

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



26 February 2020

Our Ref Joint Staff Consultative Committee/10 March 2020
Contact. Committee Services
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To: The Chair and Members of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council

District Councillors Councillor Kay Tart (Chair), Councillor Kate Aspinwall (Vice-Chair), Councillor Terry Hone, Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE and Councillor Claire Strong

(Substitutes: Councillors Councillor David Barnard, Councillor Paul Clark, Councillor Sam Collins, Councillor Tony Hunter, Councillor Sue Ngwala and Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn)

UNISON Representatives: Dee Levett, Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews, Debbie Ealand, Daniel Washington

Staff Consultation Forum Representatives: Lea Ellis, Emma Jellis, Allison Fox, Christina Corr, Nicola Viinikka, William Stafford, Matthew Hepburn, Andrew Betts

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

to be held as

A VIRTUAL MEETING

On

WEDNESDAY, 10TH MARCH, 2021 AT 10.00 AM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda

Part I

Item		Page
1.	WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY Members are requested to ensure that they are familiar with the attached summary of the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol. The full Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol has been published and is available here: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-and-committee-meetings .	
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Members are requested to notify Committee Services of any substitutions by 12 Noon the day before the meeting. Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.	
3.	MINUTES - 16 DECEMBER 2020 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2020.	(Pages 5 - 10)
4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
5.	STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM To receive the minutes from the Staff Consultation Forum from December 2020, January 2021, and February 2021.	(Pages 11 - 26)
6.	HR UPDATE INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HR SERVICES MANAGER. To update the Committee on the progress made in the last quarter completing HR work and projects as well as the work supporting employees through COVID, lockdown and ongoing restrictions.	(Pages 27 - 38)

7. **EQUALITIES UPDATE** (Pages
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SENIOR HR AND CONTRACTS MANAGER 39 - 58)
- To update the Committee in in respect of equalities at the Council including new equalities data and the Gender Pay Gap.
8. **STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER** (Pages
To receive a discussion paper on the uptake of salary sacrifice schemes. 59 - 60)
9. **FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS** (Pages
To consider the subjects for debate at future meetings of the Committee and review discussion topics previously considered by the Committee. 61 - 62)

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH DECEMBER, 2020 AT 10.00 AM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: (Chair), Councillor Kate Aspinwall (Vice-Chair), Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins and Claire Strong*

In Attendance: *Dee Levett (UNISON), Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews (UNISON), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources) Jo Keshishian (HR Operations Manager), Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer).*

Also Present:

9 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio Recording – 6 seconds.

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual meeting of the Southern Rural Committee that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online and advised that there was the opportunity for the public and press to listen and view proceedings.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call and gave advice regarding the following:

- Attendance;
- Live Streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Kate Aspinwall, started the meeting proper.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 50 seconds.

Councillors Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kay Tart.

Having given due notice Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn advised he would be substituting for Councillor Kay Tart.

Apologies for absence were also received from Debbie Ealand – Unison, and SCF Representatives Andrew Betts, Christina Corr, Lea Ellis and Emma Jellis.

11 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 13 seconds.

There was no other business notified.

12 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 18 seconds.

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (4) The Chair reminded attendees of the extended Christmas closure period for some Council employees which would begin 24 December.

Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews – Unison advised the Committee that the North Herts Museum would be open during the Christmas period.

13 MINUTES - 18 DECEMBER 2019 TO 23 SEPTEMBER 2020

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 54 seconds.

The Vice Chair noted that it was the first occasion since the end of in-person meetings that the Committee had the opportunity to approve minutes. If approval was confirmed the Vice Chair's signature would be applied electronically by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Kate Aspinwall moved and Councillor Terry Hone seconded and:

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 18 December 2019, 11 March 2020 and 23 September 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and that the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer be authorised to apply the Chair's digital signature.

14 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

Audio Recording: 7 minutes 45 seconds.

The Service Director – Resources presented the Staff Consultation Forum minutes and provided a brief overview of the matters discussed including:

- The procurement of laptops for staff
- Attendance of Senior Management at meetings
- The relationship between SCF, JSCC and the Shaping our Future steering group

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall
- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions the Service Director – Resources advised:

- The request for capital funding being brought forward to Council in January was to meet increased demand for laptops and to enable staff to communicate while working remotely;
- There had been lots of positive feedback and engagement with the staff briefing on 5th November

In response to questions the Managing Director advised:

- While there had been supply issues in procuring laptops earlier in the year bringing forward the request for capital funding would capitalise on the opportunity to acquire more;
- Feedback from the staff briefing would be made available in reports to Executive Members, the Shaping our Future steering group, and in reports before Overview & Scrutiny;
- He was grateful to the SCF for adjusting their meeting time so that he could attend.

IT WAS AGREED: That the minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held in October 2020 and November 2020 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to consider any issues addressed by the Staff Consultation Forum.

15 HUMAN RESOURCES - INFORMATION NOTE

Audio Recording: 17 minutes 23 seconds.

The Service Director – Resources presented the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update including:

- The COVID Recovery Plan was close to being finalised including lessons learned during the lockdown and strategies for overcoming limitations presented by the pandemic;
- They hoped to share the COVID Recovery Plan at the next meeting of this committee;
- The £95,000 exit pay cap situation was still evolving; the pension rules had not yet changed and the HR team were keeping staff informed with any updates; the change was still subject to legal challenge;
- There were not yet signs of any restructures in the Council that would affect anybody caught by the exit pay cap;
- The HR Team continued to work on supporting employees working from home with a range of welfare support measures including welfare emails and guidance for managers;

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions the HR Operations Manager advised:

- Welfare calls made in April and May picked up key issues when the lockdown situation was new for everybody which the HR team were able to help with;
- There have been some long term absences but not more than usual;
- The HR team was giving support where they could and employee uptake of the Employee Assistance Programme had increased; response to the support on offer was positive;

The Managing Director noted that:

- The leadership team was very conscious of encouraging people to take leave and look after one another, particularly if the period of home working is to continue for a further 6 months with a greater risk of burnout;
- From next year there would be half a day each month set aside when the office was 'closed,' and employees could focus on learning & development;
- The first of these half days was 8th January and would focus on wellbeing;
- The flu vaccination voucher scheme was open to all employees irrespective of age, and staff who were eligible for free vaccination under the NHS scheme had been advised they did not need to request a voucher from NHDC;

IT WAS AGREED: That the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the Information Note entitled People Strategy Update.

16 APPRENTICESHIPS UPDATE

Audio Recording: 26 minutes 45 seconds.

The HR Operations Manager presented the Apprentices Update including:

- There was high demand for apprentice placements across the organisation;
- The details of the Apprenticeship scheme were outlined in the report; NHDC paid apprentices above the national living wage;
- Approximately 50 apprentices had started since 2013 and many had stayed with NHDC for a while;
- Apprentices benefited the age profile of the organisation;
- The apprenticeship levy could benefit existing employees that wished to gain new qualifications;
- The scheme had been promoted to schools in the local area;
- The report included feedback from apprentices on the scheme which was positive.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall

In response to questions the HR Operations Manager advised:

- Around 40 apprentices have completed their apprenticeships with NHDC; 9 of those were still with the organisation; 24 had spent some length of time working with NHDC after completing their apprenticeship;
- The Learning & Development Team kept in regular contact with apprentices to support them through their course; there was a small drop out/non-completion rate;
- Managers enjoyed having apprentices on their teams particularly as they tended to be younger;
- In HR the apprentices had demonstrated more tech-familiarity and introduced a new approach to recruiting.

The Managing Director advised:

- The apprenticeship scheme was a big benefit to NHDC from the perspective of succession planning; the demographic of the organisation was skewed towards over 50s and successfully enrolling younger employees was positive.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Apprenticeships Update provided be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the content of the Apprenticeships Update.

17 DISCUSSION PAPER: CARERS AT WORK

Audio Recording: 35 minutes 29 seconds.

The HR Operations Manager presented the Strategic Discussion Paper on Carers at work and outlined the strategies and support NHDC had in place to support employees with caring responsibilities including:

- That the definition of a carer was expansive and the number of people with caring responsibilities across the UK was high;
- With an aging population and a rise in pensionable age it was likely that the population of carers would expand in future years;
- Supporting and retaining carers at work was essential to the aims of the organisation;
- NHDC had in place flexible working arrangements including compressed hours, flexi-time schemes, home working and special leave arrangements that supported carers in the workforce;

The following Members asked questions and contributed to the discussion:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall
- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn

In response to questions the HR Operations Manager advised:

- The HR team was conscious that some younger employees were working from home in less conducive environments;
- Managers were making the best of the resources available to them in light of the COVID restrictions;
- The HR team had adopted a virtual office hours technique which had proved helpful

Dee Levett, UNISON Representative, advised that the SCF had discussed employees finding working from home for long periods of time difficult and asked about a return to the office on a part-time basis.

The Service Director – Resources advised that there was a policy to minimise the number of employees in the office at any time but where there was a wellbeing need or practical necessity space could be made.

In response to questions the Managing Director advised that individual teams across the organisation had organised their own remote Christmas get-togethers and that Steve Crowley, Service Director – Commercial, gave a magic show at the last staff briefing which was well received.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Strategic Discussion Paper on wellbeing for Carers be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the discussion paper on wellbeing for Carers.

18 FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS

Audio Recording: 52 minutes 50 seconds.

Members considered which subjects should be discussed at future meetings and:

IT WAS AGREED:

- (i) That the discussion topics for the next meeting would be as follows:
 - (i) Uptake of salary sacrifice schemes
- (ii) That a separate verbal update on COVID-19 Recovery plans be provided to the Committee; and
- (iii) That the discussion topics of the meeting after next would include:
 - (i) The challenges and rewards of home working;
 - (ii) The return to office working.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to choose a discussion topic of interest.

The Vice Chair offered congratulations and thanks to the HR Team for handling the challenges of the last year and wished everybody a merry Christmas and enjoyable break.

The meeting closed at 10.57 am

Chair

SCF MINUTES ATTACHED:

2 December 2020

13 January 2021

3 February 2021

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Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

02 December 2020



Present: Anthony Roche (**AR**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Vic Godfrey (**VG**), Emma Jellis (**EJ**), Jo Keshishian (**JK**), Lea Ellis (**LE**), Andrew Betts (**AB**), William Stafford (**WS**), Matthew Hepburn (**MH**), Caitlin Bruce (**CB – notes**)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Debbie Hiscock, Alison Fox, Nicola Viinikka

2. Matters Arising

Welcome to the new SCF members: Nicola Viinikka, William Stafford and Matthew Hepburn.

Question: Had JK and IC discussed the requirement for SCF and JSCC?

There had not yet been any detailed conversation but there is currently the requirement for both. **JK and IC to discuss further.**

Question: Is there any progress on updates from senior management?

This will be picked up in the re-run of the staff survey.

Question: Last months minutes mentioned too many people being on the 4th floor – why was this?

This was an anomaly and does not usually happen and has not happened since.

3. Active Communities Restructure

JK: Vaughan is not able to present the restructure as the open consultation meeting was the same time as the SCF meeting. A summary will be circulated to SCF members and any questions should be sent to Vaughan Watson.

4. Building Services update

We will be coming out of the national lockdown on 02/12 but the policy for coming into the office still applies – staff should continue to book slots or get approval from their line manager.

5. IT Update

Apologies for the slow running of the network – this was due to a power outage earlier in the week and the team are looking at it as a priority.

FOI plea – please make sure requests are completed and returned before the 23rd December as the office closedown will not be seen as an acceptable reason for extension and the legislative time frame of 20 working days remains the same.

Please ensure you are calling the helpdesk on #4444 and not the helpdesk employees directly on their extensions.

IT staff will keep a confidential bin in the IT van so if you have any confidential documentation that you would like to be destroyed when IT come to collect or drop off equipment let the team know.

A proposal for all staff being supplied with laptops for use when working at home and in the office is going to cabinet in December.

