

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON
TUESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY 2014**

PRESENT:

County Councillors J.H. Brunt, S.M. Hayes, D.C. Jones, P.J. Medicott, D.W. Meredith, R.H. Mills, G.W. Ratcliffe, K.M. Roberts-Jones, J.G. Shearer, K.F. Tampin, J.M. Williams and A. York

In attendance: County Councillor S. Davies, Portfolio Holder for HR

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee it was

RESOLVED that County Councillor J.H. Brunt chair the meeting.

1.	APOLOGIES	EAC1 – 2014
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P.J. Ashton, A. Holloway, P.E. Lewis, G. Morgan, J.G. Morris and G.D. Price.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	EAC2 – 2014
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

3.	MINUTES	EAC3 – 2014
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2013 as a correct record.

4.	UPDATE ON THE VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME	EAC4 – 2014
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The Human Resources Manager provided an update on the Voluntary Severance Scheme. The deadline had closed on 31st January with 580 staff having expressed an interest. This was more than expected and exceeded the 160 redundancies planned for, giving Heads of Services the opportunity to review their staffing over two years allowing savings to be made early and lessening the impact in years 2 and 3.

Officers were preparing details of severance and pension costs for Heads of Service by 14th February for them to make decisions on whether or not to grant voluntary severance. Staff who had applied would then be written to. There was no right of appeal.

The Committee, whilst noting the need to make savings by reducing the number of employees, expressed concern that the voluntary severance scheme was a blunt instrument when compared to the redundancy scheme in that it did not give regard to the way Council services would run. There was a danger of a loss of knowledge with experienced staff leaving and the need to recruit to positions vacated. Officers

explained that if someone was successful in applying for voluntary redundancy then their post would be deleted and that managers would have to reorganise their services.

Officers confirmed that the voluntary severance scheme could be operated by schools but that it would be up to governing bodies to implement it. Officers were meeting to discuss this but acknowledged that there was very little time for schools to implement a scheme before the end of the financial year. Concerns were also raised over HR capacity to support schools making compulsory redundancies.

Members asked whether staff granted voluntary severance could apply for another post within the Council and it was confirmed that after 20 days they could. Officers confirmed that applicants for voluntary severance were not offered redeployment to vacant or hard to fill posts. They also confirmed that there was no recruitment moratorium when Members questioned why a commissioning manager position had recently been advertised. Officers explained that no suitable internal candidates had applied for the job.

The Committee felt that there should be a review of the voluntary severance scheme to ensure that the Council was not being hit twice, by having to pay severance packages and then by having to recruit to fill posts. It was agreed that a detailed minute of the discussion would be produced for the Portfolio Holder for HR IT and Communications to flag up the issues identified by the Committee with the Cabinet. In view of that fact that the Committee was not due to meet again until 22nd May it was agreed that the Portfolio Holder would report back to the Chair of the Committee, Councillor J.G. Morris and Councillors J.H. Brunt, S.M. Hayes and K.M. Roberts-Jones.

5.	UPDATE ON THE REORGANISATION OF HR	EAC5 – 2014
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The Human Resources Manager provided the Committee with an update on the Head of Professional Services and Commissioning's proposals to reorganise HR. He proposed to reduce the number of management layers in HR from 7 to 3. This would result in 8 posts being deleted saving £270,000. The Head of Service would be meeting staff on 6th February to set out his proposals and start the formal consultation process. The Human Resources Manager agreed to share details of the reorganisation with the Committee after the staff meeting on 6th February. He was confident that the service would manage with reduced numbers of staff but that this would require managers to deal with more issues themselves rather than relying on HR. He would like to see HR training for managers being made mandatory rather than optional.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to speak to Councillor David Meredith over his concerns at the level of HR support offered to school governing bodies.

6.	UPDATE ON CASE LOAD AND SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENTS	EAC6 – 2014
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The Committee was briefed on the backlog of cases which officers had been tasked to reduce. Since the last meeting the number of disciplinary cases had reduced from

29 to 21, grievance cases from 14 to 12, fairness and dignity at work from 3 to 2, performance and capability from 6 to 2. Managers were being encouraged to deal with cases through informal interventions where this was appropriate.

7.	UPDATE ON HR POLICIES	EAC7 – 2014
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The Committee was advised that since May 2013, 11 HR policies had been drafted or updated.

Officers were asked to provide a list of the HR policies that schools should hold and the date when they had last been reviewed. The Committee was advised that HR was supporting one secondary school in the county which was facing industrial action because the governing body was attempting to adopt a teachers' pay policy recommended by ERW. It was noted that ERW was seeking to produce agreed HR policies for all authorities in the region and a member asked that special schools be included when new policies were being considered.

Any Other Business

The clerk was asked to email all members of the Committee asking if they preferred to receive electronic or paper versions of the agenda.

J.H. BRUNT
Chairman