

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE ROOM 28, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 31 MAY 2011,
AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Colin Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors P Ballam, Mrs D Hone, J Ranger,
P Ruffles and N Wilson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive

55 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman sought nominations for the appointment of a Vice Chairman. It was moved by Councillor N Wilson and seconded by Councillor D Hone, that Councillor J O Ranger be appointed as Vice Chairman for the Civic Year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor J O Ranger be appointed as Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2011/12.

56 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the sad loss of Councillor D Peek who had previously been the Chairman of Human Resources Committee and referred to his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

The Chairman sought nominations for the appointment of a Vice Chairman. It was moved by Councillor N Wilson and seconded by Councillor D Hone, that Councillor J Ranger be

appointed as Vice Chairman for the Civic Year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor J O Ranger be appointed as Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2011/12.

57 MINUTES

The Chairman referred to his previous concerns about corporate induction levels. He noted that there would be a report on this issue to Human Resources Committee on 13 July 2011.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 12 January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58 HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - MAY 2011

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report updating Members on the quarterly performance of a number of people management issues. These were set out in Essential Reference Paper “B” attached to the report now submitted. She explained that a more detailed report would be presented to Members on 13 July 2011.

Updates were provide in relation to:-

- Resourcing;
- Learning and Development
- Policies
- Equalities and Diversity
- C3W Delivery
- Cycle to Work Scheme

The Chairman referred to the issue of car parking and whether those matters relating to staff remaining at Bishop’s

Stortford could also be addressed. He referred to the "Pool Car" arrangement in operation at the County Council. The Head of People and Organisational Services explained that these matters would be considered by the "Green Policy Group". She said that she would discuss the car sharing initiative with the Environmental co-ordinator.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ballam regarding the Cycle to Work Scheme, the Head of People and Organisational Services provided an explanation of how the Government supported scheme worked and the Council's role.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to Equalities and Diversity initiatives and stated that there were problems in East Hertfordshire in relation to loneliness and isolation and how these issues were difficult to address when there was no community to help. He referred to the established Polish and Portuguese communities in the area. He questioned what could be done to communicate with these groups. The Chairman referred to the useful information contained in Ward Profiles. He acknowledged that there were issues around rural isolation, but felt that these were centred around transport and of the difficulties this might cause in relation to accessing jobs. The Chief Executive explained that the Council worked via the CVS (Community Voluntary Service) and a range of groups to address issues including isolation and on areas of specific concern.

Councillor J Ranger was concerned about the return rate of performance reviews (73%) and the objectives set (67%) adding that this figure should be in the 90s. The Head of People and Organisational Services explained that in 2009/10, this figure had been in the 90s, but had dipped last year adding that this was around the time of the review of the Terms and Conditions. The HR team continued to push managers for this information. Councillor J Ranger stated that staff should see the value in the PDR process and be proactive in its application and manage themselves. He suggested that if staff should see the benefit of the process supported by a demanding culture, then this might create a

change in mindset.

Councillor N Wilson queried whether this low return was attributable to a lack of motivation in the public sector. The Chairman referred to the Revenues and Benefits return of PDRS which stood at 94.7%. The Head of People and Organisational Services stated that Officers were endeavouring to embed this view within policies and the culture. She explained that there were staff who insisted that that PDR meetings be arranged and valued the time to air their views. HR staff would continue to push and highlight the benefits of the process. It was acknowledged that PDRs were not just about the positives, but that sometimes there were negative issues about performance which might need to be discussed and which might necessitate further training for managers in handling such issues.