6. NHDC Update

The spending review was slightly better than forecasted for next year. This is due to some COVID support from central government.

The re-run of the staff survey should be launched before Christmas.

Shaping our Future have now had 2 meetings with the next meeting to be held 07/12. This is still in the information gathering stage.

There will be a monthly half day launched for employees to focus on learning and development the first one will be on the first Friday morning of January. Managers are to set the scope for each team. More details to come with the formal launch. The themes will align with the Shaping our Future themes.

Holiday flex (purchase of annual leave) will now be a permanent staff benefit.

HR are in the process of moving policies to the new templates, policies which are being amended heavily will be sent to SCF and Unison for feedback before they are circulated.

Staff are reminded that the Council offices will be closed on 24th December as a thank you for their hard work in this difficult year. **Please record Christmas Eve as special leave on time sheets to avoid this day being taken out of your flexi time allowance.**

7. Employee Queries

Question: Will there be an increase in homeworking expenses for heating and electricity during the winter?

This question has been raised and answered in past SCF meetings. All staff who are currently working all of their hours from home are able to claim £16 per month towards homeworking expenses, and this amount is kept under review. It is a fixed monthly amount which does not change during the winter months. It was changed from a broadband allowance to a homeworking expense to ensure that the amount it would not be taxed, and as a contribution to the expenses associated with working from home (not just broadband). **All staff are encouraged to claim the homeworking expense monthly as currently not all staff do.**

Further discussion highlighted that many other councils have their staff working at home currently and some do not pay any homeworking expenses. **IC to arrange a message board reminder for staff to claim their £16 in homeworking expenses.**

Question: Can staff be encouraged, if they are able to, to spend what they might on office secret Santa and Christmas meals on a donation to charity this year?

There is an Amazon wish list for Christmas gifts for children who will be in the Lister hospital over Christmas. Every child who is in the ward over Christmas gets a sack of presents, and every child who is seen in A&E gets a present:

<https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/lister-hospital-childrens-ward-christmas-present-appeal>

The staff briefing on 15th December will be our Christmas jumper day and the donations link will be sent from Sarah Kingsley.

Question: Will there be a limit on annual leave be carried over?

There is no limit on carry over leave, however, we encourage staff to take leave for wellbeing as well as to prevent the build-up of excessive leave as this could result in managers having to deny leave requests due to service needs.

There was a thank you for the extra day of leave on Christmas Eve.

The January meeting will be rearranged to the 2nd week of January, 13/01.

Chair for next meeting – Christina Corr

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g. broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - SCF@north-herts.gov.uk

Representatives (and extension):

Lea Ellis #4830 - Community Engagement team based on Floor 3

Emma Jellis #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

Allison Fox #4203 - Technical Support Officer based on Floor 3

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

William Stafford #4151 - Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Matthew Hepburn #4311 - Member, Committee & Scrutiny Officer

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford

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Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

13 January 2021



Present: Anthony Roche (AR), Dee Levett (DL), Christina Corr (CC), Ian Couper (IC), Vic Godfrey (VG), Emma Jellis (EJ), Jo Keshishian (JK), Alison Fox (AF), Lea Ellis (LE), Nicola Viinikka (NV), William Stafford (WS), Matthew Hepburn (MH), Caitlin Bruce (CB – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Debbie Hiscock

2. Matters Arising

It was raised that the half day of training at the beginning of January was appreciated by both members of the SCF and others on their respective teams.

AR confirmed that this was to be a monthly activity.

Question: Had JK and IC looked further into the value of having JSCC, Shaping our Future and SCF meetings?

Answer: The JSCC is mainly for members and is valued by them, and there is a benefit of having a representative from SCF there as the councillors value the input.

It is a good opportunity for SCF reps to get involved with councillors and committees. Shaping our Future has a different perspective, with a focus on the Learning and Development needs of the Council.

Question: How long do JSCC meetings usually last and how often are they held?

Answer: They are held once every quarter for 1 to 2 hours, they are currently being held over Zoom.

Question: Is there any update on supplying laptops to officers?

Answer: This is due to be taken to full cabinet on 21/01 – if approved the next step will be procurement. When the contract is out to tender timescales can be looked at.

3. Hitchin Town Hall and Museum Restructure – Rob Orchard

RO: The structure currently being used was put together before the full facility was in operation as the museum was not fully open. The structure was theoretical and following a first year of operation this has been reviewed in order to ensure the staff structure is fit for purpose and meets the service needs going forward.

The duty manager and events assistant casual bank has been identified in the budget, formally recognising it. The facilities assistant post would be removed in this proposal – this is result of a post which follows a fixed pattern intended to cover weekly events in the

evenings, having a permanent post for the hours identified isn't really reflective of the service needs anymore. There is recognition of needing to move towards a more flexible approach there. The budget has been moved across into the duty manager casual bank so that any events that have been left unattended by the removal of the facilities assistant post can be covered. There is a slight change in the support officers with the removal of one hour in the overall team, there are currently vacancies in that team so that reduction will not affect the current staff and we would obviously look to recruit to fill up those hours in due course. There is a slight alteration with the cleaners with 2 hours being removed, that is currently being followed by the existing cleaners so there will be no change to existing posts. The new structure is not a savings approach it is to try and make sure the structure is fit for purpose and meets the service need. The role of catering supervisor will be created as a new role. There is a need for the catering manager to step away for meetings, training and admin leaving the catering team without much supervision – by introducing a new supervisory level within that team it is hoped this can be covered more effectively. Overall there isn't a change in accumulative hours between the catering assistant and catering supervisor post but because the catering assist hours are being reduced it does mean that those 3 posts are being put at risk of redundancy. The digital audience development officer role which was a grant funded post will now be a permanent part of the structure at 14.5 hours per week. The visitor services assistant hours have also been increased and a formal VSA casuals bank has been identified to cover holiday and sickness.

4. Building Services update

The DCO building is currently open but employees are being discouraged from going in due to the national lockdown.

Question: Are employees still able to work in the building if they are struggling to pay winter bills?

Answer: Employees are still able to work in the building, it is just discouraged. **If you need to work in the office please discuss this with your line manager or service director.**

5. IT Update

The server room is being refreshed and the systems are being migrated – this can sometimes slow things down for employees. 36 systems have been migrated and there are 67 to do.

Please use the IT helpdesk on the intranet, the helpdesk number 4444 or the helpdesk app on tablets to get in touch with staff who work on the helpdesk instead of calling or emailing them directly.

The help desk is currently open from 7:45am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday although calls can be logged out of hours. VG is currently looking at reviewing standby to improve flexibility.

When passwords are due for renewal you will be sent an email. Some employees are not renewing their passwords in time and so their account is becoming locked. If you register your mobile number you can reset your own password.

The G;drive files are set to be moved to the cloud on the 21st and 22nd January.

Question: Councillors often contact employees in the CSC and democratic services to put issues through for them on the helpdesk, is there a way this can be made more accessible for councillors.

Answer: The councillors have the ability to log issues on the helpdesk themselves through the app on their tablets.

Reminder that there are documents on the intranet that should be used before a new IT project is started or new equipment is purchased.

Reminder that any data shared outside the organisation needs to be protected by encryption.

In 2020 NHDC had 677 FOI requests and 165 data protection requests.

6. NHDC Update

Supporting the NHS: a county wide call for help has gone out to support the Hertfordshire NHS in various administration, logistics and estates tasks that they might need help with.

Staff survey was planned for December, this will now happen in the next few weeks. Any issues that employees need to address personally can be put to their manager, HR or they can speak to someone through the employee assistance programme.

Pay bargaining April 2021: the local government association have not received the pay offer for Unison yet – there will be updates on this going forward.

The reorganisation policy and the special leave policy have both been updated and sent to SCF and Unison for review and comments.

Question: What support is being offered for parents who are home schooling?

Answer: As with the first lockdown, the council want to support working parents and employees should discuss the flexibility they need with their line manager in the first instance.

Question: An employee has been waiting for suitable work from home equipment since the first lockdown, who should they speak to about this?

Answer: Employees should open an IT helpdesk ticket to request equipment.

Question: Once the new equipment is brought in what happens to the old equipment?

Answer: The old equipment has a resale value and so is sold.

7. Employee Queries

If anyone comes into the office either for a quick visit or a few hours – please can they sign in and out, as well as clean desk when come in and leave and also wash up any cups they may use.

Question: Is there a reason that team leaders are not set up for creating their own team meetings via Zoom. Is there a process for someone else in the organisation that can create them for us on request?

Answer: If IT added Zoom to everyone's profiles, using it over Citrix will have exactly the same issues with buffering, in the same way as MS Teams.

Buffer with MS Teams and Zoom is not a local NHDC issue, it affects all Citrix sites. I can assure you all that I am working on this and in regular communications with the 10 other Hertfordshire Heads of IT via the HERTSLINK.

As you will appreciate, there is a cost for Zoom licences and at the moment it is £150.00 per year per person.

Question: I know this question was asked before about the £16.00 homeworking expenses which NHDC has confirmed will not be changed at present. Is it, therefore, more beneficial for people to not claim the £16.00 homeworking expense and apply to HMRC for the £6.00 per week tax relief as recommended by Martin Lewis' Money Tips or can you claim the NHDC allowance and also the HMRC allowance or will this cause issues with your tax?

Answer: The £16 per month that you can claim from the Council should be being paid to you without any tax deductions. We have had an issue with ITrent that means that tax has been being deducted. We are getting that fixed and it will be adjusted back to April. So once that is done, you will get £16 per month in your pocket/ bank account. Or £192 in a full year.

The HMRC rate is £6 per week. But if you claim that (which you can do here <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/claim-tax-relief-expenses/only-claiming-working-from-home-tax-relief>) then it adjusts your tax code by the equivalent of £6 per week. So across a whole year would increase your tax code by £312 (£6 * 52 weeks). Your tax code determines how much you can earn before you start paying tax, so increasing it reduces your taxable income. You then pay tax on earnings above that threshold. If you a standard rate taxpayer then you pay tax at 20%, so the amount you save (net impact on money in your pocket/ bank account) is around £62.

Here is a quick example, using made up numbers and ignoring impacts of National Insurance and pension contributions:

	£	£
Salary	25,000	25,000
Tax free allowance	10,000	10,000 + 312 = 10,312
Income that you pay tax on	15,000	14,688
Tax paid at 20%	3,000	2,938
Amount you get to keep	22,000	22,062

The website above does seem to allow you to claim tax relief where your employer does not pay the full £6 per week. So as we pay around £3.68 per week (£192 per year / 52.14 weeks in a year). It would seem that you could claim tax relief for the difference of £2.32 per week, or about £120 per year. The benefit to you would be 20% of that so would be £24 (assuming 20% tax rate). So total benefit of both is £192 + £24 = £216.

The rules around tax are that you have to work from home (i.e. not just because you choose to). That applies to everyone working at home under Covid-19 conditions, but you will need to review what you continue to claim post Covid-19.

Chair for next meeting – Lea Ellis

Have something to say?

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Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

03 February 2021



Present: Anthony Roche (**AR**), Dee Levett (**DL**), Christina Corr (**CC**), Ian Couper (**IC**), Vic Godfrey (**VG**), Emma Jellis (**EJ**), Jo Keshishian (**JK**), Alison Fox (**AF**), Lea Ellis (**LE**), Nicola Viinikka (**NV**), William Stafford (**WS**), Matthew Hepburn (**MH**), Caitlin Bruce (**CB – notes**)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Alison Fox, Nicola Viinikka

2. Matters Arising

The half day development for staff will take place again in February this will be on 05/02 with the focus being Values and behaviours.

3. NHDC update

There will be a national pay bargaining briefing in March, JK to update following this.

The HolidayFlex window is open again – employees can purchase additional annual leave.

04/02 will be “time to talk” day, employees are encouraged to check in with one another and some resources to support this have been added to the intranet.

The next staff briefing will take place on 10/02 and will be largely COVID themed, employees can send questions to Sarah Kingsley before the briefing.

1 employee is being put forward as an NHS volunteer.

