



James Ellis
Head of Legal and Democratic
Services

MEETING : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
VENUE : VIRTUAL MEETING - LIVESTREAMED
DATE : WEDNESDAY 5 AUGUST 2020
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors P Ruffles (Vice-Chairman), A Alder, S Bull, J Dumont,
M McMullen and S Newton

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DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

1. A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:
 - must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
 - must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
 - must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
 - if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
 - must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.
2. A DPI is an interest of a Member or their partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom they are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom they are living as if they were civil partners) within the descriptions as defined in the Localism Act 2011.
3. The Authority may grant a Member dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable him/her to participate and vote on a matter in which they have a DPI.

4. It is a criminal offence to:

- fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register;
- fail to notify the Monitoring Officer, within 28 days, of a DPI that is not on the register that a Member disclosed to a meeting;
- participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which a Member has a DPI;
- knowingly or recklessly provide information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a DPI or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

(Note: The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for up to 5 years.)

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AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 12 February 2020 (Pages 7 - 14)

To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.

5. Local Joint Panel - Minutes: 5 February and 1 July 2020 (Pages 15 - 28)

The Minutes of the meetings held on 5 February and 1 July 2020.

6. Safety Committee : Minutes - 13 January 2020 (Pages 29 - 32)

To receive the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 13 January 2020

7. Human Resources Management statistics - Quarter 4 (January - March 2020) (Pages 33 - 44)

8. Health and Safety Quarterly Review - Quarter 4 Report (January - March 2020) (Pages 45 - 56)

9. Health and Safety - Annual Report 2019/20 (Pages 57 - 72)

10. Health and Safety Quarterly Review - Quarter 1 (April - June 2020) (Pages 73 - 84)

11. Learning and Development Review 2019/20 (Pages 85 - 96)
12. Annual Turnover Report 2019/20 (Pages 97 - 110)
13. Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2019/20 (Pages 111 - 124)
14. HR Management Statistics - Quarter 1 (April - June 2020) (Pages 125 - 134)
15. Standby and Out of Hours Policy (Pages 135 - 146)
16. General Leave Policy (Pages 147 - 172)
17. HR and Payroll Team Update (Pages 173 - 226)
18. Urgent Business

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY
2020, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)
Councillors A Alder, J Dumont, S Newton
and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Claire Kirby	- Human Resources Officer
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

353 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S
Bull and M McMullen.

354 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019

were submitted. The Head of HR and Organisational Development reminded Members that Local Joint Panel considered and commented on reports prior to consideration by Human Resources Committee Councillor P Ruffles said that the Local Joint Panel played a particularly important role in the debating process prior to reports being submitted to HR Committee.

355 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed James Ellis, the new Head of Legal and Democratic Services to the meeting.

356 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW - OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2019

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report detailing the results of the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (October to December 2019) which had been considered and supported by the Local Joint Panel on 5 February 2020. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the Health and Safety Policy responsibilities and Organisation Section and the Health and Safety Policy Core Policy; Statement of Intent were both constitutionally required and would need to be submitted to Council for approval.

The Health and Safety Officer provided a summary of the review in relation to:-

- Contract Management and Compliance;
- Contract and Development Support
- Learning and Development : Partnership training and future events;
- Policy Development – future policies for Committee;
- Project work;

- Work Related Accidents

The Head of HR and Organisational Development commended the Health and Safety Officer for his work in consolidating the health and safety approach and especially for his work with contractors.

In response to a query from Councillor A Alder, the Health and Safety Officer explained how the lone worker safety devices worked and who they were issued to. The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that health and safety refresher courses would be rolled out to all Members in due course.

Councillor P Ruffles explained that in relation to Contract and Development support, and, specifically,) Hertford Theatre, there were some “pinch points” in relation to the project. He hoped that Members would be kept apprised of such issues.

The Committee noted the report as detailed and that the Health and Safety Policy Responsibilities and Organisation Section and the Health and Safety Policy Core Policy; Statement of Intent would be presented to Council for approval.

The Chairman on behalf of Members thanked the Health and Safety Officer for his detailed report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted

(B) the report be endorsed for approval by Council.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report which detailed the outcome of the Gender Pay Gap report 2019, which reported on the progress on last year's action plan and of actions proposed for the 2020/21 civic year. The HR Officer provided a summary of the report adding that a number of actions had been introduced in an effort to reduce the gender pay gap for 2020/21.

Councillor S Newton commented on the ratio of women to men (73%) employed by the Council and said that, irrespective of this statistic, the issue was about competency to undertake a role. The HR Officer provided a summary of why so many women were employed by the Council and why this differed (for example) with Stevenage Borough Council (which had not contracted out its refuse service) which was predominately male and the impact this had on statistics.

In response to a query by Councillor A Alder, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained that the Council employed 6 apprentices. The Head of HR and Organisational Development undertook to provide all Members with a summary of the Council's approach to apprenticeships.

The Committee noted the report, as detailed.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

358 PAY POLICY STATEMENT: 2020 - 2021

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report on the Council's Pay Policy Statement before its submission to Council in March 2020. The Head

of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the report. He also advised that the Council had offered a 2% pay rise to staff which had been rejected by UNISON but that negotiations were ongoing.

The Committee supported the Pay Policy Statement and recommended its approval to Council.

RESOLVED – that the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 be recommended to Council for approval.

359 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report outlining the current performance of HR Management Statistics for the Quarter 3 period (October – December 2019). The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the report adding that the Council was continuing to improve management of its vacancies.

Councillor A Alder sought clarification as to whether Officers were remunerated if they were “acting up” also in addition to undertaking their own role. The Head of HR and Organisational Development confirmed that they were paid immediately when “acting up”.

In response to a query from Councillor S Newton, the Head of HR and Organisational Development explained the rationale and timescales in relation to keeping jobs/vacancies on hold.

The Chairman on behalf of Members, asked that their

thanks be passed on to the Human Resources Officers for their continuing good work and professionalism.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

360 RECRUITMENT AUDIT 2019

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report on the findings, recommendations and management responses in relation to the Internal Audit Report on the Council's recruitment process, attached as an Appendix to the report. The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary to the report.

Members noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

361 PAYROLL AUDIT 2019

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report setting out the findings and outcomes of the payroll audit undertaken by the Shared Internal Audit Services (SIAS) for the period 2019/20.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development commended the Payroll Team for their continuing hard work.

The Chairman on behalf of Members asked that Members' thanks be forwarded to the Payroll Team for their continuing hard work and professionalism.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted; and

(B) Members' thanks be forwarded to the Payroll Team for their continuing hard work and professionalism.

362 GENERAL LEAVE POLICY UPDATE

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report which updated the General Leave Policy. He said the updated policy now omitted the Carers Policy, which had duplicated sections of the General Leave Policy and Family Friendly policy. Removing such duplication would minimise confusion.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the report and why it had been necessary to update the General Leave Policy.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report updating the General Leave Policy be noted;

363 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of HR and Organisational Development submitted a report updating the Committee on the work of the HR and Payroll team during Quarter 3 (October – December 2019). The Head of HR and Organisational Development provided a summary of the report.

Members acknowledged a number of positive outcomes

contained within the report, including the fact that the Council had been shortlisted as a finalist by Reward and Employee Benefits Association for its wellbeing programme. The results would be announced on 5 March 2020 at an award ceremony.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development explained a number of ongoing issues and frustrations from the viewpoint of support and customer services and in relation to the HR and Payroll System specifically in relation to the Health & Safety Module and Learning & Development Modules.

The Committee noted the report and the good work being progressed.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

364 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING: 5 JUNE 2019

The Minutes of the LJP meeting held on 5 June 2019 were submitted for information.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Chairman

Date

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2020, AT 12.00
PM

PRESENT:

Employer's Side

Councillors M Stevenson,
E Buckmaster, L Haysey

Staff Side (UNISON)

J Bruce (Chairman), N Munro, J Francis

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor R Bolton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Andre Ferreira	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Emily Cordwell	- Human Resources Apprentice
Claire Kirby	- Human Resources Officer

5 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of
Councillor Dumont and Debbie Thomas (Unison).

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting,

specifically Councillor Bolton, who was attending the meeting as an observer in her capacity as Chairman of the Human Resources Committee.

The Chairman said that while last meeting of the Committee was held some time ago, in June 2019, meetings would only be held if there was a strategic reason to do so.

The Chairman conveyed her thanks to Simon O'Hear, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, for his co-operation and contribution to the good working relationship which existed between the Staff Side and the Employer Side.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In response to Councillor Buckmaster who enquired if he should declare an interest on any agenda item as his son had recently been appointed as an EHC employee, the Chairman said that this was not necessary.

8 MINUTES - 5 JUNE 2019

It was moved by Councillor Buckmaster and seconded by Councillor Stevenson that the Minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

With reference to the Acceptable Use Policy, the Chairman said that certain arrangements, such as the use of Drop Box, had not yet been practically introduced. The Head of Human Resources and

Organisational Development said that while the Acceptable Use Policy had been implemented, there were some practical issues, mainly where the Council did not fully control the application of certain systems, but these were being reviewed. The preference was to use applications which were fully controlled by the Council.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9 GENERAL LEAVE POLICY UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report on the Updated General Leave Policy and the removal of the Carers Policy. He said that a review of the General Leave Policy, the Carers Policy and the Family Friendly Policy had identified that there was duplication between the Carers Policy and the other two policies.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the main issue identified related to a misalignment, in that the Carers Policy had a clear provision for eligible staff for five days paid dependency leave (further such leave would be unpaid), whereas the General Leave Policy only referred to dependency leave in the unpaid section, but did refer elsewhere to five days paid discretionary leave, with the main reason being for emergencies relating to dependents.

The Committee briefly discussed how and when dependency leave was used and the Chairman said

that the UNISON had worked closely with the Human Resources team on the exact definition of a dependant, which was now in line with statutory guidance. The aim was to ensure a consistent and fair approach across all departments.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the General Leave Policy had been updated with more detail on dependency leave, and that the policy now made it clear that line managers should consult with HR on the use of the policy. He provided examples of when dependency leave could be used, such as to support unplanned/emergency events. He emphasised that dependency leave should not be used for planned events, which should be managed through planned leave.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that once the amendments had been made and tested on MyView, the Union were fully consulted, and the policy was agreed to with a few minor amendments. The revised policy had then been published and line managers were fully briefed on the changes. To date, some requests for dependency leave had been approved, while some had been declined; managers and staff would be consistently educated on the use of dependency leave.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided an update on the East Herts Together Development and said that a group had now been established, with representatives from all services being invited to the first full meeting.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained why the group had been formed and what matters which they would consider. Some initial “quick-wins” were identified, which included supporting staff to use the MiCollab telephone system; consistent use of the Outlook calendar; the use of a standard e-mail signature; and the uploading of officer photographs to corporate systems.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that consistency was very important and referred to standardised voicemail messages as an example.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said there was still some frustration that not all staff were consistent when using Outlook. Details of policies would be rolled-out to all staff and any amendments would be submitted to the Local Joint Panel. No management training would take place until all policies had been approved and put in place so that they could be used as part of the training.

Councillor Haysey said that the request to upload photographs would also apply to Councillors and she had asked Members to do this by Friday 14 February 2020. She would give feedback on her request to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and Democratic Services.

(Note from Democratic Services: Councillor Haysey was informed post-meeting that only Members could upload their photographs to their Outlook accounts as only account holders could do this. Members were also informed via the weekly Members' Information Bulletin

how this could be done.)

It was proposed by Jenny Francis and seconded by Councillor Haysey that the Panel note the recommendations in the report and the update on the East Herts Together Development Group. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the Motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Panel note the:

- (a) updated General Leave Policy which had been published on the intranet in January 2020;
- (b) removal of Carers Policy from January 2020 (which duplicated sections of the General Leave Policy and the Family Friendly policy which had caused confusion); and
- (c) update on the East Herts Together Policy Development Group.

The meeting closed at 12.25 pm

Chairman

Date

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD IN THE VIRTUAL
MEETING - VIRTUAL MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020, AT 12.00 PM

PRESENT: **Employer's Side**

Councillors M Stevenson, E Buckmaster,
L Haysey and J Dumont

Staff Side (UNISON)

Ms Jackie Bruce (Chairman)
Ms S Forde and Ms J Pomfrett

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors J Francis, R Bolton, J Burmicz,
M McMullen and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
Claire Kirby	- Human Resources Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Buckmaster and seconded by Councillor Haysey that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked everyone attending the virtual meeting. The Chairman reminded Members that following a decision by Council in May 2020, the Membership of all committees had remained the same to address administrative protocols caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. The Panel Members introduced themselves.

The Chairman welcomed William Troop to the meeting as the new Democratic Services Officer.

The Chairman highlighted some of the good work going on in the background over the last few months as both Officers and Members dealt with working in different ways. She thanked both Staff and Members who she said had gone above and beyond to support residents and employees during this trying situation. The Chairman

referred to the innovative work in the background to ensure that the most vulnerable had been offered support and of the changes which had been made to ensure the continuation of vital services and how all within the Council had adapted to the challenges of the new working situation. The Chairman went on to say that the provision of equipment had enabled the customer services team to work from home and so allow the public to continue to have human contact, with staff readily embracing the challenges of the new ways of working and should be thanked for this.

The Chairman expressed her thanks to the IT Service on the support they had given to both Staff and Members under these difficult situations as all had embraced the use of new technology and Zoom meetings in moving forward to what had become the “new normal”. The Chairman expressed her thanks to the Chief Executive, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Leadership Team for recognising the importance of working with UNISON and thanked Members of the East Herts UNISON Branch Executive Team for their support and their input on the Risk Assessments and Policy Changes that UNISON had been consulted on and the invaluable help this had provided to the Branch Secretary.

The Chairman commented that although there were no current plans for all to return to the office, as things moved forward and the lockdown eased, she explained that UNISON would continue to work collaboratively with the Council on the creation of the new working protocols and dynamic Risk Assessments for staff and services.

The Chairman referred to the statements of support regarding the “Black Lives Matter” issue by the Leader and

leaders of other districts, boroughs and County Councils in Hertfordshire and the Police and Crime Commissioner. She expressed her thanks to the Chief Executive for his statement to staff on this important matter and commented that UNISON had always been a leader in the fight against racism and inequality in all its forms and wherever it may be and this would continue to be fought every day. She concluded by saying that everyone was entitled to be treated equally and with respect and the Council, Members and Staff would continue to work together to support this.

The Leader thanked the Chairman for her comments adding that it was a pleasure to be part of that [Black Lives Matter] Statement. She thanked Officers for working under these extreme circumstances for working flexibly and said that the support given to Members had been phenomenal.

4 GENERAL LEAVE POLICY

The Secretary to the Employer's Side (and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development) submitted a report on the proposed updated General Leave Policy. He explained that this had been updated to reflect legislative changes (Jack's Law) from 6 April 2020 regarding statutory parental bereavement leave and pay and also sought approval of a proposal to enhance the second statutory week of bereavement pay to full pay as requested by UNISON and agreed by Leadership Team. The Head of HR explained that the proposed changes were unlikely to impact on the Council detrimentally and would support the mental impact on a parent in such a difficult situation.

Ms Forde from the Staff Side referred to paragraph 3.3 and

the 26 week qualification period of needing to be in the Council's employment. She felt that as the proposal to pay the second week at full pay was unlikely to impact on the Council detrimentally, then this qualification period should be removed.

In respect of a query from Councillor Haysey, the Head of HR explained that whilst the 26 period was a statutory requirement, removing this qualification period would not significantly impact on other Council policies and the existing East Herts 5 day (1st week) provision did not have a qualifying period.

It was moved by Councillor Haysey and seconded by Councillor Stevenson that the 26 qualifying period be removed from the second week of full pay.

After being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Human Resources Committee be advised that the Local Joint Panel (A) support the approval of the updates to the general leave policy to reflect legislation changes from 6 April 2020 regarding statutory parental bereavement leave and pay; and that

(B) a proposal to enhance the second statutory week of bereavement pay to full pay be supported, subject to the removal of the 26 week qualifying period

5 OUT OF HOURS POLICY

The Secretary to the Employer's Side submitted a report

regarding proposed changes made to the Standby and Out of Hours Policy following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota. The Human Resources Officer provided a summary of the report.

The Chairman commented that going forward, when consultation was to be undertaken which affected staff, then that should be undertaken early on as this would have made the process easier. She thanked the Leadership Team for bringing the matter forward. The Head of HR and Organisational Development accepted the point made in relation to involving staff early on. He added that originally this had been led by the Housing and Health team but that Officers could have advised teams affected that the matter was under review. He reminded Members that the four staff affected were aware that the out of hours payment to them was under review.

Ms Pomfrett (UNISON Member) sought assurances that the Council's partners would be advised of the proposed changes and made aware that the caretaking team would be the only team on standby. The Head of HR explained that the appropriate service manager would be responsible for letting partners within their service area know of the proposed changes.

The Head of HR reminded the Panel that the changes to the Policy would require the approval of HR Committee which would next meet on 5 August 2020.

It was moved by Councillor Buckmaster and seconded by Ms J Bruce that the recommendation be supported.

After being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Human Resources Committee be advised that the Local Joint Panel support the changes made to the Standby and Out of Hours Policy following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota.

6 REPORTS BY SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

There were no reports by the Secretary to the Staff Side.

The meeting closed at 12:36pm

Chairman

Date

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Minutes of Health and Safety Committee **Monday 13 January 2020 in Room 1.15**

Present: Robert Allwood (RA)
Sarah Bye (SB)
Peter Dickinson (PD) - Chairman
Jenny Francis
Peter Mannings (PM) – Minutes
Graham Mully
Steve Whinnett (SW)

1.0 Apologies: Ewa Dennis (ED), Helen Farrell (HF) and
Simon O’Hear (SOH)

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 The Minutes of the 30 September 2019 meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3.0 Matters Arising

3.1 PD said that a new Grounds Maintenance Contractor had been appointed. PD and GM referred to site observations. PD explained that the new grounds maintenance contractor welcomed the participation of the East Herts Council Health and Safety Officer at contract meetings.

3.2 PD said that East Herts had been approached by Stevenage Borough Council regarding the viability of a shared procurement exercise for a lone worker solution service provider.

3.3 PD said that Fire Marshall coverage had now been increased in all areas of Wallfields.

- 3.4 SW said that he was not aware of any issues as regards to external lighting at Wallfields and there had been no complaints from residents.
- 3.5 SW advised that securing additional parking spaces at Wallfields would involve tree removal and Officers in Development Management were not supportive of this. He said that this matter needed to be considered by Leadership Team and commented on the possibility of more disabled parking in the visitors parking area.

4.0 Tenant Representative Matters

- 4.1 Nothing to report.

5.0 Accident and Incident Reports

- 5.1 For the period 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019 there had been no accidents involving employees and no reportable incidents.
- 5.2 For the period 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2019, there were 66 non-reportable incidents across all the pools and no reportable incidents.

6.0 Regulatory and Legislative Changes

- 6.1 SW said that he was not aware of any regulatory or legislative changes. He said that Brexit might affect legislation and there might be changes to building regulations after the Grenfell Tower enquiry.

7.0 Health and Safety Inspections and Compliance Reports

- 7.1 PD said that he had nothing major to report following inspections of Council premises. SB and PD commented on

the introduction of Dementia awareness signs for Charringtons House and Wallfields.

- 7.2 The Safety Committee was advised that progress had been made in respect of the formal presentation of compliance reports in respect of grounds maintenance and parking.
- 7.3 SW said he would forward plans in respect of Grange Paddocks to PD. Action: SW

8.0 Property – Premises Maintenance and Repairs

- 8.1 Nothing to report.

9.0 Facilities Management

- 9.1 SB said that she had nothing to report.

10.0 List of Issues

- 10.1a. Employees side (UNISON):
None

- 10.2b. Management side:
None

11.0 Health and Safety Training

- 11.1 PD said that bite size fire marshal training had been delivered. The training had been well attended and had covered what marshals were and were not expected to do. He said that he would be organising some fire drills for Wallfields. Lambert Smith-Hampton are responsible for fire drills at Charringtons House and Urbaser for drills at Buntingford Depot.
- 11.2 The Safety Committee had a general discussion in respect of refuse freighter vehicle movements at Buntingford Depot.

- 11.3 GM and PD said that Asbestos and Legionella Training was available at no cost from the Council's Insurance Company.

12.0 Health and Safety Policy

- 12.1 PD said that the Health and Safety Policy, containing the responsibilities set out in a statement of intent. He stated that this had been signed off by the Chief Executive, the Leader and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.
- 12.2 PD said that the policy would be submitted to Leadership Team, Human Resources Committee and then Full Council.
- 12.3 PD stated that Health and Safety was the responsibility of all Officers and not just that of the Leadership Team, Managers and the Chief Executive. The principle oversight of the policy sits with the Leadership Team.
- 12.4 PD detailed the draft driving policy, which covered work related road safety. He said that he would be making amendments to the policy. Action: PD

13.0 AOB

- 13.1 PD commented on the reminder to all Managers and Officers regarding the annual checks on driving licences, car insurance and MOTs.

14.0 Date of next meeting:

- 14.1 The next meeting will be held on Monday 20 April 2020 in Room 1.15 at 11 am

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January – March 2020)

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) That the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January –March 2020) be noted.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January – March 2020).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This report outlines the current performance against the annual HR targets as approved by the HR Committee and available benchmarking data.

3.0 Report

3.1 Vacancy Data and Recruitment

3.1.1 Table 1 below shows the vacancy position across the council as at 31 March 2020.

Table 1 – Vacancies

	Number of posts
Posts actively being recruited to	5
Posts on hold	21
TOTAL	26

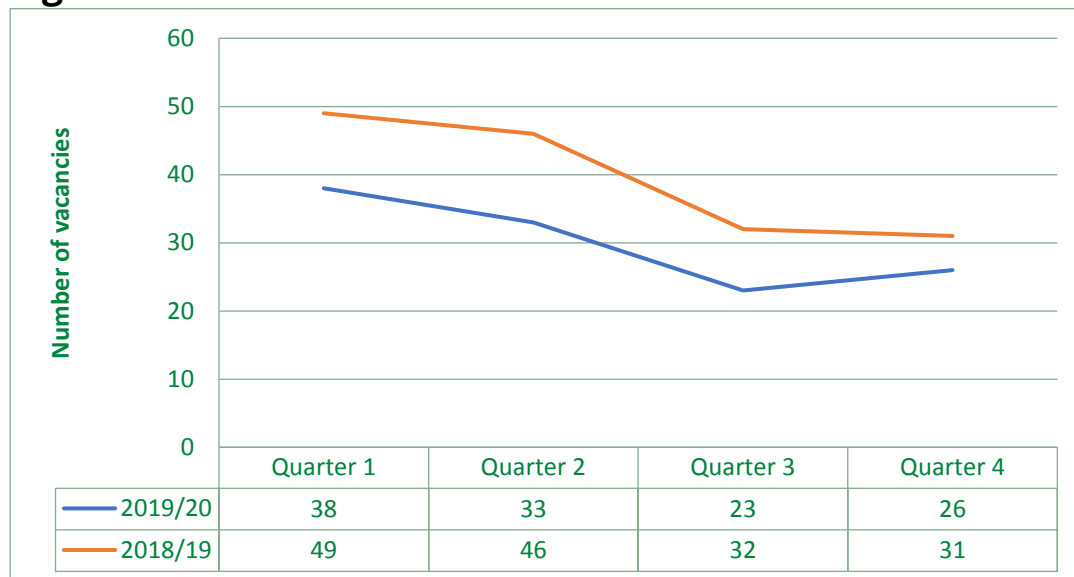
3.1.2 Posts being actively recruited to include those that are currently being advertised, at shortlisting or interview stages, pending pre-employment checks, or applicants have received an unconditional offer and have not yet started at the council. There were five posts during Quarter 4 that were actively being recruited to.

3.1.3 Twenty one posts were on hold. Ten of these were Planning posts that were being held due to an imminent review of the structure and were being covered as appropriate by agency staff. Three of these were Principal Planning Officer posts which are difficult-to-recruit-to-posts.

3.1.4 The remaining eleven posts on hold were due to e.g. pending a review of the job or the structure in the service area or potentially in relation to channel shift towards more online delivery. Two of these were solicitor roles which are difficult-to-recruit-to-posts. They were being covered by a combination of agency staff and legal support from Barking and Dagenham Council on a 6 month trial basis which will be reviewed by the new Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

3.1.5 Figure 1 shows that there were 26 vacancies in Quarter 4 which is slightly higher than in Quarter 3 (23 vacancies) but lower compared to the same period last year (31 vacancies).

Figure 1 – Number of overall vacancies



3.1.6 During Quarter 4 eleven posts were advertised. Seven posts (64%) were successfully filled, three with internal candidates and four with external candidates. Three of the remaining posts were still being progressed when the quarter ended. For the final remaining post, the manager, with support from HR, was considering alternative ways of filling it such as re-advertising and looking at job design.

3.1.7 One particularly successful recruitment campaign during Quarter 4 was for the European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) Contract Manager where twelve applications were received, five applicants were interviewed, and one appointment was made. The candidate is yet to start.

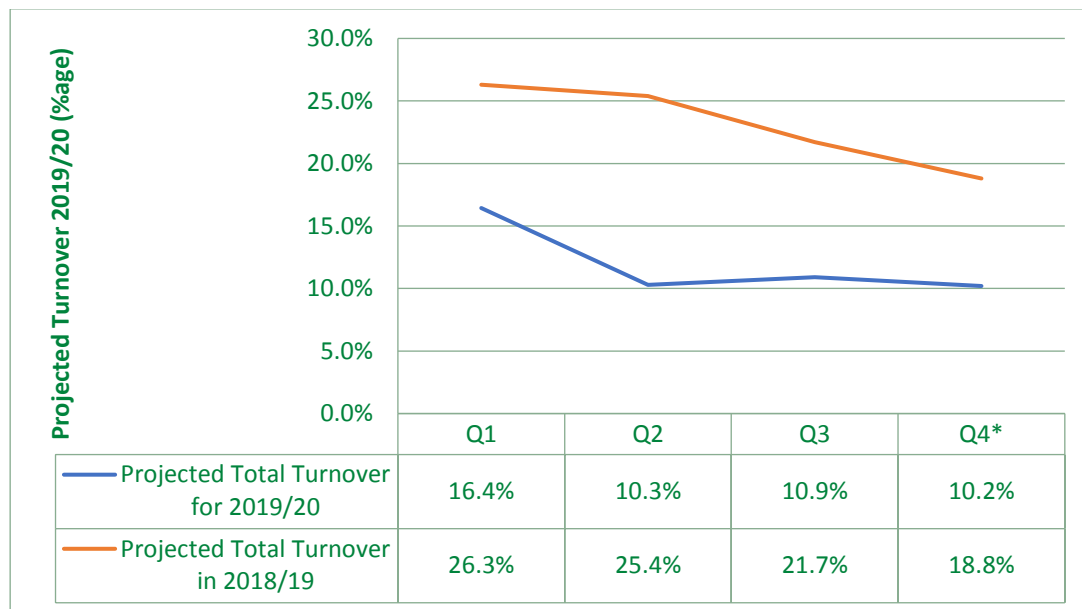
3.2 Employee Turnover

3.2.1 There were 7 leavers in Quarter 4. The total number of leavers for the whole of 2019/20 was 34 giving an annual turnover of 10.2%. Turnover in 2019/20 is considerably lower than in 2018/19 (18.8%) and lower than the local government average (14% for 2018/19 for Local Authority districts in the UK).

Quarter	Number of leavers
Quarter 1	12
Quarter 2	5
Quarter 3	10
Quarter 4	7
TOTAL	34

3.2.3 Figure 2 shows the turnover projections that were estimated at the end of each quarter during 2019/20 with the exception of Quarter 4 which shows *actual* turnover. Projected turnover generally fell throughout the year which follows a similar downward trend to the previous year.

