



*James Ellis*  
Head of Legal and Democratic  
Services

**MEETING** : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : ONLINE MEETING - LIVESTREAMED  
**DATE** : THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2020  
**TIME** : 7.00 PM

**PLEASE NOTE TIME**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

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

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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 - 5 August 2020 (Pages 7 - 24)

*To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2020.*

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.

5. Safety Committee Minutes - 3 August 2020 (Pages 25 - 30)

To receive the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 3 August 2020.

6. Health and Safety Quarterly Statistics/Updates (Quarter Two) (Pages 31 - 44)

7. Human Resources Quarterly Statistics (Quarter Two) (Pages 45 - 56)

8. Annual Staff Equalities Report (Pages 57 - 100)

9. Human Resources and Payroll Team Update (Pages 101 - 118)

10. 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 AS  
AN ONLINE MEETING ON  
WEDNESDAY 5 AUGUST 2020, AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jackie Bruce	- Senior Development Officer
Vicki David	- Human Resources Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Helen Farrell	- Human Resources Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

119 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

120 MINUTES - 12 FEBRUARY 2020

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Ruffles, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 12 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

121 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked everyone in attendance. She said she had been impressed at the manner in which Officers had continued working under difficult circumstances. Human Resources (HR) had seen an increased workload but had still given all the necessary support to staff and Members. The Wellbeing Survey results highlighted this fact and this was very impressive. The Chairman conveyed her thanks to HR and all the Council's staff.

122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ruffles said that whilst it was not a pecuniary interest, he would like it noted that he was a Member of Hertford Town Council, which had been a recipient of some HR support as referred to in Item 17.



123 LOCAL JOINT PANEL - MINUTES: 5 FEBRUARY AND 1 JULY 2020

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Councillor Alder asked a question about staff working from home and the East Herts Together initiative.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development (OD) said that this matter would be addressed in a report later in the Agenda.

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Chairman and Members that there was no provision to discuss matters arising from previous Minutes, but that questions could be asked during later items or following the conclusion of the Committee.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meetings of the Local Joint Panel held on 5 February 2020 and 1 July 2020 be received.

124 SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 13 JANUARY 2020

Councillor Ruffles asked about the possibility of removing trees and allowing more disabled car parking spaces at Wallfields as referred to in the Minutes.

The Head of HR and OD said that there had been no tree removals. As the Minutes were from January 2020, they were somewhat outdated.

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Chairman and Members that there was no provision to discuss matters arising from previous Minutes, but that questions could be asked during later items or at

the conclusion of Committee.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes from Safety Committee held on 13 January 2020 be received.

125 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS - QUARTER 4 (JANUARY - MARCH 2020)

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The Head of HR and OD presented a report to the Committee on HR management statistics, covering the period January – March 2020. He said that this report was for Members' information only, and the annual report later in the agenda would give a better overview, although he would be happy to take any questions.

Councillor Dumont asked how the targets for diversity were determined.

The Head of HR and OD said he had previously made this enquiry himself, as the targets pre-dated his tenure at the Council. He understood that they were drawn from data from the 2011 Census and the targets would be updated once new data was available.

Councillor Alder said she was impressed with the courses HR offered to Members. She asked whether these were also offered to Parish and Town Councillors. This would also be an area in which Members could be proactive in promoting the Council's training programmes.

The Head of HR and OD said the HR Officer had been proactive in sending out offers of training to Parish and

Town Councils. However, engagement had been “patchy” and sometimes it was difficult to contact the councils due to changes in their contact details. However, expanding the reach and uptake of training was an area which HR had been working on.

The Head of HR and OD agreed it would be useful for Members to promote the training, especially given the value for money and knowledge of local authority matters the Council provided, compared to private providers of training.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

126 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW - QUARTER 4 REPORT (JANUARY - MARCH 2020)

The Health and Safety Officer presented a report to the Committee on Health and Safety covering the period January – March 2020. He said that the annual report later in the agenda would give a better overview of this matter.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

127 HEALTH AND SAFETY - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Health and Safety Officer presented the Health and Safety Annual Report 2019/20 to the Committee.

