

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,  
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER  
2022, AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
Emily Cordwell	- Trainee Human Resources Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Elly Starling	- Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

150 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

151 MINUTES - 25 MAY 2022

It was moved by Councillor Ruffles and seconded by Councillor Dumont that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 be confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chairman.

152 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were rolling declarations of interest from Members of Parish/ Town Councils which were receiving services from East Herts Council's Human Resources Department.

153 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded participants to use their microphones when speaking.

The Chairman sent the Committee's well wishes to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development who was on long term sick leave, adding that they looked forward to his return.

The Chairman welcomed Elly Starling, Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to the meeting.

154 HEALTH AND SAFETY: MINUTES 3 MAY 2022 AND 30 AUGUST 2022

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The Chairman thanked The Health and Safety Officer for the two sets of Minutes from the Health and Safety Committee meetings held on 3 May 2022 and 30 August 2022.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 3 May 2022 and 30 August 2022 be received.

155 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW - QUARTER 1, APRIL 2022 TO JUNE 2022

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The Chairman thanked the Health and Safety Officer for his comprehensive report and asked if any Members of

the Committee had any questions regarding the report.

Councillor Alder referred to paragraph 8.2 of the report and conveyed her congratulations to all those involved with the event which was held at Pishiobury Park in Sawbridgeworth for Love Parks Weeks. Councillor Alder said that this event was well organised, publicised and attended.

Councillor Dumont said that it should be noted that if Members did not have any comments regarding Health and Safety this was an indicator that things were not going wrong and should be seen as a positive and not a negative. The Chairman said that this was correct, and that the report covered all areas of Health and Safety as this was a priority for the Council.

**RESOLVED** – that the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q1) report be considered and received.

156 ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT 2021/2022

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that she had gone through the report and was satisfied that what was being done by the Human Resources Department was correct for the council, and that there were other areas which she wished to explore further.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the part funding from Herts County Council for the equalities post had been lost. But she was certain that the work, plans and monitoring which were in place would ensure that the equalities agenda would be fully met via other means.

Councillor Dumont said that equality performance at the council was good, mirroring the population, and asked if recruitment for disabled applicants could be progressed/

prioritised. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed that this should be a priority, with equitable access for all important. She said that the Human Resources Team had arranged time to discuss such priorities, and that this would not be an arduous piece of work. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that she would be able to update Members regarding this matter at the next meeting.

The Chairman referred to page 66 of the report and asked when the latest Census data would be available. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the latest phase two data was expected towards the end of this year/early 2023 and would be used when available.

The Chairman said that the report was pleasing and showed that the council was improving.

Councillor Dumont referred page 54 of the report and asked if the date when the Leadership Team approved the report was a typing error. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that the month of September was a typing error and instead should have read 30 August 2022. She advised that this typing error would be corrected.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor McMullen 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 2021/2022 be noted; and  
(B) the recommendations set out in the 2022/2023 action plan are considered and approved.

157 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS QUARTERLY REPORT - QUARTER 1, APRIL - JUNE 2022

The Human Resources Officer said that she was happy to answer any questions which Members had regarding the report.

Councillor Alder referred to the equalities monitoring indicators as seen at paragraph 3.5.1 of the report and said that it would be helpful to have numbers given as well as percentages. The Human Resources Officer said that this preference would be noted for the next report.

The Chairman referred to page 92 of the report and asked for an update on the number of job vacancies at the council. The Human Resources Officer said that there were currently twenty job vacancies which were yet to commence recruitment. The Human Resources Officer said that these vacancies were currently being covered by agency staff or were under review, with the majority being within the Planning Department which had just undergone restructure. She said that the job vacancies which existed within the Legal Department and the Revenues and Benefits Department were on pause as these were difficult posts to recruit to and therefore different advertising campaigns were to be looked at.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that one of her areas of speciality was the recruitment of difficult posts. She said she would be working with the Human Resources Team to investigate what could be done to create a package to attract suitable candidates to such vacancies.

