

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2011, AT 3.00  
PM

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PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs D Hone, J Ranger, P Ruffles  
and N Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Moore

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services

177 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor P Ballam.

178 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2011 were received. It was agreed that resolution (B) of Minute 170 (Corporate Training Review) be amended to read "2011/12".

RESOLVED – the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 13 July 2011 as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

179 ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report on sickness absence between the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. It was noted that sickness absence had increased from 6.47% to 6.79% calculated on FTE. The average sickness taken from the East of England Local Government Association 2010 survey was 8.64%. Short term sickness absences had increased slightly. There had also been a slight increase in long term sickness. The report now submitted outlined the main reasons for both short term and long term sickness.

Updates were provided on the Occupational Health Service and the Employee Assistance Programme. It was noted that the Council had an independent Occupational Health provider but that other options were being explored.

Progress on recommendations for 2009/10 in terms of targets and stress-related sickness were noted. Targets for 2011/12 were set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor J Ranger referred to a fact that a drop in sickness absence figures might be as a result of home working. Clarification was provided in relation to flexible working methods.

Councillor P Ruffles sought clarification on the demographic profile of the Council and was advised that the Council reflected the local government workforce with the majority of employees over 40 years of age. He referred to certain illnesses which might affect the older generation (stress) but not the younger (colds and flu).

Members noted the report and approved the recommendations set out in the report now submitted specifically in relation to the sickness absence target for 2011/12 remaining; that further on stress awareness for managers be supported, of the need to evaluate the effects of home working on absence and the need to review the

## Absence Management Policies in 2012.

RESOLVED - that (A) the report be noted;

(B) the sickness absence target for 2011/12 remain at 5 days FTE for short term and 2.5 days FTE long term and 7.5 days FTE total sickness absence;

(C) managers be provided with further training on stress awareness including seeking support by Occupation Health and the PPC;

(D) the effects of home working on absence rates be evaluated against office-based staff and be reported back; and

(E) the Absence Management Policy be reviewed in 2012.

## 180 HUMAN RESOURCES - QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT: OCTOBER 2011

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The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report on Human Resources quarterly performance to October 2011. Policies which would be reviewed for submission to Committee next quarter included recruitment, retirement, redundancy and volunteering.

Updates were provided in relation to resourcing and the expiration of the recruitment contract with Manpower on 31 March 2013.

The Head of People and Organisational Services referred to PDRs and stated that the return rate stood at 38%.

The Head of People and Organisation Services provided updates in relation to equalities and diversity issues. It was noted there had been a 97% rate of return in respect of the data cleanse and the Council's obligations under the Equalities Act 2011. Updates were provided in relation to the C3W Programme and the exploration of a number of shared

services including facilities management, Human Resources, Payroll, ICT, some print services, creditor and debtors and Estates (North Herts and East Herts only). A further report on this issue would be reported to Corporate Management Team.

The Head of People and Organisational Services provided an update in relation to apprenticeship opportunities. One such apprenticeship had joined the PA team. Three of the Council's contractors were also offering apprenticeships.

It was noted that the Future Jobs Fund was now closed to any further bids.

Councillor J Ranger thanked the Officers and advised them to consider recommendations provided by the Task and Finish Group in relation to developing shared services. The Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that these had been taken on board. He referred to low recruitment costs using Manpower and stated that in some organisations, staff were encouraged to facilitate the recruitment process by recommending friends. The Chairman referred to the need to reflect equality and diversity.

In response to a query concerning a legal issue and Broxbourne District Council, the Director of Internal Services confirmed that the Council had joined in a partnership with Essex County Council to access their legal database and access to Counsel for a subscription fee of £1000.

Members noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

## 181 REGIONAL "E" LEARNING PROJECT

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report seeking the support of the regional E-learning Project. The aim of the project, which had been awarded £500,000 by Improvement East to fund the project for 18 months, was to drive improvement and E-learning across the East of England, to promote the sharing and collaboration of E-learning and to

eliminate duplication of effort, so that partners became self sufficient in a regional network which could extend beyond its boundaries to include wider authorities. The benefits of the scheme were explained and of particular note, was the fact that it would enhance the range of training and development methods currently offered and the ability to achieve economies of scale and in terms of not having to buy in training.

It was noted that there was no charge to Councils if they signed up to the 18 month period but an ongoing charge would be made from 31 December 2012 of £3,920 (251-750 staff) for 18 months and this charge could be met from within the Human Resources budget.

The Chairman said that he had experience of this project and that it worked well in Essex. Councillor J Ranger indicated his support for the project. Councillor P Ruffles made the point that individuals learn differently and supported a range of training and learning methods.

The Chairman sought assurances that this initiative could be made available to parishes. The Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that it could.

Members supported the Regional E-Learning Project.

RESOLVED – that the Regional E-Learning Project be supported.

182 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 13 JULY AND 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

Members noted the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel held on 13 July and 13 September 2011.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel held on 13 July and 13 September 2011 be noted.

183 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 11 January 2012, at 3.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Wallfields, Hertford.

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm

Chairman .....
Date .....