

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

12 June 2024

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No. 5

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 February 2024 – April 2024 to the same period in the previous two years.

Recruitment	VACANCIES	APPLICATIONS	SHORTLISTED	OFFER EXTERNAL	OFFER INTERNAL	NOT FILLED
Feb 22-Apr 22	22	90	53	8	11	3
Feb 23 Apr-23	24	80	43	11	6	7
Feb24- Apr24	13	157	56	9	2	2

During this quarter we have seen the number of vacancies fall but the number of applications increase. In particular, we received 43 applications for Revenues Officer, and 23 applications for Planning Compliance Officer. We have been successful in filling several other vacancies including the Careline Technician post which was unsuccessful last quarter, Senior Planning Officer (Strategic Sites and Major Projects), Seasonal Kiosk Attendants for Bancroft and Howard Park, and a Business Admin Apprentice for Licensing and Community Safety.

The two vacancies which were not filled this quarter were Estates Surveyor, and Senior Environmental Health Officer, where applications were low in numbers and of poor quality. We are still finding it hard to attract professionals with the right level of skill and experience in these service areas.

3.3 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
May-23	<u>2</u>	0.57%
June 23	<u>6</u>	1.73%
July 23	<u>4</u>	1.15%
Aug 23	<u>2</u>	0.57%
Sep 23	<u>2</u>	0.57%
Oct 23	<u>3</u>	0.85%
Nov 23	<u>5</u>	1.45%
Dec 23	<u>2</u>	0.58%
Jan 24	<u>0</u>	0.00%
Feb 24	<u>1</u>	0.28%
Mar 24	<u>1</u>	0.29%
Apr 24	<u>3</u>	0.84%
Total	<u>31</u>	8.85%

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which has continued to slow over the last few months, resulting in the annual turnover falling below 9% for the first time in 3 years. Labour turnover looks at only unplanned leavers from the council and does not include figures related to planned leavers such as the end of fixed term contracts (e.g. apprentices, and maternity cover) as well as planned retirements.

3.4 Staff Survey 2024

The staff survey has taken place and the data and feedback is being analysed. Staff were asked a variety of questions on subjects including leadership and management, communications, inclusion, work life balance and wellbeing support. Further details on the results and subsequent actions will be communicated in the coming weeks.

3.5 National Pay bargaining 2024

Pay negotiations for 2024-25 have begun and the NJC Trade Unions submitted their pay claim in February:

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points.
- Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government.
- A two-hour reduction in the working week, with no detriment
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes
- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible.

Pay claims have also been received regarding Chief Executive pay and Chief Officer pay. The regional pay briefings took place in March.

On 16 May 2024, the National Employers made a full and final offer of a £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) increase to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive (this equates to a 5.77% increase at SCP 2 and a 2.5% increase at SCP 43). A 2.5% increase to be paid on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine. This 2.5% increase was also offered to Chief Executives and Chief Officers.

3.6 Apprentices

We currently have 7 Apprentices in post, two of which are due to reach the end of their contract in the next few months. There has been approval to recruit 5 new apprentices with the start dates of these anticipated to be August/September.

We had representation once again this year, at the Local Government Apprentice of the Year event – apprentices who attend this always enjoy the experience, even though it can push them out of their comfort zone. It is a great opportunity to work with other apprentices across the country, and this exciting event provides the chance for apprentices to learn, network and showcase their skills, expertise, and initiative. Apprentices work in virtual teams, which are allocated on the day, to experience the opportunities, risks, and challenges involved in delivering successful local government services, in a developmental environment.

In March, members of the HR Team attended an apprenticeship fair targeted at school leavers. This allowed us to highlight the variety of different careers and apprenticeships on offer at the Council.

3.7 Learning and Development

A new supplier has been chosen for the Learning Management System and the process of project planning to transition to the new system is underway.

We are continuing to provide resources and learning sessions as part of the personal development days, the IT drop-in sessions are always very popular.

3.8 Inclusion Group

The inclusion group met in April and discussed neurodiversity in the workplace. This provided a platform for staff to discuss various challenges in the workplace and support mechanisms. The next meeting is scheduled for July.

3.9 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
May	<u>0.26</u>	<u>0.26</u>	0.52
June	<u>0.15</u>	<u>0.28</u>	0.43
July	<u>0.28</u>	<u>0.32</u>	0.60
Aug	<u>0.45</u>	<u>0.21</u>	0.66
Sept	<u>0.23</u>	<u>0.38</u>	0.61
Oct	<u>0.30</u>	<u>0.60</u>	0.89
Nov	<u>0.27</u>	<u>0.58</u>	0.85
Dec	<u>0.31</u>	<u>0.29</u>	0.60
Jan	<u>0.59</u>	<u>0.50</u>	1.09
Feb	<u>0.55</u>	<u>0.31</u>	0.85
March	<u>0.33</u>	<u>0.23</u>	0.55
April	<u>0.28</u>	<u>0.10</u>	0.40
Total	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4.06</u>	8.05

Summary of absence reasons:

Feb 24 – Apr 24 Absence reason	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	3 weeks+
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	29	1	0
COVID 19 - suspected	5	1	0
Sickness / Vomiting	17	1	0
Other	29	4	3
Headaches (inc migraine)	3	0	0
Musculoskeletal	7	4	0
Mental health	6	2	3
Total	96	13	6

Cases of short-term absences for cold/ flu and Covid-19 have fallen by 50% this quarter with absences of less than 1 week falling by approximately one third. Absence cases of 1-3 weeks and over 3 weeks are broadly in line with last quarter with several long-term sick cases having been resolved. Current long-term cases related to mental health issues and chronic health conditions.

The HR team continue to involve Occupational Health where appropriate to ensure employees are supported with back to work plans which may include reduced duties or working hours for their first few weeks back, in line with our policy.

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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