

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY
2022, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors R Buckmaster, S Bull, J Dumont,
M McMullen and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Jane Mackie	- Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

339 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Alder and Newton. It was noted that Councillor R Buckmaster was substituting for

Councillor Alder.

340 MINUTES - 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillor Ruffles explained that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021 contained a typing error at Minute 256, under the heading of Human Resources Management Statistics For Quarter 2 (July – September 2021). The error consisted of the words 'long term' appearing twice in paragraph two. It was suggested that the words 'long term' should be removed before the word 'elaboration' in this paragraph. Members supported this amendment.

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Dumont, that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021 as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

341 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Councillors Ruffles, Bull and Buckmaster declared non – pecuniary interests in that they were members of Town and Parish Councils which had procured services from East Herts Councils' Human Resources Department.

342 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Jane Mackie, the new Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager to the meeting.

343 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY STATISTICS (Q3)

The Chairman asked if Members had any questions regarding the report, and asked if The Health and Safety Officer had anything else to add.

Councillor Ruffles extended his thanks to the Health and Safety Officer for the extra support which he had given to the Hertford Theatre Team in relation to their Christmas productions at Southern Maltings in Ware.

Councillor Bull asked if there was any reason for Grange Paddocks leading the table of accident statistics. The Health and Safety Officer said that this was due to the larger size of this facility and therefore its higher footfall. He said that the statistics were also affected by the swimming pool facilities at Hartham Leisure Centre currently being closed to the public due to refurbishment. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that the higher footfall at Grange Paddocks was the clear link. He said that contractors would be asked to provide accident statistics from similar sized facilities to enable more meaningful comparisons going forward.

The Chairman referred to page 30, item 8 of the report, and asked how the new lone working programme implementation was progressing. The Health and Safety Officer said that uploaded forms were being

received from service teams. These forms were being passed to People Safe, who would then change the administration portal, and issue new upgraded devices. He explained that these new upgraded devices would be phase issued to staff with training, that each team would have its own group administrator, and that he himself would have contract management oversight, enabling the production of user reports.

The Chairman asked if there would be a time when both of the lone working services would be working simultaneously as they phased over. The Health and Safety Officer said that there would be an overlap, and that this would maintain continuity of service ensuring that staff continued to have protection.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q3) – October 2021 to December 2021 be received.

344 GENDER PAY GAP ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report on behalf of its author Claire Kirby. He said that the pay gap had slightly widened, but was essentially the same as it was in other years. This was due to the overpopulation of women across the organisation, with a heavier distribution of women in lower paid jobs. He explained

that those attracted to the flexibility of lower paid jobs were those with childcare responsibilities, which were traditionally women. He said that many male dominated job roles had also been outsourced including jobs in Waste, IT, Parks and Leisure and Maintenance.

Councillor McMullen said that the report gave the impression that all was going well, and that all balanced out. He said that he was impressed, and gave his congratulations to officers for their work.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 36 of the report regarding e- learning courses which included unconscious bias training. He welcomed the inclusion of such training and said that the Council's demographic mirrored the population, and so the organisation was in a good place already.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that nobody wanted to use 'industry excuses' but the Council does have a female domination in part due to the flexibility which it offers.

Councillor Ruffles expressed his concern about creating a bias for customer service and asked if customer facing roles were a good male career path. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that customer service roles did not have a high turnover and welcomed those with childcare responsibilities. He added that there were two men in Customer Services, and that men had been employed in entry roles positions in other areas, for example in Planning.

Councillor Ruffles said it was important to appoint the best person to the job. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that this was what was being done, and that the case studies within the report showed this. He added that the latest apprentice appointed to Customer Service was male, but reiterated that the council could not recruit on the basis of gender.

The Chairman referred to page 39 of the report and asked for any comments on the action plan.

It was moved by Councillor McMullen and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Gender Pay Gap Report be noted.

(B) that the action plan 22/23 be agreed.

345 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022 - 23

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. He said that the policy remained the same as last year as the pay award is yet to be awarded. He added that there are no other proposed changes to the policy.

The Chairman asked if Members had any comments.

It was moved by The Chairman and seconded by Councillor Ruffles that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting

and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be recommended for approval by Council.