Councillor Newton said it was evident a significant amount of work had gone into this report. She said that this was impressive and thanked Officers.

The Head of HR and OD said that this was the first occasion this report had been created and that it was slightly regrettable that no benchmark to review the Council's performance against other local authority data could be established. More data would be sought to establish this going forward. He thanked the Health and Safety Officer for his work and said that all action points from the Health and Safety audit had now been addressed.

The Chairman said it was disappointing that only seven local authorities had responded to the request for benchmark data.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

128 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY REVIEW - QUARTER 1  
(APRIL - JUNE 2020)

The Health and Safety Officer presented a report to the Committee on Health and Safety covering the period April - June 2020.

Councillor Dumont asked when Members could expect to see staff returning to Wallfields following the change in Government guidance on working from home. He hoped that staff with underlying health conditions, or that had previously been shielding, would receive appropriate levels of support when returning to the office.

The Health and Safety Officer said some staff had been working at Wallfields. The Council had put policies in place to ensure this was safe, for example by limiting

the number of staff allowed into the office at one time, and assigned seating in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines. These policies were being continually monitored, and with regard to first aider provision and fire safety. The results of the Wellbeing Survey had been factored in, and staff who indicated they were having significant problems working from home would be given priority in returning to the office, should they wish to. Any members of staff who had concerns about returning could seek support through the Wellbeing Hub.

The Head of HR and OD said that he wished to clarify that reference to the re-opening of Wallfields was in relation to the general public's access; Wallfields had remained open to a limited number of staff throughout lockdown. UNISON had been involved in checking the agreed safety policies in the office were being followed. He thanked the UNISON Branch Secretary, for her collaboration. In relation to staff that had been shielding, none would be forced to work from home or attend the office. HR was aware that the issue of staff returning to the office involved complexities and considerations, so this process would not be rushed.

Councillor Bull said he was surprised to hear that the small fire at Buntingford Service Centre was caused by a household battery, which he would not have expected to have 'slipped through the net'.

The Health and Safety Officer said that it was thought the battery had been damaged by a waste disposal vehicle. There had been a larger volume of general

waste being dealt with by the Council as residents were unable to visit recycling centres; this made detection of erroneous items more difficult. However, this incident had been recorded and consideration had been given to new fire safety measures.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

129 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW 2019/20

Helen Farrell, HR Officer, presented the Learning and Development Review 2019/20 to the Committee. She added that, whilst these figures were not available at the time the report was produced, it had been established that the Council delivered election training to 158 people, such as Poll Clerks.

Councillor Newton said that from a monetary viewpoint, the HR training budget appeared to be slightly overspent.

The HR Officer confirmed there had been a slight overspend in the training budget managed by Services, but the HR-managed budgets had stayed well within budget. However, there had been a positive outcome from this in that additional funds had been granted for that purpose. There were savings in other areas, such as use of the Apprentice Levy to contribute to funding training of a staff member who was studying for their qualifications at University.

The Head of HR and OD said that the key message was that the budgets had been managed very well, many budgets having an underspend.

Councillor Dumont asked how the Apprenticeship Programme had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The HR Officer said that all nine of the Council's apprentices had continued employment with the Council. All of the Apprentices' college-based learning had moved online. The Council was duty-bound to delivering 20% on-job training to the Apprentices, but HR had been creative in achieving this in alternative ways, such as asking Apprentices to shadow online meetings.

The Head of HR and OD said there had been some difficulties, particularly regarding Planning Apprentices. Site visits had not been possible during lockdown. Further, the 'pipeline' of Planning Apprentices had been disrupted due to the framework for their development reaching the date by which it needed review and replacement. The new framework had not yet been established, meaning that the Council was not able to take on as many Planning Apprentices as planned – there was budget provision for six apprentices across Services, but only two were taken on. This was being reviewed to ensure sufficient levels of apprenticeships were re-established as this was a key element of creating suitably experienced Officers.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the provision of e-learning modules for Members and asked what the uptake had been.

