

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE 2026, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chair)  
Councillors P Boylan, M Connolly,  
M Swainston and D Willcocks

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Marie Funicello	- Human Resources Adviser
Laura Pennington	- Human Resources Adviser
Sara Saunders	- Director for Place

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE - CHAIR FOR 2026/27

It was moved by the Councillor Connolly and seconded by Councillor Carter that Councillor Swainston be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee for 2026/27. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Swainston be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee for 2026/27.

2 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

3 MINUTES - 4 FEBRUARY 2026

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Connolly that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 4 February 2026 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 Boylan abstained from the vote.

The Chair referred to page 9 of the minutes and sought assurance that the Committee would receive an update on the issues raised around car park safety and potential vandalism.

The Director for Place confirmed that corporate working was in process regarding these issues and an update was envisaged within the Health and Safety Officer's next report.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 4 February 2026, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair

4 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2026

Reference was made to page 15 of the minutes, and clarification of the wording 'personnel reserve' was sought.

Members heard that this term was used to describe the Council's reserve funds – a dedicated pool to cover unexpected or major capital expenses.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 19 May 2026, be noted.

## 5 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcome all to the meeting and reminded participants to use their microphones when speaking. She thanked officers for their commitment in preparing papers.

The webcast of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

## 6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 7 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT 2025/26

The Human Resources Advisor introduced the report outlining sickness absence levels across the Council, including comparative and benchmarking data.

Members heard that overall sickness absence was slightly above the East of England average. Long-term sickness accounted for 69% of all absence, with the Council's workforce age profile identified as a contributing factor (44% of employees aged between 50 and 64)..

Short-term sickness stood at four days per employee, in line with the Council's target. Minor illnesses, such as colds, were the most common cause, accounting for over half of these absences.

Members were informed that the Council continued to support staff through a range of measures, including occupational health referrals, stress risk assessments, return-to-work meetings, flexible working arrangements, and the Employee Assistance Programme. In addition, further support had been introduced through the expansion in the number of Mental Health First Aiders and the creation of a dedicated safe space, "The Snug," with further improvements planned for 2026/27.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Members sought clarification on the timeframe for training the additional Mental Health First Aiders. They also questioned why mental health and stress-related absences were recorded separately, noting that these figures were prominent and significant.

Members were advised that three of the nine additional Mental Health First Aiders had already completed the 13-week online bootcamp, which was undertaken in their own time. Once all participants are qualified, a full rollout of the expanded provision will commence.

It was further explained that the separate recording of mental health and stress-related absences was standard practice, as mental health conditions were clinically diagnosed, whereas stress may arise from both personal and work-related factors.

Members referred to the Council's ageing workforce and asked whether preventative measures, such as voluntary medicals, were utilised. They also questioned whether there was a link between mental health and stress-related absences and the blended working model.

Members were advised that free staff vaccinations and similar initiatives had previously been provided through Hertfordshire County Council; however, this funding had recently been withdrawn due to cost reductions. Officers undertook to explore what provisions could be delivered within the existing wellbeing package.

It was acknowledged that blended working did not suit all employees. Members were informed that guidance was provided to staff, and that a further staff survey was planned. It was agreed that this area would receive additional focus and promotion through the mental health programme to help ensure that any associated issues did not go unrecognised.

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Boylan, that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote

taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the annual Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2025/26 including the actions (in section 8.0) planned for 2026/27 be considered.

## 8 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2025/26

The Human Resources Advisor introduced the report which outlined how the Council supported employee learning and development in 2025/26, including the use of training budgets and priorities for 2026/27.

Members were advised that the training budget was allocated across corporate training, service-specific training, professional qualifications, and health and safety. Staff being informed about training opportunities through email, the intranet, Teams, and during Personal Development Review (PDR) discussions.

Members heard that the PDR process had been refreshed, with the previous multi-form system replaced by a single, streamlined form, improving consistency and ease of use for both staff and managers. It was noted that a significant increase in completion rates had already been observed.

Mandatory training continued to be delivered via Skillgate, with 1,372 courses completed during the year. In addition, 236 staff participated in non-mandatory training covering areas such as conflict management, procurement, resilience, neurodiversity, de-escalation, and retirement planning. The Council also introduced SEEDL, an online learning platform offering free courses to both staff and residents. By Quarter 4, there were 97 active users, including 50 Council employees.

Members were informed that funding for professional training remained at £20,000, with staff required to sign training agreements to ensure fairness and enable cost recovery in the event of early departure. Apprenticeships

continue to be supported, although recent Government changes had restricted Level 7 apprenticeships to younger learners.

For 2026/27, priorities included analysing PDR outcomes to inform the training plan, updating e-learning content, refreshing the corporate induction programme, expanding apprenticeship opportunities, and supporting staff wellbeing through East Herts Unity. Opportunities for shared training with Broxbourne were also being explored.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Members referred to the statistics within the report relating to staff mandatory training, noting that these figures only showed the number of participants who had completed each course. They commented that a more detailed breakdown of this data would be beneficial for the Committee.

Members also sought clarification on how completion rates for mandatory training were monitored, including the processes in place to track compliance, as well as the expected timeframes within which new starters are required to complete the relevant training modules.

Members heard that officers would seek to provide this information in greater detail in future reports. It was noted, however, that employee start dates presented challenges in accurately presenting completion data, particularly where new starters were still within the allocated timeframe for completing mandatory modules. It was further explained that mandatory training was included within an employee's induction, and that monthly email reminders were sent to employees and their managers where courses had not yet been completed.

Members were advised that, to further strengthen management capability, manager training would be refreshed. It was also noted that training requirements formed part of the Performance Development Review

(PDR) process, with managers checking in on staff objectives throughout the year.

Members were told that, further to discussions at the Member Development Group, the Human Resources Department was also working to develop clear communication methods to better clarify mandatory training requirements for Members.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Learning and Development Report for 2025/2026 be considered and any comments provided.

9 ANNUAL TURNOVER REPORT 2025/26

The Human Resources Advisor introduced the report which considered the Council's employee turnover for 2025/26.

Members were informed that there had been a total of 44 leavers during the period, of which 38 were voluntary. This had given an overall turnover rate of 14.6%, which was slightly above the local government average of 12%, largely attributable to lifestyle changes such as retirement and career progression. It was noted that, given the Council's ageing workforce, these trends were expected to continue.

Members heard that 52% of leavers had completed exit questionnaires. Overall feedback was very positive; however, views on career progression were more mixed, with only 50% rating this aspect positively. This was attributed to the size of the Council and the limited scope for progression within some of its smaller, specialist teams. It was noted that career-graded roles and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy were intended to support and enhance career progression opportunities.

In relation to recruitment costs, Members were advised that these had reduced significantly due to fewer recruitment campaigns and tighter cost controls, with the average cost per hire being £749 - well below the UK average of £1,500. However, it was acknowledged that recruitment remained challenging, particularly within Planning, where targeted agency support and market supplements were utilised.

Members attention was drawn to planned forthcoming actions, to include a focus on improving recruitment processes and enhancing support for managers. A simplified Performance Development Review (PDR) process and the implementation of "The Snug" to facilitate retention conversations.

Members were further informed that work was ongoing to explore apprenticeships and develop "grow your own" talent pipelines. In addition, efforts to strengthen the Council's employer brand were being progressed, including achieving Armed Forces Silver status, updating the careers website, and promoting employee testimonials.

The Chair thanked officers for the report, there were no questions.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Annual Turnover Report 2025/26 including the actions (in section 11.0) planned for 2026/27 be considered and any comments provided to the Senior Shared Human Resources Business Partner.

10 UPDATE ON QUARTER 4 ACCIDENT REPORTS AND ANNUAL CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

FOR 2025/26

The Health and Safety Officer introduced the report which contained accident data for the period January to March 2026 and an overview of the Council's health and safety activity for 2025/26.

Members heard that there were no serious or reportable accidents recorded, and no emerging trends or patterns identified. This reflected the safe and careful working practices of officers. Improvements at Buntingford Depot under Viola –(an organisation with a strong safety culture) were also highlighted, alongside the regular training provided to staff at BEAM, including measures implemented as part of Martyn's Law.

Members were informed that staff at Grange Paddocks had been praised for their exemplary professionalism and empathy when responding to a health-related death at the centre, and that appropriate support had been offered to those officers.

Members' attention was also drawn to the shared working arrangements with the Borough of Broxbourne, as well as the joint procurement of a new occupational health provision with Stevenage Council.

Assurance was provided that, despite hybrid working arrangements, adequate provision for on-site first aiders at Wallfields during working hours (including evening meetings) had been maintained, and that training sessions in first aid, personal safety and risk assessment were ongoing.

The Chair expressed thanks to officers for the report and noted that the improvements to the Buntingford Dept were encouraging. Members also conveyed their condolences in respect of the loss of life at Grange Paddocks.

Members sought clarification that reports of waste being spilled on the A10 by the contractor, Viola, would be

addressed by the Environmental Health Department.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Annual Corporate Health and Safety Report for 2025/26 be considered and any comments provided.

## 11 HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTER 4 STATISTICS

The Human Resources Adviser introduced the report, which provided an overview of the Human Resources statistics for Quarter 4 (January to March 2026). It was noted that most of the key areas within the report had already been addressed under earlier items on the agenda, but reference was made to the positive increase in successful appointments and the growth and accomplishments of East Herts Unity.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Members queried the inclusion of a 'target' of three work-related accidents and incidents for the 2025/2026 year. They were advised that this figure was intended as a projection and was not an anticipated or desired outcome. The Health and Safety Officer confirmed that the target would be removed.

Members referred to the Health and Safety Committee Minutes at page 79 of the report and reiterated their concerns regarding the structural safety of the Gascoyne Way multi-storey car park, requesting that the matter be escalated.

Members were advised that the issue was being taken seriously and would receive further attention at Leadership Team level. They were further informed that their concerns would be escalated to the Director for

Communities and the Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services, with an update to be brought to the next Committee meeting. It was also agreed that an update regarding the Jackson Square car park would be provided, with assurance given that concerns relating to this facility had been passed to its management.

Members were advised that work to harmonise the dates of future Health and Safety Committee meetings with those of the Human Resources Committee was under consideration, with the aim of enabling the inclusion of more up-to-date Health and Safety Committee minutes on the Human Resources Committee agenda.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Human Resources Management report for Quarter 4 (January – March 2026) be considered and any comments provided to the Human Resources and Organisational Development Adviser regarding the content or formatting of the report.

## 12 REDUNDANCY ALIGNMENT

The Director for Place introduced the report, outlining the proposed increase to the Council's redundancy payment multiplier from 2 to 2.2.

Members were advised that this change would bring the Council's approach in line with neighbouring authorities, particularly in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and was recommended for approval by the Local Joint Panel at its meeting on 19 May 2026.

The Chair thanked officers for their work in preparing the

report.

Members questioned the use of the term 'aligned', noting that several neighbouring authorities currently operated lower redundancy payment multipliers. They also queried whether they were able to approve the policy, given the potential financial implications for the Council.

Members heard that the Council's approach was aligned with the majority of neighbouring authorities, including the Borough of Broxbourne. It was also noted that it was anticipated other authorities may adopt a similar position in the lead-up to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Members were advised that the recommendation fell within their remit and that the report had been considered by Finance. It was noted that any redundancies occurring ahead of vesting day would be funded from reserves. It was further explained that responsibility for redundancies arising after 1 April 2028 would rest with the newly established unitary authority.

The Committee expressed the view that this represented a sensible change, noting that it also provided a degree of protection against the potential loss of staff to authorities offering more generous redundancy arrangements.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the change to the redundancy multiplier from 2 to 2.2 as outlined in the report be approved.

13 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION POLICY AND GENERAL LEAVE POLICY

The Human Resources Adviser introduced the report seeking approval for revisions to the Recruitment and

Induction Policy and the General Leave Policy, to reflect updated working practices and support the Council's commitment to achieving silver status under the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme.

Members' attention was drawn to the key aspects of the report, including the introduction of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for eligible applicants from the Armed Forces community, the incorporation of new statutory Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave, and the extension of paid leave eligibility to Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and welcomed the positive developments outlined within the policies.

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

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the revised Recruitment and Induction Policy - (Appendix 1) be approved; and

(B) that the revised General Leave Policy - (Appendix 2) be approved.

14 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

15 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (IF REQUIRED)

There was no Part II business.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm