

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 24
NOVEMBER 2021, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors A Alder, S Bull, A Curtis,
J Dumont, S Newton and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Electoral Services Assistant
Emily Cordwell	- Trainee Human Resources Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Steven King	- Finance Management Trainee
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

248 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor McMullen. It was noted that Councillor Curtis was substituting for Councillor McMullen.

An apology was also submitted on behalf of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development. The Chairman wished him well on behalf of the Committee.

249 MINUTES - 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

Councillor Ruffles referred to the email etiquette training detailed in the minutes and asked whether this would be offered to Members as well as Officers. The Trainee Human Resources Officer confirmed that the email etiquette course would be going live in December for both Members and Officers.

It was moved by Councillor Ruffles and seconded by Councillor Dumont, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record 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 Committee meeting held on 15 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

250 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alder declared an interest in that Sawbridgeworth Town Council had used the East Hertfordshire District Council's Human Resources facilities.

Councillors Bolton, Newton and Ruffles also declared

interests in that Hertford Town Council had also used East Hertfordshire District Council's Human Resources facilities. Councillor Curtis declared an interest in that Ware Town Council had used East Hertfordshire District Council's Human Resources facilities.

251 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Emily Cordwell, representing Human Resources and Organisational Development, and also Ben Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy, She also welcomed Michele Aves from Democratic Services, to observe the meeting.

252 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 2 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillor Alder asked about regulatory and legislative changes and the building safety bill. She asked if Officers would have appropriate training, thinking especially of the number of residential homes being built for older people and those with mobility problems.

The Health and Safety Officer said that there was a new piece of legislation called Planning Gateway One, which would be supporting the planning process. He set out the actions that would have to be taken by Local Planning Authorities under the new legislation.

Members were advised that the Planning Service Managers had been contacted about the new legislation and the role of giving specialist advice would fall to the new building safety regulator, and this work

would be led by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The Health and Safety Officer answered a number of further questions in respect of lower rise developments in terms of fire safety and accessibility. He talked about the equality standards that were in place for modern new builds.

Councillor Dumont asked about the reference to a resident being unhappy with an operative. The Health and Safety Officer explained that this matter was being addressed by Glendale, the grounds maintenance contractor.

Councillor Alder asked for an update in respect of the reference to a rough sleeper. The Health and Safety Officer said that the Parking Services Manager had updated him and the rough sleeper had refused to engage with Officers and an injunction would be issued in due course. An update would be given to Members at the next meeting.

Councillor Alder asked that her thanks to Officers be recorded on behalf of Sawbridgeworth Town Council, in respect of recent resurfacing works in car parks in Sawbridgeworth.

Councillor Alder referred to the lone worker contract and in particular asked about the work undertaken by the contractor. The Health and Safety Officer explained in detail the work of the contractor in supporting Officers who were lone workers. He explained to Members that there had been a joint procurement exercise with Stevenage as their contract had also

been due to renew.

Councillor Dumont asked if the devices used were the same as those due to be issued to Members. The Health and Safety Officer confirmed that they were. He answered a question from Councillor Alder in respect of out of hours security and fire safety for sheltered properties.

Councillor Ruffles referred to Hartham Pool and highlighted the importance of communicating to swimming clubs the reasons for the delayed re opening of the pool. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that information was due to be uploaded to the website tomorrow and any further questions could be sent to him.

The Health and Safety Officer explained that a new fire safety module had been introduced to the Skills Build Training module following a fire drill that had been conducted at Wallfields on 3 November 2021. He said that this would be available to Members as well as Officers. Members received the minutes.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 2 November 2021, be received.

253 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
2 NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 2 November 2021, be received.

254 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW (Q2) – JULY 2021
– SEPTEMBER 2021

The Health and Safety Officer briefly introduced the report. Councillor Alder suggested that the Executive Summary should be sharpened up and made more focussed and a bit less wordy.

The Health and Safety Officer said that Leadership Team had asked for an expanded version but Officers could work to achieve a middle ground with a more focussed summary. Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

255 DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report in respect of the draft East Herts Domestic Abuse Policy, which had been written following on from recommendations made by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Board at the 2019 Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) self-assessment day.

The Chairman said that the policy had been considered by the Leadership Team and the Local Joint Panel (LJP). The union (Unison) had said at LJP that this was a very good policy. She referred to a duplication in the form of a typographical error that had been corrected in paragraph 7.1 of the policy.

The Chairman said that a point had been made by

Councillor E Buckmaster at LJP in respect of forced marriages. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development had said that the matter of forced marriages was covered by the Safeguarding Policy.

Councillor Ruffles said that he had been a specialist for a long time in this area through his work with victim support and he agreed that this was an excellent policy. He said that when selling the policy, there should be encouragement in respect of supporting victims of male on male abuse as statistically and proportionately, male on male abuse was higher than in heterosexual situations.

Councillor Ruffles emphasised the importance of encouraging people living in all situations to trust and speak out and share information, with a particular focus on the less well recognised potential abuse situations.

Councillor Curtis said that he had read the documents and he thought it was an excellent policy. He referred to section 10; Monitoring and Policy Review, with a particular emphasis on how Officers would be monitoring how the Authority would be ensure that the policy was adhered to.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that Officers could commit to updating the Committee annually in respect of progress on adherence to the policy or an annual update in respect to key points.

