

## JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

14 December 2022

\*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 and supporting people issues.

### 2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The information note contains updates regarding the significant and strategic activities from the 2022/23 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 North Herts Council Members.

#### 3.2 How we work

The document describing what working at the Council looks like for our employees is being finalised. Our Senior Managers group has contributed to the development of the messaging around flexibility and homeworking, whilst continuing to effectively deliver services. The document will provide a guideline for current employees and be used as part of recruitment.

#### 3.3 Recruitment & Retention

The table below shows a comparison of recruitment statistics from August – October 2022 to the same period in 2021.

	VACANCIES	APPLICATIONS	SHORTLISTED	OFFER - EXTERNAL	OFFER - INTERNAL	NOT FILLED
Aug-Oct 21	25	111	63	16	7	2
Aug-Oct 22	19	111	55	14	3	2

The number of job vacancies has declined slightly with a small increase in the ratio of applications to vacancies.

This quarter we have successfully filled 17 jobs including Area Monitoring Officer, Careline Data Officer, EH Technical Officer, Revenues Apprentice, Revenues Collection Officer, and Safeguarding Team Leader.

There were 2 vacancies that were not successfully filled this quarter - Customer Service Assistant which was readvertised and has now been filled; and Contracts

Lawyer. We are taking a different approach to legal vacancies and have now advertised two Trainee Solicitor posts with the aim to train and develop our own lawyers.

The team are focussing support on two areas which have seen increased staff turnover this year – Development Management (Planning) and Committee Services.

### 3.4 Recruitment Refresh

Based on feedback and research, changes are being made to our jobs and careers webpages and recruitment documentation such as our job descriptions and person specifications. We are in the process of creating an application pack which will provide information to candidates once they have applied for a role with us, to ensure clarity on what we offer as an employer.

Part of the refresh will include an increased usage of social media for advertising and the team are working alongside our communications team to achieve this and develop and modernise our webpages.

The ultimate aim of this project is to modernise our recruitment processes and content, to better describe North Herts Council as an employer, attract more applications and try and ensure that those applicants want to come and work for us.

### 3.5 Leavers and Turnover

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

	Leavers	Headcount	Turnover	
			Monthly	Rolling
Dec-21	4	323	1.24%	14.29%
Jan-22	1	325	0.31%	12.73%
Feb-22	1	322	0.31%	12.11%
Mar-22	5	323	1.55%	13.66%
Apr-22	1	327	0.31%	13.02%
May-22	1	325	0.31%	11.15%
Jun-22	3	331	0.91%	10.50%
Jul-22	4	331	1.21%	10.78%
Aug-22	2	340	0.59%	10.43%
Sep-22	4	340	1.18%	10.38%
Oct-22	6	344	1.74%	10.62%
Nov-22	4	344	1.16%	10.87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>331.25</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate is currently 10.9% which has increased slightly since the last quarter. Although we saw the highest number of monthly leavers in October, overall, the number of leavers has reduced since 2021.

The HR team analyse turnover data at service level, as well as using information from discussions at Business Partner meetings. This shows higher turnover in a few key

service areas and the HR team are working with managers to provide additional support and advice.

### **3.6 Apprenticeships**

There are 11 apprentices in post and our current group are completing a range of Apprenticeships including Business Administration, Customer Service Specialist, HR Support, Digital Marketing, Information Communication Technician, Community Health & Wellbeing, Finance and Cultural Learning.

Recruitment preparation is underway for a further 3 apprentice posts in Democratic Services, Communications and Enterprise and Environmental health.

Apprentices are encouraged to meet regularly as a group, not only is this a great opportunity for them to expand their network within the Council, but it also allows them to provide feedback on ongoing and gives us the opportunity to consult with them to ensure that future apprentices are supported throughout their time with us.

The current high number of apprentices is due to delays in recruiting to roles previously, and the build up of available budget. Over the next 18 months, the Council will need to return to having 8 centrally funded posts.

### **3.7 National Pay bargaining 2022**

On 1 November the 2022 pay award was agreed:

- With effect from 1 April 2022 an increase of £1,925
- An additional day of annual leave

The pay award was applied in the November pay run and backdated to April 2022. The additional leave will be applied from April 2023.

The Unions are intending to lodge their 2023/24 pay claim by the end of January 2023. This will then be considered by the Employers and North Herts Council will take part in the regional pay briefings.

