

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024, AT
7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chair)
Councillors M Butcher, D Hollebon,
M Swainston and D Willcocks

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Jackie Bruce	- Section 106 Programme Manager
Elly Starling	- Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Alex Wanless	- Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development)

240 APOLOGIES

There was an apology for absence from Councillor Connolly. It was noted that Councillor Dunlop was substituting for Councillor Connolly.

241 MINUTES - 11 SEPTEMBER 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 11 September 2024 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. It was noted that Councillors Butcher, Dunlop and Willcocks abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 11 September 2024, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

242 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and asked that the officers present introduced themselves. She said that the Human Resources Quarter Two Statistics Report included the minutes from the Health and Safety Committee, and that the agenda also included the important update to the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

243 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

244 HUMAN RESOURCES - QUARTER 2 STATISTICS

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager introduced the report and apologised for its non-inclusion of sickness data. He explained that the Human Resources reporting tool was down at the time when the report was written, but assured Members that employee's absence could still be logged at this time. He said that there had been no trend changes in sickness absence and that data for both Quarters Two and Three would be included within the next Committee report.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that vacancies had remained static, and at the request of the Chair data pertaining to 'on hold' and

'hard to recruit to' posts would be separated out within the next report. He said that the 'hard to recruit to' posts remained those within the Environmental Health and Planning Departments, which continued to be a national issue. He said that the Local Government Association (LGA) were running a recruitment campaign to encourage career uptake, which would include radio advertisements.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the council was relaunching its East Herts Together learning and development initiative, alongside its new intranet site and the opportunity for staff to attend mental health training bootcamps. He said that the Personal Development Review (PDR) deadline had been extended to 31 December 2024, to give staff time to have the required conversations, and that all these points had been publicised.

The Chair thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager for his report.

Councillor Swainston observed from the report that the Communications Department had seen one person leave but had six new appointments. She asked for the reasoning of this.

The Section 106 Programme Manager said that the recruitments within the Communications, Strategy And Policy Service were in respect of the new Corporate Support Hub, which had been created to form a central team responsible for the administrative tasks of the council. She said that this was an ongoing project, and part of the Transformation Programme.

Councillor Dunlop asked if the council would have access to monies from the Government's Planning Skills Delivery Fund to help with recruitment to the Planning Department.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that details of the fund's framework had not yet trickled down to the council, but some monies were

expected.

The Chair said that it was encouraging to see the council's focus on apprenticeships, which were both positive for the community and the council's development. She drew Members attention to the report's appendix which contained the minutes from the Health and Safety Committee, and asked if there were any questions for officers.

Councillor Swainston asked if the broken door mentioned in the Health and Safety Committee minutes had been repaired.

The Section 106 Programme Officer confirmed that the door in question had been repaired immediately after the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee.

The Chair said that for good governance the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee should be seen by Leadership Team.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed with the Chair and said that the minutes were previously seen by Leadership Team and that this process needed to be restarted.

It was moved by Councillor Hollebon 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 Management Report for Quarter 2 (July - September 2024) be considered and any comments be provided to the HR Officer / Head of HR and OD regarding the content or formatting of the report.

245 BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY UPDATE

The Human Resources and Organisational Development

Manager introduced the report. He explained that the historical version of the council's Bullying and Harassment Policy was reviewed in October 2024 to include provisions from the Worker Protection Act.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that an amendment to the Equality Act 2010 turned the duty to safeguard against sexual harassment in the workplace into an active provision, expanding the duty to protect against third parties. He gave examples of where this expansion may apply, such as at staff Christmas parties and the use of contractors.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager drew Members attention to the Action Plan detailed within the report, which had been agreed by Leadership Team. He advised the Committee that the historical policy had also been updated with input from Unison, to reflect changes in language and to give further clarification.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the updated policy contained within the agenda pack showed tracked changes as per requests from Members of the Local Joint Panel. He said that a 'no mark-up' version had also been subsequently circulated to Members for ease of reading.

The Section 106 Programme Manager (who was attending in her capacity as a Unison representative and Chair of the Local Joint Panel) said that going forward a more structured way of reviewing policies had been agreed, allowing officers and Unison representatives to discuss and produce cleaner versions of documents for Members.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the council had signed up to a Human Resources Policy Programme Forum which allowed authorities from across the region to access each other's policies via a central platform. She

said this was of particular benefit to smaller authorities such as East Herts who did not have a Policy Team or an employment lawyer.

The Chair thanked officers for their detailed work.

Councillor Butcher said that it was very sensible for the council to join the policy forum, which was a practice that many small charities followed. He asked for clarification if the duty to protect staff from harassment against third parties included the public.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that it did include the public, and that measures were taken to create safe environments for all. He gave the examples of the zero tolerance and 'Ask Angela' signage in premises and information printed on BEAM's tickets.

Councillor Butcher said that these measures sounded good, and asked if regular training would be given to BEAM staff, including casual workers.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that it was very important that this was implemented, and that he would engage with the operational team at BEAM. He also welcomed any ideas from Members regarding this matter.

Councillor Dunlop referred to the flow chart on the last page of the updated policy and observed that it had been struck through. He asked if a new chart would be produced, with different advice/flow.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the flow chart did need to be different, hence the striking through. The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that the flow chart would be revamped.

Councillor Dunlop asked how cultural integration of the

updated policies would be achieved, and asked if there were plans for Leadership Team to assist with this.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that Leadership Team had accepted a People Ambition Strategy, which set out the culture of the organisation – with a workforce which was skilled, resilient, flexible, and engaged. She said that East Herts Together would be used as a vehicle for integration, with easily accessible resources available to employees and information included in staff inductions.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said that an e-learning module around harassment had been sourced, which would give core information to staff, and which was reportable. He said that further training around the subject would be looked at, but this was budget dependent.

Councillor Swainston asked if the Human Resources Policy Programme Forum was open to Town and Parish Councils.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that currently the forum was only attended by district, county, and unitary councils, but she would check, as a possibility may be that information could be shared with Town and Parish Councils post meetings.

The Chair asked if the council were linked with the Community Safety Partnership, who gave bystander training and initiatives geared towards the nighttime economy such as the 'Ask for Angela' scheme.

The Section 106 Programme Manager said that the council were an active part of the partnership, with the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer attending meetings.

The Chair said it was important that the council took care

of its staff and that they felt safe.

It was moved by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Butcher, 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 updated Bullying and Harassment Policy be approved; and

B) the action plan be approved.

246 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 7.37 pm

Chairman
Date