

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 25 JULY 2018, AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Boylan (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs R Cheswright, S Cousins,
M McMullen, P Ruffles and M Stevenson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Kate Leeke	- Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

125 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor S Bull.

126 MINUTES

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development drew Members' attention to some minor typographical errors in relation to Minute 76 (Human Resources Management Statistics Quarterly report)

- Paragraph 1 – line 8, delete “hours” and insert “posts”;
- Paragraph 1 – line 9, delete “posts” and “hours”

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018 as now amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

127 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor R Cheswright, recently appointed to Human Resources Committee, to the meeting.

128 CLOSURE OF COUNCIL OFFICES ON CHRISTMAS EVE

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report on the proposed closure of the Council offices on Christmas Eve 2018. The Interim Head explained that Members had initially considered the issue at its meeting on 18 April 2018 when a decision had been made not to close the Council’s offices. Following the strength of comments received as a result of that decision, which had been cascaded to staff, Members were asked to re-consider their earlier decision. She provided a summary of the report.

Councillor P Ruffles reflected on Members’ views and concerns, including the views of the Local Joint Panel, when this was last considered. He referred to the previous arguments put forward to justify a closure on Christmas Eve, principally that Stevenage Borough Council, was also proposing to close its offices and that heating costs would be saved by East Herts. No decision had yet been made by

Hertfordshire County Council.

Councillor P Ruffles accepted that some services needed to be available on Christmas Eve and said that because SBC had decided to close, East Herts did not have to follow their lead. Councillor M McMullen commented that he was not left with the impression that the management side had any strong feelings about the arrangement.

The Interim Head highlighted that there would be no IT support from SBC if there was a problem with East Herts' IT system. She explained that this matter had been raised initially via the staff forum and that when Leadership Team had originally considered the request, they had sought assurances that emergency arrangements would be in place within service areas. The report had been brought back to Members to consider their previous decision and this would reassure staff that the Council was listening to their views. She added that this situation would not arise again until 2029.

Councillor M Stevenson suggested that there could be consequences in not having IT support available as a result of SBC's Christmas closure and for the Council to be aware of this in terms of any future considerations.

The Interim Head referred to the previous report and explained the methods of how staff would be expected to take a day's leave to facilitate the Christmas Eve closure.

The Committee Chairman commented that he had discussed the situation with the Chief Executive and that Members had not realised the level of feedback from staff who were unhappy about the decision. He questioned why , given the potential impact of this decision on staff morale

staff were not being given the day off to accommodate the Christmas Eve closure. Councillor P Ruffles stated that the day was likely to have reduced levels of work and footfall and that many members of staff might be told to leave work early by their managers.

Councillor S Cousins stressed the need to have sufficient back up should there be an emergency and if these assurances had been given, his suggestion was to allow staff not to attend on Christmas Eve and this should happen without losing annual leave.

The Committee Chairman commented that the issue appeared to be that staff were being told to take the day off and then told to use a day's leave. He asked the Interim Head how Leadership Team might react to a suggestion of giving staff a day off without them having to give up a day's leave.

The Interim Head assured Members that the results of the staff survey showed the Council in a positive light and that the organisation as a whole, did not have low morale but that the response to their previous decision may affect morale. She added that communication and listening were always issues that could be improved upon. She commented that a decision to close the offices without staff having to lose a day's leave, would be seen as a positive outcome.

Councillor R Cheswright said that many businesses close on Christmas Eve but to tell staff the Council offices will close and lose a day's leave could not please many staff. She supported the suggestion to give staff the day off without losing a day's leave.

Councillor P Ruffles suggested that such a decision needed to be considered in the context of the fact that there would be no IT support and the strength of staff feeling and that this would go some way to showing staff that Members were listening.

It was moved by Councillor P Boylan and seconded by Councillor S Cousins, that the Council's offices be closed on 24 December 2018 and all staff would not be required to work that day or use a day's annual leave. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the recommendation was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that (A) the earlier decision taken by Human Resources Committee be noted; and

(B) the Council's offices be closed on 24 December 2018. As a result of the closure, staff who are scheduled to work on 24 December 2018 will not be required to work on that day and will not be required to use annual leave on that day due to the decision to close.

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm

Chairman
Date