JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

15 March 2023

*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 **Recruitment & Retention**

The table below shows a comparison of recruitment statistics from November – 2022 – January 2023 to the same period in the previous year.

	VACANCIES	APPLICATIONS	SHORTLISTED	OFFER - EXTERNAL	OFFER - INTERNAL	NOT FILLED
Nov21-Jan22	15	82	56	10	4	1
Nov22-Jan23	17	94	51	7	6	4

The number of job vacancies, applications and short-listing are quite similar year on year, with a higher number of vacancies being filled internally in this period.

We have successfully filled 13 jobs including 2x Trainee Solicitors, IT Digital Service Manager, IT Helpdesk Officer, Conservation Officer, 1 x Committee Services Officer and two apprentice posts.

There were 4 vacancies that were not successfully filled – Committee Services Officer (we advertised three during the quarter and filled one), Development & Conservation Service Manager, and Contract Lawyer.

We have been supporting vacancies within Planning, including the readvertisement of the Development & Conservation Service Manager, and extended the deadline for the Senior Planning Compliance Officer post which is currently vacant. One further vacancy (Planning Officer) has interviews scheduled for this month.

3.3 **Recruitment Refresh**

Work continues on the Recruitment Refresh project. Key changes include:
- New look recruitment pages on our website
- Changes to how we advertise posts including social media
- Updated training and advice for recruiting managers
- An updated Job Description document
- Reviewing how we recruit to 'hard to fill' vacancies.

The 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 talent.

3.4 **How we work**

The How we work document will be published on our website alongside updates from the Recruitment Refresh project.

3.5 **Leavers and Turnover**

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

			Turnover	
	Leavers	Headcount	Monthly	Rolling
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%
Dec-22	2	343	0.58%	**10.21%**
Jan-23	6	343	1.75%	**11.66%**
Feb-23	1	341	0.29%	**11.61%**
Total	**39**	**336**		**11.61%**

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate has remained fairly stable during this year and despite having 6 leavers in January, there were 9 leavers in the last 3 months compared to 14 leavers in September- November.

The HR team continue to review turnover data, and monitor responses to exit questionnaires, to understand the key issues as well as working with managers to provide support and advice where higher levels of turnover are causing concern.

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, Community Health & Wellbeing, Finance, Public relations and Cultural

Learning. One of our Apprentices has recently been successful in their application for a permanent position.

The current 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.

To mark National Apprenticeship Week (6-12 February), in our staff magazine, the Managing Director took the opportunity to personally thank all our Apprentices and we shared more information about how Apprenticeships work, some of our current Apprentices were also featured on our social media platforms.

In January, members of the HR Team attended a local careers fair to highlight the variety of different careers and Apprenticeships on offer at the Council. The aim is to encourage young people to consider the Council and local government as a future career path.

3.7 **National Pay bargaining 2023**

In January 2023 the Unions tabled their pay claim for 2023 which includes:

- 12.7% increase (RPI plus 2%)
- Additional day of annual leave
- 2hr reduction in working week

Following regional briefings, in February the National Employers made a pay offer:

- £1,925 increase on each pay point
- 3.88% increase on pay points above the NJC pay scales
- 3.5% increase on pay points of chief officers

The offer has been presented as full and final and is with the Unions to consult their members.

3.8 **Employee Benefits**

The first enhancements to our employee benefits package have been introduced with the refresh of our service and recognition awards and improvements to our bikes for work scheme launching from 1 January.

Work to support the review of other employee benefits continues and a webinar on the GP Helpline formed part of the January Staff Briefing. The next stages of the project include:

- Changes to grade and service holiday entitlements
- Extension of our employee discounts scheme
- Introduction of a shared cost AVC (additional voluntary contribution) scheme for LGPS members
- Consideration of an Electric Vehicle lease car scheme
- Review of our family leave provision

3.9 **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

We continue to update and signpost staff to the wellbeing resources that are available, in February the Employee Assistance Newsletter focussed on managing your own mental health, the power of talking, children's mental health and the importance of building resilience.

Following feedback from employees, we have arranged a second menopause virtual kitchen to take place in March.

3.10 **Employee Assistance Programme**

We will be launching our new Employee Assistance Programme in April. The provision will continue to cover a 24hr confidential service for employees to access information, support and counselling, but also includes discount and wellbeing platforms and mental health support resources.

3.11 **Our Values**

Throughout 2023 we will be focussing on our Values during our monthly Personal Development Mornings. In February we focussed on our Adaptable value and managers were encouraged to consider how their teams have adapted over the past few years.

3.12 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The Inclusion group met in December 2022 and focussed on 2 further topics from the Diverse by Design framework, Rethink Recruitment Processes and Transparent and Fair Reward and Recognition.

The group agree that further information about the benefits of working for North Herts Council should form part of the recruitment webpages to best sell the Council as an employer and that the culture at North Herts could be better communicated through these pages including information about the inclusion group itself.

The group also discussed the workforce profile at the Council and ensuring that any data showing groups that are under-represented is investigated.

3.13 **Gender Pay Gap**

The annual snapshot date for Gender pay gap data is 31 March. Our Gender Pay Gap data for 2022 will be published by 30 March 2023.

3.14 **Absence**

Employee absences relating to COVID-19 have been consistent over the first three quarters of 2022-23. However, in quarter 4 we have seen a significant drop in Covid absences– only 2 cases so far compared to 25 in the same period last year, which is likely to reflect the general reduction of testing. There is also an increase in absences related to colds and other respiratory illnesses. A summary of the number of Covid cases and days lost by quarter is shown below, with January – March 2023 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	21	70	2*	6.5*	**71**	**258.5**
							OVERALL TOTAL		**184**	**773**

Absence levels remain fairly high and are similar in November – January to those same months last year. Several long-term sickness cases have been resolved, but short-term absence rates remain high. Common infections such as colds and sickness bugs account for around two-thirds of all absences (compared to 40% last quarter), with Covid absences now only accounting for only 8% of cases (compared to 13% last quarter).

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
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
Nov-22	0.32	0.37	0.69
Dec-22	0.30	0.49	0.79
Jan-23	0.18	0.41	0.59
Total	**3.38**	**4.91**	**8.28**

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).

5.0 CONTACT OFFICERS

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