Councillor Dumont sought clarification as to whether

Councillor Curtis felt that three years was not often enough before the policy was reviewed. Councillor Curtis said that even if the set policy was reviewed after three years, Members needed to know that the culture, behaviour and practices within the organisation were aligned with the policy.

Councillor Bolton proposed from the Chair and Councillor Ruffles seconded, a motion that the East Herts Domestic Abuse Policy be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the East Herts Domestic Abuse Policy be approved.

256 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS FOR QUARTER 2 (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021)

The Trainee Human Resources Officer submitted a report inviting Members to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July to September 2021).

Councillor Ruffles asked for some long term elaboration in respect of long term absence and paragraph 3.3.12 of the report as there was a lot of detail in the report and this was the only serious rise in the statistics that had been presented.

The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that in respect of long term sickness, this figure should be lower in the next quarter as one Officer will be leaving on ill health retirement. The employee in question was

being supported by HR.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Chief Executive had communicated to Councillors the loss of a long standing Officer and her question to Officers was the support that was being offered to employees in terms of wellbeing.

The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that details of the employee assistance programme would be sent out to all staff along with the funeral details in due course. The Chairman referred to this including details of online grief counselling.

Councillor Curtis referred to online learning and development and said that it was encouraging that 10 in house corporate learning and development events were held in quarter two. He wondered whether in terms of future events it would be worth add training for staff on the newly adopted domestic abuse policy.

The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that this had been considered and an e-learning course might be adopted. The Chairman asked about posts that were on hold following a review of departments or structural reviews as part of the transformation programme.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that the budget setting process was ongoing and reports would be submitted to Scrutiny in January and to Council in March. He referred to the transformation programme and as part of this the Authority was carefully scrutinising vacant posts.

Members were advised that some posts were being held vacant on the basis that a different approach might be taken as part of the transformation programme. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy referred to a project involving a central administrative hub to secure the same level of service with some economies of scale.

Councillor Curtis made reference to the different categories where data was stored and said that some protected characteristics did not accord exactly with the Equalities Act 2010. He referred in particular to monitoring in respect of religious beliefs.

The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that data was collected in terms of religious beliefs and Officers could report on that in future.

Councillor Bull expressed concerns about the impact on the planning department and whether applications coming in would be affected. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that Development Management was being affected by a national shortage and the Council was trying very hard to recruit to vacant planning posts. He said that these posts were not being offered up as savings and the Leadership Team were well aware of the challenges in recruitment of planners.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

257 HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021 TO 2025

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report that presented the Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) Strategy for 2021 to 2025.

The Chairman said that some grammatical and typographical errors had been corrected in the strategy document. Councillor Curtis said that there were a lot of cross council elements to the strategy and he referred to the nuances and needs of different departments in terms of the support required from Human Resources.

Councillor Curtis asked if the strategy in its current form was sufficiently conscious of these differences and how they could change over time. He asked if more service specific content should be included in the strategy document.

The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that the strategy was there to support managers in all departments and ensure consistency in the strategy. She said that HR and OD Officers would meet with services and adapt to their needs accordingly.

Councillor Bull proposed and Councillor Newton seconded, a motion that the recommendations detailed in the report be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resources Committee comments in respect of the draft East Herts HR and OD Strategy for 2021 to 2025 be passed onto the Head of HR and OD;

(B) The HR and OD Strategy 2021 to 2025, be approved; and

(C) The Head of HR and OD produce an annual work plan to ensure the delivery of HR Strategy with clear measures set out and a 2022 annual plan be produced for the next meeting of the Human Resources Committee.

258 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted an updated that focussed on key areas that the HR and payroll team had been working on since quarter 2 of 2021/22 (July to September 2021).

The Chairman expressed how pleased she was to see the compliments for the work of the Trainee Human Resources Officer at paragraph 3.6 of the report. She congratulated the Trainee Human Resources Officer on completing her training.

The Chairman referred to the blended working offer having been made to all eligible Officers and asked about the timescale for Human Resources writing to employees once the blended working requests had been collated. The Trainee Human Resources said that she would be starting to write to Officers from next

week and checking working patterns from next week onwards.

The Chairman referred to recent leavers from the HR team and said that a new Officer would be starting in January. She asked if there was any plan to recruit a new trainee now that Emily Cordwell was qualified. The Trainee Human Resources Officer said that the new HR Manager would be starting in January and advised that there was no plan to recruit new trainees and this was being offered up as a saving.

The Chairman commented on the new system provider to review the sickness absence reporting tools. She asked if it was realistic for this system to go live in December. The Human Resources Officer confirmed that the system would go live in December and she had been carrying out preparatory work within the test system to ensure that the software was working correctly.

The Chairman referred to the East Herts core competencies for Officers and said that there would be a delay due to sickness. The Human Resources Officer said that the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development would be working on a new PDR form which would link in with these new core competencies

Councillor Curtis asked for an update in respect of progress towards there being a dedicated team within Development Management to deal with major development sites. The Human Resources Officer apologised that she did not have an update and she

would get back to Members after the meeting.
Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

259 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.49 pm

Chairman
Date