Employees who are considered to work in social care are being contacted regarding their first vaccine.

Budgets for 2021/22 will be sent to full council on w/c 08/02.

All employees are encouraged to watch the video in insight with Anthony Roche, Reuben Ayavoo and Georgina Chapman discussing climate change.

4. Employee queries

Q: Are server updates still ongoing?

A: The server updates are now complete. Employees may find that slow running systems could be caused by national issues with telecommunications which have been ongoing through the lockdown.

Q: Could a message to go councillors regarding these national issues?

A: **VG to send.**

Q: Is there anything that can be done around professionalism during zoom calls, it has been noticed that some employees may be swearing more.

A: Tolerance towards things like emotive language are different to different people, as the lines between home life and work life become increasingly blurred people may feel their usual levels of professionalism slip somewhat.

It can also be said that when people are more stressed worse language may be used so this may be a good opportunity to check in with colleagues more often to see how they are doing.

Q: Would it be possible to add homeworking and especially homeworking during a pandemic to the employee user guide?

A: The handbook is updated periodically so this will be looked at. There is currently a lockdown toolkit on the intranet: <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-support-staff-and-managers>

The virtual kitchen organised by Helen Bylett in January was praised. Another virtual kitchen will be held on 25/02 at 10am.

Knit and Natter will continue to be held on a Monday, there is also a potential book club being started so look out for more information to follow on that.

Q: would further advice on the work from home expenses/ tax relief be available in any way?

A: We are unable to give tax advice however the link to the Gov.uk site is: <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees>

5. IT Update

The proposal to purchase laptops for staff has now been approved by full council. There are currently no laptops available from Dell due to demand at the moment so this could cause a delay in rolling this out.

The server migration is now complete. Please report any speed issues to the IT helpdesk. Speed issues could be internal or issues with users own broadband, the latter IT will not be able to assist with.

Work on the version 4 council chamber layout is set to begin in March. The new layout is more practical diamond shape.

6. Building Services Update

Compliance checks are continuing in District Council Offices.

Signage has gone up in the DCO and other buildings to wear face coverings when not seated.

7. AOB

Question: What is the current status of the Active Communities restructure?

Answer: Formal consultation on the Active Communities restructure closed on 13/01/2021 and the proposed structure will take effect from 31/03/2021

Question: Do any changes to access need to be made to the SCF inbox.

Answer: Not currently, although it would be useful to have an automated response as this is checked weekly.

Chair for next meeting – Mathew Hepburn

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g. broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - SCF@north-herts.gov.uk

Representatives (and extension):

Lea Ellis #4830 - Community Engagement team based on Floor 3

Emma Jellis #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

Allison Fox #4203 - Technical Support Officer based on Floor 3

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

William Stafford #4151 - Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Matthew Hepburn #4311 - Member, Committee & Scrutiny Officer

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford

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JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

10 March 2021

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: HR UPDATE

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES MANAGER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update the Joint Staff Consultative Committee on the progress made in the last quarter completing HR work and projects as well as our work supporting the people issues during the Coronavirus pandemic, lockdown and ongoing restrictions.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The HR Update Information Note contains the 2020/21 HR Service Work Plan.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The terms of reference for the Joint Staff Consultative Committee are to be the corporate interface with employees on major Human Resources issues and to be the Strategic HR Forum for NHDC Members. HR projects often require support from other support services such as IT, Finance, Legal Services and others.

3.2 People Strategy

The coronavirus situation continues to have a big impact on the work of HR and has changed all the normal forward planning and forecasting on the economy, labour, market, pay and pensions etc. In the current circumstances we have postponed the plan for a new People Strategy for 2020 – 2026 and as an alternative a People Recovery plan has been developed. This describes how HR processes will adapt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and how we will support our staff through this period of change. A draft of this is attached at Appendix A. This has been agreed by the Leadership Team and will have been presented to the March meeting of the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF).

Councils across Hertfordshire and the East of England region meet regularly in virtual meetings to share knowledge and experience of employment matters, and in particular to discuss issues and share ideas on current developments relating to the ongoing restrictions and employment aspects of the pandemic.

3.3 Recruitment

- 3.3.1 Since the start of the pandemic our labour turnover has declined and as a result there has been a reduction in the number of vacancies. Recruitment figures for 2020 are shown in the table below with the comparison to the previous two years:

	Applications	Interviews	Appointments	Applications ratio
2020	388	128	36	10.8
2019	640	327	81	7.9
2018	535	242	66	8.1

The impact of the pandemic on working practices within Environmental Health has recently resulted in two fixed term vacancies specifically working on track and trace. We have continued to see good levels of interest in most of our job adverts and in addition to the Environmental Health posts, we have recently appointed applicants in Waste, MSU, Legal and a new apprentice in HR.

3.3.2 Resourcing to support the NHS

In January we were approached to seek staff volunteers to support the NHS as the hospitals were under severe pressure. A small number of officers put their names forward, however the roles were filled with volunteers from elsewhere. There were more people interested in helping with vaccination clinics, although due to the longer-term commitment involved, we have advised that this cannot be supported in normal working hours due to the impact on our own service delivery.

3.4 Apprentices

We currently have 8 Apprentices, on Fixed Term Contracts, completing a range of qualifications including Events Assistant, Customer Service Specialist, Business Administration and HR Support. We also have an existing member of staff utilising the Apprentice Levy Fund for training. Although it has been challenging in the last 12 months, we have been very fortunate that all our training providers were able to transfer to remote learning, so our Apprentices were able to continue with no break in learning and we were able to continue recruiting. Two of our most recent Apprentices have been successfully recruited to other positions within the Council.

3.5 Pay

3.5.1 The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/2022 was presented to full Council for approval on 11 February and has now been uploaded to the council website along with an updated senior management organisation chart.

3.5.2 The Shared Internal Audit Services completed the annual payroll audit in December with the outcome of a good level of assurance. The audit report confirmed that there are appropriate controls and measures in place for the new payroll contract

3.5.3 National Pay bargaining

In mid-February the National Joint Council unions lodged their pay, and terms and conditions, claim for local government staff for 2021 which includes:

- a substantial increase of at least 10% on all spinal column points,
- a number of proposed T&C changes
 - o the introduction of a homeworking allowance,
 - o reduction of the working week to 35 hours with no loss of pay
 - o a minimum of 25 days annual leave for all starting employees
 - o and an agreement on a best practice programme of mental health support for all local authorities

A number of regional pay briefings have been scheduled in March giving local government employers an opportunity for this claim to be discussed before the LGA team respond on our behalf.

3.5.3 **£95K Exit Payment cap**

On 12th February the Government announced they had concluded that the Cap may have had unintended consequences and the Regulations should be revoked. This follows significant concerns raised in the consultation with local government employers as well as strong opposition from the unions. The Treasury have indicated their commitment to tackle the issue of high exit payments so further proposals are expected in the future.

3.6 **Employee Benefits**

3.6.1 **HolidayFlex scheme:** Following the successful trial of this scheme which allows staff to purchase additional annual leave via salary exchange, the Leadership Team has approved this as a permanent benefit. A window for applications was open throughout February allowing staff to purchase additional annual leave (up to 5 days) for the 2021-2022 leave year. A further window will be open throughout August 2021.

3.6.2 **Support for carers:** Following the December 2020 JSCC Discussion Paper on carers at work, further investigation has been undertaken into membership of *Employers for Carers* (EfC). We are able to utilise the umbrella membership held by Hertfordshire County Council allowing access to a range of benefits including the online members platform and the Carers UK Resources for Carers. These resources will be promoted to all staff through the intranet and Insight.

3.6.3 **Employee Wellbeing classes:** We have recently taken up the offer for some wellbeing classes through our Employee Advice Service provider at a small additional cost which allows staff to access a range of free online classes. These cover a variety of topics which support employees in proactively managing their physical and mental wellbeing such as nutrition, managing stress, how to improve sleep and a number of exercise classes.

3.7 **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

3.7.1 The HR team have continued to provide additional support to individuals in a number of service teams who have been extremely busy due to a mix of a high volume and the nature of additional work, and some resourcing issues. Each member of staff has had a personal welfare call from one of the HR team, and where needed the service managers have been provided with an update and further offer of support.

3.7.3 The benefits of Workplace Wellness, the council's confidential employee advice service continues to be promoted to staff through support emails to staff and managers, as well as in regular articles in the monthly Insight e-newsletter and Intranet message board posts. Feedback from Workplace Wellness is limited to high level usage figures, but the most recent report shows a consistent number of calls to the service.

3.8 **Equality and Diversity**

There is a separate Equalities Information Note which provides an update the latest equalities data which were published on 31st January.

3.9 **Shaping our Future**

The Shaping our Future programme is progressing with regular meetings of the steering group which involve both staff and Members. The most recent meeting focussed on the transformation project with a presentation from Howard Crompton and a discussion on how this will improve the council's future effectiveness.

Staff and management development initiatives linked to Shaping our Future are detailed in section 3.10.

3.10 **Learning & Employee Engagement**

3.10.1 Staff communication: The team have continued to keep staff informed on a variety of topics which help to support wellbeing, as well as reviewing the content available on our GROW Zone learning management system to ensure that staff have the tools they need whilst they continue to work remotely. We are encouraging staff to share the innovative ways they are keeping in touch with each other and we have recently introduced a monthly "virtual kitchen" on Zoom. This enables staff to drop in for a chat with colleagues from other teams over the course of an hour, with staff feedback being very positive.

3.10.2 Monthly half day sessions dedicated to personal and professional development for all staff started in January. The topics covered so far have included employee wellbeing, the corporate Values and Behaviours, and equality and diversity. The Learning & Employee Engagement team provide guidance to help Managers to run team activities and are able to signpost staff to various resources that are available. Whilst some months there may be corporately arranged activities or focussed topics, other months will allow staff and managers time to work with their teams or on their own personal development.

3.10.3 Service Manager Development Programme: We are due to launch a new programme at the end of March which will consist of a number of virtual workshops to develop our service managers. The programme aims to improve leadership skills, as well as covering topics such as motivation, performance and effectiveness. It is also intended to link management style with our corporate Values and Behaviours to help further embed them and bring them to life.

3.10.4 We have recently undertaken a staff survey to assess the current views on working from home and the impact on staff morale and wellbeing. We have used many of the questions from the first survey in order to gauge how things have changed, and to understand what other support or resources may be needed. Results will be analysed and reported at the end of March.

3.11 **Absence**

3.11.1 Absence figures for the rolling 12-month period are shown in Table 1 as absence days lost per employee. The short-term absence target is 3.5 days per year, and we are currently under target with 2.74 days in this rolling period.

Table 1

Rolling 12 months	Absence days lost per employee		
	Total	Long-term	Short-term
Feb-20	0.46	0.09	0.37
Mar-20	0.37	0.12	0.25
Apr-20	0.19	0.10	0.09
May-20	0.26	0.10	0.16
Jun-20	0.44	0.14	0.30
Jul-20	0.67	0.42	0.25
Aug-20	0.50	0.25	0.25
Sep-20	0.54	0.31	0.23
Oct-20	0.49	0.35	0.14
Nov-20	0.52	0.26	0.26
Dec-20	0.34	0.18	0.16
Jan-21	0.44	0.16	0.28
Total	5.22	2.48	2.74

311.2 Short-term absence has been lower than in previous years, partly due to the majority of staff working from home. We know that homeworking can help to reduce the level of minor absences as staff who are not feeling 100% may feel more inclined to continue to work in their home without having to commute to the office. In addition, the high level of homeworking and lower levels of social contact has probably helped by reducing the number of bugs and infections being passed between colleagues.

3.11.3 Levels of long-term absence have improved in the last couple of months with a number of previously absent staff being supported back to work on phased returns. Three out of four currently cases are related to mental health issues and the team are actively supporting these utilising Occupational Health where appropriate.

