

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2015, AT 3.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors S Bull, 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

331 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor S Cousins.

332 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

333 POLICY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015/16

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report updating the Policy Development Plan 2015/16 which had been amended to remove duplicated information about the Managing Violence

and Aggression in the Workplace Policy currently available under Health and Safety policies.

The Head explained that the report also set out policies which HR were currently updating and those currently circulating as part of the consultation process. She explained that, where there were changes in legislation or best practice, policies would be submitted for Members' consideration rather than wait until the next normal review.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Policy Development Plan 2015/16 be approved; and

(B) the Managing Violence and Aggression in the Workforce Policy be deleted.

334 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 July 2015 to 17 September 2015.

The HR Officer provided a summary of the key points. The Head stated that staff turnover was 6.29% in the first six months of 2015/16 and that projected turnover for 2014/15 was 12.59% against a target of 10%. She stated that this was unusual and was being investigated by HR. The number of voluntary leavers was 5.2% against a target of 10%.

The HR Officer explained that short term sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) was currently 0.23 days against a target of 4.5 days and that current long term sickness overall was 0.12 days. The current projected long term sickness absence per FTE was 1.44 days against a target of 2 days. Of particular note was the fact that the Personal Development review (PDR) completion statistic was now 96.52%.

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.

In response to a number of comments and queries from Members, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that vacancies were initially advertised internally and then after two weeks these were externally advertised. The Head explained that the Council normally experienced a lot of internal movement and that on occasion, posts were advertised simultaneously. She referred to the rolling programme of vacancies advertised in relation to Revenues and Benefits posts.

The HR Officer provided a breakdown by Directorate, of the current 37 vacancies. Regarding service areas where there might be issues of concern, the Head explained that any issues would be addressed via the PDR process. She explained that the Council was sitting below its usual targets at the moment but that this position would change as winter approached.

In respect of preventative measures such as flu jabs, the Head explained that the costs of this were being discussed with Occupational Health.

Regarding internal re-organisations, the Head stated that some managers were currently looking at their services areas but this did not include redundancies. She reminded Members a new Chief Executive would be starting on 26 October 2015.

The Committee Chairman was pleased to see the improvement in the PDS statistics. The HR Officer explained that Planning and Building Control PDR completion was now at 86%.

The Committee Chairman suggested that the recommendation be amended by the insertion of the word "report". This was supported.

The Committee approved the report, as now detailed.

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

335 PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS - REVIEW
2015 STAGE 1

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report following consultation on the Personal Development Review (PDR) scheme as a result of issues raised in the Staff Survey, July 2015 and the Here to Help Staff Forum in February 2015. A summary of the comments raised and consultation feedback was detailed in the report.

The Head explained that the report not only looked at the ongoing work around PDRs, but also reviewed the work around Here to Help, performance issues and suggestions.

The Committee Chairman complimented the Head and her team for their ongoing work in raising the profile of PDRs and the improved completion rates which had resulted.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the key comments and issues raised referring Members to the report for more in depth comments raised by staff. She explained that Managers did not see any value in bringing back a competency framework but that Members were asked to agree a number of recommendations which were set out in paragraph 4 of the report submitted. These were supported.

The Committee Chairman welcomed a streamlined approach to PDRs. He referred to the comment by UNISON that Managers used PDRs as a means of bullying/intimidation. The Head of HR and Organisational Development stated that UNISON had said that staff had been told that managers were not allowed to use “Exceptional” in the PDR process. She refuted this and stated that anyone could achieve

“Exceptional” and that the question was more about supporting managers, adding that the issue of bullying and intimidation was taken very seriously.

Councillor S Bull raised the issue of bullying and potential personality clashes with a manager and HR’s role in the process. The Head of HR and Organisational Development gave assurances in terms of mediation and support to both, whether this was provided internally or externally.

In response to a query from Councillor M Stevenson regarding HR intervention when external assistance had been asked for, the Head of HR and Organisational Development stated that if invited to intervene and sit in on meetings, they would.

The Committee noted the report and approved the recommendations referred to in paragraph 4 of the report now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress of the Performance Development Review process stage 1, be noted; and

(B) the recommendations in paragraph 4 of the report now submitted, be approved.

336 REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report setting out the findings following a review of the Council’s recruitment process in June 2015. The HR Officer provided a summary of the report and how the Council could improve its current recruitment process to attract the right candidates and promote East Herts as a great place to work.

The Committee Chairman thanked the HR Officer for a detailed and very thorough report.

