirmed that PDRs were not linked to the pay process. At the request of Members, the Interim Head of People and Organisational Services agreed to report back to Members on the PDR process.

The Interim Head of People and Organisational Services commented that average short-term sickness per FTE was 2.6 days overall and that at the current rate, the projected short-term sickness may be 3.47 days against a target of 5 days. Average long-term sickness absence per FTE was 1.2 days per month and at the current rate, the projected long-term sickness for the year was 1.6 days against a target of 3 days. She stated that only five employees had been diagnosed with swine flu and that only 18.5 days had been lost.

Councillor C Woodward referred to the fact that high sickness levels were an indicator of low morale. The Council's statistics showed low levels of sickness, which therefore, was a good indicator that morale was not low.

The Committee noted the report as now submitted.

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

(B) a report on the PDR process be submitted to a future meeting of Human Resources Committee.

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488 HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – JANUARY 2010

The Interim Head of People and Organisational Services submitted the Quarterly Performance Report for Human Resources (HR) for January 2010 (from April 2009 to December 2009).

The Interim Head stated that in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council was looking at Terms and Conditions of Staff and was working closely with UNISON. She provided an update on the outcome of the meeting

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with the Joint Secretaries of the East of England and stated that a further meeting would take place on 1 February 2010.

It was noted that in terms of resourcing, Corporate Management Team (CMT) continued to monitor vacancies and that posts required the approval of CMT before they could be advertised.

Councillor C Woodward commented on the approach by Manpower to advertise County Council vacancies in the library and suggested that the District Council adopt this approach. He also suggested that jobs be advertised inside the foyer within the Customer Services Centre in Bishop's Stortford given that Bishop's Stortford did not have a job centre. The Interim Head stated that she would investigate whether the Council could use the local libraries and the foyers to advertise any approved vacancies.

Updates were provided on Learning and Development. Councillor C Woodward referred to FISH training and queried whether there were any plans to go beyond the customer service level, in that FISH training covered cultural issues too. The Interim Head stated that she would review this and submit a further report to Human Resources Committee.

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Updates were provided in respect of Policies. In relation to the Changing the Way We Work programme, Councillor C Woodward commented that Members might wish to share their experiences of working from home with staff.

Councillor N Wilson requested that Members of Human Resources Committee should be provided with an update on the C3W programme. The Chairman undertook to discuss the matter with the Programme Director of Change.

The Committee noted the report as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the quarterly performance

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report be noted; and

(B) the Chairman be requested to liaise with the Programme Director of Change in relation to updating Members of Human Resources Committee on the C3W programme.

489 LOCAL JOINT PANEL – MINUTES: 1 DECEMBER 2009

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 1 December 2009 be received.

(see also Minutes 490 below)

490 JOB SHARE POLICY

The Committee considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 1 December 2009 on the Job Share Policy.

RESOLVED – that the Job Share Policy, as amended, be approved.

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(see also Minute 489 above)

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm

Chairman
Date