346 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTER 3 REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report which set out Human Resources statistics for Quarter 3 to include vacancy, recruitment and sickness data alongside turnover and equality. He said that turnover was down. He added that trends showed that the first eighteen months of the pandemic held people back from changing careers, but then later pushed them to retire or to make change. He said that the Council had seen a number of retirements, several within Revenues and Benefits which was a hard department to recruit to. The Head of HR and Organisational Development said that all vacancies were being looked at carefully in line with the requirement for savings. He continued by saying that there had been an increase in sickness, both in an overhang of long term cases and in short term cases due to the pandemic and the side effects of the vaccine.

Councillor Dumont asked The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development if he thought the level of short term sickness would increase now that people were returning to the office post pandemic. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that they had seen staff continue to work through sickness by working

from home, but then frustrations at the length of the pandemic had negated this.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said she agreed with The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in that people struggled through sickness. She said there had been a drop off in the sickness of those with long term conditions, who could now better manage their conditions by working from home. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that there had been blended working offers based on such scenarios.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it was important that if staff were ill they should not be working from home. He said that most staff had taken well to working from home 50% of the time, but there were some who did not want to return to the office at all. He said that this was being kept in check and that the blended working offers would be reviewed in November/December 2022. He said that having people in the office was good for both creativity and innovation and for staff mental health and wellbeing. Councillor Dumont said that it was complex and that people may have many reasons as to why they are seeking a certain life/work balance. He said it was very important that people spend some of their working life in the office, for wellbeing and creativity and to feel a sense of belonging.

Councillor Ruffles asked what qualifications/characteristics were required by candidates to fill the vacancies which existed within

the Revenues and Benefits Department. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that generally they required people with experience, as training comes from on the job. He said that discussions were taking place with regard to the Revenues and Benefits Department expanding to support other districts. This would involve Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) to obtain the experienced staff required, and would also make the Council an option for employees. He finished by saying that a new experienced Benefits Manager had been recruited, and that as a department Revenues and Benefits had seen the biggest number of recent retirements.

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Ruffles that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 3 (October - December 2021) be received.

347 HR AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. He drew Members attention to page 83, point 2.4 regarding the regrouping of the Human Resources Team. He said that the post of Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager had been given more responsibility and successfully recruited in to. He added that the HR apprentice/ trainee was now a permanent member of staff, becoming a full time

Human Resources Officer from January 2022. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development continued by saying that the post recently vacated by retirement within the department would be reviewed before being replaced.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that a rollout of staff briefing programmes relating to the new Personal Development Review (PDR) forms would soon start. He said that 360 degree PDR feedback would commence initially for managers only, as per Unison's suggestion. He continued by saying that booklets on the new Core Competencies had been produced, and that these would be circulated to Members when finalised. He said that the move towards using the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) continued. External services were still being provided by the department to Town Councils, and that approaches for services had been received from two Parishes. He finished by saying that the Wellbeing Programme continued, with some activities being effected due to the pandemic, and that the Payroll system development had another new Account Manager.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 88, point 4.2 and asked if Indeed were being used to advertise posts, and if the Council had any capacity to carry out proactive recruitment through the accessing of CV databases and the receiving of CV alerts. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that Indeed were being used as part of a multi-product, and not a sole contract. He said that the cost of access to such databases had increased and there was an issue with having the capacity to enable

dedication into the searching of these. He continued by saying that a proactive approach had been taken with executive search, as with the Section 151 Officer and that in future part one of the Council's application form would be replaced by candidates uploading their CV's.

The Chairman said that it was good to hear about the Trainee Human Resources Officer who had attended the last committee meeting in the absence of The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development. She referred to page 91, point 7.4 and asked if the word 'Trainee' was a typing error. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that this was an error, an overhang as the Officer was no longer a Trainee.

The Chairman asked if it was expected that attendance at wellbeing events would increase as staff returned to the office. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said he hoped this would be the case. He said that take up to the wellbeing offer had been low, with no real reasons as to why. Events had been arranged at different times of the day, including during work hours with people being encouraged attend. It was felt that staff prioritised their work over participating in events and looked after their wellbeing themselves.

RESOLVED – that the report be considered and received.

348 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman

Date