3.11.4 Since April we have had 17 staff reported as absent from work due to COVID-19 accounting for a total of 66 days lost. There have been other cases where staff have had COVID-19 but with little or no symptoms and therefore have not be included in the absence figures as they have been able to continue working from home. The majority of the cases that have been reported have been during this second wave.

3.12 Leavers and Turnover

Year (1 April – 31 March)	
2013/14	10.1%
2014/15	12.6%
2015/16	15.1%
2016/17	9.7%
2017/18	13.0%
2018/19	12.8%
2019/20	10.7%

Turnover figures exclude redundancies, retirement, apprenticeships and fixed term contracts).

Since the start of the April 2020 we have seen a drop in the number of staff leavers reflecting the current economic downturn and more limited employment opportunities available. There have been 23 leavers in the period April 2020 – January 2021 compared to 43 leavers in the same comparison period last year.

4.0 **NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 Progress against the HR Service plan, and work on the Covid 19 recovery as well as work on Shaping our Future will be reported to all quarterly JSCC Meetings.

5.0 **CONTACT OFFICERS**

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People Recovery plan 2020-2022

Purpose

The pandemic has naturally had a very big impact on the plans to create a new People Strategy for 2020 – 2026. Covid-19 has changed all the normal forward planning, forecasting on the economy, labour, market, pay and pensions etc. The Council is also embarking on a more co-ordinated approach to organisational development and change management called 'Shaping our Future'. Its outcomes have significant HR implications and will link closely with the work of the HR team for the next two years and beyond. Given the current circumstances it was decided to adopt a 1 -2-year pandemic People Recovery plan as an alternative to a longer-term People Strategy.

1. NHDC Values and Behaviours
2. Shaping our Future
3. Employee Wellbeing
4. Recruitment & retention
5. Benefits
6. Learning & Employee Engagement
7. Communication
8. Working Arrangements

1. NHDC Values and Behaviours

The corporate Values and Behaviours define how we aim work as an organisation. The Values provide the overall framework and the Behaviours describe how we make that a reality. There has been a lot of work in developing and communicating the Values and Behaviours. Some of this was based around the physical office environment (e.g. visuals on the walls of meeting rooms, screen at the entrance to the DCO and branded coffee mugs). The current enforced working from home, as well as a likely ongoing increase in working at home, makes these visuals less relevant and effective. Therefore, the HR team will look at ways to continue to embed the Values and Behaviours.

2. Shaping our Future

The outcomes for 'Shaping our Future' have been agreed as creating a:

- A high quality, diverse, inclusive and resilient workforce, meeting the needs of our community;
- A healthy, creative and productive organisation;
- A vibrant culture that embodies our values and behaviours.

The Learning and Employee Engagement (L&EE) Manager is the lead specialist for the programme. The L&EE Business Partner will also be involved, alongside the rest of the HR team. The Shaping our Future steering group is still establishing the key areas of development, but is expected to include a focus on the following:

The introduction and integration of organisational Values and Behaviours

Leadership and Management Development

Staff development workshops

Work on equality, diversity and inclusion (including work to address the gender pay gap)

New approaches to engaging with staff

Developing commercial skills

Developing transformational thinking

People Recovery plan 2020-2022

3. Employee Wellbeing

Mental Wellbeing

This is a big concern in a time of unprecedented circumstances and how individuals react will vary, however the pandemic and changes in restrictions will continue to impact significantly on people's lives. From an employment perspective, one of the greatest impacts on mental health and wellbeing has been, and will continue to be, the implications of our new ways of working with almost all the workforce working from home. Whilst there are benefits of home-working for many issues relating to a permanent home working environment can affect health in general i.e. the concept of living at work, feelings of isolation and the lack of face to face connection with the workplace and colleagues.

At the start of lock down the L&EE team spent time developing a 'lockdown toolkit' which contains helpful advice on wellbeing, stress management, personal organisation and resilience. In addition, we have provided support materials to managers helping them to lead in the challenging circumstances they continue to face. The team will continue to develop and promote this toolkit, including adjusting it as we hopefully emerge from mandatory working at home.

The team also initiated welfare calls from HR to all staff. This supplemented excellent work by managers in keeping in touch with and supporting their teams. Whilst this was a time-consuming activity at a busy time, it helped many people and created a positive impression of HR and their response to the crisis. We will ensure that managers (supported by HR and tools such as the Employee Assistance Programme) continue to be seen as a way of accessing support in times of need.

The intranet has plenty of advice on coping with permanent homeworking <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/coronavirus/homeworking-tips-staff> The page on remote social contact attempts to go some way to bridge the gap on the unquestionable value of workplace daily, informal interactions whilst shared resources aim to boost social wellbeing with links to quizzes and other social sites to connect teams. We will adapt this moving forward to support staff who increase the amount that they work from home on an ongoing basis

The HR team maintains provision of a large range of support that staff can access such as an Employee Assistance Programme that includes a package for confidential counselling and links to all sorts of online help with Mental Health problems. Online: www.my-eap.com username: NORTHHERTSwell. This is known to have provided valuable support during Covid-19, as well as difficult personal or work-related situations. This service is highly rated by those who make use of it, in particular the free counselling sessions, and we will continue to promote this benefit to staff including via the use of anonymised real life examples and quotes. In addition, there are 16 in-house trained mental health first aiders and there are dedicated pages of help for staff <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-support-staff-and-managers>. We will continue to support the development of these first aiders, and look to train more if required.

Managers are crucial in supporting the mental wellbeing of staff. Our management and leadership development will focus on the skills and knowledge needed by managers to fulfil this part of their role with a largely remote workforce. It will also focus on the other management skills associated with increased homeworking. This will include the new on-line workshop being run called 'Managing Homeworking Performance' which aims to help address mental health and wellbeing issues whilst maintaining organisational performance.

People Recovery plan 2020-2022

The HR team will continue to support staff and managers as restrictions ease and things seemingly move back towards normal. The economic impacts of Covid-19 will last beyond the end of the medical crisis. As the crisis subsides, this may be when burn-out happens. Support will include guidance for individuals on how to spot the signs of burn-out (both in themselves and in others) and practical ways to provide support. There will be a need to allow staff time, without the immediate pressure to pick up projects that may have been put to one side due to Covid-19. This will include allowing time for a break/ holiday, as well as reverting back towards normal.

Absence

To support staff to avoid the flu virus and to help reduce winter absence levels, we offer free flu vaccinations each year. We ran another very successful programme in the autumn of 2020 with over 140 vouchers taken up by staff and we intend to continue to provide this in future years. We will also support and encourage staff to make the time to get Covid-19 vaccinations (when available).

We also have access to a very good range of services that will help support our staff at this time and reduce absence, for example an Occupational Health Service, an online GP Service and of course a vital Employee Assistance Programme. The HR team will do regular reminders of the support available

Annual Leave

A significant number of staff have built up large annual leave balances due to work pressures and not wanting to take holidays. All staff will continue to be encouraged to take regular leave, where possible. As restrictions are lifted there will be an increased demand to take annual leave, and managers will be supported in being flexible, but also mindful of the need to maintain services. The using up of annual leave balances over two years (up to 31/3/2023) will be an option to ensure staff get the opportunity to take their leave over a phased period.

Some staff have continued to use leave (e.g. to support families and others) and where service needs allow, the Holiday Flex (purchase of annual leave) will continue to be available.

4. Recruitment & retention

Recruitment has slowed during the pandemic with a lower number of vacancies: in 2020 we appointed just 36 new staff compared to 81 appointments in the previous year.. We expect recruitment to return to more normal levels as we continue to adjust to the current working arrangements, although with unemployment on the rise there is likely to be less labour turnover which in turn will create less vacancies.

Since the start of lockdown in March 2020 we have adapted our recruitment and selection procedures. Interviews can now be conducted remotely using Zoom as our preferred video conference platform. Many job roles at NHDC include a test/presentation at the interview stage, which can also be carried out remotely, either via Zoom or through the use of email, with a time limit for response. The HR team have worked with recruiting managers to give tips and advice on navigating an interview via video conferencing. In future we will look at ways of reducing the time and travel commitment associated with in-person interviews and tests, this could mean that any tests and initial interviews may continue to be conducted online. This will need to be balanced against the advantages of candidates coming to council offices allowing them to get a better sense of the organisation.

People Recovery plan 2020-2022

The council's apprenticeship scheme will continue to be important during a period where youth unemployment is expected to be high. During the recruitment campaign in August 2020 three apprentice posts were advertised, with a large volume of applications being received and all first-round interviews took place via Zoom with an independent service manager and HR representative. Successful candidates were offered a second interview with recruiting managers for final selection before job offers were made.

Retention

To support the remote onboarding of new staff, HR have introduced a New Starter Welcome call which provides an overview of HR matters with the opportunity to ask questions or discuss any concerns. Feedback suggests this is being appreciated by staff. Other induction material has also been adapted to reflect that most new staff will be working through their induction period whilst working from home. Videos to replace the content that would previously have been part of the induction training have also been developed. Following a return to office-working some further induction and familiarisation will be arranged for the cohort of new starters recruited during the pandemic.

Retention is also supported by our approach to career development and succession planning. This will be a continued area of focus and will need to be addressed whilst maintaining our goal of equality, diversity and inclusion.

A series of online workshops were introduced in November 2020 which help staff consider their future career, their confidence and what they can do to achieve their goals. We are also boosting the role of our coaches as career coaches.

Leavers

Some staff will have left the Council during the pandemic and will have not been able to say goodbye in the usual way. Where the leaver has retired and would have been eligible for a retirement buffet, then this will be honoured when restrictions on such gatherings are lifted. Teams have made use of online cards, collections and virtual gatherings to say goodbye to staff that have left.

5. Staff Benefits

As we move through the consequences of the pandemic and a "new normal" way of working becomes established for most employees, the impact of this on the Council's current benefits package needs to be considered. This will include a review of whether as an employer with a duty of care for the wellbeing of staff, the Council should consider if additional support is needed for employees. The negotiation of new contracts for traditional elements of the staff benefits package such as the OH and EAP services will provide the opportunity to review the services provided.

New and innovative ways of enhancing the remuneration package enjoyed by employees can also be explored. This will reflect that the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to mean that pay inflation will be lower than previously expected, and the Council needs to find other ways to attract and retain staff. The latest benefit to be approved has been the Holiday Flex salary sacrifice scheme following a successful trial which achieved a net saving of £2,000, with further annual savings expected.

6. Learning and Employee Engagement

With ongoing changes to restrictions, there is likely to be a continuation of full home working for the majority of staff for many months. The results of the staff survey on recovery will inform a new 'Recovery Toolkit' which will support our staff through this difficult time and the

People Recovery plan 2020-2022

continued anxieties and challenges we will face as an organisation. We will also coach and develop managers to provide the ongoing welfare support needed.

The pandemic and the shift to homeworking has seen a necessary change towards more blended learning approaches in the form of online workshops and virtual conferences, and fewer face to face events. In some ways this move to online learning for both internal and external training provides an opportunity to make learning more accessible and flexible. L&EE have taken positive steps towards this approach to ensure that development can continue through the pandemic and have already arranged a number of learning events online ranging from a Pre-Retirement Seminar to Management Fundamentals.

The team are also exploring what new skills and capabilities will be required post pandemic and therefore the requirements for new Learning and Development. L&EE work very closely with their suppliers to ensure the right approach for our staff. The excellent coaching resources that the organisation has developed are also being mobilised to play a part in supporting people working through the COVID-19 challenges.

Learning and Development half-days have been implemented to allow individuals and teams time to focus on their personal and professional development needs. This reflects the Council's commitment to supporting staff development and wellbeing. The L&EE team will continue to provide useful resources and monthly themes will be decided in consultation with the Leadership Team and the Shaping our Future group.

7. Communication

We have many things in place to ensure people remain well informed particularly through extensive remote working. The Communications team are supporting remote working with an excellent range of regular items such as Insight, virtual all staff briefings and Senior Management Group meetings.

