

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY 2011,
AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (in the Chair).
Councillors J O Ranger, S Rutland-Barsby
and M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Emma Freeman	- Head of People and Organisational Services
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Graham Mully	- Risk Assurance Officer

479 APOLOGIES AND APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Mayes, D A A Peek and N Wilson.

In the absence of the Chairman it was moved by Councillor M Wood and seconded by Councillor J O Ranger that Councillor C Woodward be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED – that Councillor C Woodward be appointment Chairman for the meeting.

480 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 13 October 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

481 DEFAULT RETIREMENT AGE - IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report outlining the up and coming changes to East Herts policies and procedures following a decision to remove East Herts Council's retirement age arising from changes by the Government.

It was noted that the removal of the Default Retirement Age (DRA) would begin in April 2011 with transitional arrangements covering the period until 1 October 2011. East Herts Council's retirement age would cease on 6 April 2011. The transitional arrangements were explained. The changes to the retirement age would also necessitate changes to the Council's policies and procedures. The timeline for effecting the changes was set out in the report now submitted including the implications of the Council's Group life insurance and personal accident cover.

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger regarding the pension scheme and whether an individual could still contribute at 65 years of age, the Director of Internal Services confirmed that the individual could still contribute beyond 65 and that it was up to the individual.

Members noted the programme for the repeal of the default retirement age.

RESOLVED – that the Council's programme for the repeal of the default retirement age be noted.

482 CAUTIONARY PERSONS' REGISTER

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support

submitted a report concerning the establishment of a new Cautionary Persons' Register in order to fulfil the Council's duty of care to staff to protect them where an employee could be exposed to aggressive behaviour from a person or an animal. It was noted that the old policy had been based on "hearsay" and was considered unlawful. The register would be reviewed annually and was last reviewed on 21 December 2010. UNISON was happy with the new register.

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger concerning the term "partners" the Risk Assurance Officer explained the definition and that the sharing of information with partners needed to be relevant. It was suggested that the use of "partner organisations" offered more clarity to the definition and that this term should be used in the register. This was supported.

Councillor S Rutland-Barsby raised the possibility of refuse collectors being at risk from an animal and whether the collector could ask for a dog to be included on the register. The Risk Assurance Officer stated that the Courts' view was that this information could not be shared as this would be considered "hearsay". If there was clear evidence which could be used such as a court conviction then this information could be used.

In response to a query from Councillor M Wood regarding whether parking enforcement officers would be covered, the Risk Assurance officer explained that the Contractor had a duty of care to its employees and that the Council had a duty to ensure that the Contractor was managing its staffs' welfare.

Members agreed to the adoption of the new policy and that the definition "partner organisations" be used within the register.

RESOLVED – that the new policy be agreed and adopted as amended.

483 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
APRIL 2010 - NOVEMBER 2010

The Head of People and Organisational Services submitted a report detailing the turnover and sickness absence statistics for the period April to November 2010. Updates were also provided in relation to training and development and performance management.

The Committee was advised that the current turnover rate for the Council was 6.04% against a target of 12%. The current voluntary leaver's rate was 4.39% against a target of 8%. It was noted that there were 22 leavers to date. Short term sickness was 2.85 days per FTE against a target of 5 days and that the above average long term sickness was 1.19 days against a target of 2.5 days.

In response to a query from Councillor M Wood regarding an upsurge in short absences, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that these figures did not take account of staff affected by winter flu.

The Head of People and Organisational Services advised that the outturn for corporate induction was currently 40% with fifteen new staff starting this year. Of those staff, six had been on an induction course. Councillor C Woodward expressed concern about the induction levels and the role to be played by the Head of Service. The Head of People and Organisation Services undertook to report back on this issue at the next meeting.

Updates were provided in relation to the Council's Performance and Development Review (PDR) scheme with Revenues and Benefits achieving an outturn of 95.74%. The outturn for the mid year review 2010/11 was 64.99% overall against a target of 100%. Human Resources continued to push to improve on the overall target but it was recognised that it was the efforts of the Head of Revenues and Benefits that had achieved such good results. It was suggested that such successes needed to be included in Team Update and people thanked for their efforts. It was noted that a letter had already been forwarded to the Head of Service for her efforts.

It was noted that to date, 31.01% had received corporate training. The target for 2010/11 was 85.44%.

In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger concerning redundancies in relation the number of leavers, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that there had been two.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward concerning vacancies and the sharing of services, the Head of People and Organisational Services explained that the Council used Manpower and that staff would have to apply for a role as an external applicant. The Council's vacancy lists were not shared externally. She further confirmed that the Council was still actively recruiting.

The Director of Internal Services confirmed that before vacancies could be advertised they had to first be approved by Corporate Management Team. The preference was to move staff around internally. Fixed term contracts were offered to new recruits. In response to a query from Councillor J O Ranger about deleting posts, the Director confirmed that some posts affected by organisational change could be deleted and that 25 FTE posts might be affected over the next five years.

In response to a query concerning the training budget, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that this was sufficient and that there had been a focus on engagement and behaviour and values which had been given via staff briefings.

Councillor J O Ranger stated that staff within the new organisation would need a lot more training once matters had settled down and would not wish to see the training budget cut. The Director of Internal Services confirmed that there was nothing in the Medium Term Financial Plan to cut the budget. The Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that there would be a focus on up-skilling and looking at the skills staff currently had and the roles they played.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding an evaluation of the FISH training, the Head of People and Organisational Services confirmed that she would respond to the Member by email.

Members considered the benefits to the Council of using apprenticeships and the role of the Government in this process.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm

Chairman
Date