The Head of HR and OD said the uptake had been

poor, only around 30% of Members having engaged with the e-learning. A meeting had been arranged with the Executive Member for Communities, the Executive Member for Resources, HR and with Democratic Services to review how the level of uptake could be increased.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

130 ANNUAL TURNOVER REPORT 2019/20

Vicki David, HR Officer, presented the Annual Turnover Report 2019/20 to the Committee.

Councillor Ruffles said that it seemed from the main trends, an annual employee turnover rate of 10.1% and an even spread of reasons for staff departure, that tackling levels of turnover was a success for the Council. He asked whether this was the correct conclusion and whether there were any areas Members should be concerned about. Further, he said that although 65% of staff who took the exit survey were happy with the training they received, this meant 35% were not, and he asked why this was.

The Head of HR and OD said Officers intended to review and reduce the selection of 'other' as a reason for departure as this did not provide useful insight. Further, whilst it could be seen there were a number of staff leaving for more senior positions and promotions elsewhere, this could be seen as a positive, as staff were clearly developing well professionally at the Council. It was also inevitable to some extent, given the size of the Council, that not all staff would be able



to progress to the extent they would like.

The HR Officer said the current format of the exit questionnaire did not allow HR to understand why departing staff were unhappy with training they had received.

Councillor Newton said that the importance of the exit questionnaire had previously been impressed on the Committee, so it was disappointing to hear it did not give the insight needed. She asked that this be amended accordingly.

The Head of HR and OD said he would add provision to the questionnaire for departing staff to express why they were unhappy with training. However, some staff inevitably left as they were not a good fit for the role and therefore might leave negative feedback even if it was not warranted. He said that allowing departing staff the opportunity to give more feedback did not mean they would.

Councillor Ruffles said that in Planning, vacancies were still being held, due to the notion of the upcoming restructure of the Planning department. However, this meant the Council was not currently seeking out the staff it needed. He said he would like to see some progress in this regard.

The Head of HR and OD said the restructure had been somewhat delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It should also be borne in mind that The Head of Planning and Building Control had only been in post for approximately a year and needed to restructure

the department as she thought appropriate. HR could not push a department into a restructure, only support the process when it was in progress. There had been some progress already, but Members' comments would be passed on.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

131 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT 2019/20

Vicki David, HR Officer, presented the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2019/20 to the Committee.

Councillor Dumont asked whether there had been a drop off in short-term casual sickness during lockdown, given the majority of staff were working from home. Furthermore, he asked whether working from home and flexible working were being considered as longer-term policies.

The HR Officer said there had been a reduction in short-term casual sickness. She said staff who were “not feeling 100%” might be more likely to work from home given they did not face a commute and other factors. Flexible hours might have also contributed to this reduction, in that staff could still make up their hours even if starting slightly later, for example. HR were considering how lessons could be carried forward. For example, some jobs which had previously been considered incompatible with working from home could clearly be done from home. There were also other benefits, such as decreased levels of stress amongst staff.

The Chairman said that stress and mental health problems would be more difficult to detect in staff who were working from home. She asked how it would be picked up if a member of staff was struggling.

The HR Officer said it was important that managers kept up regular one-to-one meetings with their team members to keep track of their wellbeing. There were also other measures in place to promote the maintenance of good mental health amongst staff, such as the recent Mental Health Awareness Week campaign and provision of mental health first aiders.

The Head of HR and OD said the Wellbeing Survey had been valuable as follow up contact was being made with staff that were identified to be struggling. Whilst stress or mental health issues were more difficult to detect in staff working remotely, use of Zoom and other video call software at least meant that managers could see staff when talking to them, which was helpful. There were several other channels of support, such as UNISON and informal socialising amongst teams.

Councillor Newton asked whether there was an option for staff to attend the office for one-to-ones or other meetings if they wanted to.

The Head of HR and OD said this was an option available at the discretion of managers and staff. The outdoor space at Wallfields had been used extensively by staff for meetings during lockdown.

Councillor Alder congratulated the HR team for having

been shortlisted for a Reward and Employee Benefits Association (REBA) Wellbeing award, and asked what the outcome had been. The Head of HR and OD said unfortunately East Herts District Council had not won the award but were pleased to have been shortlisted as a finalist.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

132 HR MANAGEMENT STATISTICS - QUARTER 1 (APRIL - JUNE 2020)

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Vicki David, HR Officer, presented a report on HR management statistics for the period April 2020 – June 2020 to the Committee.

