

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

8 January 2025

*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 KPI 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
Q2 2024 (July - Sep)	23	18	19	4	78.3%	75%
Q2 2023 (July - Sep)	17	14	15	2	82.4%	75%

During the second quarter this year, we had six more vacancies compared to the same period last year and two more vacancies not filled.

Vacancies filled during this quarter include two Environmental Health Technical Officers, Environmental Protection & Housing Manager, four apprentices, Service Accountant and Senior IT Analyst. Vacancies that were not recruited to include Mechanical & Electrical Services Engineer, Estates Surveyor and Client Support and Repairs Officer.

3.3 National Recruitment Campaign

The National Recruitment Campaign launched in November 2024. The Council has used the publicity materials provided to produce adverts in the December Outlook magazine. Future use of the materials will include social media posts and in customer facing locations.

Example materials:



3.4 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
Dec-23	2	0.58%
Jan-24	0	0.00%
Feb-24	1	0.29%
Mar-24	1	0.29%
Apr-24	3	0.87%
May-24	1	0.29%
Jun-24	1	0.29%
Jul-24	2	0.58%
Aug-24	4	1.16%
Sep-24	7	2.02%
Oct-24	4	1.16%
Nov-24	1	0.29%
Total	27	7.82%

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which overall is tracking as lower than this time last year, despite the uplift of resignations during August - October. Annual turnover has remained below 9% since April.

3.5 **National pay bargaining 2024**

The 2024 Green Book pay award was agreed in October 2024 at £1290 on each spinal point (2.5% on higher grades). The uplift and back pay was applied for our November pay.

We await an update on the 2025 National pay bargaining process.

3.6 **Apprentices**

We have 12 Apprentices employed, completing 8 different apprenticeships. The flexibility of the Levy means that we can offer apprenticeships that fit the service areas effectively.

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 in October. Each graduate will have four rotations lasting 6 months each, covering a variety of service areas.

3.8 **Learning and Development**

We are continuing the phased roll out of mandatory learning on the new Learning Management System and providing guidance for managers on how to monitor this using the traffic light system.

Following the launch of the Digital and Data Academy alongside a specialist digital training provider, 2 additional employees have signed up to participate, 20 in total. The aim is to equip staff with the skills to develop their careers, create efficiencies through new technology and increase confidence in analysing data.

3.9 **Inclusion Group**

The Inclusion group in November focussed their discussions on the Peer Review, Gender Pay Gap and Councils White Ribbon action plan.

The importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion eLearning module, that was launched in October, currently has an 80% completion rate, we will work with the Inclusion Group and managers to increase this figure.

A Nerodiversity network was launched in December, with the first meeting being well attended. It was a helpful and supportive meeting with various experiences and signposting shared for and by employees.

3.10 **Gender pay gap**

The gender pay gap (GPG) is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, employers with 250 or more employees are required to publish statutory gender pay gap calculations every year.

The Councils 2024 GPG data is shown below, alongside the GPG from previous years.

Year	Mean %	Median %
2024	14.6	13.1
2023	15.5	14
2022	19.5	19.3

Overall, there is a steady improvement in the GPG at the Council. Action planning takes place each year with an aim to further improve the gap. The 2024 action plan includes continuing support for flexible working at all levels of the organisation, launching a mentoring scheme for women and encouraging female applicants to apply for senior roles at the Council.

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
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
Sep-24	0.50	0.31	0.81
Oct-24	0.61	0.27	0.88
Nov-24	0.25	0.42	0.67
Total	5.04	4.05	9.09

Summary of absence reasons:

Sept – Nov 2024 Absence reason	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	3 weeks+
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	34	0	0
COVID 19 - suspected	12	0	0
Sickness / Vomiting	27	1	1
Other	30	5	6
Headaches (inc migraine)	7	1	0
Musculoskeletal	9	4	1
Mental health	5	2	4
Total	124	13	12

This quarter there has been an increase in absences of up to 1 week for all types of absences except Covid which has remained stable. Absence cases of 1-3 weeks and over 3 weeks are broadly in line with last quarter.

Support continues to be provided for the cases of long-term absence, or where additional support to continue to be in work is required. Occupational Health are involved where appropriate, to ensure employees are supported with back to work plans and employees are signposted to various support throughout, including to our employee assistance programme.

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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