

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

9 October 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 our new key performance indicator– HR4, the number of vacancies filled first time in Quarter 1 April – June 2024, with a comparison with the same period last year.

	Vacancies	Filled at first attempt	Filled (total)	Unfilled	% filled first attempt	Target
Q1: April-June 2024	10	7	7	3	70.0%	75%
Q1: April-June 2023	21	19	19	2	90.5%	75%

During the first quarter this year, we had a much lower number of vacancies compared to the same period last year and therefore those vacancies not filled represent a higher proportion of the total.

Three vacancies were not filled:

- Senior Environmental Health Officer, there are continued difficulties in the sector in finding experienced and qualified professionals. The job has been changed to a career-graded position allowing us to recruit an individual with less experience who will be supported and given the opportunity to develop.
- IT Helpdesk Support Officer (Fixed term contract) – the successful candidate withdrew after the job was offered due being offered an alternative, permanent job. This job will be readvertised.

- Information Officer – we were unable to recruit to this specialist vacancy at the fully qualified level. The job will be readvertised as a career graded position.

3.3 National Recruitment Campaign

The National Recruitment Campaign is due to launch in November and the Council plans to support this campaign with local adverts and awareness raising. The tested assets are being provided to Councils as toolkits and we plan to use this to enhance our own recruitment branding.

3.4 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
Oct-23	3	0.9%
Nov-23	5	1.4%
Dec-23	2	0.6%
Jan-24	0	0.0%
Feb-24	1	0.3%
Mar-24	1	0.3%
Apr-24	3	0.9%
May-24	1	0.3%
Jun-24	1	0.3%
Jul-24	2	0.6%
Aug-24	4	1.2%
Sep-24	6	1.7%
Total	29	8.40%

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which was slower at the start of the year with an increase of resignations in the last few months. Annual turnover has remained below 9% since April.

3.5 National Pay bargaining 2024

Pay negotiations for 2024-25 are ongoing. The NJC Trade Unions have submitted their pay claim in February and the National Employers have made their pay offer:

The claim:

An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (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.

The offer:

'full and final' offer of £1290 on each spinal point (2.5% on higher grades)

Two of the three Unions involved are balloting for strike action and there will be further updates in the Autumn.

3.6 Apprentices

We currently have 8 Apprentices in post, having recently recruited to a handful of new posts.

Our apprentice scheme has been running since 2013 and in that time, we have recruited 81 apprentices. 35 of these individuals have stayed with the Council after completing their apprenticeship and 19 of those 35 still work for us.

3.7 National Graduate Scheme

We are pleased to be taking part in the LGA National Graduate Scheme, Impact. As part of this we have recruited two graduates who have started at the Council this month. Each graduate will have four rotations lasting 6 months each, covering a variety of service areas.

3.8 Learning and Development

Our new Learning Management system was launched in July and we have received positive feedback. It's an intuitive system which includes a wealth of content and helpful features, such as a traffic light system for monitoring mandatory learning and various bite size learning.

Our Digital team has launched a Digital and Data Academy alongside a specialist digital training provider, with the aim of equipping staff with the skills to develop their careers, create efficiencies through new technology and increase confidence in analysing data. This is launching this Autumn, with 19 employees signed up for various courses including advance software engineering and data fellowships.

We continue to run personal development mornings every month. Our staff survey indicates that not everyone can take part on the set date each month and so we remind employees that the learning can take place at a time that works for individual employees (and their service areas).

3.9 Inclusion Group

The September Inclusion group took place during National Inclusion Week. Discussions covered inclusion-based staff survey results and neurodiversity in the workplace.

Various resources were made available to employees to mark National Inclusion week and further raise awareness, including an updated e-learning module, a webinar on how to be an inclusive colleague, and a video and posters raising awareness about microaggressions.

3.10 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
Sep-23	0.23	0.38	0.61
Oct-23	0.30	0.60	0.90
Nov-23	0.27	0.58	0.85
Dec-23	0.31	0.29	0.60
Jan-24	0.59	0.50	1.09
Feb-24	0.55	0.31	0.86
Mar-24	0.33	0.23	0.56
Apr-24	0.28	0.29	0.57
May-24	0.36	0.33	0.69
Jun-24	0.49	0.43	0.92
Jul-24	0.40	0.36	0.76
Aug-24	0.37	0.31	0.68
Total	4.48	4.61	9.09

Summary of absence reasons:

June-August 24 Absence reason	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	3 weeks+
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	16	1	0
COVID 19 - suspected	13	2	0
Sickness / Vomiting	17	3	0
Other	22	5	5
Headaches (inc migraine)	5	0	0
Musculoskeletal	3	2	1
Mental health	2	1	6
Total	78	14	12

Overall, we have seen a typical fall in the number of short-term absences for the summer period, but a marked increase of Covid-19 cases (just 6 in total in the previous quarter). Absence cases of 1-3 weeks are broadly in line with last quarter with the number of long-term absences doubling. The HR team are currently supporting these individuals, and their managers, where the absence reasons include a range of chronic health conditions and mental health conditions. We 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.

3.11 Staff Survey

We received positive feedback in our staff survey, including 90% of staff saying they would recommend the Council as an employer. There are inevitably areas that we can improve on, and leadership team HR and the communications team have reviewed the

responses, continued dialogue with staff through team meetings and staff briefings about what can be done to improve, and an action plan has been created. This plan will be discussed with staff before being finalised.

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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