The Staff Consultation Forum every month is being held as a virtual meeting using Zoom. The agendas and minutes are shared with all staff, and the SCF representatives will raise questions and concerns at the meetings on behalf of staff. There is also a monitored e mail address SCF@north-herts.gov.uk where people can leave items to raise at the meeting. The Trade Union liaison meetings are also continuing regularly as virtual meetings.

8. Working Arrangements

At the start of the lockdown in March 2020, the IT team worked hard to create over 100 new home-working set-ups for those who had not previously worked from home. In addition, all staff on partial home-working contracts or with ad hoc home-working arrangements in place moved to full home-working, many using their own equipment. There will be further work to be done to ensure we have consistent terms and conditions for all staff who are home-working and this will be supported by the IT providing the majority of staff with a laptop to allow them to work both from home and in the office. These laptops will include cameras and microphones to allow staff to use them for virtual meetings, such as team meetings and staff briefings. Guidelines will be developed to determine what other IT equipment and furniture will continue to be provided, which will be linked to the amount of time spent working at home. As part of this new provision, the council will cease payment of the home-working set up fee for the purchase of IT equipment which was introduced in 2010. The eligibility for this payment has already substantially diminished.

People Recovery plan 2020-2022

The return to office-working and using our buildings will be dependent on government guidelines, the safety of staff and service delivery needs. Initial occupation will also be limited by the equipment (e.g. IT and furniture) that has been taken home.

Many staff have indicated their preference for greater home-working (compared to pre-pandemic) in the future and service areas will review the requirements for office working to facilitate this where possible.

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 10 March 2021
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
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TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: EQUALITIES UPDATE

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SENIOR HR AND CONTRACTS MANAGER

1. SUMMARY

This is an update regarding equalities at the Council in respect of:

- Equalities Data
- Gender Pay Gap

2. STEPS TO DATE

This note is provided to the Joint Staff Consultation Forum to update the Committee on the Council's current equalities profile.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 Equalities Data 2020

The equalities data for the Council for the period 1st January 2020 – 31st December 2020 was sent for publication in full on the Council's website in January 2021 in accordance with The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties which require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

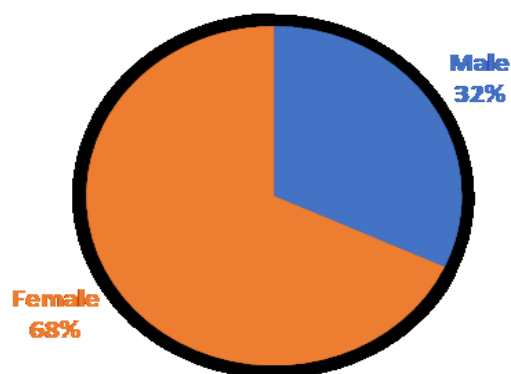
The data provided covers recruitment, current staff, application of HR policies, refusal of applications for learning and development, analysis of those taking and returning from maternity leave, analysis of leavers from NHDC employment and a summary of the most recently published Gender Pay Gap and Equal Pay Review Reports. The Equalities Data Report is available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>

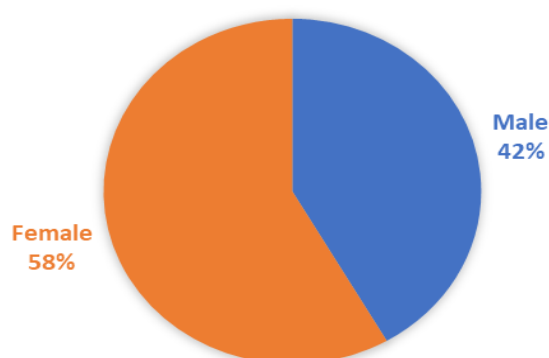
The equalities profiles for employees, appointments and those who left the Council in 2020 are given below. Current staff figures are taken as a snapshot on 31 December 2020 and starters and leavers are the totals for the full year January – December 2020. The full figures for the period 2015 -2019 are given in Appendix 1. In the publication of the data, percentages have been used instead of raw numbers in order to protect confidentiality and analysis has not been undertaken where overall numbers are less than 10. Figures may not always add to 100% as not all recruits or staff provide information on every protected characteristic and due to rounding.

The figures show that the make-up of the Council's workforce, appointments, and leavers by protected characteristic remains very stable with few changes. There are however some points to note and these are given by protected characteristic.

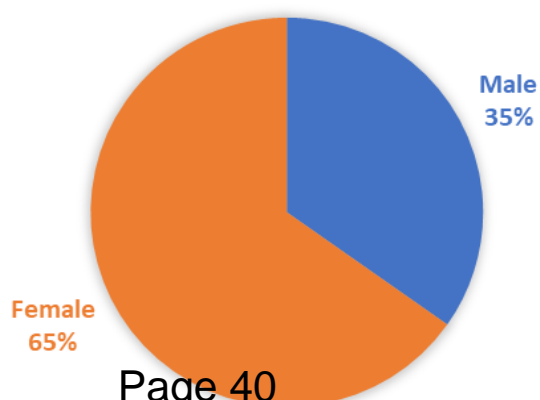
CURRENT STAFF - GENDER



APPOINTMENTS - GENDER



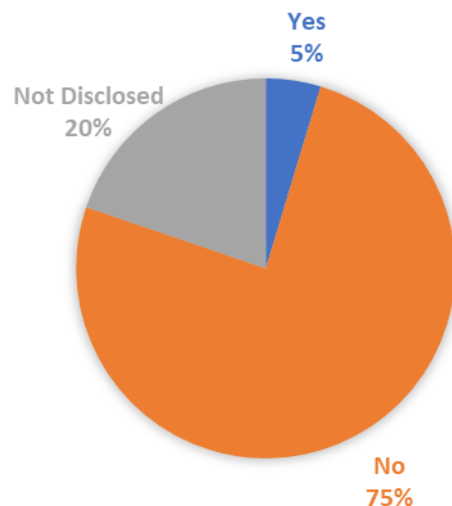
LEAVERS - GENDER



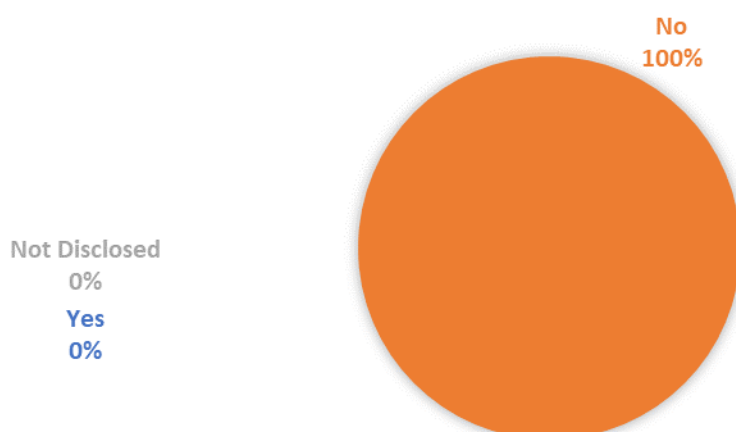
Gender

- Looking at the figures since December 2017 there has been very little change in the percentage of current staff who are female:
2020 – 364 staff – 248 (68%) – female, 116 (32%) - male
2019 – 378 staff – 260 (69%) – female, 118 (31%) - male
2018 – 352 staff - 240 (68%) – female, 112 (32%) - male
2017 – 330 staff – 218 (66%) – female, 112 (34%) - male
- Compared with the calendar year 2019, 2020 saw a significant drop, (14%), in the percentage of female appointments to the Council. This was the lowest figure of female appointments since 2017.
2020 – 36 Appointments – 21 (58%) female – 15 (42%) male
2019 – 81 Appointments – 58 (72%) female – 23 (28%) male
2018 – 66 Appointments – 40 (61%) female – 26 (39%) male
2017 – 26 Appointments - 13 (50%) female - 13 (50%) male
- The number of female leavers from the Council increased slightly from 64% to 65% of all leavers in the calendar year 2020. Almost two-thirds of those leaving the Council for all reasons are female which is broadly in line with the current staff profile. 73%, (22 employees), of those who resigned from the Council, were female. Analysis of the other reasons for leaving by protected characteristic was not undertaken as the numbers in each group were less than 10.
2020 – 46 Leavers – 30 (65%) – female, 16 (35%) male
2019 - 50 Leavers – 32 (64%) – female, 18 (36%) male
2018 - 58 Leavers – 38 (66%) – female, 20 (34%) male
2017 - 46 Leavers – 27 (59%) – female, 19 (41%) male

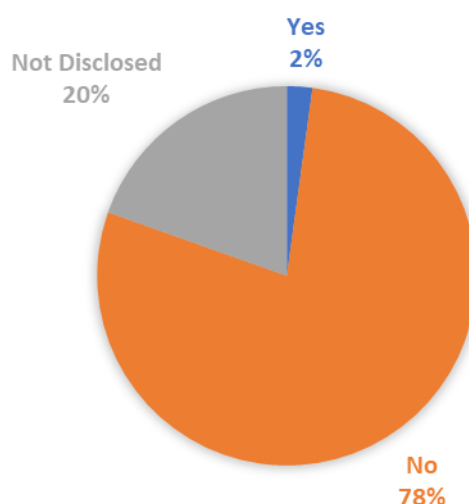
CURRENT STAFF - DISABILITY



APPOINTMENTS - DISABILITY



LEAVERS - DISABILITY

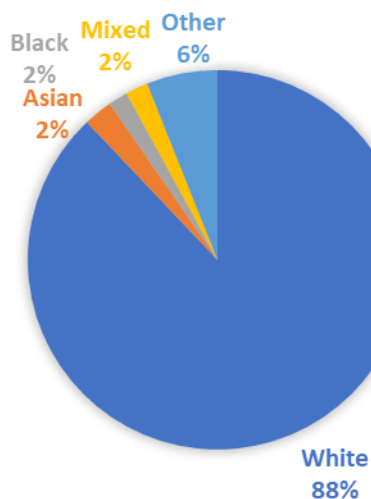


Disability

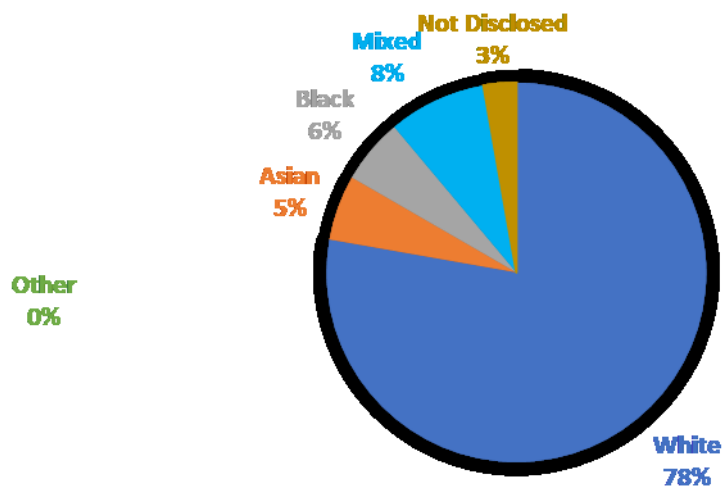
- The number of Council staff who class themselves as disabled has increased to 5%, (18 employees), continuing the upward trend seen in 2019. As all appointments were made from the group who did not declare a disability, and only 1 employee with a disability left the Council during 2020, this indicates that more current staff now class themselves as having a disability. This is corroborated by the 5% drop between 2019 and 2020 in the percentage of those who did not disclose their disability status and indicates that encouragement to complete the equalities data section on the iTrent system is having an effect.
- It is disappointing that there were no appointments in 2020 from those who class themselves as disabled. Consideration of how to ensure those in this group are fully aware of job opportunities e.g. through advertising vacancies in specific relevant media, will take place.

- The number of those leaving the Council who declared themselves to be disabled continues to fall from 7% in 2017 and 2018 to 4% in 2019 to 2% in 2020. However, as the numbers are so small, 2% is one person, the figures must be treated with caution.

