

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025, AT 7.00
PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor E Buckmaster

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Alex Wanless	- Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development)

315 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Deffley and Hollebon. It was noted that Councillor R Buckmaster was substituting for Councillor Hollebon.

316 MINUTES - 20 NOVEMBER 2024

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Willcocks that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 20 November 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. It was noted that Councillors R Buckmaster and Connolly abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 20 November 2024, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

317 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and reminded participants to use their microphones so that they could be heard. She thanked officers for their reports and their work over the past quarter to keep things on track.

318 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

319 HUMAN RESOURCES Q3 STATISTICS

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, highlighting the key areas to Members. He said that staff sickness levels had reduced in Quarter 3 compared to Quarter 2, with short-term sickness due to minor illnesses such as viruses. He said that long term sickness was actively managed by Human Resources with help from Occupational Health and that mental health training was being introduced to prevent work related absences.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that difficult to fill vacancies remained in Planning and Environmental Health, which as previously discussed, was a national problem for local authorities. He said that a review of the market forces supplements for Planning and Legal Services was planned to ensure that these remained attractive, with a new applicant tracking system (ATS) launching to improve recruitment.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there were currently 44 roles

unfilled within the council, for reasons including the DMA review, budget related holds, service reviews, and both pending and active recruitments.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there were new management training initiatives planned in development such as a manager's essentials bootcamp and a train the trainer programme.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that reporting had improved with regards to health and safety accidents and incidents, with 3 minor workplace accident and 4 near misses recorded for the quarter 3 period. He said that workplace safety audits and contractor performance monitoring would continue and that a mental first aid refresher was scheduled for Quarter 4.

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

Councillor Swainston thanked officers for their work and asked again if comparisons could be included within the report. She said that her own research which compared East Herts data with that of the Office for National Statistics suggested the council was performing well in certain areas but not in others.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that that statistics from the Office from National Statistics were always higher, but the council was now able to provide data via the Local Government Association portal. He said that this would allow the comparison of data with authorities of a similar makeup to that of East Herts, (on the proviso that such similar authorities also provided their data) which could be included in the next report. He said that time would also be spent to ensure that managers reported staff sickness correctly, so data was not skewed.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the vacancies within the council and asked how many were within the Planning Department.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that recruiting to the Planning Department remained a challenge. He said that he would respond with the required information via email.

The Chair said that it was good to see that BEAM was now a member of the Safety Committee, and that issues at Buntingford Depot had now been resolved.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager agreed and said that BEAM had attend the Health and Safety Committee which had taken place earlier in the day. He said that the issues at Buntingford Depot involved issues around cleaning, which had now been rectified and the cleaning contractor had apologised.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the issue of battery ignition and asked if a communication campaign could be undertaken to advise the public of safe disposal methods/sites. She suggested that this could include Facebook etc.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that he would raise this with the Health and Safety Officer.

The Chair said that she would support such a campaign and said that she was under the impression that anywhere which sold batteries was obliged to have a disposal facility.

Councillor Swainston asked if the same obligation extended to disposable vapes.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that he would also pass Councillor Swainston's comments on to the Health and Safety

Officer, and that this may involve the Operations Department.

It was moved by Councillor Connolly and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster, 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 3 (October – December 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.

320 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2024

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, explaining that it was a statutory requirement for the council to produce. He said that it was a positive report, with the mean gender pay gap down 3% to 13% and the median gender pay gap down to 9% from 19%.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the reasons for these decreases was due to more men in lower quartiles and a slight increase in the number of women in higher pay quartiles than last year. He said that a gender imbalance remained in lower pay quartiles – with administrative and customer service roles dominating.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that attracting men into lower paid roles remained difficult with the outsourcing (such as waste and grounds maintenance) skewing the gender balance.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that equality, diversity, and inclusion training was mandatory across the workforce,

with blind CV's being implemented alongside diversity in interview panels to reduce bias in recruitment. He said that the gender representation across pay quartiles was monitored to ensure balance.

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

Councillor Buckmaster said that blind CV's had been spoken about by the Committee approximately 2 years ago, and asked why they had not been implemented already.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the old Applicant Tracking System (ATS) had promised a blind function but could not deliver. He said the new ATS was modern with new coding, which officers were keen to try.

Councillor Swainston welcomed the report and said that it could be seen that the council was travelling in the right direction. She said that it would be helpful for the report to have explanations of terminology set out at the outset, and for diagrams (as seen at page 40) to include quantities as well as percentages.

Councillor Willcocks also sought clarification regarding the statistics within the report.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that such numbers could be included in the next report. He said that within local authorities pay grades and scales existed, meaning that new starters were generally paid at the bottom of a pay grade (except for exceptional candidates who had verifiable skills and or experience). He said that this stopped bias.

Councillor Connelly agreed with Councillor Swainston's request for numbers to be included as well as

percentages within the report. She asked if the statistics could cause a problem that was not there – with a danger that women could be kept out of administrative and part time jobs.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that this was the reason for comment to be included within the report, and that there would never be a perfect 50% balance. He said that the world was changing and that it was important to ensure that all genders could progress fairly and equitably.

Councillor Swainston referred to the Hay job evaluation method and asked if this process ironed out any skewed statistics.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the Hay method looked at all elements of a role. He said that the Strategic Human Resources/Organisational Development Lead would provide a further detailed explanation of the Hay method, which would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Carter said that it would be interesting to see comparable statistics for other local authorities.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the council did have some benchmarking, but as some services were contracted out or were a shared service he would need to research further.

It was moved by Councillor Willcocks 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 Gender Pay Gap Report 202 be noted; and

(B) the action plan 25/26 be considered and further

suggestions added where appropriate.

321 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/26

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report and explained that it was a statutory requirement to for the council to post the pay policy statement on their website annually. He asked that the Committee consider the statement and give comments prior to it going before Council for approval.

Councillor Swainston said that the statement was very clear and well set out. She said that it was helpful that the number of employees on each grade was also included.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the date 2024/2025 on the statement and asked if this should read 2025/2026.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the text should read 2025/2026 and that this error would be corrected.

Councillor Willcocks referred paragraph 5.9 of the report and asked for clarification of the asterisks which appeared next to certain job roles.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the asterisks indicated that the post holder had specifics within their contracts.

It was moved by Councillor Connolly and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster, 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 Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 be recommended for approval by Council.

322 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Chairman

Date