The Head of HR and OD said the decreased level of staff departure was likely due to the fact staff were less likely to change jobs during the uncertainty of a pandemic. Similarly, sickness absence had dropped as previously discussed. Members should not expect this reduction to be permanent.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

133 STANDBY AND OUT OF HOURS POLICY

The Head of HR and OD presented a report on the updated Standby and Out of Hours Policy. He said that this report had been approved by the Local Joint Panel (LJP). Members of this Committee had also had advanced sight of the document. He highlighted that the key change was to cease the Corporate Standby Rota, due to a reduction in usage of the scheme and

lack of value for money.

Councillor Ruffles said he was nervous about this change, especially in respect of prospective call outs relating to Traveller communities. This had previously been a problem area for the Council. As far as he was aware, there were legal procedures in relation to sites which were inhabited by Traveller communities, and he was concerned the Council would not now have adequate staff to facilitate this process.

The Head of HR and OD said the out of hours provision was previously a manned phone line, which would then pass on any out of hours referrals to the relevant teams the following day. This system was being replaced by an email address, so referrals could still be received out of hours, and there would be no real effect on the subsequent action taken by the Council. Call outs relating to Traveller communities would continue to be managed by the Leadership Team Out of Hours service and would not therefore be affected.

It was moved by Councillor Newton and seconded by Councillor Alder that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the changes made to the Standby and Out of Hours Policy following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota, be approved.

134 GENERAL LEAVE POLICY

Vicki David, HR Officer, presented the updated General Leave Policy to the Committee. She said that statutory changes meant the Council needed to update the policy to include statutory parental bereavement leave. The Council already offered the first week of this leave on full pay. UNISON had requested that this provision be extended to a second week. The request had been accepted by the Local Joint Panel (LJP). The LJP also supported a proposal to remove the 26 week length of service qualifier for this entitlement.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor McMullen that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the update to the General Leave Policy to reflect legislation changes from 6 April 2020 regarding statutory parental bereavement leave and pay be approved;

(B) that the proposal to enhance the second statutory week of bereavement pay to full pay as requested by UNISON and agreed by Leadership Team and LJP be approved; and

(C) that the removal of the statutory qualifying period of 26 weeks for the second week of full pay, be approved.

135 HR AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of HR and OD presented the HR and Payroll Team Update to the Committee. He briefly summarised the contents of the report. Specifically, he mentioned:

- The Council's drive for consistency in customer service standards, such as uniform email signatures and voicemails.
- The Council had been working on building its online visibility and presence, such as on recruitment sites like Indeed.
- As previously mentioned, some staff had returned to the office, and others were supported by giving access to local Launchpad facilities.
- The Council would proceed with plans to buy a number of influenza vaccination job vouchers for staff, which had been supported by the previous fall in short-term absence.
- There had been ongoing issues with the payroll system, which had led to talks about the provider hosting the system itself. However, as this was a shared system with Stevenage Borough Council, the partner authority would need to agree to any changes.

Councillor Ruffles said that the tone of the report was positive and Members could be pleased about this. However, the report contained some jargon which could make it difficult for the general public to understand.

The Head of HR and OD said he would endeavour to

ensure future reports had further explanatory wording alongside any industry-specific language.

Councillor Alder said it would be helpful for staff voicemails to be kept up to date as in some cases the messages were months out of date. The Head of HR and OD said that the Infrastructure Contributions and Spend Manager had been leading work to improve this problem as part of the East Herts Together initiative.

Councillor Dumont said he was encouraged to see the uptake of influenza vaccinations. This protection was particularly important this year so that there would be no potential confusion between symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 amongst any unwell staff.

The HR Officer said that in previous years, only those with underlying health conditions would have been eligible for a free influenza vaccination via their GP, but this year anyone over the age of 50 would qualify, subject to demand, which would be made clear to staff.