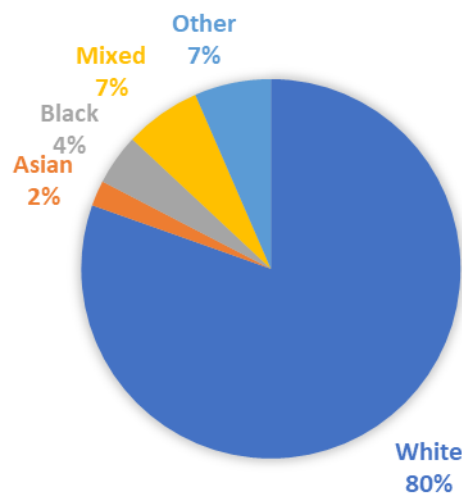
CURRENT STAFF - ETHNIC ORIGIN



APPOINTMENTS - ETHNIC ORIGIN



LEAVERS - ETHNIC ORIGIN



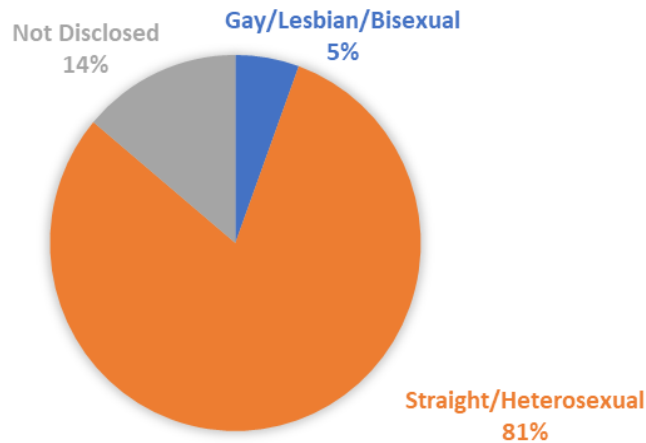
Ethnic Origin

- In the past year, there has been a small decrease, 2%, in the number of NHDC employees from a non-white background.
 - 2020** - 364 staff – 320 (88%) – White, 22 (6%) – Other Ethnic Origin
 - 2019** – 378 staff – 327 (87%) – White, 29 (8%) – Other Ethnic Origin
 - 2018** – 352 staff - 310 (88%) – White, 21 (6%) – Other Ethnic Origin
 - 2017** – 330 staff – 287 (87%) – White, 24 (7%) – Other Ethnic Origin
- The percentage of appointments from those who classify themselves as of an Ethnic Origin other than White has also increased considerably during 2020 from 8% to 19%.
- The percentage of those from non-White backgrounds leaving the Council increased by 14% to 20% in 2020.

CURRENT STAFF - SEXUAL ORIENTATION



APPOINTMENTS - SEXUAL ORIENTATION



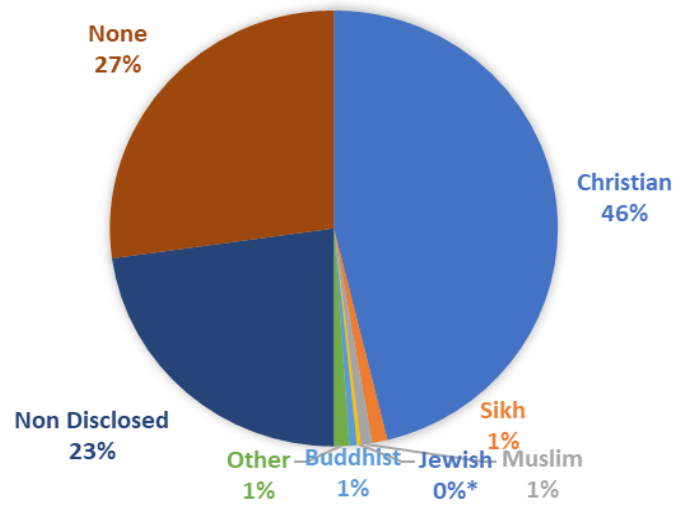
LEAVERS - SEXUAL ORIENTATION



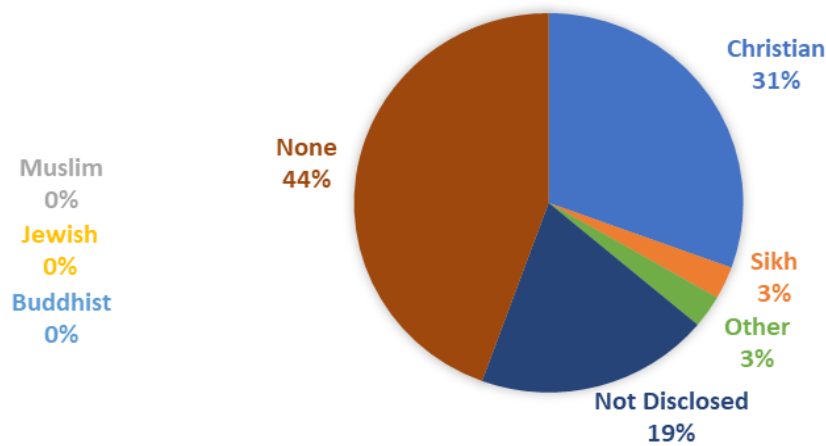
Sexual Orientation

- Whilst there has been very little change in the sexual orientation of staff and leavers during 2020, there was a decrease of 4% in the number of new appointments from the gay, lesbian and bisexual group. From the 36 appointments made in 2020, 2 were from this group. In 2019 the figures were 7 from the 81 appointments made and in 2018 66 appointments were made, 3 of which classed themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. It is difficult to determine a trend from these figures however as the numbers from the non-heterosexual group are so small.

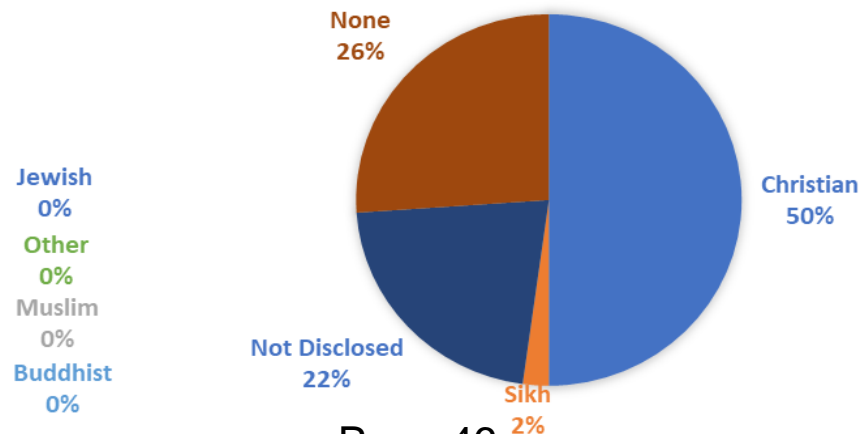
CURRENT STAFF - RELIGION



APPOINTMENTS - RELIGION



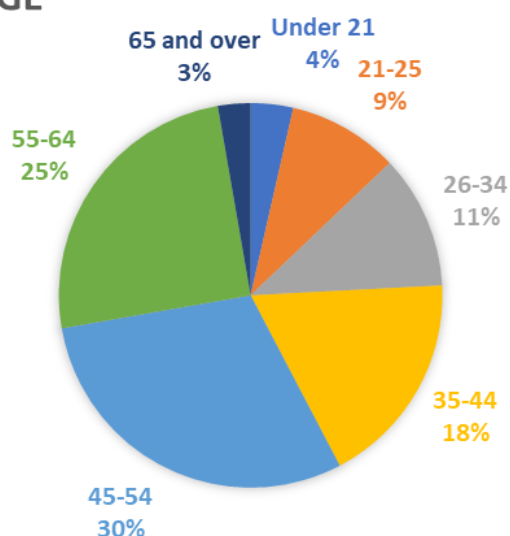
LEAVERS - RELIGION



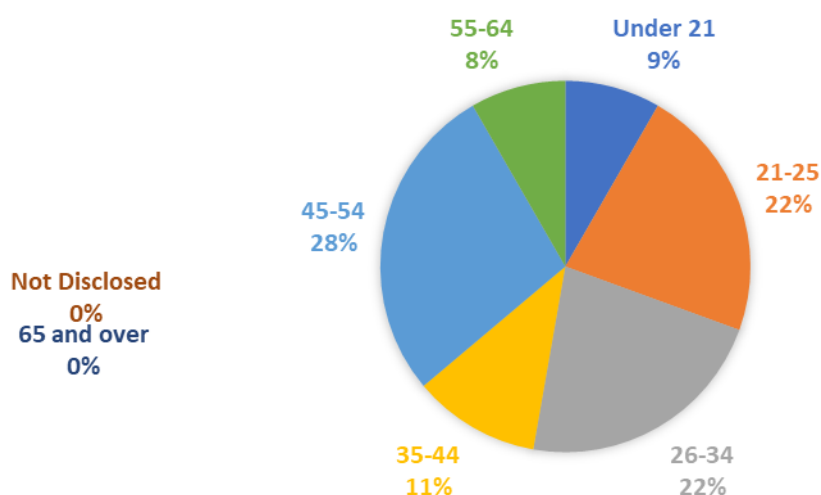
Religion

- The downward trend of those whose religion is Christian continues for employees, although there was only slight decrease, 1%, between 2019 and 2020. In addition, there has been a 14% drop in those joining the Council whose religion is Christian and a 4% increase in those leaving the Council with this faith.
- The percentage of those with no religion working for the Council remains unchanged from 2019 as does the percentage of those with other religions working for or joining the Council during 2020.
- A 2% increase in those joining the Council with faiths other than Christian occurred in 2020, but as this is only 2 people, care has to be taken that this small number does not distort the overall picture.

