

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2015, AT 3.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Helen Farrell	- Human Resources Officer
Emma Freeman	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

126 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor S Cousins and seconded by Councillor I Devonshire that Councillor P Ruffles be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

After being put to the meeting, Councillor P Ruffles was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor P Ruffles be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

127 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

128 CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report which set out the recruitment process for the appointment of the Chief Executive.

The Chairman stated that he had sat on the Recruitment Committee for the appointment of the Chief Executive, adding that it was important for as much information as possible to be in the public domain.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the background stages to the recruitment process and why GatenbySanderson had been chosen for the executive search. It was noted that the appointment of the Chief Executive would be ratified by Council on 29 July 2015.

In response to a question from Councillor I Devonshire regarding the background of the applicants, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the majority of applicants had come from the public sector with some from a mixed employment background.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding the cost of housing in the District, the salary offered and whether this had deterred any applicants, the Head of HR and Organisational Development stated that the salary reflected the role and market place and that the majority of candidates did not want to relocate. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that there would be a six monthly review once the Chief Executive was in post.

The Chairman asked that the Head of HR and Organisational Development circulate the advertisement for the role of Chief Executive to all Members of Human Resources Committee.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the recruitment process for the appointment of Chief Executive be noted; and

(B) the advertisement for the role of Chief Executive be circulated to all Members of Human Resources Committee.

129 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report reviewing the Learning and Development Programme delivered in 2014/15 and sought approval to the proposed Learning and Development Programme for 2015/16.

The Human Resources Officer (Learning and Development) summarised the main points of the report. The Chairman congratulated Officers' ingenuity for organising more training using less financial resources. The HR Officer gave assurances that any training appropriate for Members was also co-ordinated with the Scrutiny Officer.

In response to a query regarding the circulation of training to Town and Parish Councils, the HR Officer explained that only one response had been received regarding take up and that she would write to Town and Parish Councils again. She also stated that external circulation depended on the number of licences the Council held for "e"-training.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the position in relation to the number of graduates and the use of interns who primarily undertook project work for the Council according to a specified programme. Councillor J Goodeve stated that the use of interns and graduates provided a valuable way of evaluating someone before potentially employing them.

Councillor P Ruffles thanked the Officers for the quality of the report adding that the Council should not lose sight of the customer in terms of their learning needs and how people learn. The Head of HR and Organisational Development referred the Member to Essential Reference Paper "C" of the report and the variety of training offered including training for those who might be considered vulnerable.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided an update in response to a number of questions regarding skills training, professional training, skills gaps, feedback and combining the Council's training courses with other Authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor M Stevenson regarding core training, the HR Officer explained the Personal Development Reviews (PDR) appraisal process and the fact that some training such as Here to Help (H2H) was mandatory. The Chairman asked that comments on the H2H programme be also shared with Members. The Head of HR and Organisational Development undertook to speak with the Scrutiny Officer.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding the use of "Plain English" in report writing, the HR Officer explained that training had been provided on this and on the use of grammar.

Councillor P Ruffles and the Chairman queried staff training and the Council's contractors in relation to their use of apprentices, the training development process and to Town and Parish Councils in relation to the planning process. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the Council had no remit to involve itself with a contractor's training arrangements but that Health and Safety issues was addressed via the contract. Members were advised that Planning and Building Control offered pre-planning advice should this be needed. The Chairman suggested that contractors could be asked for information on their training policies and in relation to apprenticeship schemes.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to the training arranged for Members and asked that the Scrutiny Officer be thanked for arranging this. This was supported.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding Home Working for new employees, the HR Officer explained that, usually there was a six month wait time, but there was flexibility with this arrangement providing the Head of Service was satisfied that the employee had the experience and

equipment in place.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Head of HR and Organisational Development provided an update regarding the requests received for “bite-size” training and what the Council could do to provide support and training in relation to the Here to Help programme.

The Chairman asked HR Officers to ensure that all policies were consistent with one another.

The Committee approved the Learning and Development Programme for 2015/16.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Learning and Development Programme 2015/16 be approved; and

(B) Members’ thanks be recorded for the help the Scrutiny Officer had provided in arranging Member training.

130 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report on a revised and newly designed Employee Handbook. Members were advised that the handbook, as now submitted, had been revised with a more professional look and reflected current policies and practices within the Council. Following consultation with Corporate Management Team (CMT) and UNISON, a number of amendments had been made. Members were provided with an update.

Councillor I Devonshire stated that the handbook was very informative.

The Committee approved the newly designed Employee Handbook.

RESOLVED – that the Employee Handbook, as amended and now submitted, be approved.

