

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE RIVER ROOM HERTFORD  
THEATRE ON WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER  
2017, AT 1.00 PM

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PRESENT:

Councillors P Ruffles, P Boylan, S Bull,  
S Cousins and M McMullen

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

175 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted from the Committee Chairman, Councillor C Woodward. It was noted that the Vice Chairman, Councillor P Ruffles would be Chairing the meeting.

176 MINUTES

Councillor P Boylan referred to the Minutes and queried why no "action log" appeared in the Minutes to address an action to be undertaken by the relevant Officer (such as agreeing to provide a written response on an issue) and which did not form part of a resolution. He stated that having an action log column within the minutes would ensure that follow up action would not be lost. He cited as examples, the Whistleblowing Policy, the need to review the Retirement Gift Lump Sum, recruitment problems within Planning and Building Control

and training and development costs per employee.

An update was provided on the recruitment issue in planning and the transfer (via TUPE) of Building Control staff. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed to email all Members in relation to training and development costs per employee.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to Minute 100 (Absence sickness year-end report April 2016 – March 2017) and the sudden increase in mental health issues. The HR Officer explained that she had arranged for someone from Occupational Health to attend this meeting but had yet to receive a response from the Committee Chairman regarding an issue of the costs to be incurred for someone to attend a meeting (approximately £135 plus travel).

Members agreed that the specialist from Mental Health (Occupational Health) be invited to attend the next meeting. Members also agreed to email the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in advance of the visit, with their expectations of what the presentation should address in order to make the best use of the presentation and time available.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman;

(B) a specialist from Occupational Health be invited to attend the next meeting; and

(C) Members email the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development their concerns on the issue of Mental Health so these can be forwarded to the guest speaker prior to the presentation by Occupational Health.

177 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted the Equality and Diversity Annual

Report 2016/17. The Human Resources Officer provided a summary of the report and referred Members to the recommendations as detailed.

The report provided an analysis of the Council's workforce, of external applicants applying for Council jobs and the legislation relevant to public sector bodies with more than 150 employees.

The report provided a detailed analysis on the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Employee profile
- Performance Management (PDR)
- Discipline and Grievance
- Training Course participants
- Leavers
- Comments on the 2015/16 recommendations
- Recommendations for 2016/17

Councillor M McMullen referred to the Council's employment gender profile in that there were more women than men employed by the Council and queried whether genders tended to be "pigeon holed" in terms of roles? The HR Officer explained that from the information gathered, there was no evidence to suggest this was the case. She stated that the Council was researching the possibility of working with the University of Essex to gain further insights into the Council's Equality and Diversity report. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that East Herts' workforce was consistent with other Councils and that more females might be attracted to public sector employment because of the flexible working arrangements.

The Vice Chairman queried why men were not performing well at interview. The Head of HR and Organisational Development assured Members that a balanced and consistent approach was adopted at all recruitment stages and that there was no bias. Councillor M Stevenson asked whether information could, in future, be presented from the viewpoint of gender and service.

Councillor P Boylan stressed the need to include patterns and trends in future reports to provide more meaning to the information presented.

The Vice Chairman referred to the large number of part-time staff. He queried whether part-time staff might frustrate the ability to provide a consistent service and how this might impact on the Council's business proposals to be accessible 24:7. He felt that the Council was getting out of step with other organisations. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the positive steps being taken in relation to Digital East Herts in promoting access to the Council's services.

In response to a query by Councillor P Boylan regarding the "Analysis by Gender" at the shortlisting stage, the HR Officer explained why she had presented the figures as detailed.

Councillor S Bull expressed concern at the loss of experience when staff left the Council's employment and the impact this could have. The Head of HR and Organisational Development stated that the bulk of the Council's workforce was between ages 40 - 59 and that some staff affected by a restructure, had taken the opportunity to leave. She felt that there was a need to "grow your own" talent and acknowledged that turnover at the moment, was the highest it had been for a number of years, but that this was not uncommon when the organisation had undergone restructures in the last year.

Councillor P Boylan referred Members to PDR rates shown at Table 5.4 of the report and commented that the information as presented under "exceptional performance", was misleading from the viewpoint of ethnicity. He suggested that this could be made clearer by the addition of numbers but appreciated that this might mean that individuals could be identified.

Clarification was provided in relation to the promotion of the Council as a Disability Confident employer and how the Council advertised vacancies.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development assured Members that steps were being taken to improve feedback

from leavers in terms of exit questionnaires being completed.

Councillor P Boylan suggested that HR take on board the findings of research undertaken in 2014 by Roger Kline “Snowy White Peaks of the NHS” which he said, had sent “shock waves” through the NHS. He emphasised the need for talent management given the large numbers of staff who could be retiring in the next few years and the fact that 25% of staff were “exceeding expectations” on their PDRs. The Head of HR and Organisational Development reminded Members of the gender and ethnic mix of its current Leadership Team in comparison to a few years ago.

Members noted the Equality and Diversity Annual Report for 2016/17 and supported the recommendations for 2017/18 as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2016/17 be noted; and

(B) the recommendations for 2017/18 as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted, be approved.

178 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -  
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development submitted a report setting out management statistics for the period 1 July to 14 September 2017. The HR Officer summarised the report and highlighted a number of key areas. She referred to the current headcount of 343 which equated to 293 full time equivalent posts (FTE). It was noted that the number of vacant posts, was 53.

Members were advised that the projected turnover for 2017/18 was 21.9% (34 leavers) which was above the target of 10%. The current voluntary leaver’s rate was 8.3% and projected to be 18.7% for 2017/18. A summary of leaver turnover, sickness absence and work related accidents was provided.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development expressed concern that that only 30% of leavers had completed an exit questionnaire. She explained that exit interviews were being chased and meetings held. She stated that a staff survey would be circulated to all staff before Christmas.

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 as at 14 September 2017. Those sections not achieving 100% on completed PDRs were highlighted.

Members noted the HR statistics as presented.

RESOLVED – that the Human Management Statistics for the period 1 July to 14 September 2017 as now submitted, be noted.

The meeting closed at 2.20 pm

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