The Chairman referred to the issue of resourcing, the Future Jobs Fund and the use of apprenticeships within the Council. He queried whether progress had been made in asking external contractors to use apprentices. The Head of People and Organisational Services undertook to provide further information on the Future Jobs Fund separately. She explained that the Council was using apprenticeships, one such apprentice from Hertford College had been offered a permanent post recently. She undertook to seek further information from the Head of Environmental Services regarding their use by external contractors.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

59 PROBATION POLICY

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report on a revised Probationary Policy. A review had been completed in November 2010 to establish how effective the probationary period was, how it was used by Managers and to establish best practise. As a result, the new policy had

introduced a six month probationary period for all new staff reduced to three months for staff on secondment or a fixed term contract. The policy also provided clearer guidance for managers in its application. The new policy supported the current PDR process.

The Head of People and Organisational Services explained that the probationary period could be extended in exceptional circumstances e.g. for dealing with performance issues or training purposes. In response to a query by Councillor J Ranger about the impact the new policy might have for the HR team, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that she did not foresee HR Officers becoming involved in every meeting involving a performance issue as this would be managed by the Head of Service. The situation would be monitored and HR would become involved where necessary.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ballam regarding how the policy might affect probationary staff with a serious illness, the Head of People and Organisational Services stated that these matters would be considered in the context of a review of the policy. Councillor N Wilson stated that incidents such as a serious accident might impact on a member of staff's performance and this needed to be given due consideration.

Councillor J Ranger referred to Essential Reference Paper "C" attached to the report now submitted and suggested that under Key Objectives the word "development" be amended to "consideration". This was supported.

Members approved the Probationary Policy as amended.

RESOLVED – that the Probationary Policy, as amended be approved.

60 SECONDMENT POLICY

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a

report which incorporated a number of revisions to the Secondment Policy following a review of the policy in November 2010 and following an increase in the use of secondments. There had been a need to provide clearer guidance to Managers who had raised issues about the level of paperwork, who completed the PDR process and signed off absences from work. The revised policy was set out in Essential Reference Paper “B” attached to the report now submitted. The Head of People and Organisational Services outlined the content of the revised policy.

The Chairman referred to the need to keep in touch with members of staff who were on external secondments and of issues around training. The Chief Executive suggested that paragraph 5.2.1 be amended by the deletion of the words “Local Government Organisation” and the insertion of “Public Sector Organisation”. These issues were supported.

The Head of People and Organisational Services explained the PDR process and how it aimed to provide a basis for managing an individual’s career prospects and how this might link in to external secondments. Councillor J Ranger confirmed that many large organisations were increasingly using secondments in the current economic climate, rather than lose key staff, as this widened their knowledge and was of benefit to both the employee and employer. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was liaison on secondment possibilities between Chief Executives.

In response to a query by Councillor J O Ranger on the Council’s view of employees being seconded to voluntary bodies, particularly in the light of the fact that some voluntary bodies were taking on some of the services provided by Local Authorities, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that no member of staff had taken an external secondment to a voluntary body. The Chief Executive explained that a business case would have to be developed on how this would benefit the Council.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding UNISON’s view of secondments elsewhere, the Chief

Executive confirmed that it would be for UNISON to determine but usually they had looked at secondments favourably.

The Chairman suggested that the Employees / Secondees' responsibilities, paragraph 7.3 should be amended to reflect that the onus was on them to keep in touch with the Council. This was supported.

Councillor J Ranger referred to the increasing use of mentoring throughout the SE Region and suggested that this was something that the Council might wish to think about. The Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that the Council did carry out a lot of informal mentoring adding that a report would be submitted to Human Resources Committee at some future point on this issue.

Members approved the Secondment Policy as amended.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Second Policy as amended be approved;

(B) paragraph 5.2.1 be amended by the deletion of “Local Government” and the insertion of “Public Sector”;

(C) paragraph 7.3 be amended to include an explanation that the onus should be on the employee to keep in contact with the Council; and

(D) the report be amended to emphasise the need for the Council to keep in touch with staff who are externally seconded and on issues around training.

61 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS
HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2011 AND 15 MARCH 2011

Members noted the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 19 January and 15 March 2011.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Local Joint Panel meetings held on 19 January and 15 March 2011 be noted.

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm

Chairman
Date