Figure 2 – Summary of quarterly projections for Turnover during 2019/20



* The Q4 figure is actual turnover (rather than projected)

3.3 Sickness Absence

Overall absence

Quarter 4 overall absence data

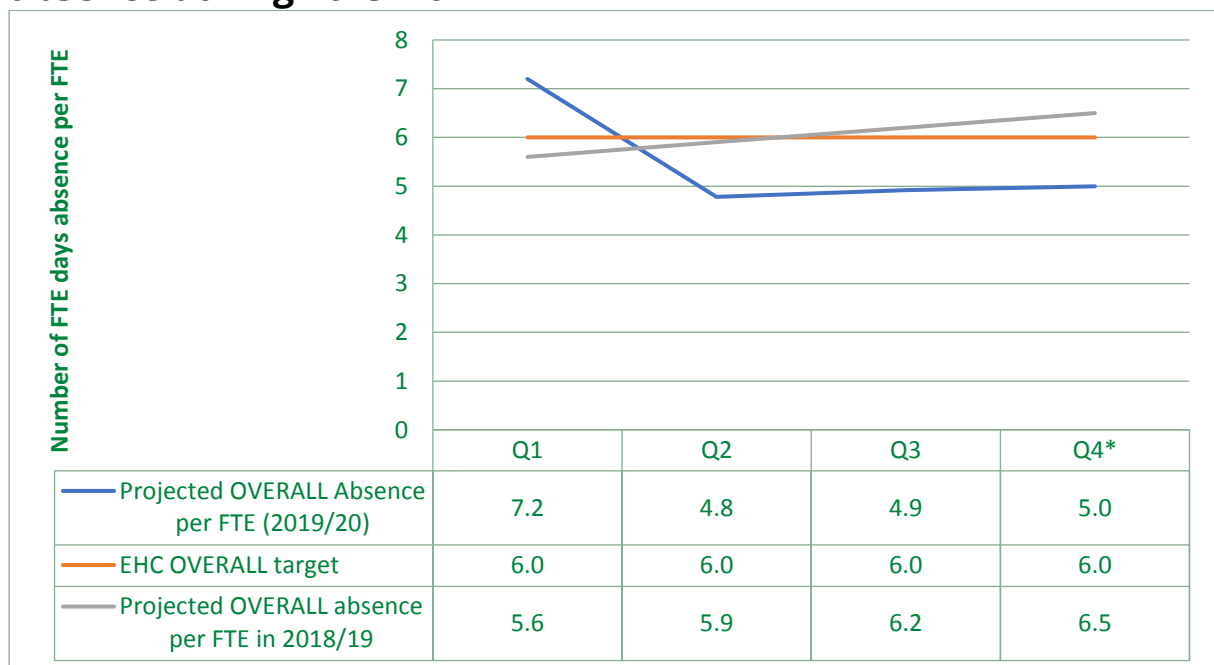
3.3.1 In Quarter 4, the total number of sickness days taken was

383.53 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 247.9 FTE days (65%) were due to short term sickness and 135.63 FTE days (35%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 1.3% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 0.7% which equates to an overall percentage lost time rate of 2%.

Overall absence for the annual period 2019/20

3.3.2 Figure 3 below shows projections for overall absence in 2019/20 at the end of each quarter with the exception of Quarter 4 which shows *actual* overall absence. For the annual period of 2019/20 overall absence was 5 days per FTE which is below the council's overall annual target of 6 days and lower than in 2018/19 (6.5 days per FTE).

Figure 3 – Summary of quarterly projections for OVERALL absence during 2019/20



* The Q4 figure is actual absence (rather than projected)

Short term absence

3.3.3 Absences of less than four weeks are considered to be short term sickness absence.

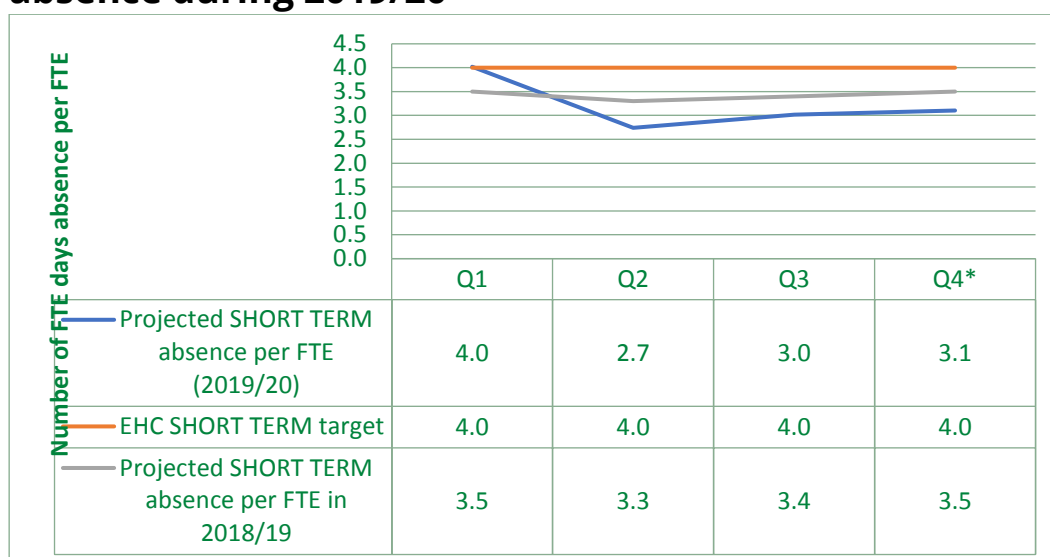
Quarter 4 short term absence data

3.3.4 Eighty Four employees (24.9% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 4 totalling 247.9 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 1.3%.

Short term absence for the annual period 2019/20

3.3.5 Figure 4 below shows projections for short term absence in 2019/20 at the end of each quarter with the exception of Quarter 4 which shows the *actual* short term absence rate. For the annual period of 2019/20, short term absence was 3.1 days per FTE which is lower than the council's short term annual target of 4 days and also lower than in 2018/19 (3.5 days per FTE).

Figure 4 – Summary of quarterly projections for SHORT TERM absence during 2019/20



* The Q4 figure is actual absence (rather than projected)

Long Term absence

3.3.6 Absences in excess of 4 weeks/28 consecutive calendar days are considered to be long term sickness absence.

Quarter 4 long term absence data

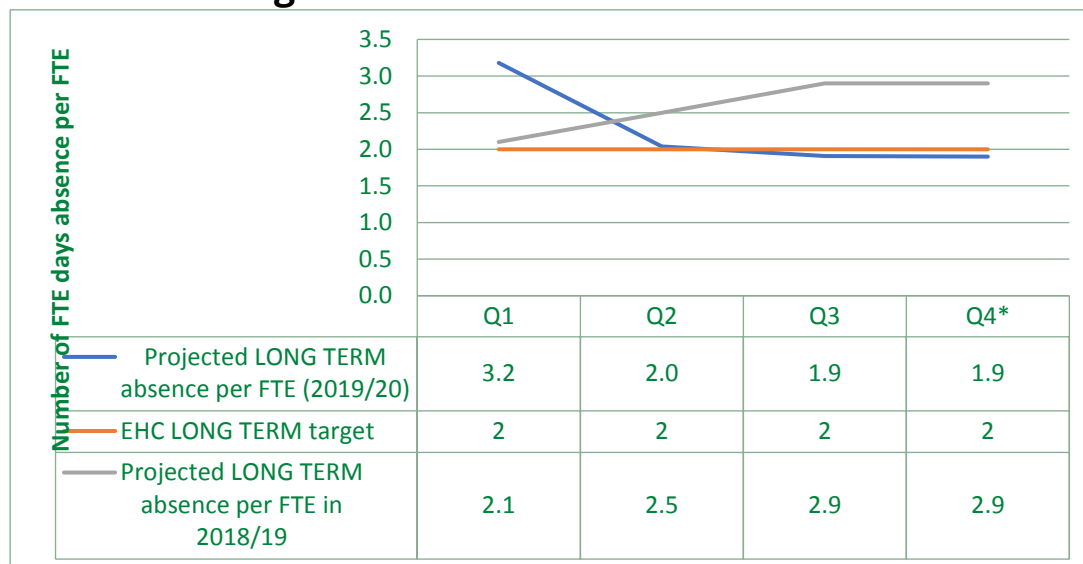
3.3.7 Seven employees (2.1% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 4 totalling 135.63 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 0.7% due to long term absence.

3.3.8 All seven employees have been offered support through the employee assistance programme and through referrals to Occupational Health. The reasons for long term absence were for reoccurring medical conditions (e.g. angina, allergies), acute medical conditions (e.g. heart attack, cancer), mental health issues, and stress (both personal and work related). With one exception, all employees have returned to work. The remaining employee has an acute medical condition and is being supported by Occupational Health.

LONG TERM absence for the annual period 2019/20

3.3.9 Figure 5 below shows projections for long term absence in 2019/20 at the end of each quarter with the exception of Quarter 4 which shows the *actual* long term absence rate. For the annual period of 2019/20 long term absence was 1.9 days per FTE which is just under the council's long term annual target of 2 days for 2019/20 and lower than in 2018/19 (2.9 days per FTE).

Figure 5 – Summary of quarterly projections for LONG TERM absence during 2019/20



* The Q4 figure is actual absence (rather than projected)

3.4 Learning and Development

3.4.1 From April to March 2020, there were 61 in-house learning and development events held and there were 454 participants. Please note these figures only include face to face in-house courses and do not include the in-house e-learning courses delivered through our skills build platform. These will be included in the annual HR report.

Event/Course	No of participants	Type/ Number of sessions held
Introduction to Procurement	22	3
First Aid at work refresher	8	2
Safeguarding	84	5
Corporate Induction	19	4
E Car Training	27	4
Attending meetings and networking	5	1
My View Sickness	6	1

Dementia Friend	7	1
Difficult conversations	28	4
Recruitment	7	1
Court Training	17	1
First Aid at Work (Qualification)	12	2
Retirement - Personal Financial Planning	15	3
Retirement - Half Day	8	1
Dealing with violence and aggression	58	6
Democratic Services Drop In	11	2
Ladder User and Working at Height	20	2
Fire Marshall Bitesize	27	6
Electrical Safety Awareness	2	1
Budget Monitoring	6	1
Intend procurement	4	1
Project Management Bitesize	6	1
Managing the Tender Process	7	1
Working with Volunteers	8	1
Risk Management Bitesize	3	1
Communication Team Away Day	4	1
Mental Health Training (Managers)	33	4
Total	454	61

3.5 Performance Management (PDRs)

3.5.1 Progress on the completion of Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) in 2019/20 will be reported on at the next HR Committee in August 2020.

3.6 Equalities Monitoring Indicators

3.6.1 The table below shows a summary of equalities data for employees as at 31 March 2020.

	Target	EHC Percentage
Disability		
Leadership Team with a disability	5%	0.0%
Employees with a disability	5%	4.5%
Ethnicity		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5%	11.0%
Employees from BAME groups	4.5%	6.9%
Gender		
Leadership Team members who are female	51%	44.0%
Employees who are female	51%	72.2%
Full Time/Part Time		
Employees who are part time	27%	35.6%
Employees who are part time and female	21%	32.3%
Employees who are part time and male	6%	3.3%

The Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Heads of Service. N.B There were 9 employees in the Leadership Team data as at 31 March 2020 (the interim Head of Strategic Finance and Property has not been included as he is not an employee of the council).

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As detailed in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety Quarterly Review – January 2020 to March 2020

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) That the report be noted

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report sets out the collation of Health and Safety (H&S) Management Statistics and service updates for Quarter 4 (January 2020 to March 2020).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Officer reports to the HR committee each quarter. This report will also be sent to the Executive and the Leadership Team for information along with minutes of the Safety Committee.

3.0 Safety Committee

3.1 In January 2020 the Safety Committee reviewed and agreed the following:

- Health and safety policy responsibilities and organisation section
- Health and safety Policy Core Policy – Statement of Intent

Both were submitted to full Council on the 03 March for consideration and were approved and adopted.

The Statement of Intent has been signed by the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development for publication. The Statement and Organisation and Responsibilities document has been published on the Councils intranet.

3.2 The operational policy for Driving was also agreed and this has been published on the intranet.

3.3 The following operational arrangements have been submitted to the next Safety Committee for consideration;

- Infection Control
- Risk Assessment and Safe Systems of Work
- Unusual, Adverse and Severe Weather

Although Safety Committee scheduled for 20 April 2020 has been cancelled due to the current Coronavirus situation, Safety Committee members will review the documents and provide feedback using IT solutions.

4.0 Contract Management and Compliance

4.1 In order to fulfil its duty of care all contracts are overseen by a contract manager who is responsible for ensuring the contract is being delivered safely and the contractor has the appropriate

safety procedures in place. The Health and Safety Officer works with the service contract managers to improve the information reporting processes and to ensure pertinent information is being reported and relevant action is being taken (when required) to Safety Committee, Leadership Team and Human Resources Committee. The following updates should be noted:

Buntingford Service Centre

- 4.2 A program of works has been taking place at the depot, all of which now allow the site to accept and transfer residual waste as part of our ongoing waste operations. From Monday 30th March 2020 the depot commenced its receiving of residual waste from our East Herts collection rounds; this means that there will be additional movements both in and out of the yard area.
- 4.3 Following recommendations from the Health and Safety Officer and the Insurance and Risk Business Advisor, the Head of Operations approved the appointment of a site supervisor to help facilitate this increase in vehicle/personnel movements a temporary appointment has been made while the recruitment process takes place. The role is primarily to ensure that all site users are safe and that the ongoing operations in the yard adhere to our health and safety regulations and Environment Agency requirements.
- 4.4 Formal introductions will take place at such a time when it is safer to do so alongside re-introducing regular H&S meetings with key personnel.

Parking Enforcement Contract

- 4.5 There are no health and safety concerns to report this quarter.

Sport and Leisure Management Contract

- 4.6 The Health and Safety Officer and Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) recommenced formal site visits on 25 February 2020 starting at Ward Freman Swimming Pool and Gymnasium. The Health and Safety Officer is pleased to report that pool water testing has been undertaken in line with requirements. Health and Safety monitoring has been undertaken to verify that compliance is in place and this is ongoing. There are no areas of concern or intervention action required to report this quarter and Sports and Leisure Management have excellent management arrangements in place.
- 4.7 Further site visits have been postponed until the current Coronavirus situation concludes and the Sport and Leisure Management, in response to advice from the Pool Water Testing Advisory Group (PWTAG), have made the decision to shut down all leisure centre functions.

Until further notice the pool's heating plumbing and electrical services (HPE's) have been switched off, which will allow the pools to reduce and settle naturally without any heat being pumped into the water but boilers and heating for the domestic water will remain on.

SLM will monitor each site daily to check the buildings and perform the statutory duties which include flushing domestic water daily, legionella checks, weekly chlorination of pools and pH and chlorine checks; with pool plant and the air handling units being switched on weekly to deal with any condensation issues and stop ceasing.

SLM will continue to manage Legionella risks during the Coronavirus situation in partnership with their consultant Kingfisher.

Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract

- 5.0 Meetings postponed until further notice.
- 5.1 The Health and Safety Officer will maintain contact with the Operations Team responsible for overseeing the grounds maintenance contract to request information on continuing grounds maintenance work.
- 5.2 The Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Open Spaces) has provided the following summary of current services being operated by Glendale and Groundworks.
- 5.3 Glendale services are continuing to deliver the contract as normal. They are currently concentrating on litter picking and dog/Litter bin emptying as well as grass cutting. Glendale has been proactive in their attitude towards delivering an as near normal service as possible within the current guidelines to keep staff safe.
- 5.4 Two projects are currently on hold as a result of the Coronavirus situation, Hartham Play area has halted just after the contract was awarded to DH Honour.

Parsonage Lane is 90% complete but has stopped due to being unable to obtain materials for the foreseeable future.

However Trinity Road play area, Bishops Stortford is continuing to be designed by Groundwork but will be facing a delayed start date.

The Operations team are continuing with site inspections and carrying out service delivery audits as usual.

Lone Worker Devices – Guardian 24

- 6.0 The Health and Safety Officer chaired a meeting with

colleagues from Stevenage Council on 29 February to discuss options for a possible joint procurement exercise for the provision of the Lone Worker service provider.

- 6.1 With support from the Procurement Team a joint procurement approach was agreed using an approved framework agreement. The process will be used to secure a single provider but there will be two separate operating contracts due to GDPR and management limitations.
- 6.2 The Procurement team has requested that East Herts Councils Health and Safety Officer acts as the lead project manager due to the Councils already established service and procedures. The officer is happy to fulfil this role.

7.0 Contract and Development Support

- 7.1 The Health and Safety Officer would like to update the committee on the following planned leisure projects:

The Health and Safety Officer will continue to liaise with the Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) on the progress of the improvement programmes.

- Hartham swimming pool and gym - upgrade and refurbishment

The Councils Planning Committee deferred the application pending a review of the designs.

- Grange Paddocks swimming pool and gym - new build

The Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) has confirmed that construction started at Grange Paddocks on Monday 23rd March 2020. Work is currently being undertaken in car park A to upgrade the incoming electrical supply and erect the fencing around the construction site.

The Health and Safety Officer is being kept up to date on the construction programme and is advising and supporting where necessary. Once the current foot bridge is removed and the temporary bridge installed, the incoming electrical and gas supplies will be upgraded and then the decision to continue construction will be taken with the contractors taking into consideration the current status of the coronavirus.

- Ward Freman Swimming Pool and gym- upgrade and refurbishment –

The Health and Safety Officer supports the proposed timetable for undertaking the upgrade and refurbishment which is currently due to commence on the 6 April 2020 and run until August 2020.

The Property Services Manager is discussing the works programme with SLM i.e. to ascertain if the refurbishments can proceed. SLM are consulting with the contractor to see if a suspension is appropriate.

- Hertford Theatre – Redevelopment and expansion

Theatre closure date is planned for January 2021 for a period of 12-18 months.

It is unknown at this time if the coronavirus situation will delay this project.

9.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and future events

- 9.1 During the period 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2020 two events were held. The First Aid at Work qualifier and a shared training event with Hertfordshire County Council; Working with Volunteers.

The Health and Safety Officer and Human Resources Officer continue to explore shared training opportunities with neighbouring authorities. All training has been postponed until further notice but work will continue on developing additional e-learning modules for Skillsbuild the Council's e-learning platform.

Event/Course	No of participants	Type/ number of sessions held
First Aid at Work 3 Day qualifier	3	1
Working with Volunteers	14	1
TOTAL	17	2

Future events include:

- Asbestos and Legionella Awareness
- First Aid at Work (Refresher) 2 day
- Defibrillator Awareness (Charringtons House)
- Evacuation Chair User

10.0 Policy Development

10.1 The Health and Safety Officer has reviewed all the arrangements in the Health and Safety Policy. A 3 year Policy Review Plan has been devised, developing a programme to support the continuation of this on-going policy review. The plan ensures the arrangements are revised in a timely manner, although there is flexibility in the programme to allow for any changes that may arise from legislative, regulatory, organisational or operational changes.

10.2 The Policy Statement of Intent and Policy arrangement for Organisational Roles and Responsibilities will be reviewed in

order to ensure they reflect the current organisational priorities and where regulatory or legislative changes occur.

- 10.3 The scope of the Health and Safety policy is included in the plan; the scope involves determining and documenting a list of specific goals, deliverables, features, functions, tasks and deadlines. In other words, it is what needs to be achieved and the work that must be done to maintain the content of the policy.

11.0 Defibrillator Update

A defibrillator was installed in the reception area at Charringtons House, Bishops Stortford in January 2020.

The Health and Safety Officer had arranged cardiac and defibrillator awareness training to take place in April 2020 at Charringtons House; this is currently on hold and will be rescheduled as soon as possible. It should be noted that 'Use of Defibrillators' has been provided to First Aiders as part of their training and the machine will instruct and guide a user on how to use the device through visual and vocal instructions.

12.0 Work-related accidents

- 12.1 There were 32 accidents recorded during the period 1 January 2020 to 29 February 2020 from the 5 swimming pools, The Committee are advised that statistics for March 2020 are currently unavailable due to disruption caused by Covid-19

There were 2 non-reportable minor incidents to members of the public.

Although the March figures are not available from the swimming pools the total compared to Quarter 3 is consistent if calculating the total by dividing the by the number of months.

There were 48 accidents recorded during the period 1 October and 31 December 2019

All accidents have been reviewed and where appropriate follow up action taken, we can confirm there has been no unusual increase, abnormal patterns or traits identified.

12.3 There were no accidents reportable under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) or any accidents or incidents that required investigation or intervention during this reporting period.

12.4 The Health and Safety Officer is analysing responses from the benchmarking survey distributed by the East of England Local Government Association, the results of the survey will be included with the annual safety report in May.

13.0 Options

N/A

14.0 Risks

As stated in the report where health and safety risks have been identified appropriate assessment has been made with relevant controls or mitigation put in place.

15.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

Yes – as described in the report

Human Resources

Yes – Health and Safety is part of the HR & OD Service

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

16.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety – Annual Report April 2019 – March 2020

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) That the report be noted

1.0 Proposal

1.1 This report sets out a summary of Health and Safety annual activities and project work from April 2019 – March 2020.

2.0 Background

2.1 Since April 2019 there has been a positive increase, commitment and support of Health and Safety throughout the organisation enabling increased development of the service in 2019/2020.

2.2 This report outlines the work by the Health and Safety Officer for the period 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. This report will be sent to the Executive and to the Leadership Team for information.

3.0 Annual Accident Data

3.1 Accident data Accident Totals 01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020.

Year	2019											2020			
Month	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar	TOTAL	
Staff Non Reportable Accidents	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	0		0	0	0	6	
Staff Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0		0	1	1	5	
Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013 involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents to Contractors Guests / Visitor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents at the 5 Swimming Pools and Gyms	16	22	18	21	10	18	21	16	14		14	18	See Note *	188	
TOTAL 19/20	16	22	19	22	11	20	25	16	14		14	19	1	199	

*Due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic figures are not available for the period leading up to the lockdown as the pools were closed.

- 3.2 All accidents have been reviewed and where appropriate follow up action taken. We can confirm there has been no unusual increase, abnormal patterns or traits identified.
- 3.3 There were no accidents reportable under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) or any accidents or incidents that required investigation or intervention during this reporting period.
- 3.4 Levels of accidents are comparable to the previous calendar year (2018) see below, there has been a reduction from the total of 225 (2018) to 199 (19/20) but this is explained by the closure of the pools in March 2020, average monthly accidents in the pool are around 17-18 meaning this figure would be 217 which is very comparable to 2018.

Year	2018												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Staff Non Reportable Accidents	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	5
Staff Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non Reportable Accidents involving Members of the Public	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013 involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Non Reportable Accidents to Contractors Guests / Visitor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non Reportable Accidents at the 5 Swimming Pools and Gyms	20	23	9	23	28	19	19	20	18	16	14	9	218
2018 TOTAL	22	23	10	23	28	19	20	20	18	16	14	12	225

3.5 Benchmarking Data – not available this year

3.5.1 The Health and Safety Officer sought benchmark data to make comparisons to other authorities through the East of England LGA (EELGA) but unfortunately only limited responses (7) were provided. Therefore a reliable benchmark was not achieved this year, this will be revisited as it is believed the response rate was affected by availability of staff/data due to COVID-19 restrictions. The limited feedback received confirmed that East Herts has sound reporting processes compared to others and the limited accident data provided was consistent and did not suggest any concern. The Head of HR and OD is going to approach EELGA to explore if accident data can be collected on a quarterly basis which sets out the number of staff and if possible visitors and the number of accidents to achieve a percentage which would then allow meaningful comparisons to be made in the next annual report. Please see section 12 below for more details.

4.0 Annual Risk Assessments

4.1 The Health and Safety Officer has developed and updated Corporate Risk Assessments to cover everyday functions such as general office working, lone working, fire safety and first aid arrangements enabling the Heads of Service and Service Managers to concentrate on specific service based risk assessments.

The Health and Safety Officer worked with managers to review service specific risk assessments, ensuring that they are still operationally relevant and up to date.

The previous H&S audit highlighted that the annual review last year had not been consistently actioned across services, this was raised at Leadership Team, it was agreed that completion of the annual review would be reported through this report to ensure accountability.

4.2 The annual risk assessment review has been undertaken and all services have been completed this year.

Table of Completed Risk Assessments 2019/20

Service	Risk Assessment
Housing and Health	Bodies, Human Remains and Bodily Fluids Nox Tubes Psychological Trauma Site Visits Water Safety Working at Height and in Confined Spaces Hillcrest Working Alone Safely Hillcrest Fire Safety Arrangements Hillcrest External - Communal Areas Hillcrest Internal - Communal Areas Hillcrest Hostel Flats Hillcrest Office Based work Hillcrest Exposure to Violence & Aggression
Strategic Finance & Property Facilities Management	Caretakers Driving Work Caretakers Lone Working Caretakers Hand Tools Caretakers Lone Working Caretakers Working at height and in Confined Spaces Caretakers Leaf Blower Caretakers Snow/Leaf Clearing Legionella Testing PAT Testing Facilities Arrangements for Holocaust Event Council Chamber Wallfields
Generic Risk Assessment Templates	Manual Handling Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Planning and organising events Working at Height Working at Height and in Confined Spaces Working with Volunteers

	Working With Young People
Planning	Site Visits
Revenues and Benefits	Outside Officers Visits
Hertford Theatre	Hertford Theatre Assessment
Corporate Risk Assessments Managed by the Health and Safety Officer Human Resources and Organisational Development	Workplace Fire Safety Workplace First Aid Workplace Shared and Common areas Workplace in Wallfields General Workplace in Charringtons General Workplace Safety General Office Workplace in Buntingford General All Weather Working Driving at Work Workstation Safety Lone Working Home Working Violence and Aggression Use of Alcohol Gels

5.0 Health and Safety Policy

- 5.1 In 2019/20 a significant review of operational health and safety policy arrangements continued.
- 5.2 The review has sought to streamline policy and eliminate duplication; ensuring effective and efficient coverage which is fit for purpose. Since the project commenced in 2017 the number has been reduced from 34 to 20 through consolidation with HR policies.
- 5.3 11 operational arrangements including the Statement of Intent and the Organisational Responsibilities policies have now been reviewed (4 were completed in this annual period) and adopted through the LT & Safety Committee and Full Council where appropriate;

2019/20:

- **Violence and Aggression - Cautionary Persons Register**
Last review Sept 2019 Date of next review: Sept 2022.
- **Work Related Road Safety**
Last review Sept 2019 Date of next review: Sept 2022.
- **Statement of Intent**
Reviewed Annually – Last approved by Full Council March 2020.
This details how safety will be managed and it demonstrates the organisation's commitment. It is signed by the Chief Executive, Head of HR&OD and the Leader of the Council.
- **Organisational Responsibilities**
Reviewed Annually – Last approved by Full Council March 2020.
This details responsibilities across the Councils range of service activities and how staff and management fit into the overall safety management system. This includes roles with specific H&S management responsibilities and decisions.

Previous Years:

- **Accidents, Incidents, Near Misses and First Aid Provision Policy**
Last review Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.
- **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Policy (COSHH)**
Last review Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.
- **Display Screen Equipment and Workstations and Employees' Entitlement to Eyesight Tests Policy**
Last review Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.
- **Fire Safety Management Policy**
Last review Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.

- **Legionella Management and Control**
Last review Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.
- **Lone Working Policy**
Last review Jan 2018 Date of next review: Jan 2021.
- **Procurement, Purchasing and Tenders**
Last review: Sept 2018 Date of next review: Sept 2021.

6.0 Display Screen Equipment and Workstation assessments

- 6.1 All staff including new starters have undertaken a Display Screen Equipment and Workstation Assessment as part of the bi-annual review and update. A total of 336 assessments were issued in 2019. The Health and Safety Officer supported, advised and resolved issues for officers where DSE issues are identified.

7.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and E-Learning.

- 7.1 During the period 1 April 2019 to 31st March 2020 a range of health and safety related training sessions have been designed and delivered:

Event/Course	No of participants
First Aid at Work 3 Day qualifier	12
Statutory First Aid at Work Certificate Renewal	7
Ladder Use and Work at Height	20
Electrical Safety Awareness	10
Fire Marshall Bitesize	27
Working with Volunteers	11
TOTAL Participants	87

7.2 East Herts continue to explore shared training opportunities with neighbouring authorities to increase economies of scale and to support Town and Parish Councils in our District. All recent face to face training has been postponed due to the Coronavirus situation and is being reviewed to be implemented in due course.

7.3 Current future events planned include but not limited to:

- Asbestos and Legionella Awareness
- First Aid at Work (Refresher) 2 day
- Defibrillator Awareness (Charringtons House)
- Evacuation Chair User

7.4 The following modules on the Councils E-Learning platform 'Skillsbuild' have been updated:

- Health and Safety in the Workplace. All staff – new starters and annual refresher.
- Lone Working for all staff who are designated as lone workers
- Display Screen Equipment & Workstation Safety all new starters and support for DSE reviews.

7.5 A more detailed Fire Safety Awareness module will be added to support fire safety protocols in addition to the core H&S module which covers basic fire safety.

8.0 Contract Management and Compliance

8.1 In response to a review of Health and Safety arrangements it was felt there was a need for greater continuity with services for contract management. This led to an improved partnership with Operations, it remains the Councils duty of care to ensure outsourced controls are operating and effective.

