

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

24 June 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: HR Information Note

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

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 January to March 2026, with a comparison with the same period in the previous two years.

	Vacancies	Filled at first attempt	Filled (total)	Unfilled	% filled first attempt	Target
Q4: Jan - Mar 2024	22	16	16	6	72.7%	75%
Q4: Jan - Mar 2025	19	15	17	2	78.9%	75%
Q4: Jan - Mar 2026	23	21	23	0	91.3%	75%

During Quarter 4, there was a slight increase in the number of vacancies compared to the same period in the previous two years. All vacancies were filled during this period which reflects the current recruitment market conditions where we are seeing an improved number of applications for the majority of our job adverts.

The vacancies successfully filled this period include:

- Civil Enforcement Officers
- Revenues Officers
- Senior Planning Officers
- Legal Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
- Business Admin Apprentice (Democratic Services)

3.3 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
Jun-25	1	0.27%
Jul-25	4	1.08%
Aug-25	6	1.64%
Sep-25	3	0.82%
Oct-25	3	0.82%
Nov-25	1	0.27%
Dec-25	1	0.27%
Jan-26	4	1.08%
Feb-26	0	0.00%
Mar-26	3	0.80%
Apr-26	4	1.06%
May-26	4	1.05%
Total	34	9.15%

The number of leavers has increased in the last couple of months which has increased the labour turnover – although comparable to the turnover at the end of April 2025 which was 9.15%.

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 (eg apprentices, and maternity cover).

3.4 Absence

The absence figures are shown below as absence days lost per employee on a rolling basis.

Monthly rolling absence: days lost per employee			
	Long-term	Short-term	Total
May-25	4.08	4.42	8.50
Jun-25	3.82	4.26	8.08
Jul-25	3.73	4.24	7.97
Aug-25	3.70	4.11	7.81
Sep-25	3.47	4.29	7.76
Oct-25	3.46	4.49	7.95

Nov-25	3.56	4.50	8.05
Dec-25	3.56	4.48	8.04
Jan-26	3.78	4.47	8.25
Feb-26	4.17	4.46	8.63
Mar-26	4.42	4.45	8.86
Apr-26	4.65	4.30	8.95

Summary of absence reasons:

Mar – May 2026 Absence reasons	Occasions of absence		
	Up to 1 week	1-3 weeks	Over 3 weeks
COVID 19 - suspected	0	0	0
Ear, Nose and Throat (Inc Cold/Flu)	21	2	0
Headaches (inc migraine)	13	0	1
Mental health (inc stress, depression)	5	3	5
Musculoskeletal	4	2	3
Other (inc Surgery)	50	6	3
Sickness / Vomiting / Gastro	18	1	1
Total	90	14	13

This quarter has seen a drop in short-term absences by around a third compared to last quarter. The number of occasions of 1–3 week absences has remained stable, with the number of long-term absences (over 3 weeks) having dropped by half. The cases of mental health related and musculoskeletal absences make up most of the long-term cases which are being supported by our HR Business Partners.

3.5 Applicant Tracking System

The new Applicant Tracking System was launched in April and is now fully operational, following a short period of running both systems in parallel.

Initial feedback has been positive. We will continue to gather views from candidates and recruiting managers so that we can identify any further improvements as the system becomes embedded.

3.6 National pay bargaining 2026/27 – National Joint Council (NJC)

The Unions submitted their pay claim for 2026/27 in December 25:

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater)
- A minimum pay rate of £15 an hour
- A two hour reduction in the working week
- An increase of one day annual leave

The National Employers made their offer in March 2026:

- 3.3% on all pay points
- All other aspects of the Unions claim for 2026/27 have been rejected.

The Unions have since rejected this offer, with some consulting with their members about industrial action. The employer offer has been accepted for Chief Officers, which covers our Director roles.

3.7 **Apprenticeships**

We currently have five apprentices in post and are in the process of appointing a further three. During this period, three apprentices were successfully appointed to permanent roles or extended fixed-term contracts with the Council. We took the opportunity to celebrate apprentices at a recent staff briefing.

In May, two of our current apprentices attended the Local Government Apprentice of the Year event. They found the experience valuable, particularly as it encouraged them to step outside their comfort zone and gave them the opportunity to meet apprentices in similar roles at other councils. All attendees also receive personalised feedback from Local Government East to support their ongoing development.

3.8 **National Graduate Scheme**

We have recently completed interviews for the next round of graduate recruitment and provided feedback to candidates. We expect to be notified of the outcome in July.

Our first graduates are now in the final few months of their fixed-term contracts with the Council. One graduate has secured a permanent role elsewhere, and we are delighted that the other has successfully moved into a new role within the Council.

3.9 **Learning and Development**

We are continuing to provide regular resources to support staff to navigate through Local Government Reorganisation, most recently to support resilience, communications skills and to educate about neurodiversity.

3.10 **Change Network**

As part of the Local Government Reorganisation programme, we have been working with councils across Hertfordshire to establish a county-wide employee change network.

The proposal has been well received at the Council, and several volunteers have come forward to join the network. They will receive training and development to support them in taking on these new roles.

3.11 **Employee Wellbeing**

Since the launch of the new EAP service in April, we have received positive feedback from several staff who have already accessed the services.

Following success of the previous wellbeing walks, a further walk is being arranged in June to support loneliness awareness week.

3.12 **Inclusion**

We are regularly providing resources to staff at our monthly staff briefing, most recently around the effects of racism in the workplace and speaking up for Inclusion. The Inclusion Group provided advice ahead of the digital inclusion survey and has created support and guidance for staff networks.

In May, the first employee Women's Network took place, led by colleagues from the Inclusion group. This session focussed on imposter syndrome and building confidence.

4. 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. CONTACT OFFICERS

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