The Head of HR and OD said previously some staff had taken the voucher simply because it was more convenient than visiting their GP. However, this would be discouraged if the staff member was eligible for a free vaccination with their GP as this was not the best use of the Council's resources.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm



## Minutes of Health and Safety Committee Monday 3 August 2020, on Zoom

**Present:** Ewa Dennis (ED), Peter Dickinson (PD), Jenny Francis (JF), Geoff Hayden (GH), Dominique Kingsbury, Peter Mannings (PM) – Minutes, Graham Mully, Simon O’Hear (SOH – Chairman), Jeanette Lowden (JL).

**1.0 Apologies:** Paul Thomas-Jones (PTJ) and Steve Whinnett (SW)

### **2.0 Minutes of the last meeting**

2.1 The Minutes of the 13 January 2020 meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

### **3.0 Matters Arising**

3.1 PD referred to support for working from home. He said that the numbers of Officers attending Wallfields was low and the sharing of the available workspace had been very measured. He also said that risk assessments/DSE assessments had been completed for both working from home and Wallfields.

3.2 The Safety Committee was advised that with a 2 metre social distancing rule in effect, the maximum number of Officers that could work from Wallfields was 132. The Committee was also advised that the guardian G24 device contract had been extended by another year.

3.3 The Committee was advised that PD was leading on the procurement of a new device, with separate contracts for East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council. PD said that full fire marshal coverage was in place for Wallfields. The Committee noted that there were no abnormal numbers from

the accident and incident reports. There had been a drop in accidents due to the closure of the Leisure Centres.

- 3.4 The Committee was advised that further Health and Safety training had taken place before the lockdown restrictions commenced. H&S training will be delivered via e-learning where appropriate and plans to return to face to face training will be made in line with guidance, the HSE has allowed refreshers to be delayed without qualifications being lost i.e. First Aid at Work.
- 3.5 The Safety Committee was advised that checks on car insurance and MOTs were up to date as far as possible based on the current COVID-19 restrictions.

#### **4.0 Tenant Representative Matters**

- 4.1 ED reported that an appointments based system was now in effect at Buntingford Depot using an entrance that was accessible and feasible for all clients at the depot site. PD referred to the introduction of a one way system for accessing Wallfields whereby Officers could enter the main entrance and exit via the passage way adjacent to the caretaker's office.
- 4.2 PD was asked to circulate risk assessments for Wallfields and in particular for the reception area, these also available on the intranet. SOH confirmed that cleaners and other contractors had been informed of controls in place and had signed up to these through the FM management of the service.

Action: PD

#### **5.0 COVID-19 Update**

- 5.1 SOH confirmed that Leadership Team and the Executive had begun use the Council Chamber for appropriate meetings. The Committee was shown an example of the configuration of

the Council Chamber. The Safety Committee was advised that 23 people could be accommodated for meetings within allocated seating. It was not therefore possible however to stage full Council meetings in this room and the public could not yet be accommodated sufficiently.

5.2 SOH said that the Leader was keen to secure a return to the Council Chamber for management and executive meetings as well as Committee meetings. PD said that the plans were on the intranet for the Council Chamber and IT were directing Officers to the protocol for working from Wallfields. He thanked Jenny Francis and Jackie Bruce for their assistance with these protocols for safe working at Wallfields.

5.3 SOH referred to the pleasing partnership working and the subsequent risk assessments were very good and incorporated feedback given. The Safety Committee was advised that all of the generic risk assessments were in place before any work commenced and this had include validation with Unison.

## **6.0 Accident and Incident Reports**

6.1 There were no accidents to report and 1 reportable accident in June 2020 which had required hospital treatment following a slip on site. PD said that forms had been submitted to the HSE and RIDDOR. The incident had occurred on a site visit and the Officer had since made a good recovery. This was an isolated accident and no remedial action was required.

## **7.0 Regulatory and Legislative Changes (Verbal Update)**

7.1 PD referred to changes expected in building regulations following on from enquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster and advised the committee these would be shared once published.

