

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 6
FEBRUARY 2024, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chairman)
Councillors M Swainston and J Dunlop

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Elly Starling	- Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property

316 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Connolly, Deffley, Hollebon and Willcocks.

Councillor Dunlop was substituting for Councillor Connolly.

317 MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Carter that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 13 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 13 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

318 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

319 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and reminded Members and Officers to use their microphones so they could be heard on the webcast.

320 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR Q3

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the Human Resources Management Report for Quarter 3 which had a different format from previous reports after discussions with the Chairman. She referred to the sickness paragraph and said the council did not have a big problem with sickness and the team dealt with sickness quickly and seriously. She said that the Occupational Health service was utilised appropriately, and the Employee Assistance Programme was offered to staff to help them return to work.

Councillor Dunlop referred to the sickness figures for musculoskeletal issues and said he felt that they were higher than the national average. He asked if the increase in working from home had meant that people did not have the appropriate workstations at home that could be contributing to these health conditions.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the Health and Safety Officer had done a lot of work providing support to staff working from home with guidance on how to set up their home working station. She said that now the council were offering blended working, staff were clear on what was and was not a good working environment. She said that a survey

would be taking place later in the year to determine what further support staff required.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said that an audit of all the chairs in the office had been carried out and 50% of the office chairs had been condemned and replacement chairs had been ordered.

Councillor Swainston referred to the pie chart in the report and said she did not find that display useful and wondered if the information could be presented as a bar chart.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that she would be happy to amend that for future reports.

Councillor Carter referred to the workplace injury in the report and asked about the health and safety procedures that were followed.

The Health and Safety Officer said that a member of staff was involved in a road traffic collision in one of the council's electric pool cars. He said that this was being managed by the council's insurance, but the council were providing the officer with Occupational Health support and was on light duties on the advice of their GP and Occupational Health. He said that the incident had been fully documented and recorded.

Councillor Dunlop referred to the challenge in recruiting planning staff and asked what the net effect of employing agency staff against the savings on vacancies.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said the team were taking a proactive approach to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said the net cost of employing agency staff was £400k and had contributed to the overspend on budget. He said that the planning department had been successful at securing a

grant from the government to assist with Urban Design.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that East Herts was no different to any other authority and the HR team were focussing on promoting the benefits of working for East Herts. She said there had been a market forces supplement exercise undertaken and looked at the wages of other posts in the region and the planning vacancies now had its own landing page on the website. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development also said the team were working hard at trying to encourage the good agency staff to work permanently for East Herts.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development referred to staff turnover and said the data in the report was real time information and would change continuously. She said turnover was currently 15.6% which was higher than last year but said this was due to the council's transformation programme and fixed term contracts coming to an end. She also said the council had an aging workforce which meant more staff were retiring.

Councillor Carter asked for more information about the impact of the transformation programme on turnover.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the surveyor team had been removed and had been reconfigured, so the roles were not needed moving forward. She said that the team helped support colleagues to find jobs in other authorities or sectors should they be at risk of redundancy.

Councillor Swainston asked if exit interviews were conducted.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said they were conducted but they were voluntary. She said that approximately 100 out of 300 staff were over 55 years old so the team were working on increasing the capacity of the workforce and growing our own managers for the future. She added that they were

working with the LEP to get some student placements to engage them to be part of the future workforce.

Councillor Carter said it was important to bring in young people and asked about apprenticeships.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that many apprenticeships were coming to an end as during the pandemic, no offers were given as the council could not provide the experience needed. She said any future offers for an apprenticeship would have to come at a cost of another role.

Councillor Carter asked if the council's contractors provided apprenticeships.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property referred to the retendering of the waste contract and said that 10% of the contract was linked to social value, specifically employing local people and apprentices. He said that throughout the competitive dialogue, the bidders were responding to that social value element.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development spoke about plans for the quarter, including a full review of the end-to-end recruitment process to make some parts quicker.

The Health and Safety Officer ran through the health and safety updates and spoke about his work with the council's contractors to ensure the right procedures were in place.

Councillor Carter said it was important to keep a positive relationship with the council's contractors to ensure that health and safety was adhered to.

Councillor Swainston asked if the council had oversight of Everyone Active.

The Health and Safety Officer said he attended regular meetings with the Contract Manager and Everyone Active

staff. He also received data from their centres to ensure there were no abnormal trends that needed to be addressed.

Councillor Dunlop asked if the council were responsible for the health and safety of Members.

The Health and Safety Officer said it was a question often asked nationally. He said Members were not employees, but the council had a duty of care to provide advice and guidance.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said that Members could be provided with lone worker devices if they were concerned about their safety when working in their wards.

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

RESOLVED - To consider the Human Resources Management report for Quarter 3 (October - December 2023) and provide any comments to the HR Officer/Head of HR and OD regarding the content or formatting of the report.

321 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2023

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development presented the Gender Pay Gap report. The report did not highlight any concerns regarding the council's gender pay gap. She ran through the actions contained in the report and explained how they would be addressed.

Councillor Carter asked about the aging workforce and if the recruitment of younger people would affect the gender pay gap.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational

Development said that one of the ambitions was to recruit to that younger age category and was why the council were engaging with local schools and colleges, but she didn't think it would be an issue moving forward.

Councillor Carter informed the committee that they would be receiving the equalities report later in the year.

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

RESOLVED - To consider the Gender Pay Gap report and provide any comments to the HR Officer/Head of HR and OD.

322 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman
Date