8.2 The Health and Safety Officer is working more closely with contract managers and providers for the high risk services being delivered;

- Accompanying the Contract Managers on site visits
- Reviewing accident, incident and near miss reports and statistics (this includes direct access to providers H&S records where possible)
- Attending Contract Management meetings and contributing to the review of health and safety arrangements

The key contract areas include;

- The Sport and Leisure Management contract for the management of the five swimming pools/leisure centres in the district.
- The Grounds Maintenance Contract operated by John O'Connor until 1 January 2020 when the contract was awarded to Glendale.
- The Shared Waste Services Contract awarded to Urbaser that commenced on the 1 May 2017.

8.3 Heads of Service and Service Managers are required to ensure that any new contract is identified to the Health and Safety Officer during the specification stage to ensure H&S elements are considered and documented. This was recommended to be strengthened in the H&S SIAS audit report in 2019 and then an ongoing monitoring agreed which is now in place (as above).

9.0 Safety Committee

9.1 The Head of Human Resources and OD has actively supported raising the profile of health and safety and is now the permanent chair of the Committee.

9.2 This included a review of how the Committee functioned and reported matters. Reports are now being submitted to the

Leadership Team as well as the Human Resources Committee and also to Executive for information to ensure full awareness and accountability.

- 9.3 The membership has also been extended to include Contract Managers from Operations to ensure feedback on the main outsourced contracts for the Swimming Pools, Grounds Maintenance and Shared Waste Service. Membership continues to have Unison representation, the Service Manager for Environmental Health as well as the Insurance and Risk Business Advisor.

10.0 Lone working Solution – Contract Renewal

- 10.1 Since April 2016, the Council has been with Guardian 24 to provide monitored lone worker protection.
- 10.2 The device allows the user to record safety memos; call for assistance and through its GPS functionality allows the ARC to direct assistance to the holders' location in addition to being able to locate a colleague if contact is lost. The contract is being reviewed with the Procurement Business Advisor and meetings have been made with Stevenage Borough Council to discuss the options of a shared procurement exercise.
- 10.3 The Procurement team has requested that East Herts Councils Health and Safety Officer is the designated lead due to the established service and procedures at EHC. However, due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the existing contract with Guardian 24 has had to be extended for a further year as the exercise has been delayed.

11.0 Defibrillator

- 11.1 A defibrillator was installed in the reception area at Charringtons House, Bishops Stortford in January 2020 in line with HR Committee's recommendation.

- 11.2 Face to face cardiac and defibrillator awareness training will be delivered as soon as the current situation with Covid-19 allows. In the meantime the first aiders are trained in the basics of how to use the machine and the machine also guides users through voice instructions.
- 11.3 Since 2019 three defibrillators have been implemented at Wallfields, Charringtons House and Hertford Theatre.

12.0 Benchmarking

- 12.1 A survey was circulated through the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) seeking views on benchmarking standards to be considered to compare with East Herts Councils Health and Safety performance.
- 12.2 The survey asked what areas of health and safety other Council's report on e.g. accidents, incidents, near miss statistics, contract monitoring and compliance etc. It also asked how they review H&S in terms of committees.

12.3 Results

- 12.3.1 EELGA has 50 member Councils, unfortunately only 7 authorities responded to the survey.
- 12.3.2 It was not possible to gain additional responses and it appears restrictions from COVID have made this more challenging this year but we will continue to explore options of benchmarking with neighbouring authorities.
- 12.3.3 There may be difficulties comparing data due to the different ways authorities manage their services e.g. Stevenage Borough Council still have Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance in house in addition to Housing.

13.0 Networking

- 13.1 The Health and Safety Officer is a member of a quarterly informal Hertfordshire Health and Safety Advisors Group.
- 13.2 The group consider legislation and regulations, good practice and acts as an information sharing body. In addition it allows the opportunity to share training opportunities and develop shared working and resources.
- 13.3 The Health and Safety Officer will discuss benchmarking options with the group and will also contact SLM/Everyone Active to see if Leisure Centre comparison data in terms of accidents can be provided for next year.

14.0 Options

N/A

15.0 Risks

N/A

16.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

Yes – as described in the report

Human Resources

Yes – Health and Safety is part of the HR & OD Service

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

17.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety Quarterly Review – April 2020 to June 2020

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) That the report be noted

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report sets out the collation of Health and Safety (H&S) Management Statistics and service updates for Quarter 1 (April 2020 to June 2020).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Officer reports to the HR committee each quarter. This report will also be sent to the Executive and the Leadership Team for information along with minutes of the Safety Committee.

3.0 Safety Committee

- 3.1 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic Safety Committee had been temporarily suspended, the next meeting will be held via zoom on Monday 03 August 2020.
- 3.2 During this period the Health and Safety Officer has been working closely with Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Service Managers and the Recovery of Service Group, Corporate Property Services Manager and the Facilities Team to support the preparation of risk assessments, covid secure working arrangements, protocols and procedures. The Health and Safety Officer has attended Leadership Meetings as required and has been liaising with UNISON to share best practice and risk assessment content.

4.0 Work Related Accident Reports

- 4.1 There have been no work related accidents recorded during the period 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.
- 4.2 There have been no accidents at the five swimming pools and gyms for the period 01 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 due to the closure of the venues as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 4.3 There were no accidents reportable under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) or any accidents or incidents that required investigation or intervention during this reporting period.
- 4.4 The Health and Safety Officer has completed the analysis of the responses from the benchmarking survey distributed by the East of England Local Government Association. 6 Responses were received from the 50 member authorities of the EELGA. Full details of the survey have been included in the Health and Safety Annual Report.

5.0 Contract Management and Compliance

5.1 In order to fulfil its duty of care, all contracts are overseen by a contract manager who is responsible for ensuring the contract is being delivered safely and the contractor has the appropriate safety procedures in place. The Health and Safety Officer works with the service contract managers to improve the information reporting processes and to ensure pertinent information is being reported and relevant action is being taken (when required) to Safety Committee, Leadership Team and Human Resources Committee. The following updates should be noted:

5.2 Buntingford Service Centre

5.2.1 Shared Waste Services Contractor Urbaser re-instated Brown bin collections for garden and food waste on Monday 11 May.

5.2.2 Following recommendations from the Government, Urbaser have been putting crew members into fixed teams to control the risk of transmission, where possible these teams do not change unless it is absolutely and operationally necessary.

5.2.3 On the 1 May a small fire started in the tipping hall at Buntingford, the smoke and fire were caught on the CCTV cameras and the crews in the hall used fire suppression equipment to douse the fire. On investigation it is believed that the forks of the waste loading vehicle hit a discarded household battery buried in the waste pile. The fire alarm did not activate due to the small size of the fire and the prompt response of the operatives in the hall. Following the incident EHC Property Services Team instructed Eastern Fire and Security to undertake a full check of the fire detection system this identified no faults in the system, in addition Property Services arranged an update of the Fire Risk Assessment undertaken by Total Fire Protection.

5.2.4 The Health and Safety Officer and the Insurance and Risk Business Advisor attended the site on 6 May to review site operations and view the location of the fire. The building was undamaged and overall management was good.

5.2.5 The Corporate Property Services Manager has asked for quotes for adequate additional flame detection sensors at the right height and locations so that the whole shed is covered for small fires in any part of the building. The sensors will trigger the alarm should the temperature increase by 3 degrees in a minute. The current CCTV system will be enhanced by the addition of audio warning to complement existing controls.

5.3 Parking Enforcement Contract

5.3.1 There are no health and safety concerns to report this quarter.

5.3.2 East Herts Parking Services reviewed APCOA's Covid-19 Risk Assessments for the Parking Enforcement Inspectors and has confirmed its use.

5.4 Sport and Leisure Management Contract – Covid-19

5.4.1 The Health and Safety Officer and Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) have visited Hartham Swimming Pool and Gym and Grange Paddocks Swimming Pool and Gym to discuss and review the arrangements Sports and Leisure Management have been putting into place to allow the re-opening of both facilities.

5.4.2 Measures being implemented are;

- Full water treatment and testing prior to re-opening
- Pre-bookable appointments which also supports Track and Trace
- Acrylic screens around service counters
- One way systems throughout the facilities for swimming pool

and gym users

- Enhanced cleaning regimes between session
- Whole room sanitisation fogging procedures
- Installation of hand sanitiser stations throughout the facilities
- Reduced swimming programmes and withdrawal of public seating areas
- Withdrawal of the use of inflatables
- Removal of gym equipment to promote social distancing
- Social distancing measure in changing areas

5.4.3 As previously reported SLM will continue to manage Legionella risks during the Coronavirus situation in partnership with their consultant Kingfisher.

5.4.4 Health and Safety monitoring will continue to be undertaken to verify that compliance is in place.

5.4.5 There are no areas of concern or intervention action required to report this quarter.

5.5 Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract – Covid-19

5.5.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been working closely with the Operations Team responsible for overseeing the re-opening of parks, play areas and open spaces. Work to re-open started in May with an anticipated opening date of the 4 July however new guidance received on the 1 May meant that the measures suggested needed further evaluation.

5.5.2 The Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Open Spaces) has provided the following summary of current services being operated by Glendale and Groundworks.

5.5.3 Glendale services are continuing to deliver the contract as normal. They are currently supporting the work on the re-opening of the parks, play areas and open spaces carrying out detailed inspections of equipment, ensuring that the areas are

litter free and installing Covid-19 awareness signage. Glendale continues to operate the delivery of the grounds maintenance contract ensuring that crews operate within guidelines.

5.5.4 Two projects are currently on hold as a result of the Coronavirus situation, Hartham Play area has halted just after the contract was awarded to DH Honour. Parsonage Lane is 90% complete but has stopped due to being unable to obtain materials for the foreseeable future.

5.5.5 The Operations team are continuing with site inspections and carrying out service delivery audits as usual.

6.0 Office Re-Opening – Covid-19

6.1 Wallfields Re-opening

6.1.2 The Health and Safety Officer has been working closely with the Corporate Property Services Manager, Facilities Team and Leadership Team and Human Resources colleagues on implementing covid secure measures for the eventual re-opening of the Wallfields Offices. This has included;

- Developing the Covid-19 Secure Workplace Risk Assessment,
- Office Safety Protocols
- Symptoms Reporting Protocols
- Track and Trace measures for entry and exit to Wallfields
- Enhanced cleaning regime
- Controlling the use of desk space and meeting rooms

6.2 Wallfields Reception

6.2.1 The Health and Safety Officer has worked closely with the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy and the Customer Service Team Leaders on measures to enable the eventual re-opening of Wallfields Reception following government

guidelines. These measures considered include;

- Introduction of one way entry and exit
- Acrylic screen for reception desks
- Removal of seats to promote social distancing
- Signage displayed to remind customers of good practice
- Enhanced cleaning
- Remove modular seating units to prevent customers from breaking social distancing measures (no waiting area)
- Floor stickers and signage in place to make this clear.
- Barrier at each front entrance to separate customers who use kiosk from those using reception.
- Signage for no more than 2 people in reception at any one time. Controlled queuing floor stickers in place.

6.3 Launchpad – Charringtons House

6.3.1 The Health and Safety Officer supported and advised the Business Engagement Manager and the Co-working Facilities Manager on the measures to re-open Launchpad. The process required the production of a Covid-secure Risk Assessment and the measures introduced include;

- Pre-bookable space, this will also support the Track and Trace system
- Redesigned layout to promote social distancing
- Enhanced cleaning and sanitiser points
- Screens
- Signage and advice

Launchpad re-opened on Monday 6 June.

6.4 Hertford Theatre

6.4.1 The Health and Safety Officer supported, advised and assisted the Front of House Manager to develop the covid secure Socially Distanced Cinema Risk Assessment for the anticipated

re-opening on the 16 July.

6.4.2 The Front of House Manager has also developed and delivered training on new measures for cleaning and operating the cinema offer that includes;

- New and enhanced cleaning procedures and colour coded cleaning equipment
- Pre-bookable seating that supports Track and Trace
- Designated seating plan for family groups, individuals or couples etc.
- Routes of travel in the building
- Information and signage
- New checklists and procedures

6.4.3 The Health and Safety Officer will continue to support, advise and assist all services in measures to ensure service delivery is maintained across the council and is pleased to report that the response, time, resource and effort taken by colleagues to keep East Herts services functioning and remobilised has been exemplary.

7.0 Homeworker Display Screen Equipment and Workstation Assessments

7.1 While there is no increased risk from DSE work for those working at home temporarily the Health and safety Executive relaxed the need to complete DSE assessments during this period, however we recognise the need to ensure employees are supported.

7.2 In June 2020 all employees were asked to complete an assessment questionnaire in order for us to assess the needs and identify issues or difficulties experienced.

- 7.3 The HSE also requires employers to provide workers with advice on completing their own basic assessment at home.
- 7.4 The Health and Safety Officer has published practical guidance and advice for colleagues on the Councils intranet on good practice linking this to the Councils Wellbeing Hub.
- 7.5 313 assessments were issued in June (the figure will vary based on starters and leavers and colleagues that do not work from home e.g. Caretakers, Post Room staff during this period) as of 15 July 209 assessments have been completed and returned.
- 7.6 Colleagues in Human Resources have been cross referencing the responses with the results of the Staff Wellbeing survey to identify colleagues with concerns or issues and will be working with the Health and Safety Officer to find solutions.

8.0 Lone Worker Devices – Guardian 24

- 8.1 The Health and Safety Officer and the Corporate Procurement Manager agreed to extend the current contract with Guardian 24 as per the existing contract specification in order to maintain an unbroken continuity of service and lone worker protection.
- 8.2 The Health and Safety Officer will contact the Corporate Procurement Officer to discuss options going forward.

9.0 Contract and Development Support for Leisure Projects

- 9.1 The Health and Safety Officer will continue to liaise with the Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) on the progress of the improvement programmes.
- Hartham swimming pool and gym - upgrade and refurbishment. (The Councils Planning Committee deferred the application pending a review of the designs.)

- Grange Paddocks swimming pool and gym - new build. Work proceeding well and on schedule with a completion date and handover scheduled for 21 October 2021. Work on site is advancing well with no reports of accidents or incidents.
- 9.2 The Health and Safety Officer is a member of the Leisure Officer Working Group for the project and continues to contribute to the health and safety elements of the construction programme.
- 9.3 **Ward Freeman Swimming Pool and gym - upgrade and refurbishment**
 - 9.3.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been advised that work on the proposed refurbishment has not commenced at this time due to ongoing discussions with Hertfordshire County Council.

10.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and future events

- 10.1 During the period 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2020 all group face to face training has been postponed due to lockdown.
- 10.2 The Health and Safety Officer will continue on developing additional e-learning modules for Skillsbuild the Council's e-learning platform.
- 10.3 As lockdown restrictions are eased the Health and Safety Officer will work closely with HR Colleagues to review future training provision and how this can be delivered in an effective and meaningful way. Future events to be rescheduled include:
 - Asbestos and Legionella Awareness
 - First Aid at Work (Refresher) 2 day
 - Defibrillator Awareness (Charringtons House)
 - Evacuation Chair User

11.0 Policy Development

- 11.1 The Health and Safety Officer has reviewed all the arrangements in the Health and Safety Policy. A 3 year Policy Review Plan has been devised, developing a programme to support the continuation of this on-going policy review. The plan ensures the arrangements are revised in a timely manner, although there is flexibility in the programme to allow for any changes that may arise from legislative, regulatory, organisational or operational changes.
- 11.2 The Policy Statement of Intent and Policy arrangement for Organisational Roles and Responsibilities will be reviewed in order to ensure they reflect the current organisational priorities and where regulatory or legislative changes occur.
- 11.3 The scope of the Health and Safety policy is included in the plan; the scope involves determining and documenting a list of specific goals, deliverables, features, functions, tasks and deadlines. In other words, it is what needs to be achieved and the work that must be done to maintain the content of the policy.

12.0 Options

N/A

13.0 Risks

- 13.1 As stated in the report where health and safety risks have been identified appropriate assessment has been made with relevant controls or mitigation put in place.

14.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

Yes – as described in the report

Human Resources

Yes – Health and Safety is part of the HR & OD Service

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

15.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Learning and Development Review 2019/20

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) That the committee to note the report

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The committee is asked to consider the learning and development undertaken in 2019/20.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The 2019/20 learning and development programme focussed on delivering a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate and individual needs in the most cost effective way.
- 2.2 The development needs were identified corporately and through individual PDR's.
- 2.3 Development opportunities were delivered by facilitated events, workshops, job shadowing, mentoring, coaching, webinars and

e-learning.

3.0 Report

3.1 Training budgets at the Council have been historically split into four main areas:

- Central/Corporate training budget
- Service training and development budget
- Professional training budget
- Health and Safety

	Budget 2019/20	Spend 2019/20	Budget 2020/21
Central/Corporate	£20,000	£16,736	£ 20,000
Service Training & Development	£48,860	£64,098	£ 60,860
Professional Training	£20,000	£13,508	£ 20,000
Health & Safety	£ 3,000	£ 5,535	£ 3,000
Total L & D Budget	£91,860	£99,877	£103,860

The total spend for learning and development corporately in 2019/20 was £99,877 an overspend of £8,017. The budgets managed centrally by HR (Corporate, Professional and H&S) were kept in line with the overall £43,000 budget with a small underspend of just over £7,000 achieved. It was expected that the professional budget would be overspent and this was agreed by LT but this was overcome in part due to charges being delayed and more significantly due to £9,500 being funded through the apprenticeship levy pot. The total budget for 2020/21 is £103,860 compared to £91,860 in 2019/20 providing an extra investment of £12,000 for the learning and development of staff in the local service training budgets.

An additional £28,704 was spent through the apprenticeship levy to fund the apprentice's qualifications.

The average development cost per employee in 2019/20 was £304 (excluding apprentices) based on the headcount of 328 in April 2019.

3.2 Central Training Budget

The Human Resources Officer continues to review the spending costs associated with the central training budget. The officer negotiates with training providers and contractors to improve the costs being charged for all events. The Human Resources Officer consults with other local council's to arrange shared events to minimise costs, share learning and build relationships.

The 2019/20 Learning and Development programme was delivered by external facilitators, internal presenters (including the HR Officer who designs and delivers training content both face to face and through e-learning), webinars and e-learning. These events are funded from the corporate training budget.

Employees are informed of training opportunities via email and individuals are approached directly when they have requested specific training in their PDR.

In 2019/20 454 delegates attended or participated in some form of face to face corporate or health and safety training (detail of the Health and Safety Training is included in the annual Health and Safety Report).

The table below shows the breakdown of the 454 face to face sessions:

Event/Course	No of participants	Type/ Number of sessions held
Introduction to Procurement	22	3
First Aid at work refresher	8	2
Safeguarding	84	5
Corporate Induction	19	4
E Car Training	27	4
Attending meetings and networking	5	1
My View Sickness	6	1
Dementia Friend	7	1
Difficult conversations	28	4
Recruitment	7	1
Court Training	17	1
First Aid at Work (Qualification)	12	2
Retirement - Personal Financial Planning	15	3
Retirement - Half Day	8	1
Dealing with violence and aggression	58	6
Democratic Services Drop In	11	2
Ladder User and Working at Height	20	2
Fire Marshall Bitesize	27	6
Electrical Safety Awareness	2	1
Budget Monitoring	6	1
Intend procurement	4	1
Project Management Bitesize	6	1
Managing the Tender Process	7	1
Working with Volunteers	8	1
Risk Management Bitesize	3	1
Communication Team Away Day	4	1
Mental Health Training (Managers)	33	4
Total	454	61

A mandatory training programme was launched in 2019 and delivered through SkillsBuild the Council's e-learning platform. All employees, agency staff and new starters were asked to complete 6 training courses. In total 1,676 training episodes were recorded.

Course	No. of participants that completed the course
Display screen equipment	323
Equality and Diversity Introduction	281
GDPR Essentials	265
Introduction to Health and Safety	261
Micollab	279
Safeguarding Awareness	267
Total	1676

The mandatory training programme for 2020 was launched in January 2020. It was agreed the following training courses would be revised and refreshed to be delivered through SkillsBuild. All employees, agency staff and new starters are required to complete these courses:

- Equality and Diversity refresher
- GDPR
- Introduction to Health and Safety Refresher
- Safeguarding Awareness refresher

In addition new starters are also required to complete the Display Screen Equipment and Micollab training courses as part of their induction.

In 2019/20 a Lone Working e-learning course was created and launched to staff. The course was designed to ensure officers

understood how to use the Guardian 24 devices and make them aware of the lone working protocols. To date 70 officers have completed the training after a targeted campaign.

The Human Resources Officer is working with the Leadership Team and Senior Officers to develop the e-learning programme to ensure the programme continues to grow and is fit for purpose. The e-learning platform is funded from the central training budget.

3.3 Service Training and Development

The total service training and development budget for 2019/20 was £48,860, which was divided amongst the services for additional training and development. This budget is predominantly used for service specific training, one day conferences, seminars, training and team building events.

The budget breaks down to £149 per employee based on the employee head count on 1 April 2019 (328). The training and development budgets are managed by each Head of Service. The 2019/20 budget was overspent by £15,238 leading to a budget increase for 2020/21 to reflect the developments requests from the services. The revised budget breaks down to £182 per employee based on the employee head count as of the 1 April 2020 (335).

3.4 Professional Training

The professional training budget was set at £20,000 for 2019/20 and was under spent by £6,492. It was predicted that the budget would be overspent but after investigation it was identified that a degree qualification was eligible for funding through the Apprenticeship Levy redirecting a £9,500 spend from this budget.

The Council sponsored employees undertaking various

vocational qualifications, which included:

- 2 x MSC Town Planning
- CIPFA final exams
- MSC Environmental Health
- BSc(Hons) Building Surveying
- ACCA Advanced Audit and Assurance

In addition to the corporate professional development budget the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services have sponsored four Officers towards gaining their IRRV qualification. The cost (currently £3145) comes from the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services' professional budget.

All employees funded for professional qualifications sign training agreements in line with the Professional Career and Vocational Study policy; which allows East Herts to reclaim a percentage of funding if an employee leaves the Council within two years. The training agreements are held centrally in Human Resources.

The professional training budget for 2020/21 remains at £20,000.

3.5 Apprentices

The Council sponsored 9 apprenticeships in 2019/20.

- Customer Services – Level 2
- 3 x Town Planning – Level 3
- Human Resources – Level 3
- 2 x Business Administration Level 3
- Accountancy – Level 3
- Chartered Surveyor – Level 6

The Council funded the upskilling of two Officers through the levy and seven apprentices. Four apprentices now have

permanent or fixed term contracts and two are continuing with their apprenticeship at the Council. One apprentice has moved to another (more local) authority, continuing to work and studying in the same field.

Human Resources continue to work with managers and training providers to develop the Council's Apprenticeship Programme within the current limitations of COVID-19.

3.6 Election Training

In December 2019 the Human Resources Officer supported the Elections Team by delivering training to all the Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks recruited for the December 2019 elections. This is the first time HR had lead on these events which received positive feedback from the attendees. The Human Resources Officer had agreed to repeat the training for The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections but they were cancelled due to COVID-19.

4.0 An overview of Learning and Development 2020/21

- 4.1 The learning and development needs for this year are being collated from the PDR's and the Human Resources Officer is working with members of the Leadership Team to ensure the learning meets the needs of the Council to deliver its priorities.
- 4.2 The Human Resources Officer with the responsibility for Learning and Development is continuing to support corporate projects such as sustainability, safeguarding, the customer complaints, comments and compliments policy and East Herts Together by designing and delivering training and presentations to help embed the projects throughout the Council, ensuring the best use of project budgets and resources.
- 4.3 Continuing to develop the e-learning platform and the mandatory e-learning courses ensuring they are up to date and

further courses are designed and developed for Officers and Members to help implement policies and projects.

The Human Resources Officer designs, creates and uploads the e-learning courses so each course is bespoke.

- 4.4 The Human Resources Officer is currently working with all our training providers to review the way learning is delivered within the current COVID-19 guidelines so staff still have the same or more development opportunities than before the offices closed.

Training will be delivered on line and virtually as we continue to develop and engage with staff.

- 4.5 Work is underway to revise the Training and Development Policy, to ensure it is fit for purpose.

- 4.6 The Human Resources Officer is working with the Digital Content Manager to development the learning and development pages on the intra-net pages, to ensure all development opportunities are fully accessible to all.

- 4.7 To continue to develop the Council's Apprenticeship Programme and support the apprentices and managers during their apprenticeship. The Human Resources Officer is working with the Leadership Team to review the programme taking into consideration the limitations of on-the-job training due to the current restrictions.

- 4.8 Reviewing and revising the Corporate Induction programme to reflect feedback received from the Chief Executive and the East Herts Together group.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 None

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 None

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes, to ensure the development opportunities are accessible to all and staff receive training on equalities.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes, the learning and development provision supports the sustainability project.

Financial

Yes, the budget data has been provided by the Finance Team.

Health and Safety

Yes as set out in this report and the report has been produced by HR with includes the H&S Officer.

Human Resources

Yes as set out in this report and the report has been produced by HR.

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Annual Turnover Report 2019/2020

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) To note the Annual Turnover Report 2019/2020.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Turnover Report 2019/2020.

2.0 Background

2.1 The council recognises that having a certain level of employee turnover is healthy. It can help maintain high levels of motivation and ensure fresh blood is injected to generate new ideas and working practices which will, in turn, help the council to grow.

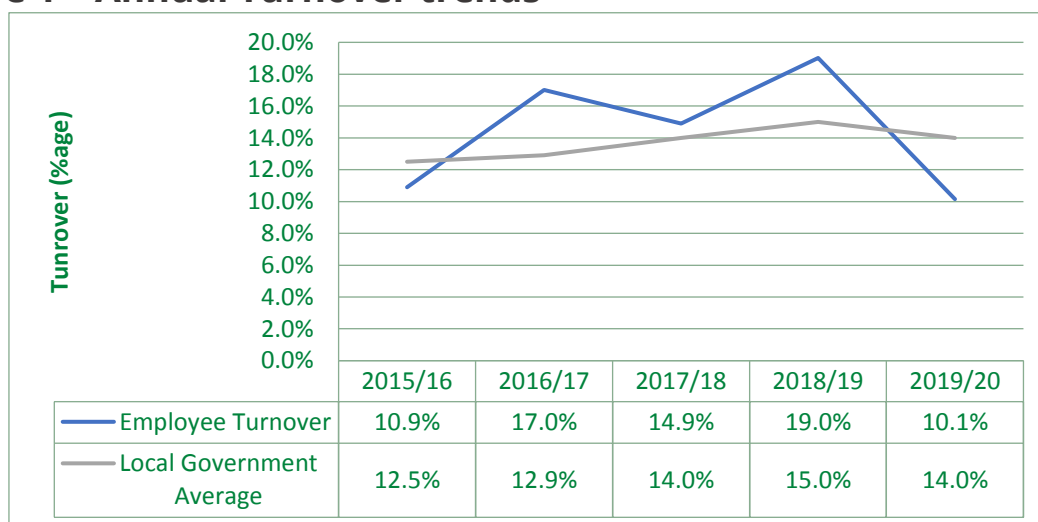
2.2 The council monitors and reports on turnover on a quarterly basis in the HR Quarterly Statistics report which is also considered at Leadership Team and HR Committee.

- 2.3 The Annual Turnover report provides a more in-depth analysis of turnover data for the year. This report considers the period April 2019 to March 2020. It explores the reasons employees are leaving and whether there are any improvements the council could make.
- 2.4 The report includes benchmarking data against previous years and from other local authorities across England.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1 There were a total of 34 leavers in 2019/20: thirty-one of those were voluntary leavers and three were involuntary leavers whose temporary contract had come to an end.
- 3.2 Figure 1 below shows the council's turnover rate (for all leavers) over the last 5 years compared with the local government average. Turnover in the council in 2019/20 (10.1%) was the lowest it has been over the last 5 years and lower than the local government average (14% in 2018/19*).

