

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

*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 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 Nov 2023 – Jan 2024 to the same period in the previous two years.

Recruitment	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
Nov23 -Jan24	25	91	51	13	7	5

During this quarter we had a higher number of vacancies, including several internal secondments which have provided opportunities for staff to develop new skills and experience. We have filled a number of vacancies including the Principal Estates Surveyor, two Environmental Health Technical Officers which were readvertised having previously been unsuccessful, and one of two IT Application Development Officers.

The five vacancies which were not filled this quarter include one Application Development Officer (as described above) Contracts Lawyer, one of two Civil Enforcement Officer vacancies, one of two Careline Technicians, and the Safeguarding Team Leader.

3.3 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
Mar-23	5	11.56%
Apr-23	4	12.39%
May-23	2	12.61%
Jun-23	6	13.44%
Jul-23	4	13.38%
Aug-23	2	13.35%
Sep-23	2	12.73%
Oct-23	3	11.84%
Nov-23	5	12.12%
Dec-23	2	12.11%
Jan-24	0	10.36%
Feb-24	1	10.33%
Total	36	

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which has continued to slow slightly over the last 6 months. Labour turnover looks at unplanned leavers from the council and does not include figures related to planned leavers such as the end of fixed term contracts (eg apprentices, and maternity cover) as well as planned retirements.

In terms of feedback from leavers, there has been no significant change in the general responses which recommend the Council as an employer.

3.4 Staff Survey 2024

Work has begun on a staff survey which will take place during March. This will be the first full staff survey since 2018 and we are looking to find out about what our employees think is working well and what we could do better in a various areas including leadership and management, communications, inclusion, work life balance and wellbeing support.

3.5 National Pay bargaining 2024

Pay negotiations for 2024-25 have begun and the Unions are expected to table their pay claim in the coming weeks. Regional pay briefings have been arranged and the Council will take part in this process.

3.6 Apprentices

We currently have 8 Apprentices in post, and one of our most recent apprentices has been successful in securing a permanent role at the Council. There are 2 further apprentice vacancies that will be advertised in the coming months.

To mark National Apprenticeship Week (5-11 February) some of our Apprentices were featured on our social media platforms. The theme this year was Skills for Life and our

apprentices shared the skills that they have developed during their apprenticeships that they are able to take with them to future job roles.

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 highlight the variety of work, how we make a difference and encourage young people to consider the Council and local government as a future career path. We will attend a further apprenticeship fair targeted at school leavers in March.

3.7 Learning and Development

The current contract for the Learning Management System is due for renewal in July 2024, the procurement process is underway.

There have been a variety of workshops (both live online and face to face) as part of the personal development days, to support staff using new systems and to develop their IT skills.

3.8 Benefits

February saw the launch of our new Shared Cost AVC scheme, and an updated employee funded health cash plan.

3.9 Inclusion Group

The inclusion group met in January and discussed topics including age and over 55's in the workplace and how the Council can best support this group of employees. There were conversations about how to best use flexi time to ensure appropriate rest and recharge times and ideas about how to ensure general IT skills are kept up to date.

Work on general awareness raising about equalities and diversity, microaggressions and unconscious bias is ongoing.

3.10 Equalities Data 2023

We publish equalities data showing the Councils workforce profile on an annual basis. Our recent data has shown little change to the previous year in terms of our overall profile. This data will be reviewed in detail, and any areas for action will be identified.

3.11 Absence

The absence figures are shown below as absence days lost per employee.

Rolling 12 months	Absence days lost per employee		
	Long-term	Short-term	Total
Feb	0.19	0.37	0.55
March	0.39	0.34	0.73
April	0.30	0.22	0.52
May	0.26	0.26	0.52
June	0.15	0.28	0.43
July	0.28	0.32	0.60
August	0.45	0.21	0.66

Sept	0.23	0.38	0.61
Oct	0.30	0.60	0.90
Nov	0.27	0.58	0.85
Dec	0.31	0.29	0.60
Jan	0.59	0.50	1.09
Total	3.72	4.35	8.06

Summary of absence reasons:

Absence reason Nov 23 – Jan 24	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	3 weeks+
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	60	3	0
COVID 19 - suspected	12	1	0
Sickness / Vomiting	16	0	0
Other	26	4	1
Headaches (inc migraine)	9	0	0
Musculoskeletal	7	1	2
Mental health	9	10	4
Total	139	19	7

It's not unusual to see an increase of minor ailments causing increased sickness absence in autumn and winter months and can be seen in the short-term absences for cold/ flu and Covid-19, in the table above. Managers are reminded of the importance of communication during absence and carrying out return to work meetings to ensure returning employees are supported.

The HR team continue to work closely with managers to support the more complex absence cases including those related to mental health, which make up the majority of our current long term absence cases. The process and support for employees on long term sickness absence is detailed in the discussion paper.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the HR Service 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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