

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025, AT 12.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor J Dumont (Chair)  
Councillors E Buckmaster, A Daar, J Bruce,  
S Forde and N Munro

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer Human Resources Officer
Emily Cordwell	
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

18 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR FOR 2025/26

It was proposed by Councillor Buckmaster and seconded by Councillor Daar that Councillor Dumont be appointed Chair of the Local Joint Panel for the 2025/26 civic year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Dumont be appointed Chair of the Local Joint Panel for the 2025/26 civic year.

19 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-CHAIR FOR 2025/26

It was proposed by Nicola Munro and seconded by Sharon Forde that Jackie Bruce be appointed Vice-Chair of the Local Joint Panel for the 2025/26 civic year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that Jackie Bruce be appointed Vice-Chair of the Local Joint Panel for the 2025/26 civic year.

20 APOLOGIES

There were apologies of absence from Hilary Marsh and Jordan Morris. It was noted that Nicola Munro was substituting for Hilary Marsh.

21 MINUTES - 30 OCTOBER 2024

It was moved by Jackie Bruce and seconded by Councillor Daar, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

It was noted that Councillor Buckmaster abstained from the vote.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked the Panel for electing him and welcomed all to the meeting. He reminded participants to use their microphones when speaking so that they could be heard on the webcast.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24 REPORTS BY SECRETARY TO THE EMPLOYER'S SIDE

POLICY UPDATES 2025

The Human Resources Officer introduced the report which detailed four policy updates, all of which worked through with Unison to give a new layout and use consistent language.

The Human Resources Officer said that the revised Sickness Absence Management Policy now included recovery periods to avoid triggers being hit, updated forms for each stage of the process, as well as updated flow charts. She said that mental health had also be added to the policy.

Councillor Buckmaster observed that the policy appeared to be a hybrid document, with its start detailing the support which the council gave, and then developing into the disciplinary process. He asked how staff may view this presentation.

The Human Resources Officer said that the policy set out the sickness absence process and then the procedure. She said that the term 'absence' had been changed to 'sickness' as per Unison's request, and that a consistent layout had been used throughout the policy.

Jackie Bruce said that a three-hour face to face meeting was arranged between Unison and the Human Resources Department to enable collaboration on the updated policies. She said that Unison was happy that the updates gave a formal, consistent procedure which was easy to follow.

Councillor Buckmaster said that this was reassuring.

Councillor Daar thanked officers for their discussions and asked how the council's sickness absence compared with national figures.

The Human Resources Officer said that an Annual Sickness Report, which detailed such comparisons was due to go to the Human Resources Committee in June.

Councillor Daar referred to paragraph 2.3 of the revised policy and said that mental health should be added to the

list of bullet points. She suggested that carers leave should also be cross referenced within the policy.

Jackie Bruce said that for ease of reference it would be helpful for the policy document page numbers to be included/retained in addition to the agenda page numbers.

The Human Resources Officer referred to the revised Grievance and Appeals Policies and said that these were now stand-alone documents, with content in one place, making them easier to read.

Jackie Bruce observed that the formatting on the first page of the documents required attention.

The Human Resources Officer said that the formatting would be rectified.

Councillor Buckmaster asked how new evidence which came to light after an appeal would be dealt with.

Jackie Bruce said that all scenarios had tried to be covered when updating the policy, and it was assumed that an initial investigation would consider all of the information before an appeal.

The Human Resources Officer referred to the revised Expenses Policy and said that apart from the inclusion of an executive summary this remained fairly unchanged. She said that travel expenses now included electric vehicles, with subsistence rates brought in line with the annual pay award.

Jackie Bruce said that she was pleased to see the inclusion of electric vehicles within the policy. She said that the subsistence rates had been checked, and were compliant, although she questioned if these would realistically cover the cost of an evening meal.

Councillor Dumont asked how the policy would be rolled out to staff once agreed.

The Human Resources Officer said that managers would receive training and staff would be made aware via communications – to include Teams notifications and articles on the council’s intranet page.

It was moved by Councillor Daar and seconded by Jackie Bruce that the recommendations, as detailed, 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 (A) the revised Sickness Absence Management Policy (Appendix 1) be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval: and

(B) that the revised Grievance Policy (Appendix 2) be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval: and

(C) that the revised Expenses Policy (Appendix 3) be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval: and

(D) that the revised Appeals Policy (Appendix 4) be recommended to the Human Resources Committee for approval.

25 REPORTS BY SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

There were no reports from the Staff Side.

26 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 12.22 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....