Councillor P Ruffles commented that selling the Council as a place to work needed a different approach adding that it must be a “dream” job in terms of terrain when compared with other

Councils. He referred to hard to fill roles, and the Council's approach. The HR Officer explained that some jobs, e.g. in planning and building control were hard to fill because there was a shortage of skills. Revenues and Benefits was another example. In the latter situation, the Council adopted a rolling advertising campaign to attract candidates. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that it was about demand and supply. She explained that at one stage East Herts was at the forefront in relation to working from home, but that many Councils now offered this arrangement.

In response to a query from Councillor M Stevenson, the Head explained that, up until recently, staff turnover had been low, but that this had increased in the last six months owing to a number of retirements. She explained that HR would be reviewing career grades and working jointly with EELGA around planning. The Head referred to the Council's Graduate Training Scheme and how this might be further expanded to encourage younger people to join the Council and the introduction of career paths.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that the recommendations in paragraph 2 of the report, as now submitted, be approved; and

(B) the Action Plan be agreed.

337 HERE TO HELP - PROGRESS REPORT OCTOBER 2015

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report providing an update on the progress made to date on the activities implemented following the second set of workshops in June 2014. She summarised the key activities between October 2014 and July 2015.

The Head stated that as a result of the workshops completed in 2014, 130 improvement ideas had been suggested, split between corporate level actions, service level and local ideas, with Heads of Service being given responsibility for different projects and how they fitted in relation to business and

organisational development.

In response to various Members' comments and queries, the Head stated that Team Update was available online and that staff also received a weekly newsletter "Connect".

She explained that in addition to internal surveys, the Council undertook residents' surveys.

Regarding forums, the Head explained that the Forums were staffed by volunteers and that no senior management attended the Forums.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the Here to Help October 2015 update be noted.

338 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (IIP) ASSESSMENT - SILVER STANDARD ACTION PLAN

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report outlining an action plan aimed at supporting the Council in achieving the Investors in People Silver Standard in 2016/17, following its successful award of the Bronze Standard in June 2015.

The Head commented that she was very pleased at the Council's success and that it had been measured against 91 evidence requirements. She referred to the 115 evidence requirements to achieve the Silver Standard and that the evaluation had to take place within a 12 month period. How this would be achieved was set out in the Action Plan within the report now submitted.

Members supported the approach as detailed within the Action Plan.

The Committee agreed that the Investors In People (IIP) Action Plan be approved.

RESOLVED – that the Investors in People Action Plan be approved.

339 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Head of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development submitted a report updating the Council's data held in relation to equalities and diversity. The HR Officer provided a summary of the report referring Members to the recommendations in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

The Committee Chairman queried the disproportionate percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) applicants who had been unsuccessful at the appointment stage and asked that this be investigated further. This was supported.

The Committee supported a suggestion by Councillor P Ruffles that Members be provided with feedback on all of the recommendations listed as bullet points with the report as now submitted.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development assured Members that HR constantly looked for emerging patterns so that potential problems could be addressed to provide a joined up and corporate approach to HR issues. Councillor J Goodeve suggested that a lack of interest in local government might be as a result of the costs of local housing. The Head explained that statistics showed that many people in the District commuted to London and could earn more money. She referred to the high percentage of part-time female staff who tried to juggle family and a work life balance.

The Committee Chairman referred to the use of apprenticeships and encouraging the Council's contractors to make use of this workforce. The Head suggested that it was about making the Council more attractive and improving promotion on how the Council did things.

Councillor I Devonshire suggested that more work be done on encouraging graduates within planning and building control. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained

that the planning service used to have a lot of career graded roles and that HR needed to speak with the Head of Planning and Building Control about this.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Equality and Diversity Annual report 2014/15 be noted; and

(B) the recommendations as now detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted, be approved and the outcome reported back to Members.

340 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING:

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 30 September 2015 be received.

(See also Minutes 341 – 343)

341 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2015-2019

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 30 September 2015, on a revised Organisational Development Strategy 2015 – 2019.

RESOLVED – that the Organisational Development Strategy 2015 – 2019 as now submitted, be approved.

(See also Minute 340)

342 PROFESSIONAL CAREER VOCATIONAL STUDY POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 30 September 2015, on a Professional Career Vocational Study Policy.

RESOLVED – that the Professional Career Vocational Study Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

(See also Minute 340)

343 SMOKE FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 30 September 2015, on a Professional Career Vocational Study Policy, subject to the amendment of paragraphs 4.3 (number of smoke breaks) and 5.2 (recording of smoke breaks) of the Policy, as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Professional Career Vocational Study Policy, as now amended, be approved.

(See also Minute 340)

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm

Chairman
Date