### **3.8 Employee Benefits**

Work to support the review of employee benefits continues and an update was given at the November staff briefing. The changes being made to our benefits package include:

- Refreshing our long service and retirement recognition awards
- Extension to the bike to work scheme
- Enhancement of our family leave provision
- Increasing GP helpline communications

We are also looking at introducing an Electric Vehicle lease car scheme and a shared cost AVC (additional voluntary contribution) scheme. AVCs are a salary sacrifice method providing LGPS members with a tax efficient way to contribute to a separate pot that sits alongside the main pension.

### 3.9 Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the October edition of Insight, the team highlighted a number of female health issues and the resources and support available, both on the intranet and external websites. This was followed up in November with an article on Men's Health and relevant signposting.

In addition, to mark World Menopause Day, the HR Team hosted a menopause virtual kitchen. Those in attendance agreed that it was incredibly helpful to speak to others experiencing similar situations and to get advice from each other it was agreed to host another of these in the new year.

The team continue to update and promote the recently launched financial wellbeing intranet page, which signposts resources for support. In addition, "Focus on your Finances" and "Planning for Retirement" workshops are offered to support staff to make informed choices about retirement.

We continue to update and signpost staff to the wellbeing resources that are available linking with national campaigns such as National Stress Awareness Day in October.

### 3.10 Our Values

The graphics to support our values are now displayed within the offices and other staff locations as well as through our IT platforms and on internal documents. To further embed the Values, our monthly Personal Development sessions throughout 2023 will focus on each individual value, providing a range of resources and opportunities for teams to further embed the values.

### 3.11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Inclusion group met in September 2022 and discussed Shaping our Future and the LGA Diversity framework – Diverse by Design. The group provided feedback on the 'how we work' document and felt that we should better promote the flexibility we offer as an employer.

Future topics will include neurodiversity and further sections from the Diverse by Design framework.

### 3.12 Absence

Employee absences relating to COVID-19 have continued to decline since their peak in January – March 2022. However, they remained at a higher rate over the summer compared to 2021. A summary of the number of cases and days lost by quarter is shown below, with October – December 2022 showing cases to date at the time of reporting.

	COVID absences									
	April - June		July - Sept		Oct - Dec		Jan - March		Total	
	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost
2020/21	1	4	2	6	7	27.5	9	38.5	19	76
2021/22	3	14	5	34.5	32	184	54	206	94	438.5
2022/23	22	75.5	26	106.5	11*	33*			59	215
	<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>								<b>113</b>	<b>514.5</b>

Overall short-term absence rates are approximately 40% higher than the same quarter last year, with common infections such as colds and sickness bugs accounting for around 40% of cases, compared to Covid absences which account for 13% of cases.

The HR team are continuing to support managers with a number of long-term absence cases which include several stress cases, chronic illness and one case of long-Covid. Occupational Health provide individuals and their managers with appropriate advice and signposting to relevant support, as well guidance on phased return to work programmes and adjustments as needed.

October has the highest overall absence this year since March, and the highest level of absence for October compared to recent years. Both the increased levels of short-term and long-term absences have contributed to this position as described above.

The absence figures for the rolling 12-month period are shown below as absence days lost per employee.

Rolling 12 months	Absence days lost per employee		
	Long-term	Short-term	Total
Nov-21	0.22	0.53	0.75
Dec-21	0.24	0.54	0.78
Jan-22	0.24	0.42	0.66
Feb-22	0.21	0.33	0.54
Mar-22	0.38	0.62	1.00
Apr-22	0.35	0.45	0.80
May-22	0.31	0.20	0.51
Jun-22	0.25	0.37	0.62
Jul-22	0.29	0.45	0.74
Aug-22	0.26	0.33	0.59
Sep-22	0.23	0.36	0.59
Oct-22	0.30	0.53	0.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>5.13</b>	<b>8.41</b>

### 3.13 Shaping our Future

The Shaping our Future steering group was ended during the last quarter. The short and medium-term actions had been completed, or there was a clear plan as to how they would be completed. There is still a commitment to develop and maintain a Council culture (and values) that help us deliver the Council Plan. However it was felt that the monitoring of this would be best achieved through other routes, including using the Joint Staff Consultative Committee (see below).

## 4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the HR Service plan and Shaping our Future action plan will be reported to quarterly JSCC Meetings.

- 4.2 This Committee receives this update, as well as getting to choose one or more discussion topics for each meeting. There is also the opportunity for the Committee to comment on what information is included in this report to help it act as the “strategic HR forum” (from Terms of Reference for the Committee).

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