## **8.0 Health and Safety Inspections and Compliance Reports**

8.1 SOH said that the requirement for home based DSE assessments during the restrictions had been waived but EHC was progressing with them alongside the wellbeing survey to ensure staff were supported appropriately. SOH said that DSE assessments had now been progressed and this process was working well with some further equipment or adjustments being identified and provided. PD was reviewing all DSE assessments and supporting both staff and managers as appropriate with practical solutions.

## **9.0 Property – Premises Maintenance and Repairs**

9.1 Nothing to report. The Safety Committee was advised of the planned replacement of lighting to LED.

## **10.0 Facilities Management**

10.1 The Safety Committee was advised that there were no major repairs to report. Screens had been installed at Wallfields for Customer Services and alternative arrangements had been made for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

10.2 The Safety Committee was advised that 20 to 30 Officers were working from Wallfields on a daily basis. SOH said that the available capacity did not have to be filled at Wallfields and staff will only be asked to work in the office where required due to work or to support their wellbeing.

10.3 SOH said that one option for Officers to consider was meetings in park settings with social distancing. He thanked the caretakers and Geoff Hayden for supporting Officers who working from Wallfields. Individual desks are identified and allocated to officers by the FM team to help support COVID security, HR are working jointly with FM/Corporate Property Manager to manage the staff spreadsheet which can only be

added to if the HOS authorised access. Office Protocols are in place which also have to read and confirmed before being authorised to come in.

- 10.4 SOH reiterated that Officers could not attend Wallfields without giving prior notice to Human Resources (HR), so that desk allocation could be made and planning for numbers attending Wallfields could be made if necessary.
- 10.5 PD praised the response of Officers to a small fire at Buntingford Depot. The Safety Committee was advised of the protocols in place for Officers and staff attending Buntingford Depot. SOH referred to the cleaning routine and he said that Perspex screens would take some time to arrive for the receptions.

## **11.0 List of Issues**

11.1a. Employees side (UNISON):  
None

11.2b. Management side:  
None. SOH thanked Jackie Bruce for her/Unison's input.

## **12.0 Health and Safety Training**

11.1 PD said that first aid refresher training had been arranged with the usual provider but has been postponed. PD referred to the reintroduction of e learning modules and said that 4 mandatory courses had been introduced which all Officers should have completed and that revisions would be made for next year.

## **13.0 Health and Safety Policy - Infection Control**

13.1 SOH said that this policy along with the other 2 policies below will also be shared with LT for feedback before being finalised and implemented. Once Feedback has been reviewed and

policies updated they will need to be approved by this committee in line with other H&S policies which donot require Full Council Approval.

- 13.2 The Safety Committee were invited to email their thoughts on this policy. Action for all

#### **14.0 Health and Safety Policy – Risk Assessment and Safe Systems at Work**

- 14.1 The Safety Committee were invited to email their thoughts on this policy. Action for all

#### **15.0 Health and Safety Policy – Unusual, Severe and Adverse Weather**

- 15.1 The Safety Committee were invited to email their thoughts on this policy. Action for all

#### **16.0 AOB**

- 16.1 GM referred to training course that were available from the Insurance Company used by East Herts Council.

#### **17.0 Date of Next Meeting**

- 17.1 5 November 2020

The meeting closed at 15:13

## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 5 November 2020

**Report by:** Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

**Report title:** Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q2) – July 2020 to September 2020

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

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### 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 2 (July 2020 to September 2020).

#### **2.0 Background**

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

#### **3.0 Safety Committee**

3.1 Safety Committee reconvened 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 and consulting with UNISON to work up agreed risk assessments and share best practice.

#### **4.0 Work Related Accident Reports**

4.1 There was one accident reportable under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR).

On investigation it was confirmed that this was not caused by a procedural or operational failure but was the result of an unfortunate misstep whereby the officer slipped down an embankment sustaining a severe injury resulting in hospitalisation.

The Health and Safety Officer completed the required report form which was submitted to the Health and Safety Executive. There have been no non reportable work related accidents recorded during the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020, compared to the same period in 2019 in part this reduction will have been affected by more staff working from home or away from the office.