Figure 1 – Annual Turnover trends



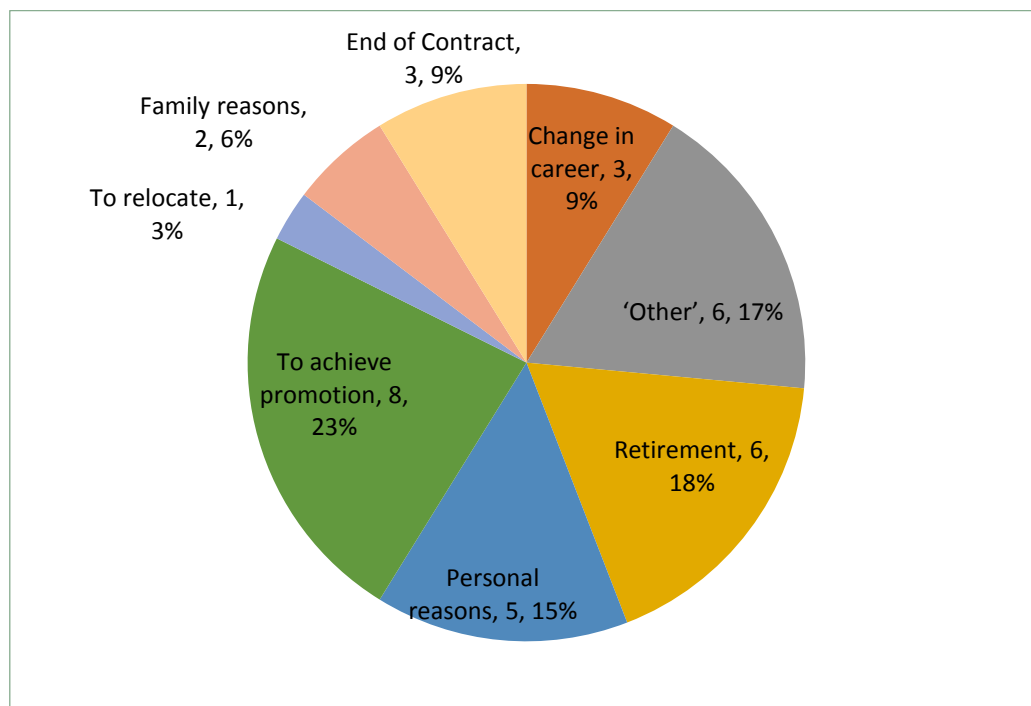
* The Local Government Average is the mean for all local authorities in England and is taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking -Workforce Metrics 2018/19' (the latest annual turnover data available at the time of writing the report).

3.3 Similarly, the voluntary turnover rate in 2019/20 (9.3%) was the lowest it has been over the last 5 years.

4.0 Reasons for Leaving

4.1 The reasons employees gave for leaving the council in 2019/20 can be found in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Reasons for leaving



4.2 The most common reason for leaving in 2019/20 was to achieve promotion (23%, 8 employees).

4.3 The council is a relatively small organisation with around 330 employees and therefore opportunities for promotion are more limited than in a larger organisation. The council invests in the training and development of its employees which can give them the skills and confidence to progress to the next level. If the promotion opportunities are not available within the council, employees may leave to find them elsewhere. This is common in

our sector and many move to another local authority to achieve promotion and vice versa.

- 4.4 Improvements made from 1 April 2019 to the pay and grading structure, which reduced overlaps along with the introduction of more career graded posts, should create further growth opportunities but this will still be limited by the size of the council. In order to try to retain more employees, the council has also provided funding for professional study to help employees to progress to the next level. Career progression aspirations are identified as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process.
- 4.5 The second most common reason for employees leaving in 2019/20 was to retire (18%, 6 employees). Retirement is very much a personal decision made by an employee and is largely outside the influence of the council. Employees are auto-enrolled in the Local Government Pension Scheme which is a much-valued scheme. The council has an older workforce and therefore retirement is likely to continue to be a common reason for leaving. The council has a flexible retirement policy which gives employees the option of reducing their hours whilst drawing their pension.
- 4.6 Six employees (17%) stated 'other' reasons for leaving: one left to travel, one stated they were offered another role, and two left through mutual agreement. Two employees did not expand on their reasons for leaving.

5.0 Stability Rate

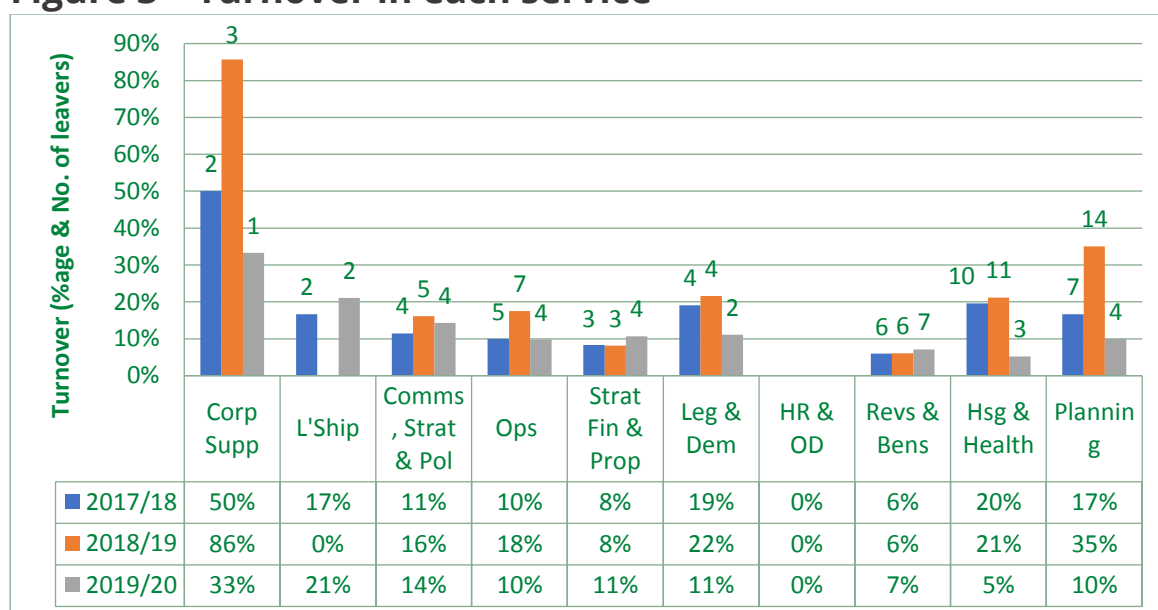
- 5.1 The council reports its stability rate to understand whether it is retaining employees in their first year of service.
- 5.2 The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of leavers with 1 or more years' service by the total number of voluntary leavers (multiplied by 100 to express as a percentage).

5.3 In 2019/20 the council's stability rate was 84% which is under its target of 90%. This means that 16% of voluntary leavers (5 employees) had less than 1 years' service. All 5 employees left for personal reasons (e.g. family responsibilities, to travel) rather than as a result of being dissatisfied with their role.

6.0 Voluntary turnover in each service area

6.1 The voluntary turnover rate in each service area, including comparisons with the previous 3 years, can be found in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – Turnover in each service



Average headcount in 2019/20: Corp Supp – 3; L'Ship – 9.5; Comms, Strat & Pol – 28; Ops – 41; Strat Fin & Prop – 37.5; Leg & Dem – 18, HR & OD – 8; Revs & Bens – 98.5; Hsg & Health – 58; Planning – 40.

6.2 Turnover in 2019/20 has increased in 2 out of the 10 services since the previous year (Strategic Finance and Property, and Revenues and Benefits) however the increases were small and were no cause for concern.

6.3 Turnover also increased in the Leadership Team (21% in 2019/20, 2 employees) however the figures are skewed due to the small

number of employees in this team (average headcount for the period was 9.5 employees).

- 6.4 The Corporate Support Team had the highest turnover rate of 33% (1 employee) however the figures are again skewed due to the small number of employees in this team (average headcount for the period was 3 employees). Turnover in this team has fallen from 86% in 2018/19.
- 6.5 It is pleasing to note that, of those services seeing reductions in turnover, two have the most difficult-to-recruit-to roles (i.e. Planning and Legal and Democratic Services). Other services seeing reductions in turnover are Housing and Health, Operations, and Communications, Strategy and Policy.

7.0 Exit Questionnaire analysis

- 7.1 All voluntary leavers are asked to complete an exit questionnaire to help the council identify any improvements it could make e.g. to its policies and practices. The questionnaires are returned to HR however leavers are asked whether their feedback can be shared with their manager.
- 7.2 Almost two thirds of voluntary leavers (65%, 20 out of 31 leavers) completed an exit questionnaire.
- 7.3 The key highlights from the exit questionnaires are as follows:
- 70% (14 employees) said that they would rate the council 7 or higher out of 10 as an employer (only 1 employee rated the council less than 5 out of 10);
 - 85% (17 employees) said they 'mostly' or 'completely' enjoyed working at the council;
 - 70% (14 employees) would recommend the council to others as a good place to work (20%, 4 employees said they wouldn't

recommend the council to others and 10%, 2 employees said they didn't know);

- 75% (15 employees) said that pay was 'good' or 'very good'. This has increased compared to 66% in 2018/19. The improvement in pay scales in April 2019 has clearly had a positive effect on how leavers view the council's pay;
- 75% (15 employees) said they agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that their pay and benefits were reasonable for the work and responsibility undertaken. This is an increase from 69% in 2018/19;
- 40% (8 employees) said that prospects for promotion/advancement were 'good' (55%, 11 employees said they were 'poor' and 5%, 1 employee did not answer the question). The council will continue to upskill employees through e.g. designing career graded posts, funding professional study, arranging training and development opportunities such as secondments;
- 85% (17 employees) said their relationship with their manager was either 'good' or 'excellent' (the remaining 3 employees, 15% didn't answer this question);
- 90% (18 employees) said their relationships with colleagues were either 'good' or 'excellent';
- 65% (13 employees) agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that they had received adequate training/coaching;
- 70% (14 employees) said that flexible working options at the council were either 'good' or 'very good' (3 employees, 15% said they were 'poor' and 3 employees, 15% did not answer the question).

8.0 Vacancy rate

- 8.1 The council monitors its vacancy rate as this can have an impact on employee turnover e.g. employees may feel under additional pressure to cover the work of any vacant posts.
- 8.2 The vacancy rate in 2019/20 was 7.7% which is significantly lower than the local government average (the mean for all English authorities was 15% in 2018/19). The council's vacancy rate has continued to fall over the last two years (13.1% in 2017/18 and 11.1% in 2018/19).
- 8.3 As at 31 March 2020, there were 26 vacant posts across the council. Twenty one (21) posts were on hold (e.g. pending job or structure reviews), and 5 were being actively recruited to.
- 8.4 Of the 21 posts were on hold, 10 were posts in the Planning service that were being held due to an imminent review of the structure and were being covered as appropriate by agency staff. Three of the ten posts were Principal Planning Officer posts which are difficult-to-recruit-to-posts.
- 8.5 The remaining eleven posts on hold were due to e.g. pending a review of the job or the structure in the service area or potentially in relation to channel shift towards more online delivery. Two of these were solicitor roles which are difficult-to-recruit-to-posts. They were being covered by a combination of agency staff and legal support from Barking and Dagenham Council on a trial basis which is being reviewed by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
- 8.6 The council has focussed on upskilling employees through introducing career graded posts and funding professional study as well as employing apprentices. Career graded posts allow the recruitment of candidates with more transferable skills which can then be developed.

9.0 Recruitment Costs

- 9.1 Recruitment costs have fallen considerably in 2019/20 (£34,900 compared to £66,633 in 2018/19). Recruitment costs include external advertising costs, agency and search fees.
- 9.2 The cost per hire has also fallen from £1418 in 2018/19 to £727 in 2019/20. This is considerably lower than the UK average cost per hire of £1000 (CIPD Survey 2017).
- 9.3 The council has aimed to keep recruitment costs as low as possible by using social media platforms (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter), university job boards, the job centre and online jobs boards which are either free or cheaper than the more traditional professional magazines. The purchase of bulk advertising credits with Not For Profit People, who advertise on various online job sites, has helped to keep costs low. An agreement has been reached with the leading generalist job board 'Indeed' for an annual provision of job adverts (60 jobs across the year) which will reduce recruitment costs by a further 75%.

10.0 Actions taken in 2019/20 to improve recruitment and retention

10.1 Recruitment processes were reviewed

- 10.1.1 In 2019, the council began accepting CVs (rather than accepting application forms only) for certain posts as a trial to encourage more candidates to apply.
- 10.1.2 Candidates whose CVs were shortlisted were then asked to complete the council's full application form.
- 10.1.3 This approach was trialled predominantly for difficult-to-recruit-to posts including Environmental Health Officer, Principal Planning Officer and Solicitor, along with 1 other post (Project Manager – Castle Park).

- 10.1.4 The table below shows that the council had mixed results using this approach. Whilst each post received a reasonable number of CVs, three of the five posts did not result in any candidates being appointed.

Job Title	No. of CVs received	No. of candidates interviewed	No. of appointments made
Environmental Health Officer	8	2	1
Principal Planning Officer	7	2	2
Solicitor (Property)	16	2	0
Solicitor (Contracts and Procurement)	10	0	0
Project Manager (Castle Park)	13	0	0

- 10.1.5 Further work has commenced to re-design the job application form so that it has two parts whereby if a CV is submitted with the application, only Part 2 of the application form needs to be completed by the applicant thus making it easier for candidates to apply.

10.2 Trialling a recruitment incentive payment for certain difficult-to-recruit-to roles

- 10.2.1 A recruitment incentive payment or 'golden hello' was used in June 2019 to attract candidates to apply for the role of Principal Planning Officer. Candidates are given a one-off payment of £5000 after they have successfully completed their probation period and must repay it if they leave within 2 years.
- 10.2.2 Seven candidates applied for the role, two were interviewed and two appointments were made. One of the successful candidates was an internal permanent employee and the other was an agency worker already working for the council. It

could be argued that the golden hello payment went some way, along with the improvement to pay scales in April 2019, to discouraging the two successful candidates from finding Principal Planning Officer roles with another organisation.

10.3 Improvement in pay scales in April 2019

- 10.3.1 As already covered in Section 7, the improvement in pay scales in April 2019 has clearly had a positive effect on how leavers view the council's pay and, it could be argued, has contributed to the low turnover rate for 2019/20.

10.4 Promotion of the council's health and wellbeing programme

- 10.4.1 The council has continued to promote its employee health and wellbeing programme. The programme has included NHS Health checks, Flu jab voucher campaign, free wellbeing taster sessions such as Reiki and Reflexology, Happy Back sessions, Time to Talk Day promotion, lunchtime health walks and signing up to the Time to Change employer pledge. A full list of events can be found in the Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2019/20. Positive feedback has been received from employees on the wellbeing programme being offered.

10.5 Staff Recognition Scheme

- 10.5.1 The council's Staff Recognition Scheme, which was launched in February 2019, has continued to reward employees throughout 2019/20 for excellent work or exceptional modelling of the council's values and behaviours.

11.0 Actions planned for 2020/21 to improve recruitment and retention

- 11.1 The 'Working for Us' page on the council's website is being updated to better promote the benefits of working for the council.

- 11.2 The council will monitor the success of the new two part job application process using feedback from managers and candidates.
- 11.3 From June 2020 the council will advertise all jobs on the Indeed website (the largest online general job board) on a 1 year's trial basis. The package will include a branded page giving the ability to promote the benefits of working for the council, include case studies and videos, and employees/applicants will be able to leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer.
- 11.4 As part of the East Herts Together programme, core competencies are being developed to allow more transferable skills to be recognised in the selection process.
- 11.5 The council's exit questionnaire document will be redesigned to increase the range of feedback from leavers.

12.0 Options

N/A

13.0 Risks

N/A

14.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As covered in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

15.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2019/20

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) To note the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2019/2020.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2019/2020.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Employee absence can be costly for an organisation and therefore it is important that the council accurately measures and monitors absence.

3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 The Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2019/20 considers sickness absence levels across the council and compares them with previous years and benchmarking data. It also considers

what the council can do to support employee health and wellbeing.

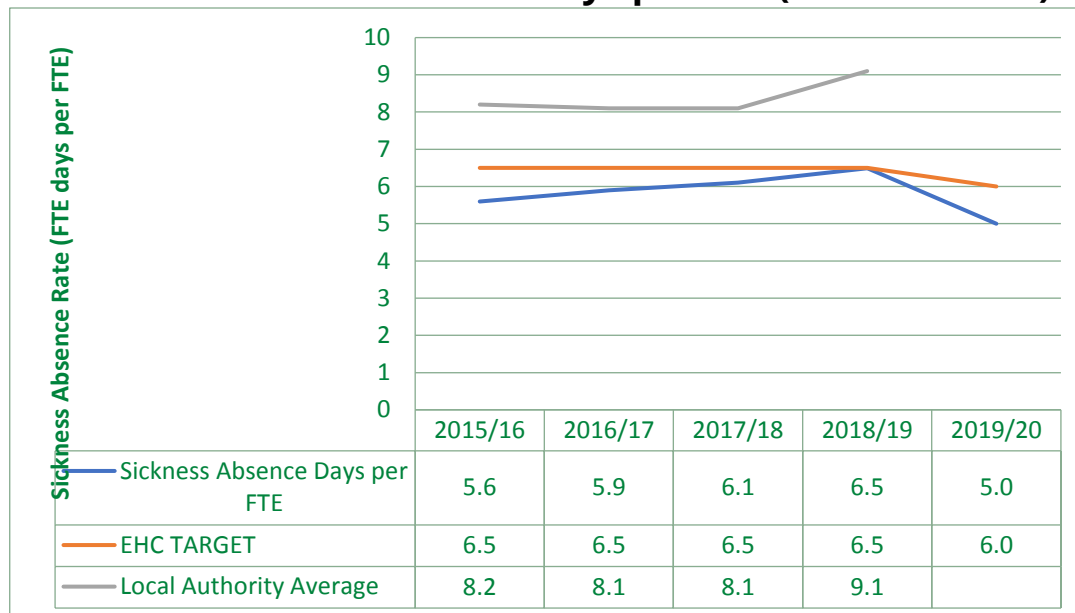
- 3.2 The council measures sickness absence in two ways: the number of full time equivalent (FTE) days absence per FTE employee and the percentage time lost due to absence.
- 3.3 The number of FTE days absence per FTE employee is calculated by dividing the number of FTE days sickness absence by the total number of FTE employees in the council.
- 3.4 Percentage time lost due to absence is calculated by dividing the total number of FTE days sickness absence by the total number of available working days.
- 3.5 This report breaks down absences into short and long term.
- 3.6 Comparisons have been made with local government averages which are taken from the LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19 (the latest report available at the time of writing this report).

4.0 Sickness Absence Levels

4.1 ALL Absences

- 4.1.1 In 2019/20, the number of sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 5 days which is below the council's target of 6 days and lower than in 2018/19 (6.5 days). It is also lower than the local government average in 2018/19 (9.1 days). Please see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Sickness absence FTE days per FTE (ALL absences)



The council's absence target was reduced from 6.5 days to 6 days in April 2019.

The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

4.1.2 The total number of days taken as sickness absence in 2019/20 was 1379.08 FTE days. Sixty-five percent (477.19 FTE days) of these were due to short term absence and 35% (477.19 FTE days) were due to long term absence. The total percentage time lost in 2019/20 due to all absences was 1.85%. This is lower than the local government average (4.9%).

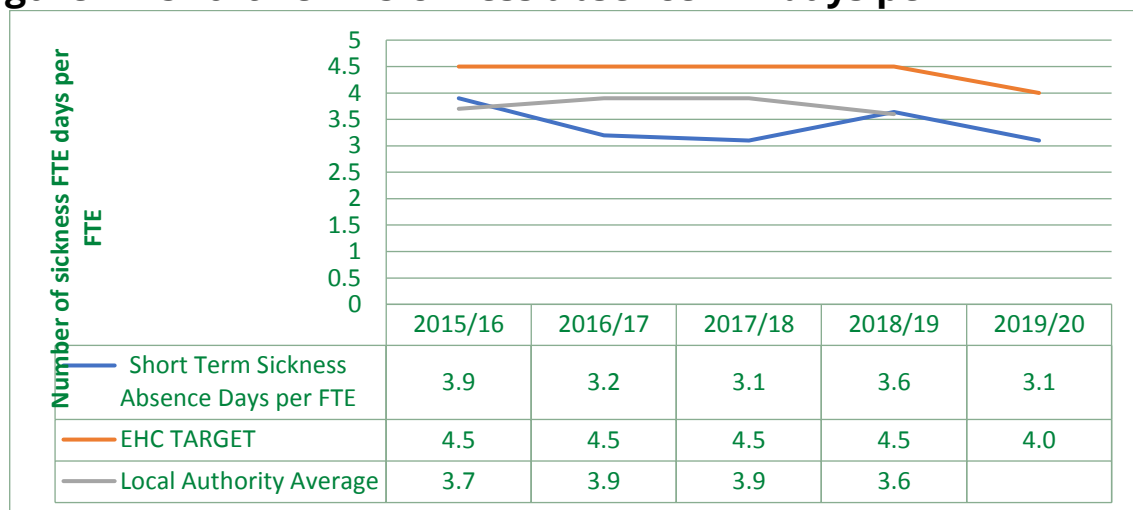
4.2 Short Term absence

4.2.1 Absences of less than four weeks are considered to be short term sickness absence.

4.2.2 In 2019/20, the number of short term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 3.1 days which is below the council's target of 4 days and lower than in 2018/19 (3.6 days).

It is also lower than the local government average (3.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Short Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE



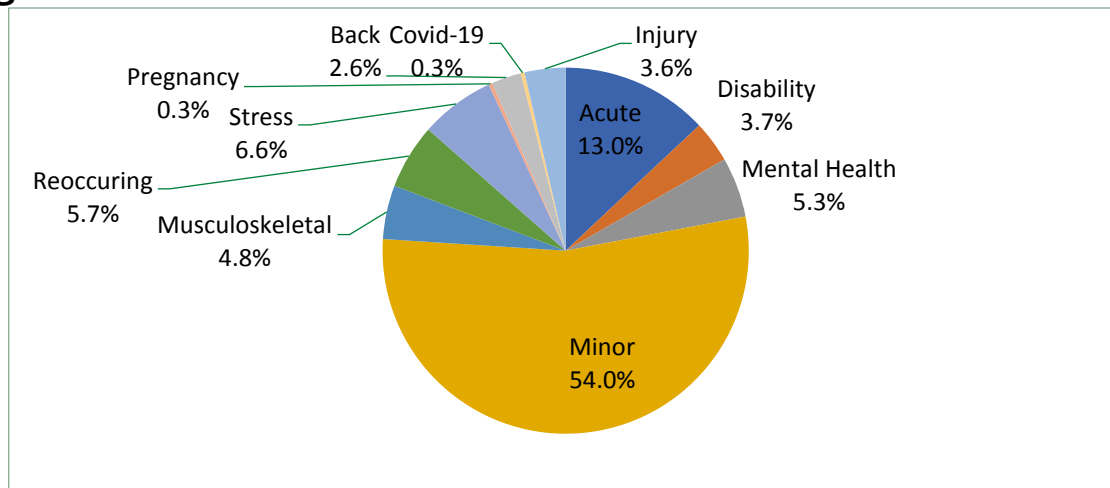
The council's short term absence target was reduced from 4.5 days to 4 days in April 2019.

The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

4.2.3 The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness in 2019/20 was 1.21% which is lower than the local government average (2.6%).

4.2.4 Figure 3 below shows the causes of short term absence in 2019/20.

Figure 3 – Causes of Short Term absence in 2019/20



KEY:

- *Minor illnesses (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines minor operations)*
- *Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strains and repetitive strain injury, but excluding back pain)*
- *Recurring medical conditions (e.g. asthma, angina and allergies)*
- *Mental ill health (e.g. clinical depression and anxiety)*
- *Acute medical conditions (e.g. stroke, heart attack and cancer)*
- *Home/Family Responsibilities (e.g. bereavement)*

4.2.5 The most common cause of short term absence in 2019/20 was minor illnesses, such as colds/flu, headaches/migraines, stomach upsets, and minor operations, accounting for 54% of all short term absences. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey 2018' 84% of public sector organisations responding to their survey reported that minor illnesses were in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.2.6 The second most common cause of short term absence was acute medical conditions, such as stroke, heart attack and cancer, which accounted for 13% of all short term absences (19 employees). The CIPD Survey reported that 8% of public sector organisations had acute medical conditions in their top three causes of short term absence.

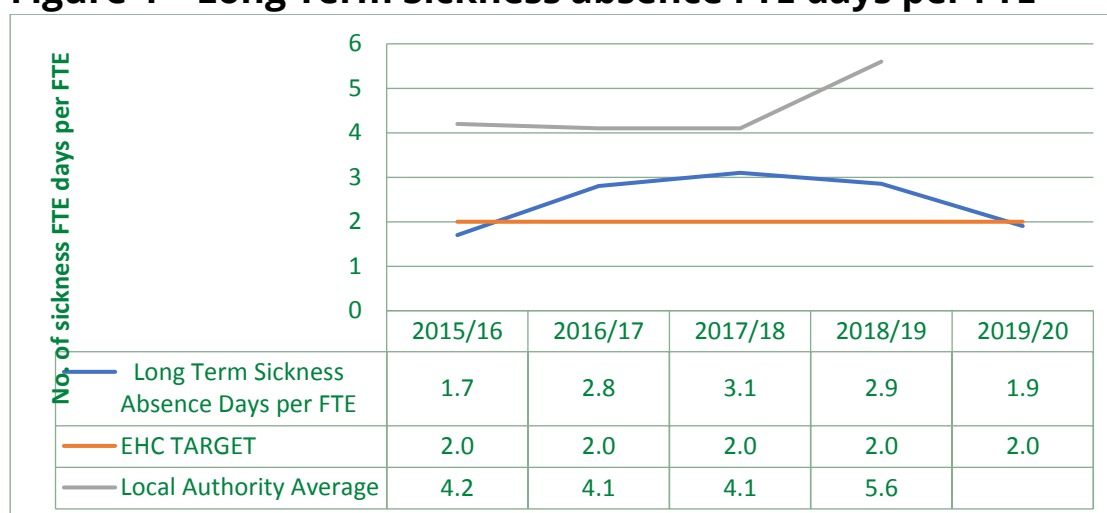
4.2.7 Stress was the third most common cause of short term absence accounting for 7% of all short term absences (8 employees). The CIPD Survey reported that 66% of public sector organisations said that stress was in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.3 Long Term Absence

4.3.1 Absences in excess of 4 weeks/28 consecutive calendar days are considered to be long term sickness absence.

4.3.2 In 2019/20, the number of long term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 1.9 days which is below the council's target of 2 days and lower than in 2018/19 (2.9 days). It is also lower than the local government average (5.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 – Long Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE



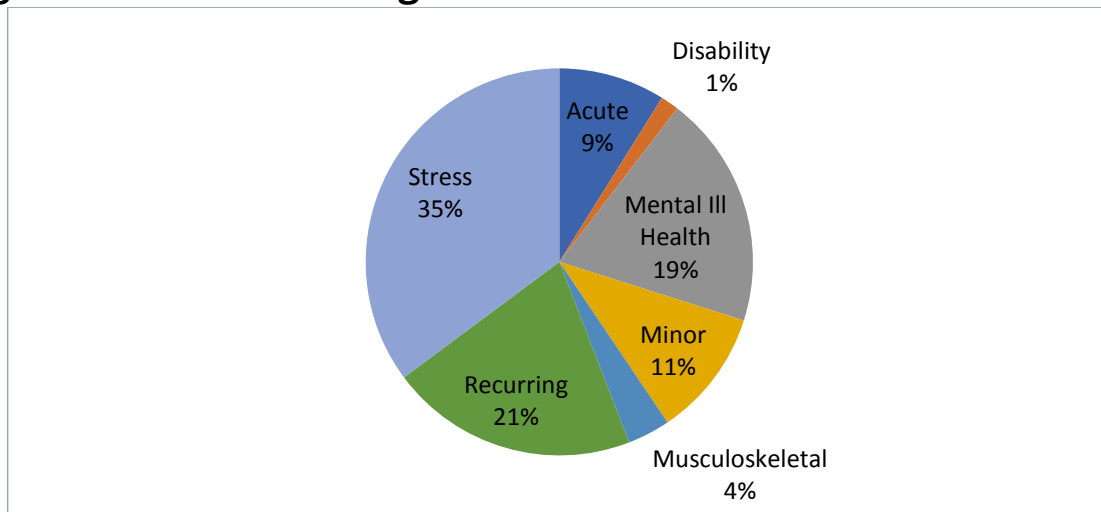
The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

4.3.3 The percentage of time lost due to long term sickness in 2019/20 was 0.64% which is lower than the local government

average (2.3% in 2018/19).

4.3.4 Figure 5 below shows the causes of long term absence in 2019/20.

Figure 5 – Causes of Long Term absence in 2019/20



KEY:

- *Minor illnesses (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines minor operations)*
- *Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strains and repetitive strain injury, but excluding back pain)*
- *Recurring medical conditions (e.g. asthma, angina and allergies)*
- *Mental ill health (e.g. clinical depression and anxiety)*
- *Acute medical conditions (e.g. stroke, heart attack and cancer)*
- *Home/Family Responsibilities (e.g. bereavement)*

4.3.5 The most common cause of long term absence in 2019/20 was stress which accounted for 35% of all long term absence. This has fallen from 55% in 2018/19. According to the CIPD Survey, 72% of public sector organisations reported that stress was in their top three causes of long term absence.

