

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY
2018, AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Colin Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors P Boylan, S Bull, S Cousins,
M McMullen, P Ruffles and M Stevenson

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms Watkins and Dr Weston

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

310 MINUTES

In respect of Minute 176 – Minutes, Councillor P Boylan referred to his suggestion for an action log so that actions

requested by Members would not be lost. The Democratic Services Officer explained that Minutes were written in accordance with the corporate format. Councillor Boylan stated that if they could not be changed, then the action should be shown as detailed within resolutions (B) and (C) of Minute 176.

In respect of Minute 177 - Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2016/17, Councillor M McMullen referred to paragraph 4 and the gender profile of employees and clarified that he had asked why this was happening.

On the same Minute, the Chairman referred to paragraph 7 and asked that comments such as “the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the positive steps....” be listed.

Councillor P Boylan referred to the fact that 25% of staff were “exceeding expectations” on their PDRs. He asked for further information on how HR was managing that pool of talent bearing in mind the number of staff who could retire shortly.

Finally, the Chairman confirmed that the omission of Councillor M Stevenson from the attendance listing had been amended on the website and the Minutes to be signed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman; and

(B) the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development’s Annual Report to the

April 2018 meeting address the issue of talent management given that 25% were “exceeding expectations” on their PDRs.

311 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed guest speakers, Dr Weston and Ms D Watkins to the meeting.

312 PRESENTATION BY OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

A presentation was provided by Dr Weston, an Occupational Health Physician. She explained that one in four people would experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives and the impact this had on the individual, their employers and on the economy (estimated to be in the billions of pounds). Dr Weston explained the risk associated with people who were coming to work when they should not.

The speaker referred to stress and the availability of mental health information on websites (e.g. the Health and Safety Executive and ACAS). Dr Weston explained how situations needed to be managed with open and honest discussion and the legal requirements in terms of the need to evaluate risk and of the consequences of not promoting a positive mental health approach.

Dr Weston referred to the “six management standard stresses” which impacted on an individual (including management of change) and what legal assessments needed to be carried out. The Human Resources Officer assured Members that Officers followed HSE guidelines, including the HSE toolkit. Dr Weston acknowledged that an

employer would not be able to address issues which related to serious mental health, but that that it could address work related stresses. She encouraged the need to create a culture in the workplace which enabled employees to talk about mental health and for the employer to provide adequate support to returning employees including the need to make reasonable adjustments such as phased returns to work, home and flexible working arrangements.

Dr Weston referred to new training in mental health supported by the Government (mental health first aiders) and to a number of documents which were good sources of information for an employer including "Thriving at Work" written by a senior member of staff at Deloitte who had suffered a breakdown.

Dr Weston commented that she had reviewed the Council's sickness and absence records and by comparison, the Council was doing relatively well. Of particular note was the fact that the Council had a small number of staff and that one employee with a mental health issue, could have a dramatic impact on its HR statistics. She referred to the possibility of under reporting in that an employee might not be able to cope and could be off sick for a day and record this as a cold. Dr Weston suggested that the Council might wish to consider the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders and a Mental Health Policy.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the Council was particularly good at supporting health and wellbeing across its services and cited, by example a new initiative, "Fresh Start", recently promoted by the Head of Housing and Health.

The Committee Chairman stated that a number of Councillors acted as champions on the Health and Wellbeing Forum which included one for Mental Health. Councillor P Ruffles sought clarification on Members' supporting roles. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained the Council's proactive and open approach to mental health, in providing adjustments such as allowing people to work at home.

Councillor P Boylan raised the issue of under reporting of mental health issues in terms of short term sickness and return to work interviews. He asked if Officers could review the template used to capture such issues. The Human Resources Officer undertook to review this.

Councillor S Cousins referred to stress caused by abusive telephone calls, particularly for those employees working in Revenues and Benefits and sought assurances that the Council was doing all it could to ensure staff were supported. The Human Resources Officer explained the steps in place to facilitate support to staff and manage workplace stress within Revenues and Benefits (such as the "buddy" system, rotas for different types of work, phones on "hunt"). In response to a query from Councillor M Stevenson, the Human Resources Officer explained the different stress related training employees were provided with.

Councillor S Bull acknowledged the progress made in addressing stress related issues. Councillor M Stevenson sought and was provided with clarification regarding the referrals system to occupational health.

The Committee Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the guest speakers for their presentation and thanked Human Resources for their positive policies in managing stress in the workplace. He suggested that there was a need for a Mental Health Policy and to progress the suggestion of Mental Health First Aiders and Champions. This was supported.

The Committee Chairman asked that the presentation slides be forwarded to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development for circulation to all Members.

RESOLVED – that (A) the presentation be received;

(B) the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development be requested to circulate the presentation to all Members when available;

(C) the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development be requested to develop a Mental Health Policy and progress initiatives in relation to Mental Health First Aiders and Mental Health Champions; and

(D) the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development review appropriate return to work templates to ensure accurate reporting and capture of issues which might be mental health related.

At this point, there was a short recess to enable the guests to leave and allow the Human Resources Officer to set up the MyView presentation.

313 MYVIEW - PRESENTATION

The Human Resources Officer provided a presentation on the recently introduced HR software MyView. Its use and applications in relation to HR matters including the ability to manage absence, book leave, amend personal details, submit expense claims and view online pay slips was explained. The software had been bought as a “shell” and had been designed in consultation with Stevenage Borough Council in view of the joint working relationship.

The Human Resources Officer explained that the information contained was hierarchical in that a section’s manager could only view staff working within their specific section. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development thanked Officers for the hard work by the team which had gone into developing the software. She explained that Officers hoped within the next 18 months, to include more information to manage issues such as training and development, the PDR process, leavers and starters, exit interviews and linking core recruitment to the website.

In response to a query from Councillor P Boylan, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the system would eventually be extended for Members’ use, e.g. submission of expense claims, learning and development.

The Committee Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked Officers for their hard working in driving the initiative forward.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

314 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report setting out management statistics for the period 1 October 2017 to 14 December 2017. The Human Resources Officer summarised the report and highlighted a number of key areas. She referred to the current headcount of 355 which equated to 304 full time equivalent posts. It was noted that the number of vacant posts was 50.

Members were advised that the projected turnover for 2017/18 was 17.7 % against a target of 10%. The current voluntary leavers' rate was 14.4% against a projected (voluntary) turnover of 7% for 2017/18. A summary of leaver turnover, sickness absence and work related accidents, was provided. There were no reportable accidents.

The Human Resources Officer provided a summary of the Learning and Development programme for 2017/18. Clarification was sought and provided regarding those attending the retirement workshop. The Head advised that PDRs would be carried out between January and March 2018. Updates were provided in relation to equalities monitoring data up to 14 December 2017.

In response to a query from Councillor M McMullen regarding the 23.4% projected turnover in Quarter 1, the Human Resources Officer explained that the high number of leavers was as a result of re-structures in the Council,

but that turnover was falling.

Councillor P Boylan commented that Members should be provided with comparative data from last year which would help identify whether there were any emerging trends in the figures as presented.

The Human Resources Officer explained that she would be including comparative information from the start of the next financial year. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that the Annual Report went into greater depth in terms of presenting comparative information. Councillor M Stevenson asked that the information be presented from a service viewpoint. She sought and was provided with information on how staff were encouraged to train and how this was co-ordinated.

Members noted the HR Statistics as presented.

RESOLVED – that the Human Management Statistics for the period 1 October 2017 to 14 December 2017 as now submitted, be noted.

315 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 29
NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 be received.

(see also Minutes 315 to 318)

316 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 29 November 2017 on a new Social Media Guide.

RESOLVED – that the Social Media Guide as now submitted, be approved.

(See Minute 315 above)

317 EXPENSES POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel held on 29 November 2017 on a revised Expenses Policy.

RESOLVED – that the revised Expenses Policy as now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 315 above)

318 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel held on 29 November 2017 on a revised Training and Development Policy.

RESOLVED – that the revised Training and Development Policy as now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 315 above)

319 HEALTH AND SAFETY: MINUTES

The Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 28 September 2017 were submitted for information.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2017 be received.

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm

Chairman
Date