Councillor Dumont said that the vacancies within the Planning Department were not just an issue for East Herts Council and there was a national shortage of Planning Officers. He acknowledged that recruitment to East Herts was further challenged by its location on the

border of London and London weighting, but that delays in planning applications were an issue that residents were coming to Members about. Councillor Dumont asked if there was anything which could be done differently to recruit to Planning vacancies, including the possible recruitment of candidates outside of the area who could work remotely. He asked if such actions could be detailed in the next report. The Human Resources Officer said that the Planning Department had just undergone a restructure, with most posts now being career graded. She said that this had been implemented to aid the recruitment and retention of officers following staff exit interviews which had given the lack of career development within the Planning Department as a reason for leaving the organisation. The Human Resources Officer said that new adverts for the current Planning Department vacancies were due to go out in the next two to four weeks.

Councillor Bull asked if smaller planning applications were being dealt with more quickly. The Human Resources Officer said that the more junior posts were already in situ to enable this, adding that these posts were easier to recruit to.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that there were other recruitment tools which could be explored, including Human Resources policies which are not currently being used, for example in terms of renumeration. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that a full analysis of what was going on around the council was required, and that she had joined the Hertfordshire Heads of Human Resources Group to obtain a true picture of the competition.

The Chairman said that the turnover and sickness of employees looked good and asked how East Herts compared to other local authorities. The Interim Head of

Human Resources and Organisational Development said that any current information relating to this was only anecdotal and that she would be working with the Hertfordshire Heads of Human Resources Group to understand issues within Hertfordshire, the wider area and nationally.

The Chairman referred to page 97 of the report and asked what percentage of staff were attending training and how this was monitored. The Human Resources Officer said that approximately ten percent of council staff were attending training, and this was scoped from the appraisal system. She said that training courses were advertised to staff, many of which were online/virtual sessions.

**RESOLVED** – that the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April – June 2022) be considered and received.

158 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE REPORT

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report and said that the Human Resources payroll system continued to provide challenges, which were being worked through under the charge of the highly skilled and knowledgeable Payroll Manager. She said that the payroll system was a shared service with Stevenage Borough Council and that there were some tie ups required.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that in terms of training and development eight 'The Art of Brilliance' workshops had been offered to staff. She said that the Corporate Induction was working and that there was a strong push for a Future Managers Programme to aid the council's ageing workforce profile.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it was understood from the results of the Staff Wellbeing Survey that people preferred to learn face to face rather than virtually. She said that surgeries for managers to enable further Management Development Training were planned and that she was keen to have a structured learning plan, corralling resources.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that she was keen for the East Herts Together Group to continue to enable staff to be involved with the Transformation Programme and the results of the Wellbeing Survey. She said that as she was the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, she did not wish to undermine the plans of the regular post holder and wanted the team to be able to follow through on any plans made in his absence when he returned to work.

Councillor Newton referred to paragraph 5.3 of the report and said that the services provided to external organisations by the Human Resources Department were brilliant, but variable. She asked where the division was should Members need Human Resources advice separate to that structure. The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that should anything be outside of the Service Level Agreement Members should contact her, adding that such trading of services was great, but that East Herts Council must be the priority. She said that all charges for providing such services were now covering costs, but that tracking was needed to ensure that all activities were being accounted for and that staff were getting job satisfaction.

Councillor Dumont asked who had ownership of the newly implemented Applicant Tracking System (ATS), ensuring that users were being trained and delays avoided. The Human Resources Officer said that Claire Kirby, Human

Resources Officer had responsibility for the ATS managers, all of whom had received system training (which was recorded). She said that managers had also been given the customer services contact details for the system supplier and each manager was monitored monthly to check if they had any issues with the system. The Human Resources Officer said that to date no issues had been reported, and the system was working well.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it was very important that all recruiting managers followed good practice to maximise opportunities to capture good staff.

Councillor Newton referred to paragraph 7.3 of the report and asked why the submitting of overtime claims via MyView by staff had not progressed. The Human Resources Officer said that although the module was easy to build and easy to train staff to use, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development had wanted to review the overtime policy prior to his sickness leave.

**RESOLVED** – that the Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report be noted and received.

159      URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....