4.3.6 Eight employees were off on long term sickness absence due to stress in 2019/20. All employees have received support from Occupational Health (OH), managers and HR. All cases have been resolved: 4 employees have returned to work and 4

employees have left the council.

4.3.7 The second most common cause of long term absence was recurring medical conditions, such as asthma, angina and allergies, which accounted for 21% of all long term absence (4 employees).

4.3.8 The third most common cause of long term absence was mental ill health which accounted for 19% of all long term absence (3 employees). According to the CIPD, 73% of public sector organisations reported that mental health was in their top three causes of long term absence.

5.0 How is the council addressing absence

5.1 Absences due to minor illnesses are mostly unavoidable. Managers hold return-to-work meetings with employees after every absence, provide support, monitor absences against the council's triggers (7 days in any 12 month period and 3 occasions in 6 months) and take the appropriate action in line with absence policy and procedures.

5.2 Managers are supporting employees with acute and recurring medical conditions by e.g. allowing them time off to attend medical appointments/treatment, allowing flexible working where possible and referring them to occupational health where appropriate.

5.3 It is important that managers recognise the signs of stress at an early stage so that action can be taken to support employees. Employees experiencing stress are referred to the council's occupational health service. Managers use the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) stress risk assessment tool which looks at the key causes of stress (e.g. demands of the job, control over their work, support from their manager and colleagues, relationships at work, the role, and organisational change) and identifies actions to help reduce the stress. Employees can also

seek confidential support from the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

5.4 The council has taken the following action to manage employee mental health in 2019/20:

- Promoting the support available from the council's trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs),
- Promoting mental health awareness through events such as Time to Talk,
- Arranging lunchtime bitesize wellbeing sessions on topics such as mindfulness,
- Mental health awareness training has been arranged for all managers (some sessions have been delayed due to Covid-19),
- The council signed up to the Time to Change Pledge which demonstrates the council's commitment to change how it thinks and acts about mental health in the workplace and to make sure that employees who are facing these problems feel supported,
- The council has partnered with Able Futures, which provides up to 9 months free mental health support for employees, and promoted this to all staff through Connect.

5.5 Managers and HR are supporting all employees with health issues through e.g. home visits, referrals to Occupational Health, undertaking stress risk assessments and implementing action plans, making adjustments to their work/workplace to assist them in returning to work at the appropriate time, and offering flexible working.

6.0 Progress against actions taken in 2019/20 to improve health and wellbeing

6.1 In addition to the actions already mentioned in Section 5 above, the council has achieved the following in 2019/20 to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees:

Promotion of Health and Wellbeing activities

- 6.2 The Community Wellbeing and Partnerships Team in conjunction with Human Resources have developed and delivered a comprehensive programme of events throughout 2019/20 to support employee health and wellbeing.
- 6.3 To understand what events employees were interested in, Staff Forum representatives were asked to consult their colleagues. Wellbeing sessions have included lunch time health walks, Reiki and Crystal healing sessions, reflexology sessions, short 'TED-style' talks on topics such as mindfulness, improving quality of sleep; and wellness talks on e.g. hydration. Other initiatives have included free flu vaccinations for employees at the workplace and setting up a carer's support group. Initial taster events were free and HR then negotiated discounted rates for employees interested in having further sessions. The feedback from employees attending the events has been positive.

Wellbeing Hub

- 6.4 The wellbeing hub page on the intranet has been updated. The hub brings together information for employees on wellbeing e.g. how to contact a Mental Health First Aider, details of upcoming lunchtime health walks, and links to further sources of support.

MyRewards Wellbeing Centre

- 6.5 The Wellbeing Centre has been promoted. It provides education, support and tools for employees e.g. helping improve their quality of sleep, healthy recipes, online exercise programmes and advice on how to improve financial wellbeing.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

6.6 The council has continued to offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which supports health and wellbeing.

7.0 Actions planned in 2020/21 to improve health and wellbeing

7.1 The following actions have been planned:

- Explore having an Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that the council is taking an integrated approach to wellbeing;
- Continue with the roll out of the Wellbeing programme – i.e. lunchtime health walks, Bike to Work week, workplace NHS Health checks, reflexology etc;
- To explore the recruitment of employee wellbeing champions to help with promoting the council's health and wellbeing programme;
- Continue to action the Time to Change Pledge to support employee mental health;
- Promote Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May 2020) sharing tips and guidance to improve mental health;
- Promote sources of advice on financial wellbeing e.g. debt counselling from EAP, financial tips and advice available on MyRewards, signpost to external sources of free advice e.g. debt charities, citizens advice;
- Deliver lunchtime bitesize sessions to help employees build personal resilience (such as coping techniques and mindfulness);
- Review the council's Sickness Absence Management Policy and the notification of sickness absence process;

- HR Officers to continue to meet regularly with managers to ensure managers are consistently and proactively managing sickness absence;
- Review the council's Occupational Health Provider to find a more proactive provider in helping advise on complex cases;
- To review the impact of Covid-19 on employee wellbeing via a Wellbeing survey and put actions in place to support employees;

8.0 Reason(s)

N/A

9.0 Options

N/A

10.0 Risks

N/A

11.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As covered by the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

12.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2020)

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) The Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2020) be noted.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2020).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This report outlines the current performance against the annual HR targets as approved by the HR Committee and available benchmarking data.

3.0 Report

3.1 Vacancy Data and Recruitment

3.1.1 Table 1 below shows the vacancy position across the council as at 30 June 2020.

Table 1 – Vacancies

	Number of posts
Posts actively being recruited to	5
Posts on hold	18
TOTAL	23

3.1.2 There were 23 vacancies in Quarter 1 which is significantly lower than the same period last year (38 vacancies in Quarter 1 2019/20).

3.1.3 Five posts were actively being recruited. These include those that are currently being advertised, at shortlisting or interview stages, pending pre-employment checks, or applicants have received an unconditional offer and have not yet started at the council.

3.1.4 Eighteen posts were on hold. Ten of these were being held due to an imminent review of the service structure and were being covered as appropriate by agency staff.

3.1.5 The remaining eight posts on hold were due to e.g. pending a review of the job or potentially in relation to channel shift towards more online delivery. Two of these were solicitor roles which are difficult-to-recruit-to-posts. They were being covered by a combination of agency staff and legal support from Barking and Dagenham Council on a trial basis. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is currently updating the solicitor job descriptions in preparation for recruitment.

3.1.6 During Quarter 1 six posts were advertised. One post (17%)

was successfully filled with an external candidate. Five of the remaining posts were still being progressed when the quarter ended.

3.1.7 A particularly popular role advertised in Quarter 1 was the Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership Co-ordinator where 173 applications were received. Managers are currently shortlisting applicants.

3.2 Employee Turnover

3.2.1 There were 4 leavers in Quarter 1. Based on this number, projected annual turnover for 2019/20 is estimated to be 4.8% which is considerably lower than for the same period last year (16.8% in Quarter 1 in 2019/20) and lower than the local government average (14% for 2018/19 for Local Authority districts in the UK).

3.3 Sickness Absence

ALL absence

ALL Absence - Quarter 1

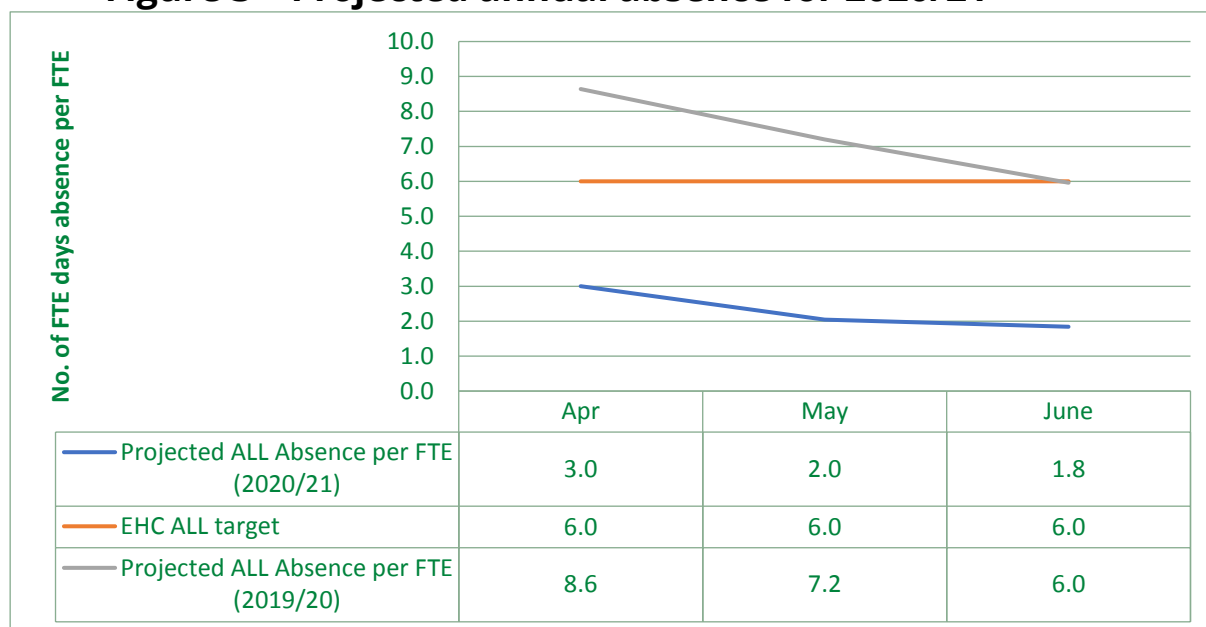
3.3.1 At the end of Quarter 1, the total number of sickness days taken was 135.49 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 64.48 FTE days (48%) were due to short term sickness and 71.01 FTE days (52%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 0.4% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is also 0.4% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 0.8%.

3.3.2 At the end of Quarter 1 (June 2020), the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.46 days.

ALL Absence - Annual period 2019/20

3.3.3 Based on the absence data at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2020) it is estimated that projected sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 1.8 days per FTE. This is below the council's annual target of 6 days and lower than the projected annual level in Quarter 1 in 2019/20 (6 days per FTE). See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – Projected annual absence for 2020/21



Short term absence

3.3.3 Absences of less than four weeks are considered to be short term sickness absence.

Short term absence - Quarter 1

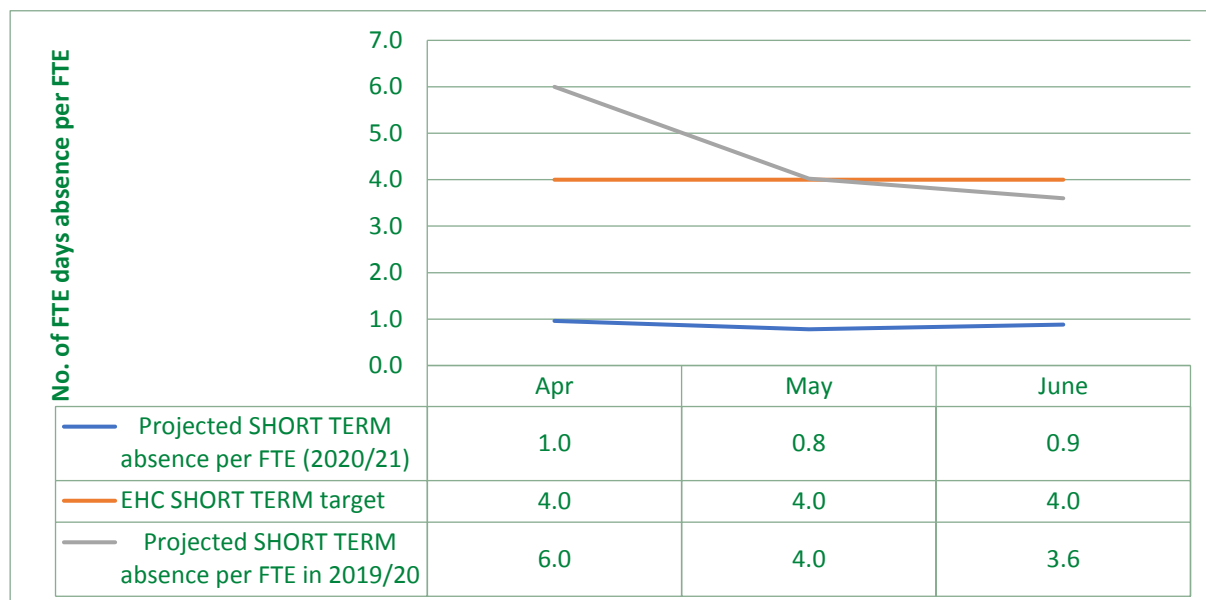
3.3.4 Twenty Three employees (6.9% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 1 totalling 64.48 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 0.4%.

3.3.5 At the end of Quarter 1, the number of short term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.22 days.

Short term absence - Annual period 2019/20

3.3.6 Based on short term absence data at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2020), it is estimated that projected short term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 0.9 days per FTE. This is below the council's short term target of 4 days and lower than the projected annual level in Quarter 1 in 2019/20 (3.6 days per FTE). See Figure 3 below.

Figure 4 – Projected annual SHORT TERM absence for 2020/21



Long Term absence

3.3.7 Absences in excess of 4 weeks/28 consecutive calendar days are considered to be long term sickness absence.

Long term absence – Quarter 1

3.3.8 Four employees (1.2% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 1 totalling 71.01 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 0.4%.

3.3.9 All four employees have been offered support through the employee assistance programme and through referrals to Occupational Health. The reasons for long term absence were for acute medical conditions (e.g. heart attack, cancer), and

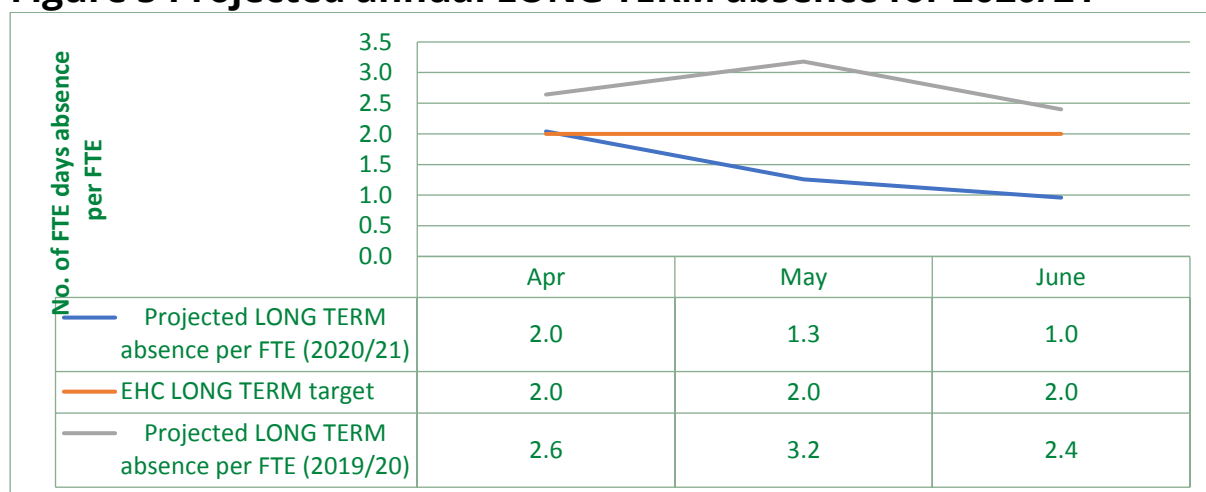
reoccurring medical conditions (e.g. angina, allergies). All except one employee have returned to work. The remaining employee has an acute medical condition and continuing to be supported by Occupational Health and management.

3.3.10 At the end of Quarter 1, the number of long term FTE days absent per FTE was 0.24 days.

LONG TERM absence - Annual period 2020/21

3.3.11 Based on long term absence data at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2020), it is estimated that projected long term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 1 day per FTE. This is below the council's long term target of 2 days and lower than the projected annual level in Quarter 1 in 2019/20 (2.4 days per FTE). See Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Projected annual LONG TERM absence for 2020/21



3.4 Learning and Development

3.4.1 Between April and June 2020, there were 5 in-house learning and development events held and 28 participants in total. Please note these figures do not include the in-house e-learning courses delivered through our Skills Build platform. These will be included in the annual Learning and Development report.

3.4.2 Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, most events that were scheduled were able to continue using the Zoom platform. However, some events such as the Evacuation Chair Basic Operator and the Defibrillator/Cardiac Arrest Response training could not continue due to the practical nature of the events and will be re-arranged once the social distancing parameters allow.

3.4.3 The Human Resources Officer is working with training providers to look at ways to adapt the training programme in for 2020/21 to enable events to take place on-line or through e-learning platforms.

Event/Course	No of participants	Type/number of sessions held
Customer Service Complaints Process	10	2
Supplier GDPR Assurance Training	5	1
Members enquiry training	13	2
Total	28	5

3.4 Equalities Monitoring Indicators

3.6.1 The table below shows a summary of equalities data for employees as at 30 June 2020.

	Target	EHC Percentage
Disability		
Leadership Team with a disability	5%	0.0%
Employees with a disability	5%	4.2%
Ethnicity		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5%	11.1%
Employees from BAME groups	4.5%	6.5%
Gender		
Leadership Team members who are female	51%	44.5%

Employees who are female	51%	72.2%
Full Time/Part Time		
Employees who are part time	27%	38%
Employees who are part time and female	21%	33.8%
Employees who are part time and male	6%	4.2%

The Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Heads of Service. N.B There were 9 employees in the Leadership Team data as at 30 June 2020 (the interim Head of Strategic Finance and Property has not been included as he is not an employee of the council).

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As detailed in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Updated Standby and Out of Hours Policy

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) HR Committee to approve the changes made to the Standby and Out of Hours Policy following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. The Standby and Out of Hours Policy has been updated following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Standby and Out of Hours Policy was first written in 2010 and has not been updated since then apart from to update the payment amounts in line with annual pay awards.
- 2.2 The original policy covered three teams that received payment for Standby/Out of Hours duties; Environmental Health, Building Control and the Corporate Standby team.

- 2.3 In 2015 the Caretaking team raised a grievance stating that they should also receive standby payments for being on call for alarm call-outs for Wallfields. Their grievance was upheld and payments have been made since but the policy was not updated to reflect this.
- 2.4 Since the policy was introduced, Environmental Health has now ceased their out of hours rota and Building Control is no longer part of the Council but these sections had not been removed from the policy.
- 2.5 The decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota taken by Leadership Team on 26 May 2020 means that the Caretaking Team will be the only remaining team receiving payment for standby duties.

3.0 Report

Corporate Standby Rota

- 3.1 Leadership Team took the decision on 26 May 2020 to cease the Corporate Standby Rota. This section has been removed from the updated policy.
- 3.2 The Corporate Standby Rota is a voluntary shared rota and officers on the rota are not contractually obliged to provide this service and can give or be given one month's notice to terminate.
- 3.3 There are four standby officers who are on a 128 hour per week rota and are paid £2.02 per hour (£258.56 per normal week) and double on public holidays. If costs are incurred these can be claimed back and if calls last longer than 15 minutes, overtime payment can be claimed for the entire length of the call. The annual cost of this service for 2019/20 is £13,690.

- 3.4 The standby officer records the caller's details and passes this to the appropriate officer during the next working day.
- 3.5 Calls received typically cover alarm notifications, stray dogs, noise complaints, building control and illegal encampments.
- 3.6 There has been a 77% decrease in calls received by the Corporate Standby Team since 2016/17, reducing from 272 calls in 2016/17 to 63 calls in 2019/20. This means that the cost per call has drastically increased and averaged £217.30 per call in 19/20 (the annual cost was £13,690 in 2019/20). Please see the table below showing call volumes between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

Type	Number in 20 16/ 17	Number in 20 17/ 18	Number in 20 18/ 19	Number in 20 19/ 20
Noise	120	72	71	32
Dogs	114	79	61	20
Travellers	0	1	0	6
Structural Damage	8	5	6	3
House Alarm	10	5	3	1
Highways	5	0	0	1
Homelessness	0	1	0	0
Bonfires	15	5	0	0
Total	272	168	141	63

- 3.7 Leadership Team agreed to put in place an automated system to give out of hours callers the appropriate response. Building Control matters would normally go through HCC as the first point of contact and then should be dealt with through the LT on call rota. With all other matters there should be an automated voice message informing the caller to email or call during the next working day or highlighting information on the councils' or other relevant websites.

- 3.8 UNISON were consulted on the revised policy and decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota and have agreed the changes to the policy.
- 3.9 UNISON accept that the cessation of the Corporate Standby Rota would result in considerable savings for the Council and this could be achieved without a significant loss of service to residents. However, UNISON consider that the required notice period of one month to be unjust due to the lack of notice of any planned change to this service being given. In order to allow the recipients to become accustomed to what may be a significant reduction in their income, UNISON propose that a notice period of not less than three (3) months should be given once the revised policy and report have been agreed by the LJP to be advised to HR committee.
- 3.10 Leadership Team have accepted UNISON's proposal to extend the notice period to 3 months to provide more time for the four staff members to adjust subject to LJP approval.
- 3.11 LJP have approved UNISON's proposal and the revised policy.

Environmental Health and Building Control

- 3.11 Environmental Health ceased their standby rota some time ago so this section has been removed from the policy. Building Control Officers who used to provide standby cover are no longer employed by the Council so this section has also been removed.

Caretaking Team

- 3.12 The Caretaking team have been receiving standby payments since their grievance was upheld in 2015. Details of their standby rota have been added to the policy.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

Financial savings of £13,690 per annum will be made by ceasing the Corporate Standby Rota.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes as set out this is an employment matter and the report has been produced by HR

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- 5.1 The updated Standby and Out of Hours Policy is attached at Appendix 1.

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East Herts Council

Standby Duty and Out of Hours Call Out

Policy Statement

Policy Statement No 39 (Issue No 3)

Updated August 2020

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Introduction

- 1.1 Services may require employees to be available outside working hours to respond to incidents / emergencies which, due to their nature, cannot wait until the next working day.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to compensate individuals for the inconvenience of being at their employer's disposal outside of working hours and for the limitations this imposes on them.
- 1.3 Rates of pay are standardised across the council in recognition of the principle that employees' own time outside of working hours is of equal value.
- 1.4 Officers carrying out standby or out of hours duties are required to remain contactable, available and fit for duty. Officers must therefore refrain from being under the influence of alcohol or any other substances that would impair their ability to work safely.
- 1.5 Officers on standby or out of hours duties are not required to stay at their home address but should be within a reasonable proximity of the district boundary and ensure that telephone contact coverage is maintained.

2.0 Out of Hours Working

- 2.1 The Caretaking team are currently the only team in the council working on a standby rota.
- 2.2 The Caretaking team run an out of hours rota whereby one Caretaker is always available on standby outside of the Wallfields' opening hours to respond to alarm call outs for Wallfields. A normal week of standby duty for the Caretaking team is 103 hours as follows:

Day	Hours to/from	Hours
Mon/Tues	20.00-7.00	11.00
Tues/Weds	20.00-7.00	11.00
Weds/Thurs	20.00-7.00	11.00
Thurs/Fri	10.00-7.00	11.00
Fri	20.00 - 0.00	4.00
Sat	0.00 – 0.00	24.00
Sun/Mon	0.00 - 24.00 + 7.00	31.00

- 2.3 Certain officers in the council, for example in Planning and Licensing also take part in out of hours working as part of their role, but are not required to be on call as they only make proactive planned visits. Officers in these teams do not receive additional payments as the out of hours working is taken into account in their job description and therefore basic salary. Officers in this team can claim time off in lieu (TOIL) in line with current policy for any visits made outside of hours, inclusive of travelling time.

3.0 Emergency Planning Activities

- 3.1 A number of members of staff have chosen to be trained as emergency planning volunteers so that they can be called upon to assist the council in the event of an emergency. They are not required to be on call so do not receive any payment for this but if they are available and fit for duty at the time of an emergency they will be asked if they can assist.
- 3.2 If emergency planning volunteers are called out to attend an emergency outside of normal office hours they will be reimbursed for their time with either overtime or TOIL. It will be the decision of the employee whether they wish to take overtime or TOIL.
- 3.3 The Deputy Chief Executive and all Heads of Service are required to take part in an on call rota to act as the first responder in relation to out of hours emergencies. This is a contractual requirement for which there is no additional remuneration. In line with this policy they too must remain contactable, available and fit for duty while on call, and therefore refrain from being under the influence of alcohol or any other substances that would impair their ability to work safely.

4.0 Payment

- 4.1 A corporate approach has been adopted across the council, with the same level of payment being awarded to all staff undertaking standby and out of hours duties (excluding emergency planning volunteers). The rate per hour as of 1 April 2020 is £2.02 and this is doubled for Public Holidays.
- 4.2 Payments will be increased each year by the same percentage increase as the NJC agreed annual pay award.

- 4.3 If employees are required to be on standby / out of hours duties on Public Holidays they will be paid an enhanced rate of hours for that day, as detailed in the table above.
- 4.4 Officers can claim overtime (or TOIL if requested by the employee) for any alarm call outs they are required to attend, inclusive of travelling time.
- 4.5 The standby / out of hours duty payments that employees receive form part of the employee's pensionable pay.
- 4.6 Where staff are unable to provide planned standby / out of hours cover (for example, through sickness or annual leave), staff are required to swap duties with a colleague. Staff will not be paid for standby / out of hours duty whilst on annual leave or off sick. Staff must make every effort to take annual leave at a time when they are not on standby / out of hours duty.
- 4.7 However, if staff wish to continue to undertake standby duties whilst on annual leave, for example they are staying at home and will be contactable and available to take calls/ attend call outs, then this is permissible, subject to approval from the relevant manager.

5.0 Job Descriptions, Person Specifications and Written Particulars of Employment (not applicable to emergency planning volunteers)

- 5.1 Job Descriptions – It must be stated in all appropriate job descriptions that it is a requirement of the job to perform out of hours duties.
- 5.2 Person Specifications – It must be stated on all appropriate person specifications that the employee must be available to work out of hours in line with service requirements.
- 5.3 Written Particulars of Employment – It must be stated that the employee will be required to participate in an out of hours rota.

6.0 Administration

- 6.1 Payment for Standby and Out of Hours duties should be claimed on an overtime claim form that should be completed by the employees, passed to the relevant manager for authorisation and forwarded to Payroll for payment by the 6th of the month following the month claimed. The manager who authorises the

payment and associated overtime / TOIL must be an authorised signatory. This will ensure that payment is only made to those employees who have carried out this service.

7.0 Policy Review and Amendment

- 7.1 This policy shall be reviewed after three years, or sooner in line with legislation and best practice to reflect the best possible level of support and management.

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Updated General Leave Policy

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) To approve the update to the general leave policy to reflect legislation changes from 6 April 2020 regarding statutory parental bereavement leave & pay**
- (b) To approve the proposal to enhance the second statutory week of bereavement pay to full pay as requested by Unison and agreed by LT and then LJP.**
- (c) To approve the removal of the statutory qualifying period of 26 weeks for the second week of full pay in line with LJP's agreed proposal.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. The General Leave Policy has been updated (see Section 6: 6.3) and published on the intranet with Unison agreement to ensure it is clear and up to date with legislation changes on statutory parental bereavement leave and pay.

- 1.2 The main proposal is to agree to further update the policy to enhance the second week of statutory parental bereavement pay to full pay.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The General Leave Policy was previously taken to Local Joint Panel on 5 February 2020 and HR Committee on 12 February 2020 following updates to the section on dependency leave and to add further sources of support for carers/staff with dependents.
- 2.2 Legislation introducing Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay came into effect from 6 April 2020. The bereavement section of the General Leave policy was therefore updated to incorporate the required statutory changes. The statutory changes were agreed with Unison and the Leadership Team and implemented in line with the legislation.
- 2.3 Once the policy was updated and published to reflect the statutory provision in line with the 6 April 2020 effective date, Unison contacted the Chief Executive and the Head of HR to request that East Herts Council enhance the second week of statutory parental bereavement pay to full pay in addition to the enhancement already provided by the existing policy for the first week (5 days) to be full pay. The Chief Executive on behalf of LT has agreed to the proposed enhancement and it was then for LJP to consider.
- 2.4 At Local Joint Panel on 1 July 2020, it was proposed that the requirement for employees to have 26 weeks continuous service to qualify to receive statutory bereavement pay and therefore the enhancement to full pay should be removed. This was supported.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The council's General Leave Policy already includes a provision for bereavement leave and pay for employees in the event of the death of their child (and other immediate family members) of up to 5 days paid leave. Leave may be taken at/or around the time of bereavement at the employees request (there is no qualifying period for the EHC 5 day provision). Where an employee requires more than the 5 days leave the employee can discuss with their manager regarding taking additional annual leave or accrued flexi time.
- 3.2 From 6 April 2020, employees who satisfy certain eligibility criteria are entitled to take up to two weeks parental bereavement leave (with statutory pay where applicable – see below). Employees can take leave as a single two-week period or take one or two separate periods of leave of a week each (it cannot be taken as single days) within 56 weeks of the child's death.

