

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 2 OCTOBER 2013, AT 3.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors P Ballam, Mrs D Hone, P Ruffles,
J Thornton, A Warman and N Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor D Andrews

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Glenda Bennett	- Interim Head of People and Property
Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

269 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Ranger. It was noted that Councillor A Warman was substituting for Councillor Ranger.

270 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 3 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

271 HUMAN RESOURCES - QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Interim Head of People and Property Services submitted a quarterly performance report for the period up to 30 September 2013, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and the supporting Essential Reference Papers. She drew Members' attention to the most recent people statistics in relation to the current headcount, the number of starters, the current turnover and common reasons for leaving. An update was provided in relation to those staff who had transferred to Stevenage Borough Council following the introduction of shared service arrangements.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding staff attending training sessions and whether the number of vacancies would be made available for public examination, the Interim Head of People and Property advised that attendees were always asked to evaluate the course attended. The number of vacancies were made available to the public through this report, but there was no specific body that examined the level of vacancies or benchmarked them. The Chairman stated that it would be useful to have statistics showing the numbers invited to attend training and those failing to attend. The Head of People and Property Services stated that HR would be taking steps to find out what type of training staff would wish to attend. She informed Members of the positive impact of staff turnover.

In response to queries from Councillor A Warman and P Ballam concerning long term sickness and attendance at training, the Head of People and Property Services stated that staff on long term sick were encouraged to return to work with a phased approach as appropriate and that training was made available to all staff with some tailored to specific work areas. Councillor J Thornton suggested that training be benchmarked to give the statistics more relevance.

The Chairman asked for further information on "e"-learning and whether this initiative had been taken up by Parish and Town Councils. Officers agreed to bring this forward as part of future reports.

The Head of People and Property Services stated that a “Wellbeing Day” had been programmed for 17 October 2013 when a number of activities would be taking place at Wallfields. She provided a summary of the initiatives.

Councillor N Wilson commented on stress and how this could be hidden especially in relation to those staff who had moved from Bishop’s Stortford to Wallfields and home wWorkers. The Director of Finance and Support Services stated that management was very much aware of stress especially on home workers and of the need for managers to take appropriate steps to ensure regular contact with them. Managers were also encouraged to consider what actions could be taken at particular times when workloads might increase and highlighted, as an example, action taken by the Shared Revenues and Benefits service as the welfare reforms had started. The Head of People and Property Services added that Line Managers also monitored stress levels, making sure that staff had the resources they needed.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

272 POLICY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Interim Head of People and Property submitted a report detailing a calendar of policy reviews which needed to be undertaken by Human Resources every three years, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and the Essential Reference Papers. She stated that some policies needed to be reviewed as it had been more than three years since their last review and also because of legislative changes. These included “the duty to consider working past retirement age” and the policy relating to fixed term employment.

The Interim Head of People and Property drew Members’ attention to three policies which needed to be reviewed urgently as these had cost implications for the Council. These were the Redeployment Policy 2006, the Redundancy Policy

2012 and the Retirement Policy 2009.

Members were asked to agree that mileage rates be reviewed as part of the Policy Plan. This was supported.

The Committee approved the recommendations as submitted and requested that the list of policies include a column showing when the policy was last updated.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Policy Development Plan as amended, be approved;

(B) Policy 20 (the duty to consider working past retirement) be deleted; and

(C) the Fixed Term Employment Policy be terminated.

273 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

The Interim Head of People and Property Services submitted a report setting out the results of the Equality and Diversity in Employment Report 2012/13, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and Essential Reference Papers. It was noted that the Council was required to publish data on equality in the workforce by 31 March 2014.

The Chairman drew attention to the numbers given for staff with disabilities and those statistics which were either “unknown” or “not given”. The Interim Head of People and Property stated that this reflected a reluctance on the part of staff, to let management know if they had a disability and of the possible reasons for this. It was noted that if this information was not provided, then the Council could not provide the necessary aids and adaptations.

In response to a query from Councillor J Thornton concerning benchmarking of the statistics relating to disabilities, the Interim Head of People and Property undertook to establish this information and let him know.

Councillor P Ruffles stated that he was pleased to see that people were allowed to work beyond retirement age and

referred to statistics regarding retirement ages and its impact on life expectancy within his profession.

The Interim Head of People and Property drew Members' attention to issues which needed to be addressed arising from the 2012/13 Employment Equality and Diversity report, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. These were supported.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the annual Equalities and Diversity Report 2012/13 be approved;

(B) the report be published on the Council's website to ensure compliance with statute by 31 March 2014;

(C) a data cleanse be refreshed as part of the Human Resources and Payroll upgrade and that the Disabilities Status be refreshed every two years; and

(D) training and evaluation forms be reviewed.

274 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 3 JULY 2013 AND 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meetings held on 3 July and 3 September 2013 be received.

(see Minute 275 below)

275 GRIEVANCE POLICY

The Interim Head of People and Property Services submitted a report updating the Grievance Policy to reflect changes in legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice.

The Committee considered and supported the recommendations made at the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 3 September 2013.

RESOLVED – that the revised Grievance Policy, as

now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 274 above)

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm

Chairman

Date