

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY
2023, AT 7.00 PM

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
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

350 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

351 MINUTES - 23 NOVEMBER 2022

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Ruffles that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 November 2023 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. It was noted

that Councillor Newton abstained from the vote as she was not present at the meeting on 23 November 2023.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

352 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

353 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members to use their microphones when speaking as the meeting was being webcast.

The Chairman said that the meeting was the last of the current administration and extended her thanks to Members and Officers for their contributions and hard work in association with the Committee. She said that Officers rarely received praise and requested that her thanks be passed on to all of the staff within the Human Resources and Democratic Services Department.

The Chairman said that many Members of the Committee had served as Councillors for many years, and that some may not be returning after the Elections

in May. She thanked these Members for their years of selfless commitment, giving both their time and skills so generously and acknowledged that the residents of East Herts had benefited from this, receiving high quality services.

Several Members of the Committee then extended their thanks to the Chairman for the way she had conducted the meetings of the Committee over her tenure.

354 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 8 NOVEMBER 2022

The Chairman thanked the Health and Safety Officer for the Minutes from the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 8 November 2022.

The Health and Safety Officer confirmed that a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee was held on 7 February 2023, but that the Minutes of this meeting had not been available in time to also be included on the agenda.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 8 November 2022 be received.

355 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW - QUARTER 3, OCTOBER 2022 - DECEMBER 2022

The Health and Safety Officer introduced the report and asked Members if they had comments or

questions. There were no Members comments or questions.

The Chairman thanked the Health and Safety Officer for his report.

RESOLVED – that the Health and Safety Quarterly Review – Quarter 3, October 2022 – December 2022 be considered and received.

356 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS - QUARTER 3, OCTOBER 2022 - DECEMBER 2022

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report and asked for Members' questions.

The Chairman referred to page 37 of the report and asked for further information pertaining to the large number of job vacancies which were outstanding within the Planning Department.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that thirteen of the job vacancies had gone live on 3rd February 2023. He said that the closing date for these vacancies was 3rd March 2023, but that consideration to shortlist potential applicants before this date was being given.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that measures to help recruit to the Planning vacancies included a Planning banner on the East Herts website, a powerful recruitment campaign

video and job adverts appearing on both the Public Sector Today and the South East Times.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that to further aid recruitment and retention twelve of the Planning job vacancies also included market supplements.

The Chairman asked for clarification of market supplements. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that market supplements were additional payments on top of a post's basic salary which are awarded where market pressures would otherwise prevent the recruitment and retention of staff. He said that market supplements were only be applied to posts where recruitment for the role had already been unsuccessful, and that this was why the Enforcement Officer vacancy did not include such a payment.

Councillor Alder asked if it was correct that those who expressed an interest in the Planning vacancies could arrange to be shown around the Department in person. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the recruitment video on the website did say 'come and see us' and so he assumed arrangements for such visits could be made. He reiterated that positive applications could be interviewed prior to the vacancy closing date to avoid losing good candidates.

Councillor Dumont asked if the Grants Officer role was to be recruited to. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the Grants

Officer role was currently frozen as part of the Transformation agenda, with the role's duties moved to another area.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 43 of the report and asked when the census figures used would be updated. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the new figures were released approximately two weeks ago (after the report was written) and would therefore be used in the next report.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 42 of the report and asked how often staff were required to undertake cyber training and if there were any plans to increase the frequency of the training as cyber threats increased. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that cyber training was IT led, but he would make enquires regarding such training.

Councillor Ruffles referred to page 40 of the report and asked if there was a common cause for staff who were long term absent, and if the council should be doing more. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that such staff were referred to Occupational Health as standard. He said that those suffering from stress were risk assessed and signposted towards specialists with managers made aware.

Councillor Newton asked how the council were able to assess the working environment of those staff who were working from home. The Head of Human

Resources and Organisational Development said that all such staff had undergone a Display Screen Equipment Assessment (DSE). He said that any specialist equipment required by staff had been allowed to be taken home by those working in both blended and full time from home patterns.

Councillor Newton asked if any analysis had been done in regard to the stress of working from home. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that 160 responses had been received in response to the Blended Working Review, which showed that most staff wanted to work from home.

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

RESOLVED – that the Human Resources Management Statistics – Quarter 3, October 2022 – December 2022 be considered and that any comments provided to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

357 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2022

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report and highlighted the two recommendations for the Committee. He said that the report had already been considered by Leadership Team, resulting in the action plan being

strengthened.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the gender pay gap had increased, but this was due to the lack of men in the lowest pay quartiles at the Council. He explained that the council's waste and leisure services were outsourced, and so these generally male dominated lower paid roles were not included, causing disproportion to the mean figures.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 51 of the report and asked if other local authorities had a similar female gender dominance. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that all local authorities had more female staff. He said that this was due to the flexibility of the roles which local authorities offered, for example, part time admin jobs which appealed to women as the traditional main childcare providers.

The Chairman referred to the investigations which were being made into enabling the name blinding of CV's submitted to the Council via the Applicant Tracking System (ATS). She said that it was disappointing that this was not currently possible without losing other key data from CVs. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it was evident that there was not a male bias, and that the Council did not have a problem with recruiting women. He said that the Council had received a good deal with ATS which was still being developed.

Councillor Newton said that the bottom line was that applicants should be given jobs because they can do them, by whatever means of application. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed with Councillor Newton and said that he was confident that the Council was a merit-based organisation, with no issues regarding equal pay.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 43 of the report and said that there was no evidence of any employee bias, adding that the Council had done a good job in ensuring this.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont 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 Gender Pay Gap Report 2022 be noted.

(B) that the Action Plan 23/24 be considered, and any further suggestions be added where appropriate.

358 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/2024

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. He said that the report had not changed significantly since last year but had been updated to include the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 pay awards. He referred to paragraph 3.4 of the report which detailed these awards and included the additional day of annual leave awarded to National

Joint Council (NJC) posts with effect from 1 April 2023.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development drew Members' attention to Section 7 of the report which gave clarification on Market Supplements, and paragraph 5.12 which gave detail on the spread of East Herts Council's pay grades, which start from spinal point 4. He said that Payroll had now processed the pay awards for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, which staff had received.

Councillor Alder asked if there was any indication of what the pay award for 2023-2024 would be. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the Trade Unions had made a request, but with the council's budget and savings requirements negotiation would be required.

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

RESOLVED – that the Pay Policy 2023/2024 be recommended for approval by Council.

359 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE REPORT
- QUARTER 3

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report, noting that the last such report to the Committee had been a verbal update.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the lean process review had identified an over reliance on the Payroll Manager. He said that administration back-up for this position was in place and that future payroll provision was being reviewed, to include the option to outsource the service.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the external Human Resources support which was being provided to Broxbourne Council had ceased, as Broxbourne now had staff in place.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that East Herts Council did not operate a blanket annual leave year for all staff. He said that instead each staff member's annual leave year aligned with their start date. He said that the pay award which gave an extra day of annual leave to staff members effective from 1 April 2023 had therefore been administered on a pro rata basis.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the ATS system was not currently being used for onboarding as a more personal approach for new starters was preferable at this time.

Councillor Alder applauded the council's approach to having a non-fixed leave year and said that this was very sensible.

Councillor Dumont asked for more detail regarding the Payroll problems identified by the lean process review. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that efficiency was being looked at within Payroll. He said that a heavy reliance upon one individual within the Payroll team meant that back-up and an effective use of the system was necessary.

Councillor Dumont said that he had experience of using an outsourced payroll provider and warned of the mistakes and stress which can occur. He said that the council therefore needed to be sure that the outsourcing of payroll was the right decision.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed with Councillor Dumont and said that he had been asked to make exploration into the option of outsourcing payroll. He said that any decision regarding such outsourcing would not be taken lightly, with costs, quality of service and in house requirements considered. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that any provider would need to have local authority experience and supply case studies.

Councillor Dumont said that the purpose of the Committee was to give steer, and he wished to express strong caution to the outsourcing of the Payroll Department.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 4.10 of the report and said that it was good to see the two elements of the Management Development Programme. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

thanked the Chairman for this and confirmed that the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development had led on the first element of the programme, known as First Step, and that he had developed the five- day programme for the second element, known as Blueprint.

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

360 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman
Date