JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

19 March 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 the number of vacancies filled first time in Quarter 3 October – December 2024, with a comparison with the same period last year.

	Vacancies	Filled at first attempt	Filled (total)	Unfilled	% filled first attempt	Target
Q3 2024 (Oct-Dec)	23	18	22	1	78%	75%
Q3 2023 (Oct-Dec)	25	19	21	4	76%	75%

During the quarter this year, we had a similar number of vacancies including apprentices for HR, Communications and Careline. A similar number of vacancies were filled at the first attempt in both quarters.

- Vacancies filled during this quarter included apprentices roles (as above, Revenues Officers, Customer Service Officers, Community Partnership Officer, IT Helpdesk Team Leader, Planning Officer, and Careline Operators.

- The only vacancy that was not filled was a Senior Planning Officer in Strategic Development.

3.3 **Leavers and Turnover**

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
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%
Dec-24	0	0
Jan-25	4	1.13%
Feb-25	4	1.13%
Total	**32**	**9.22%**

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which overall is still tracking slightly lower than this time last year. A low number of leavers in November and December has been followed by higher numbers in January and February, bringing the annual turnover to over 9% for the first time since March 2024.

Unplanned exits from the council (such as resignations and dismissals) are the focus of the turnover calculation which does not include figures related to planned exits such as retirements and the end of fixed term contracts (e.g. apprentices, and maternity cover).

3.4 **National pay bargaining 2025**

The Trade Unions have made their pay claim for 2025. The National Joint Council claim is for:

- An increase of at least £3,000 across all NJC spinal column points
- A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour
- One extra day of annual leave for all staff
- A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay

Regional employer pay briefings took place during February and it's expected that a pay offer from the employers will follow shortly.

3.5 **Apprentices**

National Apprenticeship Week ran from 10th – 17th February and our Communications Apprentice developed the communications for the week. This included several social media posts supporting the messages of "Skills for Life" and "NAW Official Supporter", and a quote from a previous apprentice who is now a Service Director at the Council.



We are pleased to have also had 2 of our Apprentices nominated for awards by their Training Provider.

Since we started our apprentice scheme is 2017, we have submitted data to the Department of Education. It was recently announced that this data will no longer be required because of the additional administrative burden this places on public sector organisations and due to apprenticeships becoming firmly embedded in recruitment decisions.

3.6 **National Graduate Scheme**

We are pleased that our current graduates have had a successful first rotation at the Council and will be moving to their next service areas in April. The Council intends to continue to be part of the National Graduate Scheme, Impact and plans are being progressed to recruit a further Graduate as part of the 2025 cohort.

3.7 **Learning and Development**

We are continuing to introduce staff and managers to new elements in the Learning Management System include the Smart Café which gives access to bitesize learning.

3.8 **Inclusion Group**

The Inclusion group in February focussed their discussions on Equality Data and a review of posters to further promote support available for staff.

The importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion eLearning module, that was launched in October, now has an 86% completion rate, we are continuing to work with the Inclusion Group and managers to increase this figure.

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
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
Dec-24	0.22	0.49	0.71
Jan-25	0.19	0.54	0.73
Total	**4.55**	**4.29**	**8.84**

Summary of absence reasons:

Dec 2024 – Feb 2025 Absence reason	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	3 weeks+
COVID 19 - suspected	1	0	0
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	49	7	0
Headaches (inc migraine)	10	0	0
Mental health	6	2	1
Musculoskeletal	6	2	1
Other	18	4	2
Sickness / Vomiting / Gastro	20	0	1
Total	**110**	**15**	**5**

This quarter there has been seen a decrease in reported COVID-19 cases but still a high number of Cold/Flu type illnesses as would be expected at this time of year. Short term absences remain relatively high, but we have seen a return to work for a number of employees from long-term sick absences which has reduced the number of current cases.

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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