The right to parental bereavement leave and pay applies to parents of a child under the age of 18 who dies, or parents of a child who is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, on or after 6 April 2020.

- 3.3 The bereavement section of the council's General Leave Policy has been amended to include the provision for statutory parental bereavement leave and pay. It has been made clear in the policy that it is not intended that parental bereavement leave is taken in addition to the existing 5 days paid bereavement leave that can be taken for the loss immediate family members (referred to in 3.1 above). At the Local Joint Panel meeting on 1 July 2020, support was given for the removal of the requirement for employees to have at least 26 weeks' continuous service to be entitled to receive statutory bereavement pay.

3.4 Initially it was proposed that the council would pay for parental bereavement leave as follows:

- first week to be paid at full pay (the policy already had a provision for 5 days paid bereavement leave for the loss of immediate family members)
- second week to be paid at the statutory rate (e.g. £151.20 for 2020/21)

3.5 Following consultation with Unison it was agreed to change the second week to be paid at full pay subject to approval by LJP which has been achieved and then HR Committee. This means therefore that both weeks would be paid at full pay.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – the General Leave Policy support a number of equality areas i.e. those with dependents, career breaks, religious events.

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

LT agreed which includes section 151 Officer as well as all Heads of Service.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes as set out this is an employment matter and the report has been produced by HR

Human Rights

No

Legal

As set out in the report statutory parental bereavement leave is required to comply with legislation and therefore the legal requirements have been met.

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

5.1 The updated General Leave Policy is attached at Appendix 1.

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East Herts Council

General Leave

Policy Statement

Policy Statement No 7 (Issue No 2) December 2019 (updated April 2019, December 2019, March 2020)

-
1. **April 2019** - Minor updates made to reflect pay and terms and conditions changes agreed through collective bargaining in March 2019. This policy applies to situations which arise from 1 April 2019 onwards.
 2. **December 2019** - Updated to ensure dependency leave is clear and no longer relies on a separate Carer's policy to provide clarity. Carer's Policy has been incorporated and deleted with General Leave updated to ensure consistency, changes were not material but have been agreed with Unison and will be reported to LJP/HRC.

3. **March 2020** - Updated to ensure a change in legislation on statutory parental bereavement leave from 1 April 2020 is included.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The General Leave Policy provides employees and managers with information on the various types of leave entitlement.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all employees including Chief Officer level that are employed by East Herts Council.

2.0 Contractual Relationship during Absence

- 2.1 Having granted a period of paid or unpaid leave, the contract of employment between both parties remains in existence (except in the case of a Career Break) and therefore a commitment to maintain confidence, trust and act in good faith during the period of leave.
- 2.2 Employees on periods of extended leave will be required to maintain regular contact with their manager and, if appropriate, inform them of any changes in circumstance which may affect their intention to return to work.
- 2.3 Employees suspected of abusing the provisions of these procedures or fraudulently applying for leave will be subject to disciplinary investigation as detailed in the Disciplinary Policy.

3.0 Granting and Recording Leave

- 3.1 It is the Line Manager's responsibility to consider applications for special leave or approving and logging dependency leave and use the following information as guidelines (please contact HR for further guidance where appropriate and to ensure consistency).

4.0 Public Holidays

- 4.1 Employees are entitled to public holidays, irrespective of length of service. Part time employees are entitled to a pro rata entitlement to these holidays. This is calculated as a fifth of the employee's working week, for each bank holiday, regardless whether this is a working day or not. For example, an employee working 20 hours per week would be entitled to receive 4 hours for each bank holiday.

5.0 Annual Leave

5.1 Leave Year

- 5.1.1 The Council operates an anniversary leave period commencing on the date an employee commenced working for the Council. Those employees starting or leaving employment during the year are entitled to leave proportionate to the number of completed weeks of service during the year.

5.2 Part Time Staff

- 5.2.1 Annual Leave entitlement and any other leave allowances will be applied pro-rata for part time employees based on 37 hours full time working week. For example an employee with full time equivalent 25 days annual leave (7.4 hours x 25 days = 185 hours) entitlement working 20 hours per week will be entitled to 13.5 days/100 hours annual leave.

5.3 Approval for Taking Leave/Carrying Forward Leave

- 5.3.1 All leave is taken at the discretion of your Line Manager and requests will need to be looked at in the context of the cover available within the team to ensure that the service provided is not disrupted.
- 5.3.2 Managers should try and plan staffing arrangements well in advance so that peak holiday periods are adequately covered so that holiday requests can be treated equitably.
- 5.3.3 Where a late request is received, the employee should not expect or assume that it will be granted and managers should treat such requests, due to unexpected events, sympathetically. As a general rule, however, employees should give at least twice the amount of notice that they wish to take as leave. Therefore, if 5 days' holiday is being requested, at least 10 working days' notice is required.
- 5.3.4 As far as possible all employees should take their annual leave before the end of their leave year. Where this is not possible up to five days annual leave may be carried forward into the next leave year with the prior written consent of their Line Manager.

5.4 Cancelling Leave due to sickness

- 5.4.1 If an employee is due to go on annual leave or during their leave becomes unwell, any absence will be counted as sickness absence rather than annual leave if a fit note is provided. Employees must notify their manager as soon as possible to inform them that they are unwell. Details of the nature of the illness and an indication of the expected return to work should be provided.

5.5 Continuous Service

- 5.5.1 Employees who have 5 years' continuous local authority service with East Herts or another local authority are entitled to an extra 5 days annual leave.

5.6 Basic Leave Entitlement

- 5.6.1 The basic leave entitlement is dependent upon the scale point an employee has reached. It is banded as follows:-

SCP 4 - 22	25 days
SCP 23 - 25	26 days
SCP 26 - 28	27 days
SCP 29 and above	28 days

6.0 Bereavement

6.1 Bereavement of Immediate Family Members

(Please also see 6.3 Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave in relation to a child under the age of 18)

- 6.1.1 When an employee suffers the loss of an immediate family member, for example, partner, child, parent or sibling, the employee will be entitled to 5 paid days leave. Leave may be taken at/or around the time of bereavement at the employees request.
- 6.1.2 If the employee has the same relationship with the deceased as described above, for example, having been brought up by the person, then the same provision of leave will apply.
- 6.1.3 Managers should endeavour to facilitate any requests for leave in these circumstances. However, if the Manager has any query

regarding leave arrangements these should be discussed with the appropriate Head of Service and Human Resources before any action is taken.

- 6.1.4 There may be circumstances where an employee requires more than the 5 days leave when an immediate family member has died. In this event the employee should make their Line Manager aware of the situation in order to arrange that annual leave or accrued flexi time can be added on.

6.2 Bereavement of Relatives / Friends

- 6.2.1 When an employee suffers the loss of a relative or friend, for example, grandparent, aunt/uncle or neighbour, the employee will be entitled to 1 day's paid leave to attend the funeral.
- 6.2.2 Line Managers should endeavour to facilitate any requests for leave in these circumstances. However, if the Line Manager has any query regarding leave arrangements these should be discussed with the appropriate Head of Service and Human Resources before any action is taken.
- 6.2.3 There may be circumstances where an employee requires more than 1 day's leave when a relative or friend has died. In this event the employee should make their Line Manager aware of the situation in order to arrange that annual leave or accrued flexi time can be added on.

6.3 Bereavement of a Child under the age of 18 (Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave)

- 6.3.1 When an employee suffers the loss of a child under the age of 18 (including parents who suffer a still birth after 24 weeks of pregnancy), the employee will be entitled to two weeks parental bereavement leave. The leave must be taken as a single block of two weeks or two separate blocks of one week at different times. Leave cannot be taken as single days.
- 6.3.2 Employees can take the leave at the time(s) they choose within the 56 weeks from the date of the death. They might choose, for example, to take it at a particularly difficult time such as their child's birthday.

- 6.3.3 If the employee has lost more than one child, they have a separate entitlement to bereavement leave for each child who has passed away.
- 6.3.4 The scope of who qualifies as a bereaved parent for the right to statutory parental bereavement leave and pay includes the following:
- Biological and adoptive parents;
 - Natural parents of adopted children who have been granted some court-ordered contact;
 - Intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement (who must either have applied or intend to apply (within six months of a child's birth) for a parental order under ss.54 or 54A of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 in relation to the child);
 - Local authority foster parents who are also prospective adopters under a fostering for adoption scheme; and
 - "Parents in fact" who, for a continuous period of at least four weeks before the child died, lived with the child and had "day-to-day responsibility" for them (but who are not being paid to look after the child).
- 6.3.5 The partner of qualifying parents, who lives with the child and the parent in an enduring family relationship, also qualifies for statutory parental bereavement leave and pay.
- 6.3.6 Employees do not need to have a continuous period of service to be entitled to take statutory parental bereavement leave or to receive statutory parental bereavement pay.
- 6.3.7 The council will pay statutory parental bereavement pay. An enhanced contractual provision will be made for the first week of parental bereavement leave where the 5 day paid provision set out in 6.1.1 above will be used to enhance to full pay for the first week. The second week will be paid at the statutory rate (e.g. £151.20 for 2020/21).
- 6.3.8 If the employee needs to take parental bereavement leave within the first 56 days after their bereavement, they can take the leave straight away. They do not have to provide any notice however they must let their manager and HR know no later than when they are due to start work on the first day on which they wish to take leave or, if that is not feasible, as soon as they can.

6.3.9 To take leave more than 56 days after their bereavement, employees must give their manager at least one week's notice.

7.0 Dependency Leave

7.1 Dependency Leave

7.1.1 Eligibility to dependency leave:

7.1.2 Employees have the right to take dependency leave during working hours to deal with unforeseen/unplanned or emergency events.

7.1.3 The right applies to all employees regardless of length of service, hours worked, permanent or fixed term.

7.1.4 Employees are entitled to take reasonable time off in order to take action necessary in relation to the types of unplanned circumstances set out in 7.3 below.

7.2 What is a dependant?

7.2.1 A dependant is someone who relies on the employee for care. A dependant is defined for the purposes of this procedure as an employee's spouse, partner, child, parent, dependant relative or someone who lives in the same household as the employee but who is not his or her employee, tenant, lodger or boarder or someone else who is dependent on the employee. If a manager or employee requires further clarity on what a dependant is please contact HR.

7.3 When dependency leave may be taken

7.3.1 Employees may take reasonable time off during working hours in order to take action necessary to deal with the following types of unforeseen/unplanned or emergency events:

- To provide assistance on an occasion when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted;
- To make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- Because of the unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant; or

- To deal with an incident that involves a child of the employee and which occurs unexpectedly in a period during which an educational establishment that the child attends is responsible for him or her.

7.3.2 These are examples of instances which may require dependency leave; however, the council will give consideration to requests for dependency leave which are not included above but may require the support of the council, **manager should consult with HR to ensure consistency**. Illness and injury do not necessarily have to be serious or life-threatening and may be linked to a dependant with a deteriorating condition requiring occasional support. The council will consider sympathetically each individual request for dependency leave considering the merits and circumstances of the specific case.

7.4 Procedure for taking dependency leave

7.4.1 The council will allow employees reasonable time to do what is necessary in any particular given situation. Employees will need to notify their line manager who can approve dependency leave by logging it into MyView (the council's HR & Payroll system) which will ensure the paid allowance is managed. Up to five days in any twelve month period will be paid (this will be pro-rata for part time employees in line with all leave provisions). Further time required for dependency leave is to be taken as unpaid leave, again a manager can log this into MyView but will need to log it as unpaid with the reason of dependency chosen. Agreement should be reached regarding what time is required and for what purposes, though it is accepted that the employee may need to alter the initial agreement depending on the circumstances. Each request will be considered individually in the context of the particular circumstances.

7.4.2 There is no limit to the number of occasions on which an employee can exercise the right to take time off; however, such leave should normally be for genuine emergencies and unforeseen matters or in the case of paid provision for providing care. Employees should, therefore, utilise annual leave, or parental leave, for any planned absence as dependency leave is not intended for such purposes.

7.4.3 Permission for dependency leave should not be unreasonably refused. Employees who feel they have not been treated reasonably in relation to such leave should discuss the matter with HR and if it cannot be resolved they should access the council's grievance procedure.

7.5 Unpaid Dependency Leave (where entitlement to paid Dependency leave has been exhausted)

- 7.5.1 Paid dependency leave should be used to take the appropriate action necessary to resolve or deal with an emergency/unplanned event which has arisen because of a dependant. Once the employee has had reasonable time to make alternative arrangements for care provision, any further planned time off for that particular event should be taken as annual leave or flexi leave or unpaid if appropriate.
- 7.5.2 Where an employee has exhausted their entitlement to paid dependency leave (5 days pro-rata in a rolling year), any further time off required for dependency leave within a rolling 12 month period is to be taken as unpaid leave unless flexi or annual leave can be authorised.
- 7.5.3 Managers should log unpaid dependency leave on MyView as unpaid absence with the reason of dependency chosen.

7.6 Further support for Carers/Staff with dependents

- 7.6.1 East Herts Carers Group is self-organised staff group which meets on a monthly basis in staff own time (usually at lunch time) to provide support to fellow carers by sharing best practice and experiences. The group is open to any staff member to join and as well as supporting each other it also works with human resources to ensure staff feel supported by the council in line with the provisions made.

7.6.2 Other provisions

As set out in this General Leave Policy and the Family Friendly Policy in addition to providing an enhanced provision of paid dependency leave and operating a flexi-leave scheme for most staff:

The council also provides enhanced occupational paid leave in the following areas:

- Antenatal care
- Maternity
- Adoption
- Paternity
- Fostering
- Bereavement

The council also provides the opportunity to take unpaid leave in the following areas:

- Parental Leave
- Career Breaks which can be used to support a longer term caring arrangement
- Dependency leave
- Unpaid leave to provide planned care

7.6.3 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) The council provides employees with an external EAP which provides proactive, practical information and emotional support to help you to manage and reduce the impact of all of life's events, both at home and at work. The service is available 24/7 and is completely free and confidential. The service provides a specially trained, legal and information team which can help to resolve issues around: debt, legal concerns, consumer and care etc. In addition to a helpline/ telephone service and online support where appropriate employees will have access to up to 6 sessions of structured counselling.

7.6.4 Useful Links:

- Carers UK: <https://www.carersuk.org/>
- Herts Carers: <https://www.carersinherts.org.uk/> this site also provides links to many other useful sites
- Hertfordshire County Council:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/home.aspx>
- Unison (Trade Union) Carers support/news:
<https://www.unison.org.uk/search/carers/>

8.0 Career Breaks

8.1 What is a Career Break?

8.1.1 A career break enables an employee with 2 years continuous service with the Council to take an unpaid break from work for personal reasons and maintain continuity of service with the Council. The employee is required to give a minimum of 3 months' notice to commence a career break. With the exception of continuity of service, all other terms of the employment contract with the Council will be suspended. On return, at an agreed date following the career break, the employee will be able to return to the same or similar post within the Council without competitive selection.

8.1.2 It is recognised that during an employee's working life there will be times when personal commitments may take priority over work for example, bringing up children, longer term care for sick or elderly relatives, or pursuing a course of further education. The Council can accommodate such personal commitments, where operationally practicable, through career breaks.

8.2 What is the purpose of a career break?

8.2.1 The purpose of a career break could be:

- To extend the maternity/ paternity leave period
- To extend a period of adoption leave
- To care for dependent relatives
- To enter full time education
- Extended foreign travel
- To convalesce after a period of illness or major life crisis such as bereavement or divorce

8.2.3 These reasons are not all inclusive and others may be considered, with the major exception of taking up other paid employment.

8.3 How long is a career break?

8.3.1 The minimum break is 3 months and the maximum break is 1 year.

8.3.2 There is no limit to the number of career breaks an employee can take providing that they return to work for the Council for a minimum of 2 years between each career break.

8.4 Who can apply for a career break?

8.4.1 All permanent employees, with at least two years continuous service with the Council, regardless of the number of hours worked, are eligible to apply for a career break.

8.4.2 An employee must submit their request to their manager, with a copy to Human Resources stating when they would like their career break to commence, the reason for their career break and the durations of the requested break.

8.5 What happens to the employee's job?

- 8.5.1 After a career break the employee will have the right to return to their same or equivalent position (in terms of service area and pay) where this is available. However, where this is not available the Council will offer an alternative which can include work elsewhere in the Council at a different level and pay. The new job would need to be a suitable alternative, within the definition used when employees are facing redundancy and would be in line with the Redeployment Policy regarding salary protection. (see Redundancy policy and Redeployment policy for more details)

8.6 Extending or cutting short the career break

- 8.6.1 If the employee wishes to extend the career break, they must do so in writing giving a minimum of three months' notice. The Line Manager will give consideration to the extension along the same lines as the original request and may grant up to one year in total.
- 8.6.2 There will be no automatic right to cut short a career break but Line Managers will consider such requests from an employee as they can accommodate, without impacting on service level.

8.7 Contract of employment

- 8.7.1 The employee will be required to sign an agreement suspending all terms of their contract of employment, with the exception of continuity of service with the Council. The contract of employment will remain suspended for the duration of the career break. This will not constitute a break in service and general conditions of service will apply as at the start of the career break when the employee returns to work.

8.8 Rate of Pay/Pension

- 8.8.1 At the end of the career break the employee will return to the same incremental point they were on at the start of the career break which may result in salary protection if the post has been downgraded in a restructure or an alternative post has been agreed by all in lieu of the original post.
- 8.8.2 Employees considering career breaks should contact LPFA pensions for more information.

8.9 Disciplinary warnings

8.9.1 Any live disciplinary warnings will be suspended for the duration of the career break and will be carried forward upon the employee's return to work.

8.9.2 Please also view the Flexible Working Policy for more information.

9.0 Citizenship duties

9.1 Elected Members of other Council Authorities

9.1.1 Employees who undertake duties as an Elected Member in another authority will be allowed to take up to a maximum of 10 days paid leave per annum. Leave must be used to attend official functions or meetings. Requests for leave must be accompanied by proof that attendance is required.

9.1.2 All employees paid on or above SCP 44 are politically restricted and therefore, unable to undertake these duties. Other employees may also be restricted from undertaking these duties. Guidance should be sought from their line manager or Human resources. In both circumstances the restriction will be detailed in the employee's contract.

9.1.3 It is the Line Manager's responsibility to approve and monitor requests for time off to undertake Civic Duties. However, if the Manager has any query regarding leave arrangements these should be discussed with the appropriate Head of Service and Human Resources before any action is taken.

9.2 Magistrates

9.2.1 Employees who are Magistrates will be allowed to take up to a maximum of 10 days paid leave per annum. Leave must be used to attend court sessions. Requests for leave must be accompanied by proof that attendance is required.

9.2.2 It is the Line Manager's responsibility to approve and monitor requests for time off to undertake Civic Duties. However, if the Line Manager has any query regarding leave arrangements these should be discussed with the appropriate Head of Service and Human Resources before any action is taken.

9.3 Court Attendance as a Witness/Jury Member

9.3.1 Employees summoned as a witness or jury member will be allowed the necessary time off to attend court. The employee should inform their Line Manager at the earliest convenience and pass on the summons document to Payroll for completion.

9.3.2 Any monies received by an employee to compensate for loss of pay must be declared to Payroll.

9.4 Court Attendance as the accused or to pursue a Personal Claim

9.4.1 Employees who are attending court as the accused or to pursue a personal claim will be required to take annual or flexi leave.

9.5 Active Citizen Duties

9.5.1 Employees who volunteer their expertise for public service may take up to 3 days paid leave per annum to attend formal meetings or functions.

9.5.2 Applications for leave must be accompanied by proof that attendance is required. Leave will be granted at the discretion of the manager.

9.5.3 The definition of active citizenship duties would include School Governors, Trustees of Charitable Trusts, Management Committee members of charitable trusts, members of publicly constituted watchdog organizations. N.B. This list is not exhaustive and other bodies may fall into this category.

9.6 Service in Reserve Forces

9.6.1 Employees who are members of the Reserve Forces may be required to attend summer camp on an annual basis. Two weeks' paid leave will be allowed in these circumstances.

9.6.2 Employees are required to give as much notice as possible for annual camp in order for the Line Manager to arrange appropriate cover. Leave may be refused if it would have a detrimental impact on service delivery.

9.6.3 In circumstances where a reservist employee is mobilised they will not be paid by East Herts Council and should be placed on a Career break for payroll purposes to ensure their continuous service is not broken.

10.0 Union duties

10.1 Time off to Undertake Trade Union Duties

10.1.1 Unison stewards and officers are entitled to reasonable time off for Unison activities in accordance with the Recognition and Procedural Agreement 2004. As much notice as possible must be given to their line manager of absence due to union duties.

10.1.2 When the Employer request Unison to attend meetings, the employees concerned will be allowed paid time off from their normal duties to attend. Any additional expenses incurred by attendance will be reimbursed under the normal Council guidelines subject to approval by the Employer before they are incurred.

10.2 Unison Annual General Meeting

10.2.1 The annual general meeting will be arranged in consultation with the Chief Executive who should be given at least one month's notice of the date of the meeting.

10.2.2 The meeting will generally be held at lunchtime and Unison members attending may credit flexi time up to the end of the meeting.

10.3 Executive and Safety Committee Meetings

10.3.1 Unison will hold monthly executive meetings at Wallfields, Hertford and occasionally other EHDC venues.

10.3.2 The meeting may commence any time after 16.00 hours and employees attending may credit the flexi system until the end of their attendance or until 17.30 hours whichever is first.

10.4 Other Trade Union Activities

10.4.1 Managers may allow reasonable time off for Unison Officers to attend training courses, regional meetings and the annual conference in accordance with the Recognition and Procedural Agreement 2004.

11.0 Training Courses and Day Release

- 11.1 Employees who are required by the Council to participate in training events and/or day release courses will be allowed paid time off.
- 11.2 Employees will not be required to work extra hours to compensate for time off to attend Council run training events or courses. If an employee attends a course the time should be recorded in flexi time in accordance with the Flexitime Policy and guideline.

12.0 Examination & Study Leave

- 12.1 Employees who are required by the Council to undertake training course examinations will be allowed paid time off to do so. The time should be recorded in accordance with the Flexitime Policy and guide line.
- 12.2 Employees may apply to take one day's study leave per exam at the discretion of their manager.
- 12.3 Time off to resit exams should be taken as annual leave or flexi leave.
- 12.4 Employees should inform their manager of dates and times of examinations in order that cover arrangements can be made.

13.0 Interviews in other Local Authorities

- 13.1 Employees will be able to take up to 5 days' paid leave per annum in order to attend interviews at other Local Authorities.
- 13.2 It is the Line Manager's responsibility to approve and monitor requests for time off to attend Local Authority Interviews. However, if the Manager has any query regarding leave arrangements these should be discussed with the appropriate Head of Service and Human Resources before any action is taken.

14.0 Leave for Medical Reasons

14.1 Medical Screening

- 14.1.1 Employees will be entitled to paid time off for the purpose of medical screening as deemed necessary by their GP or any relevant medical body.

14.1.2 Employees should inform their Line Manager of date and times of the appointment and provide details of appointments as soon as practicable in order that cover arrangements can be made.

14.2 Hospital Appointments

14.2.1 Employees are entitled to paid time off to attend hospital appointments following referral by their GP or any relevant medical body.

14.2.2 Disability leave should be considered where a person needs time off every week, every few weeks, every few months or every year for medical appointments, treatments or rehabilitation relating to disability. Disability leave should not be counted towards trigger points. Please refer to the Absence Policy for detail.

14.2.3 Employees should inform their Line Manager of date and times of the appointment and provide details of appointments as soon as practicable in order that cover arrangements can be made

14.3 Fertility Treatment

14.3.1 An employee will be given reasonable time off to undertake fertility treatment.

14.3.2 Employees must agree their time off arrangements with their manager in advance of the appointments and produce their appointment card where appropriate.

14.3.3 Employees on flexi-time should record time to attend appointments as described in the Flexitime Policy in the section relating to hospital appointments.

14.4 GP and Dental Appointments

14.4.1 Normally employees should use flexi time to visit their GP or Dentist or arrange appointments outside work time.

15.0 Time off for Religious observance

- 15.1 Many religions or beliefs have special festival or spiritual observance days. Employees may request holiday in order to celebrate festivals or attend ceremonies. Line Managers should sympathetically consider such requests and grant leave out of holiday entitlement, flexitime or unpaid leave.

16.0 Review

- 16.1 This procedure will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there are any changes in legislation requiring amendments to be made.

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: HR and Payroll Team Update Report

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) To note the HR and Payroll Team Update Report

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report provides an update on what the HR and Payroll team have been working on during both Quarter 4 in 2019/2020 (January 2020 to March 2020) and Quarter 1 2020/21 (April 2020 to June 2020). (The report is longer than it normally would be due to covering two quarters on this occasion and also because of the work being done in relation to COVID-19 which has seen HR and Payroll workload increase.)

2.0 Payroll Service

- 2.1 Payroll continues to deliver its primary mission of ensuring all Staff, Councillors and Contractors on Payroll are paid accurately and on a timely basis.
- 2.2 Payroll finalised the separate general election payroll in

relation to the snap election as expected, successfully processing individual payments to 286 people on 7 February 2020.

- 2.3 Payroll complied with the Pension Regulator's legal duty instruction to re-enrol and re-declare automatically enrolling staff not in the pension scheme. This was completed in the with the 3 year re-enrolment requirements in the February 2020 payroll including submission to Regulator. As previously report the re-enrolment affected 20 staff who had the option to opt out once re-enrolled.
- 2.4 Payroll processed all year end statutory requirements for the 2019/20 financial year to HMRC and LGPS Pension provider which included balancing to the general ledger and closing down the ResourceLink system. Payroll then worked with IT to install the 2020/21 new year service pack on the test system which they fully tested before agreeing to install on the live system to begin the 2020/21 monthly processing. The pension year end return that payroll processed is a complex time consuming return that includes all Staff pension contributions and employers that has to be balanced to the general ledger and monthly submissions to the pension provider (LPP). All circumstances like maternity/sick/unpaid leave have different calculations to ensure records are accurate.
- 2.5 Payroll and HR like all services has had to manage the different ways of working to comply with restrictions from the outbreak of Covid-19. This has meant all the team working from home and only accessing the office for essential matters e.g. to print payslips (for casual staff and contractors). Refined processes have been put in place to ensure this is effective and Payroll are keen to retain elements of home working moving forward to retain some of the productivity gains achieved. Payroll adapted very quickly to this immediate change in processing mainly the receipt of information from HR and Staff as well as increased claims for processing received due to extra hours being worked to process business loans etc.

- 2.6 Payroll and HR have also had to set up and calculate furlough payments for theatre staff (all Casuals and 8 permanent employees) with first payment being made in May and ongoing. This information is collated then submitted on the HMRC portal by HR staff (in particular the Trainee HR Officer – Emily Cordwell) who has also been calculating the ongoing payments for payroll to process.
- 2.7 Payroll processed P60's for all Staff & Councillors for the 2019/20 tax year onto 'My View' also processed the P60's for the Election payroll which were posted to the 286 individuals on that payroll.
- 2.8 Payroll collated and calculated the payments for the 2019/20 tax year paid to Councillors and sent to Democratic Services for publishing on the East Herts website. Other published information has also been provided to Finance to be included in the 2019/20 statement of accounts relating to senior officer pay.
- 2.9 To keep visual communication with the rest of the HR Team weekly zoom meetings chaired by Head of HR & OD take place where all Team members reflect on their previous weeks achievements then priorities for the coming week which allows work loads to be divided appropriately and ensure effective practice is shared. The Head of HR and OD also briefs the whole team (HR, OD, Payroll and H&S) on updates from Leadership Team meetings.

3.0 Learning and Development

- 3.1 The HR Quarterly Management Statistics Report provides the data regarding the learning and development events from January to June 2020. Events were delivered face to face until it was unsafe to do so and some events had to be cancelled/postponed in response to the COVID-19 advice received. There were 127 employees participating in 14 learning and development opportunities during the period

January - June 2020 (in addition e-learning has also been undertaken in this period with staff completing the 4 core courses required on an annual basis – see 3.3).

