

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.34 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

**COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWER HAMLETS TOWN HALL, 160 WHITECHAPEL
ROAD, LONDON E1 1BJ**

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Abdul Malik (Chair)

Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Councillor Abu Chowdhury

Councillor Asma Islam

Councillor Abdi Mohamed

Councillor Abdal Ullah

Councillor Musthak Ahmed

Apologies:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Officers Present in Person:

Julie Lorraine (Corporate Director Resources)

Liz Haynes (Interim Head of Corporate Human Resources)

Justina Bridgeman Democratic Services Officer (Committee)

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Paul Patterson (Interim Corporate Director Housing And
Regeneration)

Carole S Bowes (Employment Lawyer, Legal Services, Directorate
Law, Probity and Governance)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, however Councillor Abdi Mohamed declared he is a lay member for the GMB union.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

That the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 16 May 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

Chair's Update

- Members were informed that Councillor Sirajul Islam has been replaced by Councillor Abdi Mohamed in the Committee.

3. WORK PLAN

The Human Resources Committee **RESOLVED** that;

1. That the work plan be noted.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Corporate Directors Update

Paul Patterson, Interim Corporate Director, Housing and Regeneration, informed the Committee that David Joyce has been appointed the new Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration. Members were given background information on the new directorate established in November 2023, Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) being returned in-house and the subsequent restructure currently taking place. This now incorporates the integration of THH into a single management function. The Council house building services is also under one division, called the Regeneration and Housing Supply of Assets.

The original housing management function is now separate from the Housing Options team, now under the Resources Directorate, to ensure a customer centred approach is used by the service. Mr Patterson noted that around 21 teams across the directorate were 'lifted and shifted', primarily moving the line management Heads of service into each of those divisions. The restructure was completed on 01 September. David Joyce will be responsible for the recruitment process for permanent roles for the Director of Regeneration and Housing Supply of Assets, the Director of Housing management, and a Director of Housing Options. Karen Swift has now been appointed the Director of Housing Policy and Strategy.

Following questions by the Committee, Paul Patterson and Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director of Resources;

- Confirmed that the Council's protection policy applies to staff for specific roles created from one original post. The same salary level applies and all policies and processes, including consultations, have been observed to the aforementioned roles within the housing directorate.

Members were concerned that a written brief did not accompany the verbal update and requested written details be presented at the next meeting. The Committee also requested details of the new organisational housing structure.

The Human Resources Committee **RESOLVED** that;

1. The new organisational housing structure be forwarded to the Committee for review.
2. The verbal update be noted.

4.2 Employee Relations Casework and Policy Quarterly Review

Liz Haynes, Interim Head of Human Resources, provided the Committee an overview of the employee relations casework for Quarter 1 (April – June 2024) Members were informed of the number of cases that have risen, with grievances, disciplinaries, and attendance management issues. Due to the increase in the number of investigators and the length of time to close cases, further training for investigators was conducted in July this year and will now include all Heads of Service training, to streamline the service and close down cases earlier.

Ms Haynes then noted that 21 of the 81 grievances are still open and 9 closed down. 7 disciplinary cases were closed out of 21 and 15 remain open.

Following questions from the Committee, Liz Haynes and Julie Lorraine;

- Explained that details on the duration of time it takes to close an investigation are not known, as some cases are complex in nature, while others are not.
- Noted that Managers have a corporate responsibility to ensure that staff grievances or misconduct concerns are properly managed. More available investigators means more thorough inquiries can be conducted in an expedited manner.
- Clarified that investigation training for Senior Management will commence in October 2024.
- Confirmed that details of the number of staff with safeguarding positions conducting disciplinaries or grievances and how this affects vulnerable individuals they support, will be presented to the Committee for review.

- Noted that the numbers of interim posts is not excessive compared to other local authorities. Interim arrangements are made during the course of recruiting to a permanent role and not vice-versa. It would be inappropriate to recruit a permanent post to an interim role when the scope of that post is still uncertain. Posts that are being reviewed relate to ones where changes are taking place within that directorate.
- Clarified that the Director of Legal and Section 151 Officer post is required as the current interim Monitoring officer is part time. Additional support is required to ensure a functioning legal service on a temporary basis. The Committee is requested to maintain these two posts as interim arrangements, pending the new full-time Director of Legal.

Members requested the report include further details on the exact placement of the grievance, to show which department it comes from and give the figures more context. The Committee were also concerned about the late submission of the report, despite the apologies. A request was made to submit reports in a more timely manner going forward.

The Human Resources Committee **RESOLVED** that;

1. Written details on the number of staff with safeguarding positions conducting disciplinaries or grievances and how this affects vulnerable individuals they support be presented to the Committee for review.
2. Further details on the exact placement of grievances be shown to provide more context to the figures for future meetings.
3. The report on the current position on the Employee Relations Casework and policy quarterly review be noted and the extension of external interim arrangements beyond the six-month period was **AGREED**.

4.3 Update on Senior Recruitment

Reasons for urgency on the late report were agreed by the Committee.

Julie Lorraine, Corporate Director of Resources, apologised to the Committee for the late report and stated that the initial version did not include up-to-date information and had to be modified.

Liz Haynes, Interim Head of Human Resources, introduced the report which provided the current senior recruitment positions to senior management vacancies and the interim arrangements in place.

Further to questions from the Committee, Liz Haynes and Julie Lorraine;

- Confirmed that there were changes made to the original proposals and a new Corporate Director of Youth and Commissioning has now been

appointed. Confirmation will be presented to Members regarding the permanent postholder for the Director of Youth and Commissioning. A request will be made to Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive to arrange an organisational structure be forwarded to the Committee.

The Human Resources Committee **RESOLVED** that;

1. Confirmation will be presented to Members regarding the permanent postholder for the Director of Youth and Commissioning.
2. An organisational structure be forwarded to the Committee for review.
3. The report on the current position on the recruitment to senior management vacancies be noted.

4.4 Update on Savings from ER/VR

Julie Lorraine, the Corporate Director of Resources, apologised to the Committee for not submitting the report. Members were informed that John Harrison, Corporate Director of Efficiency, was unable to attend the meeting to give the Committee an overview of the Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy (ER/VR).

The Committee were asked if the report could be circulated outside of this meeting and Mr Harrison could attend the next meeting to present the details. The Committee agreed.

The Human Resources Committee **RESOLVED** that;

1. Officers will circulate the ER/VR update outside of the meeting and John Harrison will present the update at the next meeting scheduled for 12 December 2024.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

1. That in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the remaining agenda item contained information defined as exempt or confidential in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

7. EXEMPT MINUTES

None.

The meeting ended at 7.31 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Malik

Human Resources Committee