

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2014, AT 3.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor G McAndrew (Chairman)
Councillors P Ballam, Mrs D Hone, P Ruffles,
J Thornton, A Warman and N Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors C Woodward

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Property Services
Nikki Roberson	- Corporate Project Co-Ordinator

305 PAY POLICY UPDATE

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report on the Pay Policy Statement, produced annually as required by the Localism Act 2011 (Sections 38 – 43).

The Head of People and Property Services advised that the report was being submitted to Members following recently agreed changes to the Council's management structure, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

The Head of People and Property Services advised that Councillor J Ranger was not in attendance, but had asked that the rate at which apprentices were paid be reviewed.

The Committee recommended approval of the report, as now submitted, to Council.

RECOMMENDED – that the Pay Policy Statement 2014/15, as now submitted, be approved.

306 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor J Ranger. It was noted that Councillor A Warman was substituting for him.

307 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

308 EQUAL PAY AUDIT 2014

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report detailing the outcome of an Equal Pay Audit completed in September 2014. She explained that the full Equal Pay Audit was available on request. The Head of People and Property Services provided the background and the methodology behind the Audit and its key findings which had revealed nothing of concern.

It was noted that, to date, the recommendation to introduce a new Human Resources IT system to enable pay data to be analysed in more detail had not been implemented.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding feedback on the disability target, the Head of People and Property Services explained that this might be because staff chose not to declare any disability on the survey.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to the need to focus on areas such as faith and sexual orientation which could be a focus of discrimination. The Chairman reminded Members that discrimination was not always physical (e.g. mental health) and of the perceived stigma which might result if this was

declared.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ballam regarding the definition of disability, Members were reminded that there was a clear definition of disability as set out in statute. The Chairman asked that this be circulated to Members.

The Head of People and Property Services referred to the recommendations set out in the report and as now submitted. These were supported.

RESOLVED – that (A) the results of the Equal Pay Audit 2014 be noted;

(B) the Job Evaluation Scheme be reviewed;

(C) a new HR IT system be introduced in time for the next scheduled Equal Pay Audit;

(D) the Local Award be reviewed;

(E) Equal Pay Audits (EqPAs) be carried out every two years in line with published guidance to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010; and

(F) Weekend Enhancements be reviewed to reflect current market practices.

309 SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT APRIL 2013 - 31 MARCH 2014

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report on absence levels and an analysis of short and long term sickness for 2013/14. The report also considered current and proposed initiatives to reduce absence.

The Head of People and Property Services drew Members' attention to the comparative overview of sickness absence since 2009/10. To date, the Council showed a total of 5.89 days against a target of 7.5 days. It was noted that short term absence had increased in 2013/14 from 4.5 days to 4.6 days but there had been a decrease in long term absence from

1.70 days to 1.26 days. The Head of People and Property Services provided a breakdown of short term and long term sickness by reason and service headcount. She advised Members that staff who had referred to stress and depression as a reason for sickness, were immediately referred to Occupational Health.

The Head of People and Property Services referred to comparative figures on home workers and office based staff sickness absence which in 2013/14 had shown no differential between the two groups (home workers 4.8 days per FTE compared to 4.71 days for office based staff). She stated that it was common to expect to see a reduction in sickness absence for home workers but that this had not been the case for East Herts. Members supported the suggestion that home workers' sickness be reviewed.

The Head of People and Property Services provided a summary of the costs associated with Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). She referred to the new Absence Management Policy which had recently been introduced.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding age related sickness absence levels, the Head of People and Property Services confirmed that Human Resources (HR) did not collate age related sickness data.

Councillor A Warman suggested that it might be useful if staff were to have flu vaccinations to lessen the impact of sickness over the winter months.

The Head of People and Property Services reminded Members that targets for 2014/15 had been approved by Members on 16 April 2014 and that the Absence Management Policy had been recently rolled out. In terms of stress related sickness cases, it was recommended that the Council should continue to support employees through the Employee Assistance Programme. This was supported. It was also noted that a programme to support Health and Wellbeing had been designed and would be delivered to managers and staff in 2014/15.

The Committee noted the report and the approved the actions now proposed.

RESOLVED – that (A) sickness absence be noted;

(B) employees suffering from stress related sickness continue to be supported through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP); and

(C) home workers' sickness absence data be reviewed and reported back to Members.

