

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 20
NOVEMBER 2019, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors A Alder, S Bull, J Dumont,
M McMullen, S Newton and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer

231 MINUTES

The Minutes of Human Resources Committee on 3 July 2019 were submitted.

With regard to the provision of a defibrillator at Charrington's House, the Health and Safety Officer advised Members that the defibrillator had been ordered and that delivery was awaited.

In relation to Minute 61 – (Human Resources and Payroll Update) the Chairman asked for an update in relation to Charrington's House and its closure. The Head of Human

Resources and Organisational Development advised that this was tied to the development of the Old River Lane project in Bishop's Stortford. He estimated that the closure of Charrington's House was at least two years in the future.

The Democratic Services Officer provided an update in relation to work which had been undertaken and which would be done in relation to Member Training and protocols.

232 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors R Bolton, S Newton and P Ruffles asked that their (non-pecuniary) interests be recorded in relation to Agenda Item 9 (HR Payroll and Update) in view of the HR support given by the Council to Hertford Town Council by virtue of the fact that they were all Hertford Town Councillors.

233 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the current functions of both the Local Joint Panel and Human Resources Committee. She reminded Members that the Local Joint Panel was advisory and that it comprised Officers from the Staff side (UNISON) and the Employer's side. The Chairman explained that there was a need to be more efficient in relation to how these two bodies interacted and suggested that policies be sent to both bodies at the same time so that amendments could be resolved at the LJP and thereby expedite the consultation process.

It was noted that any suggestion to alter the structure of the Panel or Committee or to subsume one into the other would require a change to the Constitution and approval

by Council. The Head of HR and Organisational Development undertook to review processes in other authorities. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development assured Members that any questions or comments would be considered and responded to and incorporated as appropriate.

The Democratic Services Officer agreed to refer to the matter to the Democratic Services Manager to establish whether any changes might be required to the Constitution on the change in process referred to above.

With the consent of Members, the order of the agenda was changed. Agenda Item 8 (Human Resources Quarterly Management Statistics) would be considered as the first substantive item on the agenda.

234 HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT STATISTICS

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report which detailed management statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2019). Officers welcomed questions from Members.

Councillor A Alder expressed concern about the support offered to staff returning to work after a long term absence. The HR Officer explained the process and the support given and assured Councillor Alder that the Council worked closely with the Occupational Health Service. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the difficulties that the Council had encountered with one particular Occupational Health Service.

Councillor A Alder referred to the Council's Duty of Care.

She stressed the need for staff to feel supported and hoped that any long term absence would not impact negatively on their long term prospects. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the HR service could only work within its policies and that it took a cautionary approach in relation to working with the medical professional to ensure that lines were not crossed.

Councillor S Newton commented that she felt that staff were well supported at East Herts.

In response to a query by the Chairman, the HR Officer explained the processes in place for those staff covering vacancies and those who received an honorarium. The issue of agency workers, their use in hard to recruit roles (e.g. Planning and Legal) and how the salary differentials could impact on long term staff was debated. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the incentives in place to encourage applications into hard to recruit roles.

Councillor A Alder queried the impact on staff acting up and sought assurances that they were properly remunerated. The HR Officer explained that staff covering higher level roles could be paid retrospectively at full or part of the salary, or could receive a responsibility allowance or honorarium. The HR Officer confirmed that this could be paid with immediate effect and that staff could challenge this process. Councillor A Alder praised the Council's staff and the need for fairness and consistency adding that staff welfare was at the root of what the Council did.

Councillor S Newton referred to the difficulties in the planning service and the impact of IT on this service and

the pressures which might have come about because of a lack of staff continuity and knowledge. She stressed the need for a mix of competencies.

The Chairman welcomed the report commenting on the number of applications for a Communications Manager and the drop in staff turnover and a reduction in absences.

Councillor A Alder referred to the numbers attending the violence and aggression event and asked that all Town and Parish Councils be advised of learning and development courses. The Head of HR and Organisational Development assured the Member that they would be invited depending on what spaces were still available.

The Committee noted the report, as detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2019) be noted.

235 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report summarising the Health and Safety (H&S) Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2019) which provided an update on projects and policy work being carried out. The Health and Safety Officer provided a summary of the report.

In response to a query the Health and Safety Officer provided an explanation of the use of safety devices.

In response to a query from Councillor S Bull the health and safety implications were debated regarding the

closure of Westmill Landfill; the fact that Buntingford Service Centre would be taking residual waste and the changes proposed by the contractor in dealing with this change.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to the Young People at Work policy arrangements. The Health and Safety Officer explained the protocols in place in relation to older persons which differed from those for younger people and the protections afforded to those under 18.

The Chairman referred to the table within paragraph 7.2 (Work related accidents) and queried whether any interactions were needed. The Health and Safety Officer explained that trends were monitored. She suggested that a phrase or wording be inserted within future reports should any interventions be required and that figures be incorporated based on the Council's current headcount so that a clearer picture was provided. This was supported.

The Chairman referred to Health and Safety Training for Members. The Head of HR explained that training was historically provided within the remit of HR (learning and development) but that this was now within the remit of the Member Development Group. H&S E-learning and other E-learning programmes developed that were suitable for members will be rolled out to ensure annual refreshers and support ongoing development needs. The Democratic Services Officer who would be taking up the role of Scrutiny Officer agreed to refer the matter to the next Member Development Group (4 December 2019).

The Committee approved the report, as amended.

It was moved by Councillor A Alder and seconded by

Councillor S Newton that the report, as amended, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted.

(B) in relation to Work Related Accidents, should any interventions be required then some form of wording or explanation of what this was or what was intended be incorporated within the report including numbers based on the Council's current headcount (this would include a statement where applicable that no interventions were required to ensure clarity either way).

236 SAFETY COMMITTEE: MINUTES

The Minutes of the Safety Committee meeting held on 30 September 2019 were submitted for information.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles, the Health and Safety Officer explained what inspections were carried out and what these entailed. He referred to a visit to Hillcrest which had resulted in the need to change the width of a door to ensure compliance with planning and building regulations to allow wheelchair access.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2019 be received.

237 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - STRATEGY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report on the progress made in relation to the Council's Organisational Development (OD)

Strategy 2015 – 2019 and the work underway on a new strategy and staff transformation programme.

In response to a query from Councillor A Alder, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained how the staffs' views and comments were sought and taken into account. Assurances were provided that the plan was evolving and that staff would be actively engaged in the process and that views via staff briefings, were cascaded up. Councillor Alder explained that she was very concerned about the "worker bees" and the need to adopt a "bottom up" approach in terms of responding to staffs' views. She did not want to see changes imposed on staff but rather their views fed into the system.

Councillor J Dumont referred to training and the levy pot and how this was allocated. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained how and on what the Apprenticeship Levy could be utilised.

In response to Councillor A Alder, an update was provided in relation to Dementia Friendly training. She sought assurances that both Wallfields and Charrington's House buildings were Dementia Friendly. The Head of HR and Organisational Development agreed to seek a response from the Facilities Management and Community Wellbeing and Partnerships Teams and advise Members. The Committee noted the report, as detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the key progress made in delivering the Council's Organisational and Development Strategy 2015 – 2019 be noted; and

(B) the planned works to be undertaken to develop a new HR and Organisational Development Strategy

and Staff Transformation Programme be noted.

238 HR PAYROLL -TEAM UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted an update report on the HR and Payroll team. The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the report.

Councillor J Dumont referred to the use of agency staff and the costs the Council incurred in 2018/19. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the basis of a new framework which should halve agency fees and provide a saving of £180,000 based on a spend of £1.2Million.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development referred to the problems with the payroll transition and ongoing work to resolve issues.

The Committee noted the report, as detailed.

RESOLVED – that the HR and Payroll Team Update report be noted.

239 ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT 2018/19

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report detailing the results of the Annual Equalities Report 2018/19. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the report had been reviewed by Leadership Team and that no changes had been suggested. He explained that more work needed to be done in relation to workforce / succession planning

given the Council’s above average and ageing workforce.

The Committee approved the report, as detailed.

It was moved by Councillor J Dumont and seconded by Councillor S Newton that the report be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the annual equalities report 2018/19 be noted.

(B) the recommendations set out in the Action Plan 2019/20 be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman
Date