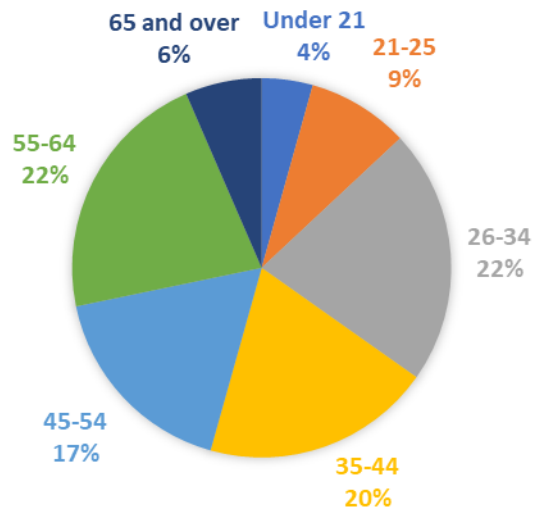
CURRENT STAFF - AGE



APPOINTMENTS - AGE



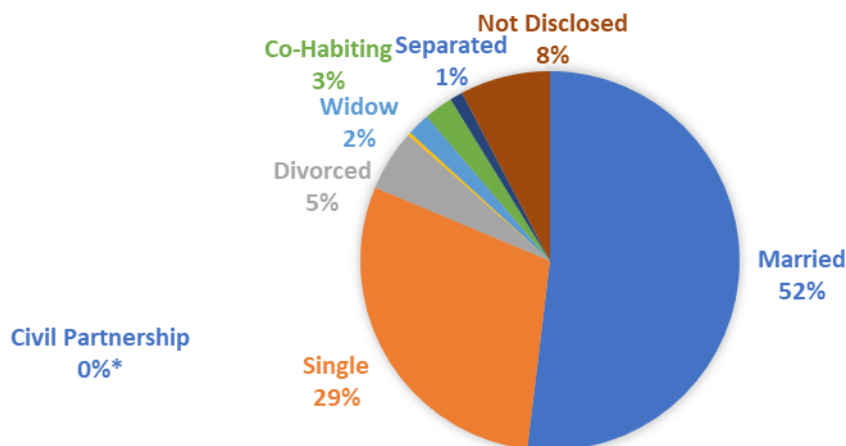
LEAVERS - AGE



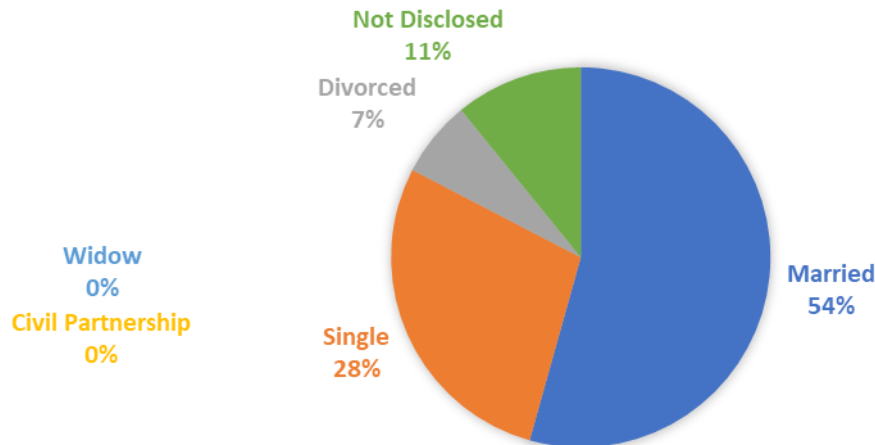
Age

- The age group 45-54 remains the largest group of employees as it has been for the last 5 years and accounts for almost one third, (30%), of all staff. This group has increased by 2% in these figures. 58% of Council staff are over the age of 44.
- There have been small changes in the other age groups of employees apart from the 65 and over group which has remained the same. 3 groups have shown an increase (under 21, 1% increase, 21 – 25, 1% increase, 55-64, 2% increase) and 2 a decrease (25-34, 4% decrease and 35 – 44, 2% decrease).
- For appointments made during 2020 there was a mixed picture regarding the age groups. In the youngest (Under 21) and oldest (65 and over) age groups there were very small decreases of 1% and a small increase in the 21-25 age group of 2%. The largest changes came in the 35 – 44 age group where there was an 8% decrease in appointments and the 45 – 54 age group where there was a 7% increase in appointments.
- In 2020 there was a reduction in those leaving from the two youngest (Under 21 and 21-25 age groups) and the two oldest age groups (55 – 64 and 65 and over age groups), compared to 2019. The largest change was an increase in leavers from the 26-34 age group, which was up 8% on 2019. There were also increases in leavers in the 35-44 and the 55-64 age group of 4% and 1% respectively.

CURRENT STAFF - MARITAL STATUS



LEAVERS - MARITAL STATUS



Marital Status

- Following three consecutive years of decrease, (2017 – 2019), there was no change in the percentage of married employees at the Council in 2020. Again, reversing the trend of the past three years when there was an increase in single employees, 2020 saw a drop of 8% in the number of single employees.
- There has been a 6% increase to the percentage of those leaving the Council who have given their marital status as married and a 14% decrease in those classing themselves as single.
- Marital status of those joining the Council is not requested during recruitment.

Full time/Part time

- 63% of those working for the Council at the end of 2020 were on a full time basis, a decrease of 7% on the workforce profile of 2019 and the lowest number in the past 5 years.
- Following three years of growth, the percentage of the full time workforce who are female has fallen by 3% to 57% (2019 – 60%, 2018 – 57%, 2017 - 53%).

Long Term Sick

- There has been little change in the number of long term sickness cases in between 2019 and 2020 following a peak in 2018, (2020 – 23 cases, 2019 – 24 cases, 2018 - 49 cases, 2017 – 26 cases, 2016 – 19 cases).
- Although the overall number of long term sickness cases remained stable in 2020, the percentage of those taking long term sick leave who were female continued to increase – 91% in 2020, 83% in 2019, 75% in 2018 and 54% in 2017. Further investigation into the causes and length of these absences will be undertaken to determine if this trend has any significant factors.

Attendance Procedure

- Cases of staff under this procedure dropped 62% between 2019 and 2020 from 13 to 5. It is likely that this has been influenced by the move to all staff working remotely due to the pandemic and it will be interesting to see how this figure changes as the Council moves towards a blended approach to on site and remote working.
- Analysis by Protected Characteristic was not undertaken as the total number of cases is less than 10.

Leavers

- There was a decrease in leavers in 2020 to 46. This compares to 50 in 2019, 58 in 2018, 46 leavers in 2017 and 60 leavers in 2016.
- The number of staff going on maternity leave in 2020 fell by 2 to 7 in 2020 and the number of those who returned from maternity leave also fell to 3 compared to 4 in 2019, 2 in 2018 and 4 in 2017.
- During 2020 the pattern of reasons for leaving the Council was mixed with the percentage of those retiring and being made redundant decreasing by 9% and 8% respectively, the percentage of those resigning remaining virtually unchanged and the number of those leaving at the end of their contracts increasing by 13%. It should however be remembered that as there were only 46 leavers in total, each leaver represents about 2% and so the small numbers can lead to a distortion of the overall picture.

3.2 Gender Pay Gap

3.2.1. Background

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 employers with 250 or more employees are required to publish statutory gender pay gap calculations every year. Accordingly, NHDC are required to calculate and publish the following gender pay data:

- Gender pay gap (mean and median averages)
- Gender bonus gap (mean and median averages) *
- Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses*
- Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the Council's pay structure

*The Council does not operate any bonus schemes, but the definition of bonus under the Regulations on gender pay gap reporting includes long service and staff recognition awards and for this reason the Council produces bonus figures for publication.

3.2.2 Data

The data must be a snapshot of salary data on 31 March each year and the bonus pay gap must be calculated from all bonus payments made in the 12 months up to and including the snapshot date of 31 March. This data must be published on the NHDC website and a government website by each year, usually by 30 March, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic an extension has been given and the 2020 figures do not need to be submitted until 5 October 2021.

NHDC gender pay reporting figures have been calculated using the standard methodologies outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

The gender pay gap and equal pay are not the same and do not have the same purpose. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission:

- Equal pay means that men and women in the same employment performing equal work must receive equal pay, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between men's and women's average earnings across an organisation or the labour market. It is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings.

The broad purpose of the equal pay provisions of the Equality Act 2010 is to require equality of treatment in employment as between men and women in respect of pay and other contractual terms. The stated aim of the gender pay gap reporting legislation is to introduce greater levels of pay transparency.

Salaries at NHDC are determined through a grading system which evaluates the job and not the post holder. It makes no reference to gender or any other personal characteristics of existing or potential job holders. Therefore, we are confident that NHDC is paying the same salary to roles of equal value and that its gender pay gap may be as a result of the roles which men and women undertake within the Council and the salaries and allowances that these roles attract.

3.2.3 **Results**

The tables below contain a comparison of the NHDC Gender Pay Gap figures for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. The highlighted figures are the ones reported on the Gov.uk website.

Table 1 Gender Pay Gap 2017 – 2020 – Hourly Pay

	Mean Hourly Rate				Median Hourly Rate			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	£13.94	£14.19	£14.47	£15.06	£12.05	£12.48	£13.01	£13.32
Male	£18.57	£18.43	£19.13	£18.85	£18.17	£16.85	£18.33	£15.37
Gender Pay Gap	25%	23%	24%	20%	34%	26%	29%	13%

Table 2 Quartile Pay Bands 2017 – 2020

	Males				Females			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Lower Quartile	22.8%	30.9%	28.4%	31.0%	77.2%	69.1%	71.6%	69.0%
Lower Middle Quartile	16.3%	17.0%	15.8%	21.8%	83.0%	83.0%	84.2%	78.2%
Upper Middle Quartile	41.8%	37.8%	27.2%	25.6%	58.2%	62.2%	72.8%	74.4%
Upper Quartile	58.2%	59.8%	58.5%	51.8%	41.8%	40.2%	41.5%	48.2%

Table 3 Percentage of Staff Receiving Bonus Payments 2017 – 2020

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	5.2%	0.3%	2.9%	4.0%
Male	1.8%	0.6%	2.4%	1.9%

Table 4 Gender Bonus Gap 2017 – 2020

	Mean Bonus Rate				Median Bonus Rate			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	£73.52	£50.00	£50.00	£96.67	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
Male	£66.67	£50.00	£50.00	£67.86	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
Gender Bonus Gap	-10.27%	0%	0%	-42.46%	0%	0%	0%	0%

3.2.4 **Analysis**

The figures for the Council's 2020 gender pay gap are included in the tables above and the Report will be uploaded to the Council's website by the end of March 2021.

Key points to note are:

- The average differences in the pay packets of women compared to men at the Council are now £3.79 per hour (mean) and £2.05 per hour (median) which is an improvement on 2019 when they were £4.66 per hour (mean) £5.32 per hour (median). This still shows however that using the mean figures above, females at the Council earn £140.23 per week, or £7,291.96 a year, less than males.
- Although the proportion of females in the upper quartile is still considerably lower than in the other quartiles, it shows an increase of nearly 7% since 2019 which is a positive sign.
- The narrowing of the mean and median gender pay gap in 2020 brought them to their lowest levels since reporting began in 2017.

3.2.4 **Actions Taken to Date**

The actions we have taken in recent years to narrow our Gender Pay Gap are:

- An organisation wide career development survey in 2019 where almost 50% of staff responded. Consequently, career development discussions took place, and individual plans have been created for those who want to progress.
- Use of software for ensuring the use of gender-neutral language in recruitment advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications and interview questions
- Introduction of Gapsquare software for calculation and deeper analysis of the Council's gender pay gap, and in time, the ethnic pay gap, data. The software is also being used to identify where there are particular pay disparities so specific actions can be developed to address these and for equal pay analyses.
- The Council's Recruitment and Selection workshop now includes additional content relevant to addressing the Gender Pay Gap. The training is focused on clear and objective selection criteria and contains an enhanced session covering unconscious bias. Recruitment and selection methods are also being reviewed to use a broader range of selection activities allowing more opportunity for those shortlisted to demonstrate their attributes.
- Eliminating unconscious bias training has been rolled out across the organisation.
- Specific training workshops are being developed on job design (job descriptions and person specifications).
- A Staff Network is in place with focus on having an inclusive remit, but within which there is a study of specific narrower issues e.g. women, minority ethnic staff numbers, younger staff, and generally staff getting to know other work areas etc.
- As part of the Shaping our Future project - which aims to develop a high quality, diverse, inclusive and resilient workforce - the Gender Pay Gap group has widened its remit to become an Inclusion Group, this will ensure that we look at all 9 protected characteristics equally.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 There will be a further update on equalities prepared for the September 2021 JSCC.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – NHDC Equalities Data 2015 – 2019

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

6.1 Maggie Williams – Senior HR & Contracts Manager
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6.2 Jo Keshishian - Interim Human Resources Services Manager
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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Equalities data for the Council for the period 1 January 2020 – 31 January 2020 published in accordance with The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). Available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>

7.2 The Council's Gender Pay Gap Report 2019 published in March 2020 in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. Available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>

NHDC EQUALITIES DATA 2015 - 2019

Employees 2015 - 2019**Gender**

2019 - 69% female, 31% male
 2018 - 68% female, 32% male
 2017 - 66% female, 34% male
 2016 - 66% female, 34% male
 2015 - 66% female, 34% male

Disability

2019 - 82% not disabled, 3% disabled
 2018 - 80% not disabled, 3% disabled
 2017 - 78% not disabled, 4% disabled
 2016 - 78% not disabled, 5% disabled
 2015 - 75% not disabled, 4% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2019 - 87% White, 8% other ethnic origin
 2018 - 88% White, 6% other ethnic origin
 2017 - 87% White, 7% other ethnic origin
 2016 - 88% White, 5% other ethnic origin
 2015 - 88% White, 6% other ethnic origin

Sexual Orientation

2019 - 79% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
 2018 - 76% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
 2017 - 77% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
 2016 - 76% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
 2015 - 74% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Religion