131 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 April to June 2015.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development advised that staff turnover was 4.67% in the first three months of 2015/16 and that projected turnover for 2014/15 was 17.58% against a target of 10%. The number of voluntary leavers was 2.47% against a target of 9.89%.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that short term sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) was currently 0.47 days against a target of 4.5 days and that current long term sickness overall was 0.39 days. The current projected long-term sickness absence per FTE was 2.34 days against a target of 2 days.

Updates were provided in relation to Training Development, Performance Development reviews (PDRs) and Equalities Monitoring.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development was pleased to report substantial improvements in relation to the PDR statistics in that all Directorates except one, were 100% complete. The Chairman thanked the Head of Service and all those involved in achieving this tremendous result. For the benefit of new Members, the Head of HR explained the PDR process.

The Chairman stated that Revenues and Benefits had one of the biggest workloads and had always achieved 100% on its PDR returns.

In response to a query from Councillor J Goodeve regarding equalities monitoring targets, the Chairman confirmed that HR Committee set the targets. Councillor J Goodeve commented that she hoped that the targets reflected the local population and what was typical in other organisations. In response to a further question regarding leavers, the Head of HR and

Organisational Development confirmed that there were 43 vacant posts and that 9 posts were being actively recruited. She asked that Members be provided with a breakdown of those vacancies at the next meeting. This was supported.

In response to a query regarding the use of agency staff, the Head of HR and Organisational Development provided an update. She explained that the introduction of the new payroll system would enable HR to extract and monitor more information and produce more useful information.

The Committee received the report, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resources Quarterly Management Statistics, as now submitted, be received; and

(B) Members be provided with a breakdown of current vacancies at the next meeting of Human Resources Committee.

132 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT 2014/15

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report on sickness absence levels, which reviewed short and long term sickness for 2014/15 and proposed initiatives to reduce absence.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development drew Members' attention to benchmarking averages, adding that the Council had the lowest sickness absence statistics for 2014/15; the average figure for local government was 8.2 days with East Herts recording 4.52 days. The Chairman asked that the benchmarking information be circulated to Members of HR Committee.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the total short term and long term sickness was its lowest since 2010 which was a result of changes in policy and return to work interviews. The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of staff sickness reasons.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding a report on Health and Safety issues and injuries, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that there was a Health and Safety Committee and would speak to the Health and Safety Officer about reporting matters to Human Resources Committee.

The Chairman referred to the Absence Management Policy and the phrasing around verbal warnings and asked Officer to review this. This was supported.

The Chairman referred to the high short-term sickness levels in Economic Development in 2013/14 and explained that as this Team was very small this had been reflected in a very high spike. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the graph showed comparative full time equivalents (FTEs), rather than numbers of staff.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the sickness absence levels be noted;

(B) the Council's sickness absence categories be amended to reflect those shown in the CIPD's Annual Absence Management Survey to facilitate detailed benchmarking when the new HR and Payroll system is introduced;

(C) the current sickness absence management targets for short term absence (4.5 FTE days) and for long term absence (2 days FTE) and total absence of (6.5 days FTE) be retained; and

(D) the wording in Absence Management Policy about verbal warnings be reviewed.

133 TURNOVER 2014/15

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report on the reasons and key issues for the turnover in 2014/15 and proposed

recommendations for 2015/16.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to the importance of succession planning in the context of human resources and career progression. The Head of HR and Organisational Development referred to the wide spread internal movement of staff and job shadowing which occurred across the Council.

In response to a query from Councillor S Cousins, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the process around induction training.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding recruitment costs, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that recruitment for two Heads of Service appointments had affected last year's total figure and the same would occur again in next year's figure as a result of the Chief Executive recruitment process.

The Committee approved the report, as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted and that the turnover target remains unchanged for 2015/16;

(B) staff continue to be supported in relation to career development and succession planning;

(C) the Council continue to attract apprentices and volunteers into the workforce;

(D) actions within the 2014/15 East Herts Health and Wellbeing work plan be implemented; and

(E) staff continue to be supported in implementing the ongoing actions identified from the "Here to Help" Programme.

134 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING:

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 17 June 2015 be received.

(See also Minutes 135 – 136)

135 HANDLING PERSONAL DATA POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel on a new policy for handling personal data to ensure compliance with best practice and the Data Protection Act.

RESOLVED – that the Handling Personal Data Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

(See also Minute 134)

136 SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE - FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel on an updated Shared Parental Leave - Family Friendly Policy, which had been updated to reflect the rights of employees who fell within the “Foster to Adopt” Scheme”.

RESOLVED – that the Shared Parental Leave – Family Friendly Policy, as amended, be approved.

(see also Minute 134)

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm

Chairman
Date