

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE LEA ROOM,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 21
MAY 2024, AT 12.00 PM

PRESENT: **Employer's Side**

Councillors A Daar, J Dumont and D Hollebon

Staff Side (UNISON)

Jackie Bruce (Chairman)
S Forde and H Marsh

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Emily Cordwell	- Human Resources Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Alex Wanless	- Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development)

384 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Daar that Jackie Bruce be appointed as Chair for the 2024/25 civic year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Jackie Bruce be appointed Chair for the 2024/25 civic year.

385 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor Daar and seconded by Hilary Marsh that Councillor Dumont be appointed as Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 civic year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Dumont be appointed Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 civic year.

386 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Eric Buckmaster and Paul Stevens.

387 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked participants for attending.

388 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

389 REPORTS FROM THE EMPLOYER'S SIDE

389 FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, which addressed legislation passed in April 2024 to change the flexible working rights for employees.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the amendments to the Council's Flexible Working Policy ensured compliance to this legislation, which included the removal of the requirement for an employee to have at least twenty-six weeks of continuous

service to enable them to make a flexible working application. He said that this was now a 'day one' right, and that employees could also make two statutory flexible working requests every twelve months. He added that under the new legislation employers also now had a reduced time limit in which to respond to such requests.

Councillor Daar sought confirmation that final policies contained a date of update.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager confirmed that final policies did show a date of update and advised that Human Resources had an ongoing programme of review for all policies.

Councillor Daar and Councillor Dumont both said that they were keen to support the review programme.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor Hollebbon that the updated Flexible Working Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the updated Flexible Working Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

390 GENERAL LEAVE POLICY REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, which concerned a legislative update passed in April 2024, entitling employees to request unpaid Carer's Leave of up to five days per year (FTE) to care for dependents.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the proposal was that Carers Leave be added to the Council's current Dependants Leave (which allowed employees five days paid leave per year to give emergency care to dependents). He said that this would split the entitlement of up to five days paid leave between both types of leave, allowing employees to support their caring duties for both planned and unplanned situations.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that as Carers Leave could be planned it was operationally better for employers, and that the annual leave entitlement listed in the policy would be amended to show the increased leave allowance from the 2022/23 updated pay award.

It was moved by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Daar that the updated General Working Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the updated General Working Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

391 FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICY REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, which again was initiated by new legislation passed in April 2024, and therefore initiated the requirement to update the Council's Family Friendly Policy.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that employees could now take

paternity leave at any time during the fifty-two weeks post birth/adoption of their child and separate their two-week paternity leave into separate one-week blocks. He said that employees also now needed to only give four weeks' notice of their expected childbirth or adoption.

It was moved by Sharon Forde and seconded by Councillor Daar that the updated Family Friendly Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the updated Family Friendly Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

392 REDUNDANCY POLICY REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, explaining that the Redundancy Policy had been updated for business reasons, to reinstate a clause which was not in the Council's current policy. He said that the clause had been removed approximately fifteen years ago, but that neither Human Resources nor Unison had a record of this change.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the reinstated clause would prevent employees from receiving redundancy and then being re-employed by the Council within six months. He said reinstating the clause would be good practice and protect public money.

Jackie Bruce said that such a clause was consistent with other local authorities, ensured business continuity and negated the

potential negative impact which such an incident may have on the Council's remaining staff. She said that it was unclear as to why the clause was deleted and this appeared to be a glitch.

Sharon Forde said that it was important to remember that not all employees received substantial redundancy pay, and that there may therefore be some circumstances which were appropriate to be excluded from the clause.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the policy needed to be consistent, and that the clause was designed to stop people from taking redundancy money and then applying for another Council job. He added that the offer of alternative employment instead of redundancy may be an option available to some employees.

Hilary Marsh said that the Council had some technical jobs which were external funding dependant, and that the clause could limit the talent base by not allowing former employees to apply for roles which were readvertised when new funding was awarded.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there could be some consideration regarding the clause to address such niche circumstances.

Jackie Bruce said that employees who had less than two years' service would not receive any redundancy monies. She said that some local authorities had a clause which stopped employees from taking work in any other local authority for a period following redundancy, and that it was positive that this was not in the East Herts policy. She added that it was important that a balance was reached which protected the public purse and limited any embarrassment for the Council.

Councillor Hollebon said that clause seemed in line and proportionate, and asked if employees who retired could return to another Council job.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the Retirement Policy should include this and needed to be considered.

Councillor Hollebon said agreed with this inclusion/consideration to the Retirement Policy, saying that this could also impact the Council's remaining staff.

Hilary Marsh drew attention to page 80 of the report which referred to Unison as 'she'.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that this grammatical error would be corrected.

Councillor Daar said that it would be better for policy changes to be presented to the Panel with tracked changes.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that this could be facilitated for future panels.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor Hollebon that the updated Redundancy Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval. It was noted that Councillor Daar, Sharon Forde and Hilary Marsh abstained from voting. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the updated Redundancy Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

393 VOLUNTEERING POLICY REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, which concerned the

use of volunteers for BEAM (formally Hertford Theatre). He said that the Volunteering Policy has been updated in consultation with BEAM's Hospitality and Operations Manager.

Councillor Daar said that she had experienced writing policies as a volunteer coordinator, and that a lot of the content of the Volunteering Policy was what she expected. She said that it would, however, be good practice to use 'role description' instead of 'job description' and include out of pocket expenses for young people to encourage inclusion. She explained that there could be a set budget for these expenses, which could be an operational consideration if not included in the policy.

Sharon Forde asked if lunch allowances could be included in the policy.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there were tax implications for such allowances, and that therefore care needed to be taken. He said that he would consult with the Head of Operations regarding the tax laws.

Hilary Marsh said that for consistency the venue should be referred to as BEAM throughout the policy, and not its previous name of Hertford Theatre.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the term Hertford Theatre would be replaced with BEAM throughout the report, and that he was also happy for 'role description' to replace 'job description' within the policy.

It was moved by Councillor Daar and seconded by Hilary Marsh that the updated Volunteering Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the updated Volunteering Policy be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

394 REPORTS FROM THE STAFF SIDE

There were no reports from the Staff Side.

395 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 12.37 pm

Chairman
Date