2019 - 47% Christian, 27% no religion, 4% other religions
 2018 - 49% Christian, 23% no religion, 5% other religions
 2017 - 54% Christian, 18% no religion, 4% other religions
 2016 - 53% Christian, 18% no religion, 5% other religions
 2015 - 53% Christian, 18% no religion, 5% other religions

Age

2019 - 3% under 21, 8% aged 21-25, 15% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
 2018 - 2% under 21, 7% aged 21-25, 13% aged 26-34, 22% aged 35-44, 31% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
 2017 - 2% under 21, 5% aged 21-25, 11% aged 26-34, 25% aged 35-44, 32% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over
 2016 - 2% under 21, 6% aged 21-25, 10% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 34% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
 2015 - 2% under 21, 5% aged 21-25, 8% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 33% aged 45-54, 24% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over

Marital Status

2019 - 52% married, 37% single, 4% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2018 - 55% married, 32% single, 5% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2017 - 60% married, 27% single, 3% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2016 - 59% married, 29% single, 3% divorced, 1% civil partnership
2015 - 58% married, 27% single, 4% divorced, 1% civil partnership

Full-time/Part-time

2019 - 70% full time, 30% part time
2018 - 67% full time, 33% part time
2017 - 65% full time, 35% part time
2016 - 67% full time, 33% part time
2015 - 65% full time, 35% part time

Appointments 2015 - 2019

Gender

2019 - 72% female, 28% male
2018 - 61% female, 39% male
2017 - 50% female, 50% male
2016 - 64% female, 36% male
2015 - 60% female, 40% male

Disability

2019 - 99% not disabled, 1% disabled
2018 - 93% not disabled, 5% disabled
2017 - 97% not disabled, 0% disabled
2016 - 86% not disabled, 12% disabled
2015 - 93% not disabled, 5% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2019 - 86% White, 8% other ethnic origin
2018 - 82% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2017 - 86% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2016 - 88% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2015 - 88% White, 7% other ethnic origin

Sexual Orientation

2019 - 91% heterosexual, 9% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2018 - 89% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2017 - 84% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2016 - 90% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2015 - 82% heterosexual, 5% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Religion

2019 - 42% Christian, 4% other religions, no religion 47%
2018 - 37% Christian, 5% other religions
2017 - 41% Christian, 3% other religions
2016 - 45% Christian, 4% other religions, 2015 - 47% Christian, 22% other religions).

Age

2019 - 10% under 21, 20% aged 21-25, 17% aged 26-34, 19% aged 35-44, 21% aged 45-54, 12% aged 55-64, 1% aged 65 and over
2018 - 8% under 21, 14% aged 21-25, 25% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 22% aged 45-54, 8% aged 55-64, 0% aged 65 and over
2017 - 5% under 21, 14% aged 21-25, 27% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 30% aged 45-54, 0% aged 55-64, 0% aged 65 and over
2016 - 10% under 21, 21% aged 21-25, 21% aged 26-34, 17% aged 35-44, 24% aged 45-54, 5% aged 55-64, 2% aged 65 and over
2015 - 20% aged 16-20, 28% aged 21-30, 34% aged 31-40, 7% aged 41-50, 10% aged 51-60

Leavers 2015-2019**Gender**

2019 - 64% female, 36% male
2018 - 66% female, 34% male
2017 - 59% female, 41% male
2016 - 62% female, 38% male
2015 - 64% female, 36% male

Disability

2019 - 82% not disabled, 4% disabled
2018 - 84% not disabled, 7% disabled
2017 - 85% not disabled, 7% disabled
2016 - 82% not disabled, 8% disabled
2015 - 73% not disabled, 3% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2019 - 86% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2018 - 79% White, 10% other ethnic origin
2017 - 83% White, 15% other ethnic origin
2016 - 87% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2015 - 80% White, 7% other ethnic origin

Sexual Orientation

2019 - 90% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2018 - 85% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2017 - 80% heterosexual, 4% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2016 - 85% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2015 - 68% heterosexual, 8% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Religion

2019 - 46% Christian, 34% no religion, 2% other religions
2018 - 53% Christian, 28% no religion, 7% other religions
2017 - 37% Christian, 35% no religion, 10% other religions
2016 - 48% Christian, 28% no religion, 4% other religions
2015 - 51% Christian, 19% no religion, 2% other religions

Age

2019 - 8% under 21, 12% aged 21-25, 14% aged 26-34, 16% aged 35-44, 16% aged 45-54, 26% aged 55-64, 8% aged 65 and over
2018 - 7% under 21, 12% aged 21-25, 16% aged 26-34, 22% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45-54, 19% aged 55-64, 10% aged 65 and over
2017 - 11% under 21, 7% aged 21-25, 17% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 13% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over
2016 - 2% under 21, 13% aged 21-25, 8% aged 26-34, 25% aged 35-44, 17% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 12% aged 65 and over
2015 - 11% under 21, 16% aged 21-25, 14% aged 26-34, 19% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over

Marital Status

2019 - 48% married, 42% single, 6% divorced
2018 - 33% married, 29% single, 2% divorced
2017 - 33% married, 54% single, 7% divorced
2016 - 52% married, 33% single, 7% divorced
2015 - 36% married, 41% single, 1% divorced, 1% widowed

Reasons for Leaving

2019 - 66% resigned, 18% retired, 2% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 12% redundancy and 2% were dismissed
2018 - 57% resigned, 14% retired, 12% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% redundancy, 3% were dismissed and 2% died in service
2017 - 61% resigned, 22% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% retired, 2% early severance, 2% died in service and 7% were dismissed
2016 - 52% resigned, 13% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% were made redundant, 12% retired, 5% transferred under the TUPE regulations and 5% were dismissed
2015 - 53% resigned, 31% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% were made redundant, 3% transferred under the TUPE regulations, 3% retired and 1% died in service

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STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER

March 2021

Salary Sacrifice Schemes

Salary sacrifice schemes exist in many organisations and can often be used by employers as a great incentive to attract and retain employees. These schemes form part of the non-cash and fringe benefit elements of a pay package which can be extremely valuable to the employee, with the benefit of tax efficiencies.

What is a salary sacrifice scheme?

Salary sacrifice is where an employee agrees to exchange part of their salary to get a non-cash benefit from their employer. The deduction in salary is taken from gross pay so once the salary is given up overall pay is lower and therefore the employee pays less tax and National Insurance. In addition, the employer does not have to pay employers' National Insurance on the part of the salary exchanged and this saving can be used to offset the cost of administering the scheme.

Any salary sacrifice arrangement must be set up by amending the employee's contract of employment to reflect the reduction in salary. There are rules relating to when deductions can be amended which are usually only permitted in very specific circumstances.

What salary sacrifice schemes has the Council supported?

Over the years the Council has offered a number of salary sacrifice schemes for employees which have included:

- computer equipment
- lease cars
- childcare vouchers
- cycle to work schemes
- and most recently, the purchase of additional annual leave.

The tax related advantages offered through salary sacrifice schemes were amended in 2017, and only a few schemes remain exempt from tax and NI. These include cycle to work, ultra-low emissions cars, pension contributions (AVCs) and childcare vouchers.

Which schemes are currently offered to staff?

Childcare Vouchers

The Council has offered the facility of childcare vouchers to employees for many years although following the launch of the Government's Tax-Free Childcare Scheme in 2017, employees are no longer able to take advantage of both sources of childcare support. Whilst existing recipients of our Kiddivoucher scheme can continue to receive them until the child reaches the maximum eligible age, the scheme has been closed to new applications since October 2018. Consequently, the scheme now has just 10 active members, which continues to offer monthly savings on their childcare costs as well as the savings on employer National Insurance contributions for the Council.

Cycle2work Scheme

Cycle to work is a government-approved salary sacrifice initiative allowing staff to hire a bike and accessories from the Council for the purpose of cycling to work. The NHDC Scheme is offered through Halfords with options to select a bike from Halfords, or a number of local independent bike shops. Electric bikes are also included in the Scheme.

STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER

March 2021

Salary Sacrifice Schemes

The Council has been offering a cycle to work scheme since 2013, and to date 22 employees have opted to take part. The scheme was re-launched in December 2019 with a small number of employees taking up the opportunity before the impact of lockdown and office closures halted any further interest. The scheme is currently on hold until the offices re-open and it is hoped that a good level of interest continues.

Holiday Flex – the purchase of additional annual leave

This scheme (which was initially trialled last year) offers all staff the opportunity to purchase up to 1 week's additional annual leave each year. The cost of one hour's annual leave for the employee is the same as their hourly rate of pay, and with the cost spread out over either 6 or 12 months deducted from gross salary employees benefit from savings that result from paying less tax and National Insurance.

There were 7 applications for the initial trial in August and all applied for the maximum amount of hours. The total salary savings from this trial were just under £4,000, and it is hoped that this scheme will increase in popularity over time and there will be a greater level of interest this year as travel restrictions are lifted (although it may be limited by the leave balances that are being carried forward from 2020/21). Staff will be offered the opportunity to apply additional annual leave in February (with deductions spread over 12 months) and in August (deductions spread over 6 months).

Future considerations

Whilst there are now only limited options for this type of benefit, there are two other salary schemes which the Council could consider:

Pension contributions
















Introducing a pension contribution salary sacrifice scheme would involve individuals electing to make additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) to the Local Government Pension Scheme via salary sacrifice. Employees would benefit from tax relief as AVC's would be deducted from gross salary, with the key benefit being an increase in the value of their future pension.

Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles

Prior to 2017 a salary sacrifice car scheme carried the same tax advantages as other salary sacrifice schemes however, since April 2017 the employee is now required to pay income tax on either the value of the car or the amount of salary sacrificed. However, Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) – cars emitting 75g/km CO2 or less – are eligible to purchase on a salary sacrifice basis and are exempt from the new tax rules in the hope to reduce CO2 emissions on UK roads.

Before embarking on any new salary sacrifice schemes it will be important to assess if there is a sufficient level of staff interest eg through a short survey. There are currently only a couple of staff contributing to standard AVC's for example, and in our previous salary sacrifice car scheme the take-up rate was also very low.

JSCC Strategic Discussion Topics Suggested Items 2020-22

Continuous Development	
	Essential Learning
	Coaching
	Career Development/Succession Planning
Health and Well Being	
	The role of Occupational Health
	The value of an Employee Assistance Programme Service
	Long Term Absence Management
	Outplacement Support
	What's the employer's role in keeping staff healthy?
	Continuing to provide support for staff during these uncertain times
Employee Relations	
	Employment Tribunal
	Employment law update
	What can we expect in terms of employment law changes in the next 12 months and beyond?
Resourcing	
	Social Media for recruitment
	Recruitment - How we are modernising the recruitment process
Equalities	
	Future Streams of mandatory pay cap reporting
20's Diversity, changing workplace accommodation and practices to embrace all equality streams.	

JSCC Strategic Discussion Topics Suggested Items 2020-22

JSCC		Discussion topic
2017	March	Obesity and disability
	June	TUPE
	Sept	Shared Parental Leave
	Dec	Local Government Pension Scheme: What is the current position and what changes are planned?
2018	March	The future for Apprenticeships Apprentice Levy, Public sector targets and Higher Apprenticeships
	June	Coaching for individual and organisational development
	Sept	Update on new and proposed family friendly legislation – e.g. Parental Bereavement, Grandparental Leave
	Dec	How we are modernising the process for on-line applications
2019	March	Essential Learning – Responding to growing demands and how L&D support organisational change
	June	The role of Occupational Health at NHDC
	Sept	The role of employer supporting employees with mental health problems.
	Dec	Salary Sacrifice: What are they, what have we got on offer and what's their future?
2020	March	Career Development, Talent and Succession Planning
	June	N/A
	Sept	Knowledge Transfer
	Dec	Support for Carer's
2021	March	Salary Sacrifice Schemes, what we have and what's their popularity
	June	The challenges and rewards of long term home-working
	Sept	
	Dec	