

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD AS
AN ONLINE MEETING ON TUESDAY 16
FEBRUARY 2021, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors A Alder, S Bull, J Dumont,
M McMullen and S Newton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Vicki David	- Human Resources Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

359 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Ruffles.

360 MINUTES - 5 NOVEMBER 2020

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Alder, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 November 2020 be confirmed as

a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 5 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

361 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 4 April 2020 to enable councils to hold remote committee meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic period. This was to ensure local authorities could conduct business during this current public health emergency. This meeting of Human Resources Committee was being held remotely under these regulations, via the Zoom application and was being recorded and live streamed on YouTube.

The Chairman also advised Members that the Health and Safety Quarterly Statistics/ Updates (Quarter 3) would be brought forward on the agenda and would be considered after the receipt of the Health and Safety Committee Minutes.

362 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

363 LOCAL JOINT PANEL MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 20 January 2021, be received.

364 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 19 OCTOBER 2020 AND 18 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meetings of the Health and Safety Committee held on 19 October 2020 and 18 January 2021, be received.

365 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY STATISTICS/UPDATES (QUARTER 3)

The Health and Safety Officer briefly introduced the report and invited questions.

The Chairman asked that in future the Committee was furnished with more data from contractors on accidents at their respective sites. She also said she was surprised by Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC) decision not to take part in a joint procurement exercise for lone worker devices.

The Health and Safety officer and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) said that work was already being done to establish a framework for contract managers to report more extensively and this data would be presented to the Committee in due course. It was also explained to Members that SBC had now decided to take part in a joint procurement exercise. It was hoped that a

contract could be incepted by 1 April 2021.

366 EMPLOYMENT POLICIES DEVELOPED REPORT X 7
(DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCE, CODE OF CONDUCT FOR
EMPLOYEES, PROBATION, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT,
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT AND APPEALS POLICY)

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and said that the policies had been through extensive scrutiny and been approved by Leadership Team (LT), East Herts Together (EHT) and Local Joint Panel. He also explained to Members that the Code of Conduct would need to be approved at Annual Council in May 2021 as it was a change to the Constitution. The recommendation in this regard would therefore be amended accordingly.

The HR Officer briefly explained the changes that had been made after the meeting of Local Joint Panel.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor McMullen that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the revised Code of Conduct be recommended for adoption by Annual Council as part of the constitutional review.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Newton that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the revised Disciplinary Policy be approved;

(B) the revised Grievance Policy be approved;

(C) the revised Probation Policy be approved;

(D) the revised Bullying and Harassment Policy be approved;

(E) the revised Absence Management Policy be approved; and

(F) the revised and reduced Appeals Policy be approved.

367 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS FOR QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020)

The HR Officer briefly introduced the report and invited questions.

The Chairman said that the ongoing low absence and staff turnover levels were encouraging. She also asked if there was still a lack of available benchmarking data, and if there had been less available learning and development opportunities for staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The HR Officer said it had not yet been possible to obtain benchmarking data.

The Head of HR and OD said that in-person training had ceased and therefore reduced the availability of some sessions. However, the report only covered the

in-house learning and development opportunities offered by the Council, so there was still an array of remote training staff could engage with, and this meant there was no shortage of opportunities.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

368 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and thanked the HR Officer for her excellent work on the wellbeing survey. HR were proud of the results of the in-house survey. Work was still to be done on the performance development scheme, as highlighted by the survey.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their work and listed a number of areas of the survey response which were very positive, as well as an encouraging response rate, despite the timing of the survey around the festive period.

Councillor Alder asked about the redeployment of Council staff to the NHS to assist with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Head of HR and OD said that the Council had volunteered staff in 9 of the 11 areas in which the NHS had requested assistance. Only one member of staff had been deployed, mainly because the pressure on the NHS had reduced and it had then been able to recruit rather than rely on interim staff. The staff member had excelled in her role. She had also been paid her normal wage, which would be reimbursed to

the Council by the NHS, as well as becoming a higher priority for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Chairman asked about the progress of agile working and further redevelopments of policies.

The Head of HR and OD said the move towards agile working was split into three areas: consideration of site/ office space, development and provision of the necessary technology, and the development of an agile working policy. Steady progress was being made in all areas. Five further policies would be redeveloped, but would again need to go through the extensive scrutiny process. This was also being balanced with ongoing work on the HR Strategy – which would hopefully be presented at the May or September meetings of the Committee – as well as other commitments.

Councillor Alder asked about the nine staff whose response indicated they did not understand the priorities and objectives of the Council. The Head of HR and OD said overall there was a positive and encouraging response to this question. However, as the survey was not anonymous this year, these responses could be followed up and the situation rectified.

The Chairman placed on record the Committee's congratulations and thanks to the Payroll Manager for her 40 years of service.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

369 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and explained the main changes. Honorariums had been strengthened and other slight amendments made to reflect changes, such as in pay scales. Members were also advised that UNISON had just submitted its annual pay claim of 10%.

Councillor Bull asked whether UNISON believed this was a realistic and attainable increase.

The Head of HR and OD said that it did and had cited a 25% cut in pay in real terms since 2010. However, the same claim had been submitted last year and resulted in a 2.75% increase. There was also a feeling that central government may scrap its 2024 Living Wage target due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase of the amount claimed for could likely not be accommodated from the Council's budget without redundancies.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Bull that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – to recommend to Council that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved.

370 GENDER PAY GAP

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and explained the main points. The production of case

studies was in progress but had been delayed by Officers' other commitments, including in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been a slight improvement in relation to the gender pay gap, and although it was a slow process, this would continue.

Councillor Alder asked about LT's decision not to make the presence of both males and females on selection panels mandatory, and also asked about the gender balance of LT itself.

The Head of HR and OD said that LT felt this measure might have been difficult to achieve and instead had decided to move forward with a 'meet the team' approach during recruitment. This meant potential staff met a wider array of Council staff during the interview process and were more likely to feel the Council was an inclusive employer. LT was currently comprised of six males and four females.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Dumont that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

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

(B) the 2021/22 action plan be agreed.

371 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman
Date