3.2 The Human Resources Officer has been looking at different ways to deliver the face to face sessions. The Officer has worked with the Customer Services Team to design and deliver two bitesize virtual programmes:

- Complaints, Compliments and Comments
- The new Member Case Management System

The sessions were delivered through Zoom (a virtual/video platform) and the events received positive feedback. Work continues with training providers to move the face to face sessions to virtual sessions and for courses to be converted to e-learning courses where possible.

3.3 The 2020 Mandatory E-Learning Programme was launched at the end of January. The refresher courses are mandatory for all staff and also provided to members in line with policies agreed. The Human Resources Officer is currently working on a variety of new e-learning courses for staff using SkillsBuild the Council's e-learning platform to develop and deliver.

3.4 Work on the corporate induction training has commenced after a review from the Chief Executive. Additional feedback is also being provided from the East Herts Together group which will assist in the development of the programme and ensure that new initiatives implemented are maintained and embedded for new starters as well as existing staff.

3.5 Three apprentices have completed their apprenticeships. Two have accepted fixed term contracts at East Herts and the third apprentice will be supported through their level 6 qualification as they continue their career progression. The current apprenticeship programme is in development as we look at ways to implement the programme in the current climate.

4.0 Human Resources Update

4.1 East Herts Together Development Update

The East Herts Together Group has continued to meet during lockdown on Zoom and has made progress on actions.

4.1.1 East Herts Together (EHT) has established where we are currently and where want to get to which has been confirmed by the feedback provided from staff and management:

Where we are now:

- Values are not fully embedded and there are no clear behavioural competencies behind them
- Policies & procedures could be better incorporated and are not always consistently applied by management or as well joined up
- There are barriers to having a 'one team' approach. Not enough cross team working
- There is a lack of consistency in the use of corporate housekeeping tools
- There is a lack of staff ownership and engagement leading to an inconsistent organisational culture.
- Corporate customer standards have largely been forgotten about.

Where we want to be;

- One team with a clear and recognisable organisational culture that everybody understands and adheres to
- A consistent set of employment tools and practices which are truly embedded
- A 4 year HR and OD Strategy and Work Programme that supports the corporate priorities and strengthens the one team approach.
- Values and behaviours are supported by consistent

management practice, strong management training and underpinned by clear and appropriate policies

- Focused on providing excellent customer service to our residents and all whom we work with

4.1.2 EHT Quick wins achieved include:

- Developing and rolling out a corporate email signature
- The majority of staff have now added their photos to Outlook and the intranet and those still outstanding are being picked up by Heads of Service to ensure full coverage
- Outlook calendar protocols have been established and circulated to all staff in preparation for all outlook calendars becoming readable by all staff. Staff calendars are going to be made public on 3 August 2020 by IT, in line with the calendar protocols staff should connect MiCollab to their calendar and can mark appointments private where appropriate.

4.1.3 As part of the EastHerts Together work HR developed a survey that was sent to all staff in May 2020. The survey sought feedback on an initial analysis of the council strengths and areas for improvement as well as core behaviours expected of staff that was undertaken by LT and senior managers. Staff were asked for their input on the key positives to build upon, identified areas for improvement and desired staff core behaviours that all staff will all sign up to. The results of the survey have now been analysed and shared with staff at the recent Staff Briefings. A framework of cultural and behavioural expectations will be built around this in the form of a set of staff and manager core competencies.

EHT agreed to further strengthen a number of the positives identified as needing wider recognition across staff:

- The Leader to cover regeneration and place making in staff briefings
- More internal comms on district plan and G&HGT

- Feature Planning service in future staff briefings
- Services to work with comms to enter more awards such as LJC and MJ to increase the council's profile
- Include a protocol on how to work with Members in corporate induction

4.1.4 A draft Customer Charter has been developed with input from all service areas and has now been taken to Leadership Team for approval and will be implemented shortly.

4.1.5 A One page plan for the Eats Herts Together project has been developed which covers all of the actions for the 1st year. All actions have been assigned to members of the East Herts Together (cross service) Group and target dates agreed (see below). Included in the plan is to review and redevelop employment policies. A sub-working group of HR Officers and Managers has been formed which will develop drafts to the full EHT group. Policy development will follow terms of reference established by the EHT group:

Agreed TOR for HR/Employment policies

- To take the employee through their career journey
- Should be joined up, not in isolation to each other
- Include good examples and flow charts
- Legally compliant and best practice
- Include who to contact for more information

As set out below draft policy developments from EHT will then progress through the existing channels of Leadership Team, Unison, Leadership Team and then LJP and HRC.

Actions /Key projects

Introduce a new Customer charter

Develop calendar management protocols

IT to switch all accounts to reviewer and Comms to promote

Introduce a corporate email signature

Roll out/promote photos for Outlook, Micollab, and the Intranet

When

Aug-20

Apr-20

Jul/Aug 20

Apr-20

Apr-20

Roll out/promote more effective use of Micollab	Jul-20
Survey all staff on strengths and weaknesses of our 'one team' to help inform Strategy and Competencies	Apr-20
Roll out/promote consistent voicemail messages	Aug-20
Develop Zoom Etiquette to support staff use and ensure balance	Sep-20
Re-implement Email Etiquette, train staff to use email effectively	Sep-20
Produce best practice guide for Managers and Staff for effectively working remotely	Aug-20
Develop a staff charter which sets out expectations from EHC and also expectations from staff/ this may be linked with revised Values	Oct-20
Corporate Induction improved	Jan-21
Develop HR & OD Strategy up to end of the new corporate plan, this needs to be considered by EHT, then LT and then HRC	Sep-Nov20
Review and develop all employment policies to take the employee through their career journey, a prioritised order has been devised by HR who will draft improvements with EHT members as listed, once drafted all EHT members will be engaged for feedback via email, then LT, Unison, LT and finally to LJP/HRC for adoption and implementation In line with LJP meetings:	Oct-20 Jan-21 Apr-21
Review polices which provide support for staff to manage work life balance/wellbeing	As above
Develop staff and Management competencies	Oct-20
Develop a new PDR process to support competencies	Oct-20
Develop recruitment tools to support competencies	Nov-20
Develop a management training to support new policies	From Feb-21
Review the staff recognition process	Dec-20

4.1.6 A draft HR & OD Strategy will be produced by the Head of HR and OD for consideration at the next HR Committee on 5 November which will be considered first at Leadership Team in October.

The recent Wellbeing Survey completed by staff (see Wellbeing section below) and feedback gathered at the Service Manager quarterly meeting has also identified in relation to current Home Working and the expectation of moving into an Office and Home Working Hybrid model some additional

developments for EHT to implement shortly to further support staff and share best practice (which are outlined above in the one page plan actions):

- Develop Zoom Etiquette to support staff use and ensure balance
- Re-implement Email Etiquette and train staff to use email effectively
- Produce best practice guide for Managers and Staff for effectively working remotely

4.2 Recruitment

4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

The council went live in June 2020 working with Indeed (Generalist Job Board) on a 1 year's trial basis to advertise all jobs on Indeed (branded adverts) rather than using the multi online job board package across a range of generalist sites that we had been using. The cost of advertising has reduced significantly with this arrangement (by more than 7 times) and all of Leadership Team will ensure their service advertise posts on Indeed. Indeed are the market leader in terms of generalist job boards with more hits than others and their jobs tend to be listed first on search engines. We are currently developing a branded page where we are able to sell the benefits of working for the council, including case studies and videos (demonstrating our commitment to equality and diversity), and employees/applicants are able to leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer which will be built into the new starter process as action for new starters to complete ensuring a wide variety of reviews are posted which should also help attract more candidates .

4.2.2 Improved Job Application Form

A new job application form has been implemented which is

more user friendly. It has two parts whereby if a CV is submitted with the application only Part 2 of the application form needs to be completed by the applicant. The Part 2 section ensures that the candidate provides all the information required that is not normally covered by a CV e.g. reasons for leaving, any employment gaps, referee details etc. as well as demonstrating how they meet the person specification criteria. HR worked with the Web Admin team to ensure that the form is fully accessible for those who are blind or partially sighted.

4.2.3 Corporate Web Site

The content of the 'Working for Us' page on the council's website has been updated with the help of the Communications team and will be updated on the website soon.

4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

As members will already be aware East Herts HR service has been providing HR support on a pay as go basis to Hertford Town Council. During this period the Head of HR and OD was approached for support by Cllr Stowe on a similar pay as go basis from Datchworth Parish Council to support them with a complex employee relations matter. Support was provided which was extremely well received:

Dear Mr Cassidy,

I am writing to say how pleased Datchworth Parish Council have been with the superb HR support provided by Simon O'Hear and his team including Helen and Vicki.

From the outset, they have been overwhelmingly supportive, professional and efficient in dealing with the HR issues faced by our Council.

I cannot praise Simon and the team highly enough and, subject to council approval, hope to use them for HR services in the future".

Kind regards,

*Cllr Jane Dodson
Vice-Chair*

Datchworth have since approached EHC HR for further support which will be progressed.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council have also approached EHC for some HR advice and the Head of HR and OD has had initial discussion for further paid support to be provided in the future on a pay as you go basis.

The Head of HR and OD has also recently been approached by Ware Town Council to bid for HR services from November 2020 and initial scooping meeting has been held.

During the summer the Head of HR and OD and HR Officers will develop the offer with revised rates to ensure EHC costs are fully met going forward as the rates have not been updated for a number of years. The offer will also be expanded to include more L&D support and additional H&S support to maximise use of the HR team and generate further income for EHC.

4.4 HR like all services have had to modify some working practices as we adjusted to new ways of working. HR have completed a variety of additional work in light of circumstances caused by impact of COVID-19, some key highlights are set out below that have not been covered above, please also refer to section 6 on Wellbeing Support below as well sections above (Payroll and L&D):

- Supporting staff home working and wellbeing

- Supporting Risk Assessments for COVID-19 (working with H&S, Management and Staff)
- Supporting and managing redeployment of staff across the council
- Supporting and managing the furloughing of staff at our theatre
- Creating COVID-19 Office protocols for Wallfields and managing the control of staff using the building to ensure safety (working closely with FM)
- Creating new COVID-19 protocols for example reporting COVID-19 symptoms and getting tested.

5.0 Casework

- 5.1 Support has been provided by HR on a number of cases in terms of absence and capability.

6.0 Wellbeing Support

- 6.1 Prior to lockdown restrictions in the period and during them the council has continued to support staff with existing wellbeing measures. These are set out below and were reported at full council on 22 July 2020 in response to a member question (services have been promoted through staff communications from HR):
- Line management: which includes regular 1 to 1s with staff has continued but is carried out through Zoom or on the phone (with emails) as the majority of staff have been working from home (WFH).
 - Access to mental health first aiders has continued, again access has moved to email, with Zoom and phone support as required.
 - Access to the My-rewards Wellbeing Centre: which provides exercises, training, advice and guidance to maintain wellbeing/mental health

- Access to the Employee Assistance Programme which provides both telephone counselling and face to face counselling as appropriate, this access is also provided to members.
- The majority of East Herts line managers have recently received training to help identify and support staff with mental health, this training took place in January and February 2020.
- Regular team meetings and Staff Briefings to ensure staff remain informed, engaged and feel less isolated, again this has moved to Zoom.
- MiCollab phone and online chat system has continued to be used with further support and guidance to improve use. MiCollab also includes a chat room feature which is also being used to keep up less formal team working practices whilst WFH.

6.2 Additional wellbeing support has been provided during this period of remote working, key highlights include:

- Advice/guidance has been provided to staff and managers from HR to help staff to improve their resilience whilst working at home.
- An article was written by HR and published in Connect (the staff weekly newsletter) reminding staff of the wellbeing support available to them including further mental health support from Able Futures (this is a new partnership arrangement with the DWP which provides staff with up to 9 months support around their mental health), advice from the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), support from Mental Health First Aiders, access to the MyRewards Wellbeing Centre, and for further sources of support the Wellbeing Hub on the Intranet. The article also provided support in terms of advice and guidance for those juggling childcare/home schooling with working from home.
- Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May) was promoted with a series of daily articles on e.g. how employees can be kind to themselves and others during lockdown, how physical activity can help with wellbeing and promoting what's on offer

at the council (e.g. online yoga sessions, exercise videos available on MyRewards website), and promoting other sources of support mentioned above.

- Managers have agreed support for employees e.g. for those with caring responsibilities, having flexible start and finishing times and allowing staff to come into the office to work (on a limited and appropriate basis).
- Staff have been allowed to return to the office to collect further equipment from the office to support them working more effectively from home e.g. laptops, mouse, keyboard and chairs.
- Guidance and support around coping with and managing bereavement for those staff who had lost loved ones due to Covid-19 or during the pandemic were shared with staff.
- A Wellbeing Survey was developed by HR and approved by Leadership Team. In particular the Head of HR and OD would like to thank HR Officer Vicki David for the work put into both developing the survey and for analysis and report provided. The survey was sent to all staff to identify how they could be supported further whilst working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The response rate was excellent (89% of all staff completed the survey) and the results were very positive overall (see below). Where staff experiences have not been so positive, managers with HR support have been contacting staff to follow up discussions and put further support in place. The survey results were reviewed by HR and then reported to the Leadership Team with a number of actions identified to further support staff. The survey results and actions the council is taking have been shared with all staff with the report and appendices being published on intranet.
- The Wellbeing survey allowed staff to raise any issues or concerns they had about working from home or eventually returning to the office so that the council can support them and address any concerns, each employee has been followed up by their line manager with HR support over their individual response to confirm support where appropriate (this includes

staff who did not respond, a number of non-responders. were existing home workers or working in the office).

- The Survey asked staff to report if they are currently shielding in line with government guidance so that further support can be provided to support this including more equipment being delivered to their home where appropriate.
- In order to further support mental wellbeing as well as complying with Government Guidance and H&S requirements: DSE assessments have been sent to all staff and collected from the majority of staff with actions followed up alongside the wellbeing survey results for Individual staff. Risk Assessments have been completed for all council services in relation to COVID-19 restrictions and safe practice (Unison have been consulted on all as well as the staff who will then follow them). We have a main Wallfields Workplace Risk Assessment in place which allows limited numbers of staff to return to the office on a limited basis with clear Office Protocols for staff (and also for Members) to follow in order to adhere to social distancing requirements. Where a service requires work to be done away from the office or home, risk assessments have been undertaken and implemented to ensure this is done safely and relevant measures but in place including PPE being provided where identified.

6.3 Summary of Key results from the Employee Wellbeing Survey (The full report and appendices are attached as Appendix 1 to this report).

- 93% of employees gave a rating of 6 or higher out of 10 for their overall experience of working from home so far (10 indicating that the experience has been extremely positive and 0 indicating their experience has been extremely negative).
- The top three positive aspects of working from home reported were: not having to commute to work, good work/life balance and having a suitable home work environment.

- The top three most significant challenges reported were: demanding workload, being unable to keep up with colleagues/friends from work and limited IT. The council has identified support for employees facing these challenges e.g. by helping them to re-prioritise or reallocating work where appropriate, having regular team meetings and supporting more flexible hours to allow a balance to be achieved.
- The majority of employees reported positively regarding the suitability of their workstation whilst working from home, how technology was working for them, the suitability of their work environment (e.g distractions/noise from other people in their household), team communication and how well they were being kept informed on the Covid situation and measures that the council was putting in place.
- Many employees gave reasons for wanting to continue working from home e.g. being more productive and better able to balance their caring responsibilities. The council is not expecting employees to return to offices until it is safe and appropriate to do so. It will explore whether more remote/home working can be accommodated. Managers will continue to discuss with employees their individual circumstances and any barriers to returning to work, identifying solutions with them where they can be accommodated. Risk assessments have been undertaken in each service to allow a limited and appropriate return.

6.4 Further Measures which are being developed and then implemented based on the Staff Survey Results which will also support mental wellbeing:

- East Herts Together have been tasked with developing guidance and briefings for employees to reduce email traffic/make more effective use of email.
- East Herts Together have also been tasked with sharing best practice from Revenues and Benefits in terms of effective home working including more use of MiCollab chat to avoid

emails and sharing advice regarding building in breaks from the screen and having informal interactions with the team etc.

- East Herts Together have also been tasked with creating Zoom guides which focus on building in breaks and etiquette to make use more effective and less demanding.
- The Leadership Team will explore whether team, service or council-wide level events could be arranged with social distancing measures in place which allows there to be a physical employee presence at an event to help support staff engagement and reduce feelings of isolation.

6.5 In partnership with the Community Wellbeing and Partnerships Team, HR are continuing to develop and promote the council's wellbeing programme. The Council had submitted a bid for the REBA (Reward & Employee Benefits Association) Employee Wellbeing Award 2020 for 'Best Wellbeing Engagement' covering our Live Well, Work Well staff wellbeing programme. As previously reported REBA recognised the quality of the work led by the Community and Wellbeing Partnership team with HR by shortlisting East Herts Council as a finalist, unfortunately we did not win on this occasion.

There have been two Wellbeing meetings during the restrictions and both have been attended by the Deputy Chief Exec as the Wellbeing Sponsor and the Head of HR and OD as well HR and Community Wellbeing staff. A number of improvements have been identified especially to promote the offer further and increase further staff take up. A report is being written for Leadership Team to consider and support further development. A key new initiative to help build upon the extensive work already undertaken is that each service will be asked for a wellbeing champion who will be developed to help improve engagement across the council.

6.6 Flu jabs

The council's offer of free flu jabs to staff was a success last year with 70 staff taking up the offer and the reduction of sickness absence in 2019-20 supports the provision being made this year so this will be rolled out in September 2020 via the Boots Scheme.

6.7 Mental Health First Aiders

Mental Health First Aiders continue to meet every 2 months to support each other. Experiences of giving support to staff (and on occasions to members of the public) are shared (anonymously).

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

8.1 The HR Trainee Officer has begun further developing the HR and Payroll system in line with their new role which provides approximately 2 days per week to maintain and develop the system. Unfortunately as previously reported the provider, who are now called Zellis, have been poor in terms of support/customer service and despite only having the system for a number of years we now have our 5th account manager who like predecessors has been slow to respond and support effective use and delivering the outcomes expected. An onsite meeting had been planned to drive more effective use of the system and to review unimplemented modules but this has not been possible due to restrictions. A special online demo is therefore to be arranged in the coming weeks on how to more effectively use the system which will include use of the H&S module and the L&D module which are not currently implemented (a refund of 50% will be given if the modules are unsuitable).

8.2 As outlined in the Payroll update the self-service portal of the system called MyView has now been developed for Member

use so that they can now all access their records and update them, receive e-payslips and claim expenses electronically. A pilot of 10 members across the different wards and parties was rolled out successfully in February with training on how to use the system and claim expenses/mileage. All member expenses and mileage claims will be sent to the DSOs for checking and then a further authorisation by the Democratic Services Manager. The remaining members will receive training on how to claim expenses/mileage in the coming months this has been delayed as expenses are not currently being claimed in the main meaning the learning will not be put into practice, a staged further rollout will take place when appropriate. The restrictions have also delayed moving all casual staff onto myview for self serve access to details and payslips as the IT accounts have not been set up by users as they have been on furlough leave and not accessing the Theatre or council network.

9.0 Recruitment Agency Review

- 9.1 The Head of HR and OD with the support of the HR Trainee Officer have now fully implemented Matrix SCM to support the procurement and management of Agency workers, following the ESPO MStar 3 framework. This is a Neutral Vendor Managed Service which is web based and centralises the end-to-end procurement process to enable all parties to achieve the best possible value both in terms of quality and price (this will generate savings on the cost of agency workers as it reduces the margins charged by the agency in terms of temp fees, conversion from temp to perm fees and ensuring actual NI costs are charged rather than inflated ones). The implementation for this project was completed on time and went live on Monday 13 April 2020.

Work has now begun on implementing a similar system from Matrix for procurement of specialist work at more competitive rates from specialist/consultancy firms in relation to project

work where it is appropriate to commission a specialist firm for a statement of work/ distinct piece of work rather than hire a temporary worker.

10.0 Options

N/A

11.0 Risks

N/A

12.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes – as described in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

13.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix 1: Employee Wellbeing Survey Results with appendices A, B and C.

Contact Officer

Simon O'Hear – Head of HR and OD

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Employee Wellbeing Survey Results

June 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Employees were asked to complete a Wellbeing Survey at the beginning of June 2020. The purpose of the survey was to enable the council to support employees while they continued to work from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data from the survey will help to identify any individual support that employees might need as well as some of the wider things that the council may be able to help with, such as increasing access to technology.
- 1.2 Employees were asked to include their name on the survey (rather than complete it anonymously) so that further follow up conversations can be held with them to support their specific needs (if appropriate). Employees were assured that individual responses would be treated confidentially and would only be seen by their line manager and HR in order to identify and prioritise needs and support.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The survey was quick and easy for employees to complete. There were 21 questions in total and each question asked employees to either give a rating predominately on a scale of 0-5 or provide a Yes or No answer. There were also free text boxes so that employees could have the opportunity to expand on their answers if they wished to.
- 2.2 The survey was organised into the following sections:
 - 1. Overall experience of working from home
 - 2. Positive aspects of working from home
 - 3. Challenges whilst working from home
 - 4. Workstation set up
 - 5. Technology
 - 6. Work environment
 - 7. Communication
 - 8. Wellbeing support
 - 9. Employees who are shielding

- 10. Other reasons to continue working from home
- 11. Other comments

2.3 In conjunction with this survey, employees have also been asked to complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessment on their home set-up to gather further information and to help identify support for employees whilst working from home.

3. Next steps

3.1 The data from the survey will help the Leadership Team to understand what is currently working well for employees and should continue (e.g. the frequency of the communication with employees to keep them informed of the situation) and what solutions could be provided to address some of the most commonly reported problems (e.g. limitations with IT, access to technology whilst working from home).

3.2 It is also intended that individual responses from the survey will be shared with the line manager so that specific support can be put in place for the individual where needed. HR will be available to provide advice to managers to help them support their staff.

3.3 Section 16 includes a list of the common themes that have come from the wellbeing survey results and how the council has or will support employees.

4. Summary of findings

4.1 282 employees responded to the survey out of a total of 318 employees giving an 89% response rate which is an excellent result.

4.2 There were therefore 36 employees who did not complete the survey: 5 of these are currently working in the office i.e. Caretakers and Post room/finance staff, and 12 are permanent home workers. This means that there were only 19 temporary home workers (who the survey is predominately aimed at) who did not complete the survey. Follow-up discussions will be held with all of the 36 to ensure that any support identified can be put in place.

4.3 Overall, responses from employees regarding their experiences of working from home during Covid-19 have been positive. Some of the key headlines are listed below:

- 93% of employees gave a rating of 6 or higher out of 10 for their overall experience of working from home so far (10 indicating that the experience has been extremely positive and 0 indicating their experience has been extremely negative)
- The top three positive aspects of working from home reported were: not having to commute to work (81%), good work/life balance (69%) and having a suitable home work environment (61%)
- The top three most significant challenges reported were: demanding workload (27%), being unable to keep up with colleagues/friends from work (22%) and limited IT (18%)
- 93% of employees reported positively regarding the suitability of their workstation whilst working from home - i.e. gave a rating of at 3 or above out of 5 (5 = very suitable, 0 = not very suitable)
- Technology (e.g. email, the intranet, MyView) was generally working well for the majority of employees whilst working from home
- 94% (265 employees) reported positively on the suitability of their work environment (e.g distractions/noise from other people in their household) whilst working from home - i.e. gave a rating of 3 or above (5 = very suitable, 0 = not very suitable at all)
- 97% (274 employees) felt that their team were continuing to communicate well
- 97% (274 employees) felt that the council was keeping them informed about the current overall position and 91% (256 employees) said the frequency of the communication was about right
- 97% (274 employees) had received the wellbeing updates in Connect and via email on mental health awareness and wellbeing support available (E.g. EAP, Mental Health First Aiders)

- 3.9% (11 employees) informed us that they were shielding and, of those, 64% (7 employees) wanted to continue to follow the guidance and remain working from home if possible
- 43% (120 employees) stated there were other reasons they wished to remain working from home at the present time. The top three reasons were childcare (42%, 45 employees), caring responsibilities (17%, 18 employees) and concerns regarding their own health (including mental health) (16%, 17 employees).

Findings

5. Overall experience

- 5.1 Employees were asked to rate their overall experience of working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The vast majority of employees have had a mostly positive experience working from home so far: 93% (262 employees) gave a rating of 6 or above out of 10 (10 indicating that the experience has been extremely positive and 0 indicating their experience has been extremely negative).

Rating given for overall experience of working from home	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents*
10	89	32%
9	45	16%
8	73	26%
7	36	13%
6	19	7%
5	9	3%
4	6	2%
3	0	0%
2	3	1%
1	0	0%
0	2	1%

10 = extremely positive, 0 = extremely negative

* Figures have been rounded up

- 5.2 A small number of employees (20 out of 282 employees, 7%) reported not so positive experiences of working from home, giving a rating of 5 or

less. It is worth noting that of those 20 employees, 9 (45%) gave a rating of 5 out of 10 which does not demonstrate there are significant concerns.

- 5.3 The 20 employees work in different services across the council (Strategic Finance & Property – 6 employees, 16%; Housing and Health – 4 employees, 7%; Planning – 4 employees, 10%; Revenues and Benefits – 2 employees, 2%; Communications, Strategy and Policy – 1 employee, 4%; Operations – 1 employee, 3%; HR & OD – 1 employee, 3%; and Legal and Democratic Services – 1 employee, 6%).
- 5.4 The reasons given for their not so positive experiences of working from home are shown in the table below.

Reasons for employees' not so positive experiences of working from home	Number of employees*	Percentage of all respondents giving a rating of 5 or lower*
Balancing work with childcare	6	30%
Problems with IT	5	25%
No appropriate place to work at home	3	15%
Feeling isolated	2	10%
Workload has increased	1	5%
Limited interaction with colleagues	1	5%
Limited opportunities to discuss work	1	5%
No reason given	5	25%

* Employees may have given more than one response

- 5.5 The three most common reasons were balancing work with childcare (6 employees, 30%), problems with IT (5 employees, 25%) and having no appropriate place to work at home (3 employees, 15%).
- 5.6 Of those employees reporting issues with balancing work with childcare, three of the six employees (50%) said that the council could help by allowing them to come into the office once day a week. This has been accommodated where possible and, depending on how the coronavirus situation progresses e.g. in terms of social distancing and the numbers of employees who wish to return to the office, the number of days they can

be allowed in the office could be increased in the coming weeks if it would help them further. There were no other suggestions from those reporting challenges with balancing work with childcare as to how the council could help them. This may be because employees have already discussed this with their manager and support has been put in place e.g. flexibility around hours, start and finish times, or it is simply not an issue that the council can assist with.

- 5.7 Of the five employees reporting IT issues as one of the reasons for giving a rating of 5 or lower, two reported IT connection issues or being thrown out of the system several times a day, two reported issues with making Zoom calls (e.g. not being able to access Zoom via VM Ware and therefore not being able to access papers required at the same time), one said their phone was not diverting consistently and IT had been unable to resolve the problem, and one reported not being able to print from home (please note that some employees reported more than one IT issue). There were no suggestions from employees as to how the council could help them with the IT issues they were experiencing. Managers will ensure they discuss the issues with the individual and identify any support, liaising with IT where appropriate.
- 5.8 The three employees reporting they did not have an appropriate place/enough space to work from as the reason for giving a rating of 5 or lower perhaps unsurprisingly did not provide any suggestions for how the council could help them. An employee's home environment is not within the council's control however the manager can discuss further support with the employee such as coming back into the office if appropriate. The DSE assessment will also help to identify solutions for how the individual can safely work given their restricted work space.
- 5.9 Managers will offer support to all those employees who are experiencing difficulties working from home. In addition to what has been mentioned above and depending on the situation, support may include increasing 121s, offering wellbeing support, re-prioritising or re-allocating work.

6. Positive aspects of working from home

- 6.1 Employees were asked to choose (from 7 tick box options) which were the most positive aspects of working from home – see table below. They also had an opportunity to state other aspects if they wished to. The top

three most positive aspects were not commuting to work (81%, 229 employees), having a good work/life balance (69%, 194 employees) and having a suitable home/work environment (61%, 171 employees).