310 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS - QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report setting out Human Resource indicators for the period 1 April 2014 – 30 September 2014. The Head of People and Property Services suggested that the usual Human Resources Quarterly Performance report be integrated within the Human Resources Management Statistics report as now submitted, in order to avoid duplication of effort. This was supported.

The Head of People and Property Services advised that based on the current figures, the projected turnover for 2014/15 was 8.6% which was below the target of 10%. Current voluntary leavers' rate was projected to be 6.9% against a target of 7%. Updates were provided in terms of posts filled both internally and externally.

The Head of People and Property Services explained that short term sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) for the year was 2.74 days against a target of 4.5 days and current projected long-term sickness absence per FTE for the year was 1.2 days against a target of 2 days. During the period in question, there had been 25 new starters to the Council.

Statistics were provided in relation to equalities monitoring; 3.98% of staff had declared a disability against a target of 5.2%; the target for those staff described as from black and

minority ethnic origin was 2.83% against a target of 5.45%. It was noted that women made up 68.95% of the total workforce; of that figure, 29.4% women were representative on Senior Management Group.

The Head of People and Property provided an update in relation in the supplementary report to this item on Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) which set out in further detail, which sections were achieving the Council's 100% completion target in terms of the full year review (2013/14), mid-year review (2014/15) and objective setting (2014/15).

The Head of People and Property Services stated that, while there were four sections not achieving 100%, of particular concern were Planning and Building Control and Community Safety and Health Services. The respective heads of service had been already been approached and concerns had been expressed by Human Resources. Possible reasons for non-achievement of a 100% PDR return by those sections were discussed.

The Head of People and Property Services stated that overall, the returns of PDRs was much improved and welcomed. She felt that this had been helped by a greater focus by managers on the process, facilitated by an on-going interest shown by Members and their concerns about the PDR process.

The reporting timelines of the PDR process were considered. The Head of People and Property Services agreed to email Members with a "snapshot" of PDRs at the end of each July and January.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Human Resource Quarterly Management Statistics, as now submitted, be received;

(B) the Human Resource quarterly performance report be assimilated into the Human Resource Management Statistics quarterly report with immediate effect; and

(C) the Head of People and Property Services email

Members with a “snap shot” of PDR returns in July and January each year.

311 POLICY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014/15

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report on the Policy Development Plan for 2014/15. A list of policies which required revision, their progress and reasons for change were set out in the report as now submitted. The Head of People and Property Services referred to a new policy which was being developed around the carer’s role following feedback from the Health and Wellbeing Panel. It was noted that negotiations were continuing with Unison in regard to the Redeployment, Expenses and the Retirement Policies.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles, the Head of People and Property Services explained the principles underpinning the Professional Career and Vocational Study Policy which had been developed to help staff in supporting their career development.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED - that the Policy Development Plan, as now submitted, be approved.

312 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 18 AUGUST 2014

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 18 August 2014 be received.

313 "HERE TO HELP" PROGRAMME

The Head of People and Property Services submitted a report detailing the progress of the “Here to Help” programme which had been set up in January 2014. The Corporate Project Co-ordinator explained that managers and staff had attended workshops in April, May and June 2014 and identified ideas and suggestions aimed at a local, service and corporate level around working together to make a difference, the detail of

which was set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor P Ruffles welcomed the programme and asked if there were plans to sell the approach or share the information with other authorities and cited the Environmental Agency as an example. The Corporate Project Co-ordinator said that the programme was only in its initial phasing but could be developed further working with external partners.

The Head of People and Property Services stated that Human Resources would be looking at particular sections with a view to increasing awareness.

Councillor C Woodward referred to previous initiatives to encourage improved service delivery such as “Changing the Way We Work”, and the FISH Programme which he said, had faded away. He was concerned that what was now being proposed was yet another panacea when he believed, the previous schemes had not been delivered. He suggested that it could be useful to develop the “Here to Help” approach in Councillors’ Development Programmes and also externally, to include Parishes. Councillor Woodward referred to the shared services and the different cultures of each Council.

The Head of People and Property Services stated that the approach aimed to allow staff to lead the process and enable change. Councillor Woodward urged Members to listen to feedback.

The Chairman stated that the Council’s position in 2007 was completely different to how it was now. He praised the on-going work.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the update on “Here to Help” Programme for September 2014 be received.

The meeting closed at 4.25 pm

Chairman

Date