

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 13
SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chairman)
Councillors M Connolly, T Deffley,
D Hollebon, V Smith and M Swainston

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors J Dumont

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
Emily Cordwell	- Trainee Human Resources Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer

135 APOLOGIES

There was an apology of absence from Councillor Willcocks.

136 MINUTES - 15 FEBRUARY 2023 AND 21 JUNE 2023

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Smith that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 15 February 2023 and the 21 June 2023 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 15 February 2023 and the 21 June 2023 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

137 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

138 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, she said that the Committee will have noted from the papers that the reports were in a new format, for which comments would be welcomed.

The Chairman said that an update on Marshgate Bridge, the recruitment of a new Human Resources Manager and the inclusion of Mental Health Statistics in the Quarterly Report would be addressed by officers.

139 SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 9 MAY 2023

The Health and Safety Officer said that there was nothing to report from the Safety Committee, only that a new Chairman would be in place for their next meeting.

The Health and Safety Officer gave Members an update on Marshgate Bridge as arising from the last meeting of the Committee. He said that despite numerous contact attempts by the Council to the Bridge's owner, Dicker Mill Investments, there had been no engagement. The Health and Safety Officer said that this included offers to carry out a survey of the bridge and make any repairs. He said that an offer by the Council to purchase the bridge had also been declined.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said that a similar situation concerning another bridge in Hertford had been concluded when the Council closed the approach road (which it owned) to it. He added that however, if such a closure didn't affect Dicker Mill Investments the road would just effectively remain closed.

The Health and Safety Officer said that that this unfortunately would not be a potential remedy the situation with Marshgate Bridge as the Council did not own the approach road, just half of the carpark situated on the bridge's far side. He said that the council's Property Department would once again contact Dicker Mill Investments in the hope of receiving a response.

Councillor Connelly asked if Marshgate Bridge would remain on a register for monitoring due to structural concerns.

The Health and Safety Officer said that as the Council had no responsibility for Marshgate Bridge it could only inform Dicker Mill Investments.

The Chairman thanked the Health and Safety Officer for the Health and Safety Minutes and his update.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 9 May 2023 be received.

140 HUMAN RESOURCES Q1 STATISTICS 23/24

The Human Resources Officer introduced the report, highlighting its new format and dashboard approach which continued to include all the main areas of interest. She said that she welcomed Members feedback on this new format.

The Human Resources Officer said that the council staff headcount was approximately 300, and so this was the figure which the percentages within the report were based upon.

The Human Resources Officer gave the Committee statistics for staff absences due to stress in Quarter 1;

- There were five long term staff absences which related to stress in the period. Of these five cases, three staff members had now returned to work,

one staff member had retired, and one staff member remained absent from work.

- There had been no staff members leave due to stress.
- There were three short term staff absences which related to stress for the period, it was not recorded if this was absence due to work related stress or 'other' stress.

The Chairman thanked the Human Resources Officer for her report and update and asked if the 300 headcount was full-time equivalent (FTE).

The Human Resources Officer said FTE was 275.07, with a staff headcount of 308.

Councillor Connolly said that she thought that the dashboard format was great and thanked the Human Resources Officer for her work. She asked if the sickness absence data contained within the report was based on full time days and requested that this be specified.

The Human Resources Officer confirmed that the sickness absence statistics within the report were based on full time days, and that this would be specified in future reports.

Councillor Connolly said that it was disappointing that there were no reported employee work related incidents and 'near misses' within the statistics. She said that such reporting should be encouraged as this

could stop incidents from escalating into accidents.

The Health and Safety Officer agreed with Councillor Connolly and said that the reporting of 'near misses' was a focus. He said that a staff member's reaction to a situation was individual, with many front-line staff not reporting abusive/ confrontational situations. He said that work would be done to reinforce that staff should report incidents.

Councillor Deffley said that he too thought that the new report format was great, and a step forward. He asked that an explanatory sentence be included under each of the bullet points. The Chairman agreed and said that it would be good to have the bullet points under categories.

The Human Resources Officer said that Learning and Development was not included in the report, and asked the Committee if they would like to see this in future reports.

The Chairman said that this should be included as the Committee wanted to be kept informed about the development of staff.

Councillor Swainston said that she really liked the dashboard format and asked if comparison data with other local authorities could be included going forward.

The Human Resources Officer said that such comparison data could be included.

Councillor Connolly referred to page 48 of the report and asked what was in place for staff as both the Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programmes were out of contract.

The Human Resources Officer said that new contracts were being investigated, but that she could not give a timeframe at present for when this process would be concluded.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said that he was assisting Human Resources with the procurement of these new contracts and that the Employee Assistance Programme remained available to staff.

The Chairman referred to exemption reporting and asked that explanations be given in the report as well as figures. She said that it would also be beneficial to the Committee to have sight of an organisational chart.

The Human Resources Officer said that an organisational chart was part populated and would be available to the Committee when completed. She said that the chart's completion was dependent on the council obtaining a full licence from the software provider.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resources

Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2023) be considered.

B) that the move to a dashboard approach for Human Resources statistics, with exception reporting only be agreed.

C) that it be agreed that non-staff Health and Safety issues are reported through Safety Committee meeting with minutes being sent to the Human Resources Committee.

141 ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT

The Human Resources Officer introduced the report which had been written by her colleague, and explained how it outlined the difference between the population of East Herts compared to the council's staff.

Councillor Connolly referred to page 78 of the report and asked if the reference to the 'Human Resources Committee – June 2022' was a typo.

The Human Resources Officer said that this was an error, which she would correct this to read 'Human Resources Committee - June 2023'.

The Chairman referred to page 59 of the report, which detailed collaboration with the Shaw Trust to attract more disabled job applicants. She said that she encouraged this action to be carried out and that it would be useful for the Committee be able to see the progress of the Human Resources Department within

the Council's Transformation Programme.

It was agreed that the Committee would be provided with detail of the Transformation Programme objectives for staff within the Human Resources Department in the next quarterly report.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that collaboration with the Shaw Trust was a matter which had previously been raised by the Committee, and as this was still outstanding, he would push this forward.

Councillor Connolly referred to page 55 of the report and asked if the council's disabled employee profile was of a normal level compared to other organisations.

The Human Resources Officer said that comparison data would be added to the next report.

Councillor Smith referred to page 68 of the report which detailed protected characteristics data, and asked why data pertaining to transgender job applicants was not monitored.

The Human Resources Officer said that she would seek clarification from the report author and email Committee Members with a response to this question.

The Chairman thanked the officers that were present for their work and both officers and Members for their attendance.

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded

by Councillor Smith that the recommendations, as detailed be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Annual Equalities Report 2022/23 be noted.

B) The recommendations set out in the 2023/24 action plan are considered and approved.

142 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

Chairman
Date