The most positive aspects of working from home	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents
Not commuting to work	229	81%
Good work/life balance	194	69%
Suitable home/work environment	171	61%
I am working more flexibly	151	54%
I am communicating well with colleagues and friends from work	142	50%
I am better able to manage my workload	103	37%
I have found new ways of working	101	36%
Other	79	28%

Employees may have given more than one response

- 6.2 Where employees have given ‘other’ positive aspects of working from home these are detailed in Appendix A. In summary they include having a positive impact on the environment, reduced likelihood of getting other viral infections such as colds and flu, less distractions and noise, less stressed and more relaxed at home, better for mental and physical health and no queue for the toilets.

7. Challenges of working from home

- 7.1 Employees were asked to choose (from 10 tick box options) what their most significant challenges were when working from home – see table below. They also had the opportunity to state other reasons and to give further details if they wished to. Of all those who completed the survey, 39% (109 employees) reported no significant challenges working from home. The top three challenges were: demanding workload (27%, 75 employees), unable to keep up with colleagues/friends from work (22%, 62 employees) and limited IT (18%, 51 employees).

Most significant challenges	Number of employees*	Percentage of respondents*
Don't have any	109	39%
Demanding workload	75	27%
Unable to keep up with colleagues/friends from work	62	22%
Limited IT	51	18%
Balancing work and caring responsibilities	39	14%
Feeling down as a result of social isolation	36	13%
Anxiety regarding their own health or the health of their loved ones	34	12%
Demands of working combined with home schooling	29	10%
Unsuitable work environment	26	9%
Not enough work	1	0.3%
Other	23	8%

* Employees may have given more than one response

7.2 Those reporting a demanding workload (27%, 75 employees) work in the following services:

Service	Number of employees	Percentage of all staff in the service
Leadership Team	6	60%
Planning	15	37%
Corporate Support	1	33%
Communications, Strategy & Policy	9	33%
Housing & Health	12	20%
Legal & Democratic Services	3	19%
Operations	7	19%
Strategic Finance & Property	7	19%
Revenues and Benefits	15	15%
HR & OD (including Health & Safety)	1	13%

7.3 The table above shows that employees in all services have experienced challenges with demanding workload to some extent as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Managers will support employees in managing their

workload e.g. by helping them to re-prioritise or reallocating work where appropriate.

- 7.4 The second most common challenge was being unable to keep up with colleagues/friends from work (22%, 62 employees). Managers can discuss support with these individuals e.g. encouraging contact between colleagues, having regular team meetings, and suggesting virtual social events via Whatsapp or Zoom.
- 7.5 The third most common challenge was limited IT (18%, 51 employees). A full list of IT issues experienced by employees is given in Appendix B. In summary they include problems logging on, the system freezing or throwing employees out, the size of their screen not being large enough and only having access to one screen, not having access to a printer, problems with the telephone system, and not having a work mobile phone.
- 7.6 Twenty Three (23) out of 282 employees (8%) said they were experiencing 'other' significant challenges working from home however the vast majority of these included the challenges already listed as tick box options (e.g. Limited IT, feeling down as a result of social isolation). Three employees felt their most significant challenge was not being able to do their job properly or they did not feel able to fully support vulnerable residents.

8. Work Station set up

- 8.1 Employees were asked how suitable their work station set up was in allowing them to perform their role effectively (including their screen, keyboard, mouse, desk, suitable chair etc.). Ninety-three per cent (93%, 261 employees) gave a rating of at least 3 out of 5 (5 = very suitable, 0 = not very suitable).
- 8.2 Those giving a rating of 2 or lower (19 employees, 7%) reported issues such as the screen on their laptop not being large enough, the height of their chair or desk being too high or low, uncomfortable chair, not having a separate keyboard, and not having two screens.

- 8.3 Employees have been made aware that they can visit the office to collect equipment such as a keyboard, mouse or chair as long as they seek permission from their manager first and the facilities team are notified.
- 8.4 The DSE assessment will also help to identify solutions for employees experiencing issues with their work station set up.

9. Technology

- 9.1 Employees were asked to indicate which technology (e.g. email, the intranet, MyView) was working well for them whilst working from home using a scale of 0 to 5 (5 = working very well and 0 = not working very well at all). The table below shows the percentage of employees giving a rating of 3 or above for each type of technology.

Which technology is working well	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents
Email	267	95%
Intranet	264	94%
MyView	266	94%
VM Horizon (Hosted desktop)	253	90%
Contacting colleagues/clients by phone	255	90%
Zoom	250	89%
MiCollab	234	83%

- 9.2 The vast majority of employees reported that each type of technology was generally working reasonably well for them.
- 9.3 Employees also had a free text box to give further details on the subject of technology if they wished to. 126 employees (45% of those completing the survey) provided additional comments. The comments have been split into those concerning the use of Zoom, Micollab and Telephones and can be summarised as follows:

Issues with Zoom

- Compatibility with VM Ware
- Not receiving any training/guidance on using it
- Basic package only allows for a 40 minute call time

- Concerns it is not secure
- VMware does not support the camera on the East Herts laptop so having to use Zoom on a private mobile phone.

Issues with MiCollab

- Not refreshing
- Not showing call history
- It is intermittent where it logs on and off at times
- It seems that not all staff are using MiCollab
- Would be better if MiCollab logged everyone on automatically
- Not getting as much out of Micollab as possibly could, just using it to divert calls to a mobile and let everyone know when employee is next available.

Phones

- Having to use own personal phone to make work calls
- Can't see who is calling
- Need training on how to use own phone to make work calls
- Not all the calls come through, it rings and then not able to hear the person at the other end or the phone cuts out
- When using their personal mobile to make and receive work phone calls from their diverted extension, clients that are being contacted directly have employee's personal mobile number
- Having to claim expenses for conference calls as these are not included within their data / call package.

10. Work Environment

- 10.1 Employees were asked to rate the suitability of their work environment (e.g. distractions/noise from other people in their household) whilst working from home: 94% (265 employees) reported positively on this - i.e. gave a rating of 3 or above (5 = very suitable, 0 = not very suitable)
- 10.2 Where a rating of 2 or lower was given (17 employees, 6%), employees were asked to give further details and how they thought the council might be able to help them. All employees said that the distractions were either from their children or others in their household who were also working from home, or both. Unsurprisingly, there were no suggestions made as to how the council could help. However managers can discuss support with employees e.g. avoiding contacting them at

certain times if they are home schooling at that time, and having flexible start and finish times.

- 10.3 Employees were also asked to rate how well they have been able to maintain their usual work patterns and hours whilst working from home: 95% (267 employees) reported positively on this - i.e. gave a rating of 3 or above (5 = they work the same work pattern/hours as if they were in the office and 0 = not very well at all).
- 10.4 Where a rating of 2 or lower was given (15 employees, 5%), employees were asked to give further details of their concerns and how the council might be able to help them. Most employees said that they had agreed with their manager to extend their work start and finish times to allow them to do some home schooling in between. Other than that, there were no other suggestions as to how the council could help.

11. Communication

- 11.2 Employees were asked to rate how well they felt their team was continuing to communicate whilst working from home: 97% (274 employees) reported positively - i.e. gave a rating of 3 or above (5 = very well and 0 = not very well at all).
- 11.3 Where a rating of 2 or lower was given (8 employees, 3%), employees were asked to give further details on how communication could be improved. Of the 8 employees, 5 employees gave a rating of 2, and 3 employees gave a rating of 1 suggesting that employees felt there was some communication happening within the team but perhaps not enough. Most of the 8 employees have said in their comments that communication within the team had been slow initially but had now picked up with team meetings being scheduled and regular Zoom calls set up with colleagues.
- 11.4 Employees were asked how well the council was keeping them informed about the current overall position: 97% (274 employees) reported positively - i.e. gave a rating of 3 or above (5 = very well and 0 = not very well at all).
- 11.5 Where a rating of 2 or lower was given (8 employees, 3%), employees were asked to give further details regarding how they wanted the

council to keep them more informed. Of the 8 employees, 5 employees gave a rating of 2 and 3 employees gave a rating of 1 suggesting that they felt they had been kept informed to some extent but there was room for improvement. The suggestions for improvement have either been quite general such as the council should keep everyone involved and that messages to staff could have been better, or they have been quite specific which could identify individual employees.

- 11.6 Employees were asked to tick which communications (e.g. CEO weekly email, Intranet) they had accessed during lockdown. The results are shown in the table below.

Type of communication accessed	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents
CEO weekly emails	247	88%
Intranet	240	85%
Team Meetings using Zoom	213	76%
Connect	213	76%
Service-wide updates from Heads of Service via email or Zoom	207	73%
121 with line manager using Zoom or another method	183	65%
Other	34	12%

- 11.7 The table shows the CEO weekly emails (88%) and the intranet (85%) were the most popular forms of communication accessed during lockdown.

- 11.8 Chats within WhatsApp groups was the most stated form of 'other' communication that staff had accessed.

- 11.9 Employees were asked what they thought about the frequency of the communications they received during the lockdown. 91% (256 employees) felt that the frequency was about right.

Frequency of communication	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents
About right	256	91%

Not frequent enough	18	7%
Too frequent	6	2%

12. Wellbeing and Support

- 12.1 Employees were asked whether they had received the wellbeing updates in Connect and via email. These included articles in Connect on the help available to employees such as the Employee Assistance Programme, their line manager, Mental Health First Aiders and Able Futures, and a series of emails promoting Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May). It is encouraging that 97% (274 employees) said that they had received and read them.
- 12.2 Employees were also asked whether they were aware of the various wellbeing support that was available to them. The results are shown below. The majority of employees were aware of most of the support however not many employees were aware of the mental health support they can receive via Able Futures (17%, 49 employees). This is perhaps unsurprising as the partnership between the council and Able Futures only commenced recently (April 2020) and therefore, although it was promoted in May, it may take some time for employees to recognise it as a source of support. The available support listed below will continue to be communicated to employees via HR and line managers.

Support Available	Number of employees	Percentage of respondents
Line Manager	259	92%
Mental Health First Aiders	222	79%
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	178	63%
Able Futures (Mental Health Support)	49	17%

13. Employees who are shielding

- 13.1 Employees were asked whether they were shielding in line with government guidance. 3.9% (11 employees) informed us that they were shielding. Employees worked in a variety of services. Of those who said they are shielding, 64% (7 employees) wanted to continue to follow the guidance and remain working from home if possible.

- 13.2 8.5% (24 employees) stated they had someone in their household who was shielding and because of this 21 out of the 24 employees (88%) preferred to continue to work from home if possible.

14. Other reasons employees wish to continue working from home

- 14.1 Employees were asked whether there were any other reasons they wished to remain working from home. 43% (120 employees) answered 'Yes' to this question and of those, 107 employees (89%) provided details of their reasons - see the table below.

Reasons given for wanting to continue to work from home	Number of employees*	Percentage of respondents*
Childcare issues	44	41%
Caring responsibilities	18	17%
Concerns about own health (including mental health)	17	16%
Travel time and cost	6	6%
Better for environment/less traffic congestion	4	4%
Concerned about the health of others (living with or caring for)	4	4%
More productive	4	4%
Already a permanent home worker	4	4%
Better work/life balance	3	3%
Reluctant to use public transport at the moment	1	1%
Less stressful	1	1%
Less distractions	1	1%

* Employees may have given more than 1 response

- 14.2 The top three reasons for wanting to continue to work from home were childcare issues (44 employees, 41%), caring responsibilities e.g. for older parents (18 employees, 17%) and concerns regarding their own health (17 employees, 16%).

15. Other comments

- 15.1 Finally, employees were asked if there was anything else they wanted to the council to know. The full list of comments have been provided in Appendix C.

16. Actions resulting from the Employee Wellbeing Survey

- 16.1 Set out below is a list of the common themes that have come from the wellbeing survey results and how the council has or will support employees. Managers (with HR support) will also hold follow up discussions with employees individually to explore any issues in more detail so that tailored support can be put in place.

1. Demanding Workload

- a) Managers will ensure they have regular 121s with employees via Zoom to discuss workload and re-prioritise or re-allocate work where appropriate.
- b) Redeployment has and will continue to be used to support workload where possible.
- c) East Herts Together have been tasked with developing guidance and briefings for employees to reduce email traffic/make more effective use of email.
- d) East Herts Together have also been tasked with sharing best practice from Revenues and Benefits in terms of effective home working including more use of MiCollab chat to avoid emails and sharing advice regarding building in breaks from the screen and having informal interactions with the team etc.
- e) East Herts Together have also been tasked with creating Zoom guides which focus on building in breaks and etiquette to make use more effective and less demanding.

2. Unable to keep up with colleagues and not communicating well as a team

- a) See 1d above.
- b) Managers will ensure that regular team meetings take place via Zoom.
- c) Managers will discuss with their teams other ways that communication could be improved.
- d) The Leadership Team will explore whether team, service or council-wide level events could be arranged which allows there to be a physical employee presence.

3. Difficulty balancing work with childcare

- a) In many cases, managers have already agreed alternative flexible working arrangements with employees e.g. flexible daily start and finish times, adjusting their weekly working pattern to fit around home-schooling, allowing employees to take annual leave to help with childcare, and allowing employees to work in the office 1 day a week where safe and appropriate to do so.
- b) Managers will arrange follow-up 121s with employees experiencing childcare issues so that support can be put in place where necessary.

4. Insufficient equipment to work from home

- a) Some employees have reported having insufficient equipment such as a separate keyboard, mouse etc. At the start of the lockdown employees were encouraged to take home equipment from the office and more recently the take up on this has increased.
- b) DSE assessments are being used to identify further solutions/equipment to support employees. Assessments are being collated by the Health and Safety Officer and where issues

are identified he will work with HR/the line manager and the individual to provide the appropriate support.

5. Technology issues

- a) Some employees reported issues using Zoom such as its compatibility with VM Ware and the 40 minute call maximum. Employees using a laptop or a tablet are able to minimise VM Ware, then upload either the Zoom App, or you can go directly to www.zoom.us and click to join a meeting enabling access to Zoom, however unfortunately this doesn't work for those using a zero box as there is no inbuilt camera. Employees are also able to join Zoom via a smartphone with video and audio, or they can dial into a meeting for audio only from any phone.
- b) Please note that the 40-minute limit only applies where there are 3 or more people on the call. If employees require this to be increased, they can contact their Head of Service who will be able to give them access to their premium account. Employees can also contact Georgia Adamson or Kate Collins in the Corporate Support Team who can help schedule meetings on behalf of employees who need meetings with more than 3 people and don't have access to a premium licence. Please also see 1 (e) above.
- c) Some employees experienced issues with Micollab e.g. it doesn't allow work phone calls to be made. LT will review whether Micollab capabilities can be enhanced to allow phone calls to be made from the system and so not divulging personal phone numbers. Please also see 1 (d) above.
- d) There were reports of difficulty making work phone calls using personal mobiles. Employees have been asked to forward their work phone calls to their personal mobile phones where possible. If employees incur additional expenses as a result of making work calls, they can claim for the calls through expenses; attaching a copy of the relevant phone bill.

6. Unaware of some of the support available to them

- a) Whilst the majority of employees were aware of most of the core support available to them (e.g. Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders), the majority of employees were not aware of the support available from Able Futures. This is a relatively new source of support to employees and it will be further promoted in Connect.

7. A desire to retain some of the positive elements of working from home

- a) Many employees gave reasons for wanting to continue working from home e.g. being more productive and better able to balance their caring responsibilities. The council is not expecting employees to return to offices until it is safe and appropriate to do so. It will explore whether more remote/home working can be accommodated. Managers will continue to discuss with employees their individual circumstances and any barriers to returning to work, identifying solutions with them where they can be accommodated. Risk assessments have been undertaken in each service to allow a limited and appropriate return.

8. Concerns regarding the impact on the environment of reverting back to previous lockdown attendance in the office

- a) HR and LT are looking at the Cycle to Work scheme to increase the limit to £2000 to encourage a wider range of bikes to be purchased (e.g. electric bikes) which will help the environment.
- b) The council has already invested in improving the shower facilities which will make cycling to work easier and will continue to monitor.
- c) The council is also looking at increasing the use of electric vehicles across the council.

9. Reluctance to use public transport to commute to work

- a) The majority of employees are working from home in line with the government guidance. For a small minority of employees having to come into the office by public transport, managers have discussed the arrangements with the individual to mitigate the risk where possible e.g. allowing them to travel outside of peak times.

10.IT issues

- a) Many employees reported IT problems, mostly concerning logging onto the VM Ware and the system disconnecting without notice. The council is exploring how it can make VM Ware more resilient including how employees can update their password remotely.
- b) Some employees reported issues with not having access to a printer. In line with the council's green agenda, employees are encouraged to limit their printing where possible. Employees are reminded to use the Print Team for any bulk printing. If employees need to print documents they should try to do this when they are in the office.

11. Concern regarding the cleanliness of the offices when employees return

- a) Full risk assessments have taken place and measures implemented. A thorough clean has been undertaken and systems are in place to ensure this continues to be regularly monitored. The risk assessments can be found on the intranet.

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Employee Wellbeing Survey – June 2020

Appendix A – quotes from employees on the positive aspects of working from home

Working from home provides a lesser carbon footprint by not using your car to travel to work.

Working from home provides protection against other viral infections such as colds and flu when working in an open plan or small office.

You don't have to use annual leave to wait for deliveries/tradesmen.

In addition to personal benefits there is also the 'green agenda' reducing road congestion, CO emissions, relieved problems with parking

We used to print so much in the office but now have had to find new procedures to use instead of printing thus saving the Council money on printing costs.

More environmentally friendly as we have now reduced to 1 car in our household and are saving money on fuel/parking etc. Also much better for the council wide green policy and carrying things to and from work.

Less distractions from being in the Office

Less noise than in the office

Helps with the carbon footprint, less cars on the road, less congestion especially local traffic

I'm finding that we can settle down earlier as a family at the end of the day. I can use my commute time for chores, getting dinner ready. No wear and tear on my car or petrol expenses.

Less stressful

Good for mental well being

So nice that if a call runs on over past 5pm which it quite often does, that I am home so not impacting work balance so much. great to have the flexibility and comfort of home working.

I have found working from home a lot less stressful. I don't have the stresses of other road users on my way in to work, trying to get parked or running a little late; due to my commute.

Also by being in my home environment I am naturally more relaxed when working than what I was in the office.

I also feel I am more productive working from home. In fact I believe strongly that I give more through working at home as I am less distracted and interrupted with people walking by or other conversations in the office - which are not always necessarily work related.

As well as not commuting to work - considerable time and expense saving in not travelling between meetings.

Working from home - particularly for large pieces of work/ report writing and meetings with large numbers of people, seems to be much more efficient than working from the office. It also gives you the flexibility around the structure of your day and a better work-life balance through not commuting.

Home working provides a much better work-life balance, my journey normally is at least one hour each way, I have more time for home life and to help family. Can be more productive at home.

Yes, its a lot quieter no office noise!

Less interruptions.

Without having work distractions I find I am less stressed. The office can be noisy (Phones, work discussions) now we do not have that.

It also means I can work late if I want to without making my partner wait for a lift home!

Having an insight to home lives of employees, brings a new type of connection to the working relationship

I think it is good that it has allowed some roles that may have previously not been seen as compatible for home working to try it.

Less distractions, more productivity.

I am able to manage my medical conditions more effectively which is enabling me to be more proactive at work and also have a better quality of life when not working.

More relaxed environment.

Reduction in commuting traffic is good for the environment and helps the Council meet its carbon target. Do not go back to the old office-based- work model. The lock-down is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvent work practices AND reduce the harm we have been doing to the planet. Don't throw it away on a misplaced desire to 'get back to normal'. Imagine that this is the new normal and tweak it to make it work.

Also when I worked in the office, I rarely went out for a walk at lunchtime, but now I'm taking the dog out for a walk every lunchtime in the fields behind my house, so both the exercise and the fresh air are doing me good!

Easier to hold meetings with people outside of the authority and not to rely on meeting rooms which are frequently unavailable.

I am better at taking lunch breaks.

I feel more contributory to the environment not burning diesel everyday and using my local shops and services more frequently.

Freeing up Car park spaces at Gascoyne Way and potential increase in revenue.

It is less stressful in the morning, trying to get everyone up and ready and out of the door.

Generally at this present moment I am enjoying working home and I have found better for my well being

No sitting in traffic/trying to find ways around holdups on the way to work

Less tired and more able to interact, cook, etc.

Staff are generally able to work from home when feeling ill which will improve East Herts Council's attendance record.

I have also enjoyed being able to listen to quiet music/radio in the background as it helps me to focus on work.

I've repurposed my work commute into a longer dog walk, which is great because I see different people and am out and about in the fields and greenery for longer!

Better able to concentrate on work without the distractions associated with working in a large open plan office so working more effectively & efficiently.

I can have the temperature of the room as warm or cool as I would like it.

Not having to queue for office loos, which can sometimes not be as clean as would be liked.

I have more energy at the end of the working day.

Working from home has shown that it is possible for people to do it and do it, and in turn giving people the opportunity to build that trust and communication. It has shown that you can communicate well working from home and it doesn't mean that someone is not contactable.

My diet has improved as I am not tempted to walk into town and go to Greggs nor am I tempted by the sweets that colleagues bring in. The amount of exercise I do has increased as I need to get up out of my arm chair to stretch and "work out" muscle kinks more often and thus I feel fitter than I have been for a couple of years

Able to have long lunch breaks and help out in the community with deliveries

Employee Wellbeing Survey – June 2020

Appendix B – quotes from employees on IT Issues

EHDC IT services are slow and at certain times of the day is slower than normal. I cannot print documents unless I email to my phone or ask my husband to print from his local authority email address.

At times the IT has been a little challenging and frustrating - and the IT team have been stretched so response hasn't always been the quickest but overall I think the team have done well in the circumstances!

We have not been given work telephones to enable us to call residents back should we need to.

The only problem I am having is the very poor IT connection which is not at my end and out-dated software.

IT can also be a concern as we are all totally reliant on this working at all times

- IT downtime' can bring its own 'anxiety'.

There are times when the IT system freezes when using Zoom or Teams or the broadband services becomes really slow.

System slowness.

VM SOFTWARE ISSUES

I use a MacBook to work from and have to work off of an older version of VMware. The older version seem to have some bugs (crashing, freezing) and I'm not sure if these are resolved in updated versions? It would be good if the latest version(s) of VMware were supported across all operating systems.

Sometimes the ongoing IT issues can be frustrating when trying to work on the set tasks for the day , I understand that these will be resolved sometime in the future.

I ticked "limited IT" as I really need a bigger screen; I am using my old laptop which mostly does the job, but the screen is too small when I am assessing large and complex plans.

The biggest challenge has been regular issues with IT - systems not working, rebooting without notice etc.

Low IT memory meaning the system continually crashes if too many documents are open. Slow internet connections where I live leading to up to 9 seconds delays between typing and it appearing on the screen. I need two much bigger screen (equivalent of A2 size) to comprehend applications.

Often kicked out of EHDC desktop and trouble logging back in.

Not what I would call a significant challenge but Zoom doesn't always work very well, cuts in & out. I think it may be because of the internet having to run through the Dongle as I don't have Wi-Fi at home.

My home working environment is generally fine, however it is difficult with only one screen to look at plans etc.

Additionally IT sometimes stops working which causes delay to my day particularly when I am trying to meet committee deadlines.

Quite often the system throws me out for no apparent reason.

Issues with the computers and the cost of printing from home.

I would imagine that everyone is having to deal with a downgrade in IT hardware at the minute - whilst I am in the lucky position of having good personal IT I imagine others are not so lucky. Currently I am operating off a 14 inch laptop and a personal mobile. In an ideal world I would have a monitor, work laptop and work mobile - the latter two would of course allow us all to dock into monitors in the office as well and be fully flexible without any disruption. The main issue though is the operating system; my personal laptop allows me to use Office 365 but because we use a hosted desktop this is unusable in a work sense and the hosted desktop is not easily compatible with high res laptops or indeed great on anything apart from in the office.

I do think there are some issues with IT which make home working less smooth than it could be.

(1) VM ware seems to vary from day as to how often it chucks you out - seems to be a bit better lately but can be a pain to log on sometimes.

2) Biggest concern is the telephone system. I am simply not convinced that the answerphone system/divert is directing every call to my work mobile. It is set up to do so, but I know that not every call is captured and in particular voice mails are lost.

3) The ability to know who is phoning you would be helpful rather than just the switchboard number. Lately I do seem to get the actual phone number showing up on the phone when someone phones the direct line, but this is not consistent.

4) Zoom is very good. However, I think we need access to MS Teams as well as this is used by many other councils and it is frustrating only to have guest access.

5) In relation to Zoom it would be helpful if more officers could have easy access to the corporate account to enable the set up of longer meetings rather than the 40 minutes personal meeting limit.

IT issues are also causing a significant amount of lost time through experiences including: inability to log on; memory low warnings which ask me to close programs that I need to be working with; desktop crashes & boot outs, causing wasted time & having to search for the programs/documents I was previously using when an older version of the desktop is installed.

My laptop is very old, and the screen is very small. This can make viewing difficult, and tasks more time consuming as I have to move around the screen to be able to see all of it.

V m ware not working due to windows 10 upgrade being needed in wallfields.

My tablet is small and the hard to use for long periods.

Also my laptop is one of the old ones that was due to be changed last year. It seems to take many attempts to log on the system and with the lack of Microsoft updates and the new security package coming up as not installed on some occasions I wonder if it is truly secure.

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Employee Wellbeing Survey – June 2020

Appendix C - General comments from employees

I am grateful to East Herts for allowing me to balance work and childcare at this present time, which without saying is extremely tough.

On the whole I think EHC has adapted quickly and effectively to a homeworking set up and I've found a number of positives in work from home. The support and communications from leadership have been consistent and helpful and have helped reduce any feelings of isolation.

I think remote working is the future as we are continuing to provide services even with staff working from home who were told that it was not possible for them to remote work before.

Before anyone returns I expect all offices will be 'deep cleaned' properly by a reputable firm and checked this has been done before anyone enters to work?

I also assume the amount of hand sanitises and alcohol cleaning fluid and wipes will be put on every single desk, irrespective of whether they are hot desks or not?

Because before all of this there were not enough cleaning items given for hot desks and this was often brought to the attention of managers, to the point where on some occasions we as individuals had to go out and buy our own.

Clear desks policies were also not adhered to and the state of hot desks and equipment after use was quite frankly disgusting.

So going forward I would hope that this is made abundantly clear that all desks, IT equipment and phones are cleaned before and after someone has used the desk EVERY single time.

I am nervous about returning to Wallfields, hot-desking will be an issue I believe, I am not sure the standard of cleanliness is up to 'virus' capabilities, certainly having witnessed the cleaning procedure, I would not feel comfortable not knowing if my work area would be safe. I am aware eventually we will go back to normal whatever that is now, however I think we all need to take stock that we have made this work whilst being at home and

should embrace what we can from that, the environmental impact, the green agenda etc. We also need to ensure we still listen to government advice as stated at the recent Staff Briefings.

I feel that the council is taking a very sensible approach to re-opening, I don't feel it is panicked or rushed. I feel staff well-being is being really considered. Right now, I don't want to go back because I have not left the house much and still feel really nervous about the virus. I look forward to a time that I feel safer and feel comfortable being in an office environment again. It would be nice to be able to work at home on the odd occasion that I really need some quiet time, particularly if the children are back at school.

I am mindful that this survey is for the health and well being for staff who are working but what about staff who are furloughed?

I would still like to see more investment in IT and communication. If we were to invest heavily in this area everything else would fall into place. We talk about digital East Herts but if we were to improve the reliability of our systems and therefore the confidence of the public we would have the response that leadership is looking for. However, in my experience are systems are unreliable, and not very informative.

Any community news systems unavailableWe need a CRM system and someone to manage it well. This prevents a lot of communication through other channels. Complaints etc and repeated contacts. A CRM system or similar would also be an advantage across the council and an asset tool for us all working from home. It is something that would benefit all across the organisation both staff and customers.

Would welcome any additional training in the technology useful to work from home.

I think it would be worth someone calculating an estimate of how many thousand miles a year of commuting would be saved if we all worked from home; encouraging home working permanently (where it does not impact on service delivery) would make the operations of the council far more sustainable. Say 75% of staff worked from home, that would make a massive impact in sustainability terms, and perhaps in the medium-to-long-term the council could make money by leasing out more of Wallfields?

I would like there to be some encouragement for staff to meet for socially distanced meetings / or catch ups. The benefit of this for our mental health and morale is far reaching and also not breaching gov guidelines.

This is such a golden opportunity to make a massive difference to the environment. The air outside is so much cleaner and it can stay clean if working from home is embraced more widely than just during the current lockdown.

I'm able to do all of my work from home, so there is no impact on the service provision. Although I do miss the interaction in the office, for me the benefits of working from home far outweigh those of working in the office!

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