

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2016, AT 3.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor Colin Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors S Bull, S Cousins, I Devonshire,
J Goodeve, P Ruffles and M Stevenson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Vicki David	- Human Resources Officer
Emma Freeman	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive

506 MINUTES

The Chairman referred to Minute 7 (Professional Career Vocational Study Policy) and commented that career graded roles within Planning and Building Control should be given attention.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

507 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive, Liz Watts to the meeting. He explained that she would be providing Members

with a summary of the proposed new Senior Management Group Structure as part of the report on the Workforce Plan.

The Chairman reminded Members that although he ran the meetings with a degree of informality, he asked that Members address any questions through the Chair.

508 WORKFORCE PLAN

The Chief Executive thanked Members for the opportunity to explain the new leadership team proposals currently undergoing consultation. She explained that it was important that the people affected by any restructure, were advised first. Those affected had now been advised and all staff had been emailed and two staff briefings had also taken place.

The Chief Executive explained that the current structure and meetings schedule was “top heavy” and that the proposed new approach was “flatter” and moved away from a directorate approach, towards a single leadership team, with a decrease of full time equivalents (FTEs) at Senior Management Group level from 16 to 12.

The Chief Executive explained the key changes and the rationale behind the new Head of Service (HOS) roles adding that there would be no line management between HOS and Directors. HOS would have autonomy, responsibility and accountability to run their service areas, allowing Directors to concentrate on driving forward corporate priorities and large projects, such as the Old River Lane development. However, Directors and the Chief Executive would each mentor three HOS, ensuring that they had the support mechanisms in place to operate effectively.

The Chief Executive explained that the Director vacancy would not be advertised until the consultation period had ended on 3 February 2016.

Councillor P Ruffles questioned whether the Council had experience of working this model or whether the Chief Executive had seen it work in other councils. The Chief

Executive explained that she had worked in an organisation where this management structure had been in place and was confident in the proposed structure, with HOS having responsibility and autonomy. She referred to other large issues which would impact on the Council in the future, such as devolution, housing and the need for Local Government to shape itself and work more with its external partners. The Chairman referred to the Council's Director of Transformation during the Changing the Way We Work process.

The Chief Executive explained that the restructure had been shared with some external partners, such as those in shared services and at the end of the consultation period, any comments received would be considered. She explained that if any substantive changes were made as a result of the consultation, they would be discussed with the Executive.

Councillor S Bull expressed concern regarding the 25% reduction in SMG posts. The Chief Executive said that for a Council the size of East Herts, the organisation was top heavy in terms of its SMG posts and that she had aimed to put services together which made sense from a resident viewpoint, e.g. a new Head of Housing, Health and Community Safety.

In response to a query from Councillor I Devonshire regarding the savings to be achieved by a reduction from 16 to 12 and whether projects such as the Old River Lane would necessitate being managed by the creation of a team, the Chief Executive explained that there would be broadly, a saving of around £200,000 from the restructure. She further stated that some savings may be reinvested to ensure the Council had the right people in place further down the organisation, but that these decisions could not be made until HOS were in post. The Chief Executive reminded Members that a Steering Group had been set up in relation to Old River Lane and she saw this as a good example of a significant corporate project that would be led by one of the new Director roles.

The Chairman commented that the Old River Lane project

would need to be handled with sensitivity. He referred to the process of scrutiny and asked how the restructure might affect this. The Chief Executive explained that it was for Members to decide on how they wanted to take scrutiny forward and whether Members wanted fewer scrutiny committees.

Councillor M Stevenson suggested that the Council should have a statement ready for publication regarding proposed changes. The Chief Executive stated that the Council would like to be more proactive in communicating its priorities, although she did not consider the restructure to be something that was appropriate to put into the public domain. Councillor J Goodeve supported the need to produce some form of statement in the event of speculation. She asked what was being done about levels of staff morale at lower levels.

The Chief Executive agreed that a reactive statement needed to be prepared. She stated that staff had been advised why the re-structure was necessary and the savings the Council needed to achieve from 2017/18 due to the central government grant cut in the region of £2M. The Chief Executive stated that staff were being kept informed, invited to submit their comments or have 1:1 meetings with her to address any concerns.

The Chief Executive explained the need to deliver services in the “smartest” way, with more services available for customers online (where appropriate).

With regard to the use of Agency Workers, the Chief Executive hoped to see a reduction in this cost. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained the need to look at the tier below HOS to make sure that the Council had a defined tier and general capacity overall to support its services.

The Chairman stated that in terms of capacity, there were areas such as enforcement, which the Council needed to look at more closely.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational

Development submitted a report on the findings on workforce planning needs over a four year service planning process. She provided a summary of the key points.

The Chairman stated that the timing of the report was fortunate, given the restructure proposals. He expressed concern regarding retirements and the loss of “legacy” knowledge. The Chairman referred to a report on how people responded to “channel shift” and how the Council did things in the future. He queried why there was nothing in the report about working with Hertfordshire County Council.

Councillor I Devonshire referred to “work-life” balance flexible arrangements offered by the Police. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained the flexible arrangements offered by the Council to all staff.

In response to a query by Councillor S Bull regarding training, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that staff received a mixture of training both externally and internally, including an opportunity to work on secondments, “e”-learning, job shadowing and webinars.

In response to a query by Councillor M Stevenson, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained how the Council deployed and used apprenticeships. She stated that the topic would be discussed at Senior Management Group next week. The issue of pay differences between authorities and phased flexible working towards retirement was discussed.

In response to a query from Councillor S Cousins regarding lone working, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed there was a policy which addressed this. She undertook to write to the Member further on this issue.

The Committee thanked the Chief Executive for the restructure update and noted the findings from the workforce planning process.

RESOLVED – that the findings from workforce planning be noted.

509 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report setting out Human Resource information for the period 1 October 2015 to 11 December 2015.

The HR Officer provided a summary of the key points. The HR Officer stated that staff turnover was 8.7% in the first nine months of 2015/16 and that projected turnover for 2015/16 was 7.88% against a target of 10%. Voluntary leavers' was 6.53%, projected to be 8.7% against a target of 7%.

The HR Officer explained that short term sickness for the period 2015/2016 per full time equivalent (FTE) was currently forecast at 3.36 days against a target of 4.5 days. The current projected long term sickness absence per FTE was 1.74 days against a target of 2 days.

Updates were provided in relation to work related accidents, learning and development, performance management and equalities monitoring indicators. A summary was provided of policies currently under review including the number of agency staff working for the Council by service area as at 11 December 2015.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding the two new starters who did not attend corporate induction, the HR Officer explained that another corporate induction would take place on 14 January 2016. In relation to the number of courses/events offered, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that many were offered openly to staff and some were service specific. The Chairman referred to extended learning also offered online.

The Committee approved the report, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Human Resources Quarterly Management Statistics report, as now submitted, be approved.

510 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING:

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 2 December 2015 be received.

(See also Minute 511)

511 EXPENSES POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 2 December 2015 on a revised Expenses Policy.

RESOLVED – that the Expenses Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

(See also Minute 510)

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm

Chairman

Date