

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

21 October 2026

*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 during the last quarter in delivering People Strategy projects and addressing workforce matters.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The information note contains updates regarding the significant and strategic activities from the People Strategy and HR service 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 1 April – June 2026, with a comparison with the same period in the previous years.

	Vacancies	Filled at first attempt	Filled (total)	Unfilled	% filled first attempt	Target
Q1: April-June 2023	21	19	19	2	90.5%	75%
Q1: April-June 2024	10	7	7	3	70.0%	75%
Q1: April-June 2025	20	17	17	3	85.0%	75%
Q1: April-June 2026	26	24	22	2	92.3%	75%

During Quarter 1, we saw an increase in the number of vacancies compared to the same period in previous years. The vacancies which were not filled during this quarter include an Information Officer and Trainee Electoral Services Officer.

Overall, we continue to see a good response to our job adverts with the majority of our vacancies being filled. The vacancies successfully filled this period include:

- 4 apprenticeships – HR, IT, Climate Change and Revenues

- Assistant Marketing Officer
- Homelessness and Housing Officer
- HR Support Officer
- Insurance Officer
- Communications Assistant

3.3 Leavers and Turnover

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

Rolling 12 months	Turnover	
	Leavers	Monthly
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%
Jun-26	1	0.26%
Jul-26	3	0.78%
Aug-26	5	1.32%
Total	32	8.53%

The turnover has dropped slightly compared to August 2025 (9.8%) but has fluctuated in the intervening months, with the rolling figure dipping to 7.04% in March and increasing to 9.15% in May. Overall, the average turnover across the past couple of years at 8.47% has remained broadly favourable, compared to 22-23 and 23-24 where the average turnover was over 11%.

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
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
May-26	4.55	4.42	8.97
Jun-26	4.89	4.54	9.43
Jul-26	5.11	4.65	9.76
Aug-26	5.19	4.71	9.89

Summary of absence reasons:

June - August 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)	25	1	1
Headaches (inc migraine)	11	0	0
Mental health (inc stress, depression)	2	8	8
Musculoskeletal	2	3	2
Other (inc Surgery)	32	10	6
Sickness / Vomiting / Gastro	21	0	0
Total	93	22	17

There has been a similar level of short-term absences alongside a small increase in the number of other cases compared to the previous period. The number of mental health related absences has increased for both 1–3-week absences and the long-term absences.

Our HR Business Partners work with line managers providing advice and support for longer term absences, including OH referrals to help prevent absences and to seek advice on phased hours and reasonable adjustments to assist employees when they are ready to return to work.

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

The pay offer of 3.3% was agreed in August 2026.

The regional pay briefings will take place in the coming months regarding the 2027 pay award.

3.6 Apprenticeships

We have recently advertised 3 apprentice roles in Community Wellbeing, Cultural Services and Democratic Services. Across the three roles there were 134 applications.

We continue to promote apprenticeships as a developmental pathway for existing staff to allow them to continue to upskill in readiness for the potential changes ahead.

3.7 National Graduate Scheme

Our newest graduate started with this month, and our existing graduate has moved into their third rotation, after providing valuable support for a Greenspace Consultation during his previous placement. We ensure that we provide continuing support to our graduates to help them develop into the role including providing a mentor when they have settled into the programme.

3.8 Learning and Development

We continue to provide regular resources to help staff navigate the uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation. Alongside this support, we remain focused on developing core skills through a variety of methods. Our personal development mornings have covered topics including cyber security, unconscious bias and navigating change. We have also run training for managers on neurodiversity, and coaching conversations.

3.9 Regular Performance Reviews

We have reviewed the Regular Performance Review (RPR) process to ensure there is a clear framework for meaningful conversations about future roles and development needs. As part of the review, we have reintroduced the return window to support straightforward reporting, alongside timely awareness-raising and guidance.

3.10 Annual Staff Events

Our annual staff events were arranged to take place in September. These have been postponed in light of the LGR pause and will be rearranged for a later date.

3.11 Change Network

All Change Ambassadors have attended an initial induction event. The group now meets regularly, enabling members to support one another during the ongoing uncertainty surrounding LGR.

We will continue to develop the Ambassadors' transferable skills, supporting both their personal development and the effectiveness of the Change Network as the position becomes clearer.

3.12 Employee Wellbeing

We recognise that the pause in Local Government Reorganisation may have a further impact on staff wellbeing. We are therefore continuing to highlight the support available and encourage colleagues to seek help when needed.

The wellbeing room continues to receive positive feedback from both existing staff and new starters.

On World Suicide Prevention Day, 10th September, we shared support resources with staff. This year's message reinforced that suicidal thoughts can be interrupted and that simple acts of kindness, concern and connection can make a meaningful difference and help to start a conversation.

The Social Team is arranging a programme of walks in the new year to encourage staff to explore the district and spend time outdoors. Even 10–15 minutes outside can help to reduce stress, improve mood and restore mental focus.

3.13 Inclusion

Members of the Inclusion Group shared an update at the September staff briefing, highlighting progress and achievements to date. Inclusion Champions have continued to raise awareness by sharing resources for National Inclusion Week and contributing an article on Black History Month in Insight.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the People Strategy and 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

Authors

- 5.1 Rebecca Webb
HR Services Manager
01462 474481
rebecca.webb@north-herts.gov.uk
- 5.2 Ian Couper
Director – Resources
01462 474243
ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk