

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

18 June 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 4 (Jan – March 2025), with a comparison with the same period last year.

	Vacancies	Filled at first attempt	Filled (total)	Unfilled	% filled first attempt	Target
Q4 2025 (Jan-Mar)	19	15	17	2	78.9%	75%
Q4 2024 (Jan-Mar)	22	16	16	6	72.7%	75%

During the fourth quarter 2024/2025, we had fewer vacancies than the previous year. We successfully filled most vacancies including:

- Kiosk attendants for Howard Park and Bancroft Park,
- Electoral Services Manager,
- Green Space Manager,
- Senior Planning Compliance Officer and
- Senior Licensing Officer

Two roles were filled but not in the first attempt of interviewing – Information Officer and Contract Solicitor.

Two roles were unfilled – Catering Supervisor which has recently been recruited through the second attempt (in Q1) and Building & Facilities Surveyor which is recognised as a hard to fill role.

3.3 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
May-24	1	0.3%
Jun-24	1	0.3%
Jul-24	2	0.6%
Aug-24	4	1.2%
Sep-24	7	2.0%
Oct-24	4	1.2%
Nov-24	1	0.3%
Dec-24	0	0.0%
Jan-25	4	1.1%
Feb-25	4	1.1%
Mar-25	4	1.1%
Apr-25	0	0.0%
Total	32	9.2%

The table above shows the rolling labour turnover rate which is slightly higher than the same period last year.

In the most recent comparison figures with other local councils from Infinistats, our percentage of resignations and dismissals were broadly in line with the average for the East of England.

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 – National Joint Council (NJC)

The National Employers have made a pay offer for 2025:

- an increase of 3.20 per cent to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points

The Unions claim was for an increase of at least £3,000 across all NJC spinal column points. The National Employers have rejected the other parts of the Unions pay claim, such as an extra day of annual leave and a reduction in the working week.

The Unions are in the process of balloting their members.

3.5 Apprentices

Two of our apprentices attended the LGA East, Apprentice of the Year Event on 21st May. The event is a celebration of local government apprenticeship talent, including participants from across the country.

Our apprentices embraced every aspect of the event, bringing enthusiasm, adaptability, and a creative approach to every challenge.

One of our apprentices who attended, shared their thoughts on the experience: "I really enjoyed the event. It was well thought out and allowed us to work with a wide range of people across local government. The tasks were a little challenging, but that made it even better—it encouraged communication and collaboration, helping us work effectively in teams to come up with different ideas and solutions. I'd definitely recommend it to future apprentices".

3.6 National Graduate Scheme

Our graduates are now settled into their second rotation, and we have completed interviews for the next cohort. The recruitment process is managed by the LGA with candidates being shortlisted for us to interview, these interviews have taken place, and the graduates will shortly be notified of their offers. As applicants can receive offers from more than one employer in the scheme (as well as any other jobs that they apply for), our preferred candidate may not choose to work for us. If we are successful, the next graduate will start in Autumn 2024.

3.7 Learning and Development

The HR team ran the first bitesize training session for managers in May. These are short, focussed, online sessions with the aim of increasing managers knowledge and skills in key areas.

Personal development mornings take place once a month and provide employees with the opportunity to focus on their development. Recent focussed sessions include opportunities to complete mandatory training on our learning management system, stress management, productivity and our White Ribbon promise.

3.8 Employee Wellbeing

During Mental Health Awareness week, we signposted staff to a number of internal and external resources to support maintain good mental health, including the Mental Health Hub provided by Optima, which provided staff with access to videos and information on maintaining positive mental health.

3.9 Inclusion Group

The inclusion group in June included a guest speaker from Proage providing expert opinion on age inclusion, and a discussion regarding the recent Supreme Court ruling

(on the meaning of “man”, “woman” and “sex” in the Equality Act 2010) pending the guidance that is due to be released later this month.

We are investigating further guest speakers for future meetings to allow the group to develop their knowledge and thinking.

The Inclusion Group is open to all staff and is held quarterly, the next meeting is scheduled during National Inclusion Week in September 2025.

3.10 Absence

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

Monthly rolling absence: days lost per employee			
	Long-term	Short-term	Total
May-24	4.09	4.31	8.41
Jun-24	4.43	4.46	8.90
Jul-24	4.55	4.51	9.06
Aug-24	4.46	4.61	9.08
Sep-24	4.73	4.54	9.28
Oct-24	5.05	4.22	9.26
Nov-24	5.02	4.06	9.09
Dec-24	4.94	4.26	9.19
Jan-25	4.54	4.30	8.84
Feb-25	4.26	4.26	8.52
Mar-25	4.12	4.38	8.51
Apr-25	4.04	4.50	8.54

Summary of absence reasons:

March - May 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)	26	4	1
Headaches (inc migraine)	8	1	0
Mental health	1	4	3
Musculoskeletal	2	0	1
Other	21	7	1
Sickness / Vomiting / Gastro	19	0	1
Total	78	16	7

This quarter, the seasonal colds / flu absences have declined, and overall, the total number of absences has dropped by over 50% compared to last quarter. Mental health

cases remain similar to last quarter, along with similar numbers for gastro-related absences.

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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