

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 5 JULY 2017, AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Colin Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors P Boylan, S Bull, P Ruffles and
M Stevenson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Vicki David	- Human Resources Officer
Helen Farrell	- Human Resources Officer
Emma Freeman	- Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development

94 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor M Stevenson and seconded by Councillor S Bull that Councillor P Ruffles be appointed Vice Chairman for the civic year 2017/18.

RESOLVED – that Councillor P Ruffles be appointed Vice Chairman for the civic year 2017/18.

95 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2017 be confirmed as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

96 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report inviting Members to review the updated Employee Handbook. The Head provided a summary of the key changes since its last review. The Chairman sought clarification and made a number of suggestions in relation to the following:

- publication of the handbook on line;
- the removal of names from the Council's structure;
- an explanation of the relationship between the Local Joint Panel and Human Resources Committee;
- addition of the Local Weighting Allowance;
- Retirement Gift – clarification of the award rather than the wording “lump sum”. It was suggested that it should be changed to read “a gift to the value of” and that this figure be reviewed. This was supported;
- Discounts at East Herts Leisure Facilities – clarification that this was also available to Members;
- Whistleblowing Policy – it was noted that the Performance Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 4 July 2017, wanted to review the Policy. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the policy fell within the remit of Human Resources Committee; and
- Standards of Dress – especially on “dress down Friday”.

Members noted the changes to the Employee Handbook and supported the suggestion that names be removed from the Council's structure and that the Retirement Gift lump sum be reviewed.

RESOLVED – that (A) revisions to the updated

Employee Handbook as amended, be approved; and

(B) the Retirement Gift lump sum be reviewed.

97 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development submitted a report setting out management statistics for the period April to June 2017. The HR Officer summarised the report and highlighted a number of key areas. She referred to the current headcount of 354 which equated to 300 full time equivalent posts (FTE). It was noted that the number of vacant funded hours expressed as FTE posts, was 43.34 hours.

Members were advised that the projected turnover for 2017/18 was 23.4% which was above the target of 10%. The current voluntary leaver's rate was 3.94% and projected to be 20.49% for 2017/18. A summary of which services were affected by the statistics was detailed in the report. The Head explained how these were unusually high and should level off in future quarters.

The Head explained that data for quarter one in relation to sickness was not available due to the launch of a new HR and Payroll System "MyView" and would be reported to Members in October 2017.

Updates were provided in relation to reportable accidents (none) and non-reportable accidents (five).

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided a summary of the Learning and Development programme for 2017/18. The Head also provided a summary of Performance Development Reviews between January and March 2017, the detail of which was set out in the report and equalities monitoring indicators.

In response to a query from Councillor P Boylan, the HR Officer explained levels of attendance on the various courses.

He also sought and was provided with clarification on how the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) targets had been set.

Councillor M Stevenson asked how courses were organised for different departments. This was provided.

Members noted the HR statistics as presented.

RESOLVED – that the Human Management Statistics for the period April to June 2017, as now submitted, be noted.

98 TURNOVER YEAR END REPORT: APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report which provided a detailed analysis of turnover for 2016/17.

The HR Officer provided a summary of actions identified to be delivered in 2017/18 to support the Council in improving its turnover rates and reasons for leaving, as now detailed. The Head recommended that the turnover targets as follows remain unchanged for 2017/18:

- Turnover rate target - 10%
- Voluntary turnover rate 2017/18 - 7%
- Stability Index - 90%

The Chairman thanked Officers for providing comparative information and referred to the difficulties some departments faced (namely planning), in recruiting officers. The HR Officer provided an update on how the Council advertised vacant posts and what professional career support was provided.

Councillor M Stevenson referred to Leavers' Feedback and the issue of promotional prospects. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that many services had recently been restructured and that such feedback was not uncommon at a time of change.

In response to a query from Councillor P Boylan regarding the Local Government Workforce Survey 2015/16 regarding recruitment difficulties within the top three posts, e.g., Planning, Building Control and Civil Enforcement, the Head undertook to research this further and let Members know. She explained that on the issue of planning, many District Councils experienced similar difficulties and the private sector tended to pay more. The issue of recruiting civil enforcement and building control staff was debated.

Councillor M Stevenson referred to the use of apprentices and confirmed that HR Officers did visit schools to explain the role of the Council and what employment opportunities existed.

The Committee supported the recommendations, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the targets for 2017/18 remain unchanged as follows:

- turnover target rate – 10%
- Voluntary turnover rate – 7%
- Stability index – 90%

99 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2016/17

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted an annual report summarising the delivery of the Learning and Development Programme 2016/17 both to employees and to Council Members. The HR Officer provided a summary of the report.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding sharing e-learning with Town and Parish Councils, the HR Officer explained that the Council was working more closely and referred to the issue of safeguarding information. In relation to the provision of statutory information via e-learning, the Chairman stated that he was aware that some software blocked access to a computer until information, important to a person's role, had been completed. Updates were provided in relation to "Bob Business" e-learning.

The Chairman referred to initiatives which were available such

as Young Enterprise which provided young people with experience of business scenarios.

In response to a query from Councillor P Boylan, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained why the current budget should remain unchanged, despite underspends in previous years. She undertook to provide Members with the training and development costs per employee. The HR Officer explained why attendance costs had risen.

The Committee noted the Learning and Development Annual Review 2016/17.

RESOLVED – that the Learning and Development Annual review 2016/18 be noted.

100 ABSENCE SICKNESS YEAR END REPORT : APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report on the short and long term sickness absence for 2016/17 and outlined initiatives to reduce absence. The HR Officer provided a summary of the explanations for sickness and benchmarking which had been carried out to help evaluate the targets proposed.

Councillor P Ruffles expressed concern about the rise in mental health statistics and queried whether this was because more people were comfortable discussing their illnesses. He urged HR to keep this under review. The Head explained that this issue was no longer a “taboo” subject to discuss. She added that the statistics reflected the amount of change within the Council in terms of restructures and how people had reacted to this and that long term sickness was not just about work, but a combination of other factors too.

Councillor M Stevenson sought and was provided with assurances regarding the Council’s referral system to Occupational Health. The Committee Chairman queried whether Members would like to have a presentation on Occupational Health at some future date. This was

supported.

In response to a query from Councillor P Boylan regarding national sickness averages against those of East Herts, the HR Officer explained that she would review the report to establish more information. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the Council did not have high levels of sickness and that last year, the Council had its lowest sickness levels in the last five years.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained how the new payroll system “MyView” allowed employees to add personal details.

The Committee noted the changes to the Sickness Absence Policy and agreed that the targets as detailed, be retained.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted;

(B) the current sickness absence management targets of 4.5 days FTE for short term absence; 2 days FTE for long term absence and 6.5 days FTE total sickness absence be retained; and

(C) a presentation be provided to Members by the Occupational Health team on mental health within the Council, including a review on the use of the new payroll system “MyView”.

101 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 7 JUNE 2017

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2017 be received.

(see also Minutes 102 – 104)

102 FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 7 June 2017 on a new Family Friendly Policy.

RESOLVED – that the Family Friendly Policy report, as now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 101 above)

103 HOME WORKING POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 7 June 2017 on a revised Home Working Policy.

RESOLVED – that the revised Home Working Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 101 above)

104 SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 7 June 2017 on a new Safeguarding Policy.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the Policy had been updated to reflect changes requested by the Local Joint Panel at its meeting on 7 June 2017 and had been circulated to all Members of HR Committee. She provided a summary of the changes.

RESOLVED – that the new Safeguarding Policy, as now submitted, be approved.

(see Minute 101 above)

105 HEALTH AND SAFETY : MINUTES

The Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 27 April 2017 were submitted for information.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2017 be received.

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm

Chairman

Date