

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2024, AT
7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chairman)
Councillors M Connolly, T Deffley,
D Hollebon and M Swainston

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Alex Wanless	- Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development)

137 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Butcher and Councillor Willcocks.

138 MINUTES - 5 JUNE 2024

It was moved by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Swainston that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 5 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. 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 5 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

139 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked officers for their preparation of the papers, including their work to return the BEAM Volunteering Policy to the Committee.

140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

141 HR Q1 STATISTICS UPDATE

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager introduced the report.

Councillor Connolly referred to page 32 of the report and queried why there was no data pertaining to contractor accidents or near accidents.

The Health and Safety Officer said that the report did used to contain such data, but that this was removed as the Committee's remit covered East Herts staff rather than its contractors. He said that it was the contractor's responsibility to receive accident reports, and that contract managers had regular meetings with contractors to review statistics and ask for further detail regarding any points of concern.

Councillor Connolly asked which Executive Member had oversight of the Council's contracts.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that each Executive Member would have oversight for any contracts which fell under their portfolio.

Councillor Hollebon asked if the planning application had been submitted for Old River Lane, as this was mentioned on page 37 of the report pack.

Councillor Swainston said that she was on the Old River Lane board, and that no planning application had yet been submitted as normal planning processes were being followed.

Councillor Hollebon said that she was aware that a public consultation was being undertaken, and asked when data from this would be analysed and submitted to Members for discussion.

The Chair said that an answer to Councillor Hollebon's question would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Chair referred to page 29 of the report and asked for more information about the new applicant tracking system (ATS).

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the new system – Tribepad, was a modern commercial system which had been recommended by other local authorities. He said that this replaced the old system which was not really fit for purpose.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that Tribepad gave improved reporting data, including equalities data and had the potential to connect to the payroll system. He added that the new system also enabled reference requests, allowed 'blind' applications (to avoid unconscious bias), and the ability to develop employment contracts.

The Chair asked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager if there was anything he wished to highlight within the report.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the council's staff demographic was older than average, which gave way to chronic illnesses and long-term sickness absence. He said that some long-term sickness was mental health related, but this was not

always due to an employee's workplace stress. He added that the council ensured that in such cases employees were linked up with mental health first aiders and connected to occupational health and the employee assistance programme.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager thanked the Health and Safety Officer for his recent and ongoing work to ensure that the office move for the Housing and Health Department and the new BEAM facility were health and safety compliant.

Councillor Connolly referred to page 39 of the agenda and noted that officers were not always aware of their roles and responsibilities with regards to health and safety. She said that the report mentioned three options to combat this but offered no conclusion. Councillor Connolly said that contract managers needed to be aware of their responsibilities and that there were inexpensive online courses available which could be explored.

The Health and Safety Officer said that the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing safely course had been provided to Leadership Team and to Service Managers, as they had greater areas of responsibility. He said that following the Grenfell report further changes were anticipated, with pre-emptive work begun, to include manager training.

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

RESOLVED – that the Human Resources Management Report for Quarter 1 (April – June 2024) be considered and any comments be provided to the Human Resources Officer / Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development regarding the content or formatting of the report.

142 EQUALITIES REPORT

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager introduced the report. He said that due to problems with the old system the report author had experienced some issues with obtaining the required data. He said that solid data would however be available next year using the new recruitment software.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that staff updated their personal details via the Council's MyView system, which meant that some disabilities were not declared, causing gaps in data. He said that the overall profile of the council's workforce was predominantly female, at 70%, together with 47% of all staff aged between 50 – 60 years.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that these factors merited consideration on how the council attracted more junior officers and transferred skills and attracted different minority groups. He said that the council was also keen to 'grow their own' via professional apprenticeships.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the report showed the council was in line with local demographics and would inform decision making going forward.

The Chair said that the work on apprenticeships was encouraging.

Councillor Swainston said that the report was good and clear.

The Chair noted that the proportion of employees with a disability was lower than residents and asked for clarification on self-declaration and under reporting.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development

Manager said that people tended to under declare a disability due to traditional stigmas. He said this was sad as Human Resources were then unable to help employees with occupational health, reasonable adjustments, compassion, and support.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the Annual Equalities Report 2023/24 be noted; and

(B) the recommendations set out in the 2024/25 action plan be considered and approved.

143 BEAM VOLUNTEERING POLICY

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager introduced the report and thanked Councillor Connolly for all her comments. He said that the council had been amenable to all of the proposed changes, except for the implied contract which was due to employment legislation.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that BEAM now had approximately 80 volunteers. Noting that as the facility was in its infancy the policy would be revisited in the future.

The Unison Representative said that the union had been working in close collaboration with Human Resources on the policy, and that additional pointers had been identified. She confirmed that the policy had been taken to the Local Joint Panel for agreement before referral to the Human Resources Committee.

The Chair thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager and the Unison Representative for the background on the policy.

Councillor Connolly welcomed the revised policy and thanked officers for their great piece of work, which she felt was now ready to go. She said that she thought there were still tensions in the policy around an implied employment status.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said a lot of work had been undertaken, and the tensions would never be completely resolved. He said that volunteering was an interesting space, with interest being taken to see if new government labour laws would touch on such agreements.

Councillor Hollebon congratulated officers for the work which had gone into the policy and proposed that the Committee review the document annually.

It was moved by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Deffley, that an additional recommendation, as detailed, be added and approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the BEAM Volunteering Policy be annually reviewed by the Human Resources Committee.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the amendments to the BEAM Volunteering Policy be approved; and

(B) the BEAM Volunteering Policy be annually reviewed by the Human Resources Committee.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Chairman

Date