## 2019 Accident Totals – For Comparison

Site	July	August	September	TOTAL
Hartham	9	4	4	17
Fanshawe	2	1	5	8
Leventhorpe	1	0	1	2
Grange Paddocks	9	4	7	20
Ward Freman	0	0	1	1
Employees	0	1	0	1
Contractors	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>49</b>

4.2 Accident reporting had been postponed in line with the temporary closure of leisure centres. It has now resumed with accident totals received from the five leisure centres/swimming pools.

## Non Reportable Accidents – July, August, September 2020

(as reported there were no non-reportable employee accidents in Q2)

Swimming Pool & Gym	July*	August	September	TOTAL
Hartham	0	2	1	3
Grange Paddocks	0	1	3	4
Leventhorpe	0	0	0	0
Ward Freman	0	0	0	0
Fanshawe	0	0	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0*</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

\* No reports due to facility closure arising from Coronavirus Pandemic

4.3 There were no accidents from Leisure 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 There was no further action or intervention required in respect to the three reported accidents as they were individual isolated

incidents (swallowing water x 2 and a slip) and not part of any pattern.

## **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 monitored/reported and relevant action is being taken (when required) to Safety Committee, Leadership Team and Human Resources Committee.

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

The following updates should be noted:

### **5.2 Buntingford Service Centre**

5.2.1 Fortnightly depot user group meetings now takes place via zoom to ensure consistent and clear communication between the contractors occupying the depot. The depot user group is chaired by the Health and Safety Officer to avoid one tenant acting as the chair and making decisions that impact disproportionately on the other (shared site) contractors.

5.2.2 The purpose of the group is to discuss onsite operational matters, safety concerns or issues and is attended by contract managers and at least one member of the Property Team.

5.2.3 The Health and Safety Officer can report that all contractors on site have robust Covid secure operating procedures in place. Urbaser are the designated lead and contact for co-ordinating

Covid secure measures and appropriate covid safe signage is being displayed.

## **6.0 Parking Enforcement Contract**

6.1 There are no health and safety concerns to report this quarter. Parking Enforcement is also outsourced, the Health and Safety Officer can confirm that effective COVID secure practices are in place and being managed by the Contract Manager.

## **7.0 Sport and Leisure Management Contract – Covid-19**

7.1 The Health and Safety Officer and Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) provided support to Sport and Leisure Management who have now re-opened all five of the Councils swimming pools. SLM have implemented extensive covid secure measure to make the facilities safe for customers and these have been consulted upon with the Health and Safety Officer who can report that these are working well in practice.

7.2 Health and Safety monitoring by the contract manager (supported by the H&S Officer) will continue to be undertaken to verify that compliance continues.

7.3 There are no areas of H&S concern or intervention action required to report this quarter.

## **8.0 Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract – Covid-19**

8.1 All parks, open spaces and play areas were successfully re-opened in July with ongoing use being monitored by East Herts Operations team, supported by grounds maintenance contractor Glendale.

Measures that were undertaken prior to the re-opening include;

- Inspection of all play equipment
- Deep clean of all play equipment and hard surface areas.
- Information signs and notices regarding good practice and covid safety
- Removal of some equipment to ensure social distancing can be maintained
- Inspection and monitoring by Glendale as part of the contract delivery service.

## **8.2 Waytemore Castle Project:**

8.2.1 The Health and Safety Officer and Risk and Insurance Business Advisor are providing advice and guidance on the Waytemore Castle heritage improvement project which aims to open the historic ruins in a safe and sympathetic fashion. Due to the heritage status it is not possible to install conventional safety controls so innovative ways have been discussed and it was agreed that relevant safety information can be conveyed using the information signs at the base of the site.

8.2.2 The Health and Safety Officer and Insurance and Business Advisor will be scheduling a site visit in due course.

## **9.0 Office/Reception Re-Opening – Covid-19 Secure**

### **9.1 Wallfields Re-opening**

9.1.1 The Health and Safety Officer has continues to work closely with the Corporate Property Services Manager, Facilities Team and Leadership Team and Human Resources colleagues on maintaining workplace covid secure measures this includes;

- Reviewing Covid-19 Secure Workplace Risk Assessments with teams
- Reviewing Office Safety Protocols

- Attending site two days a week to carry out visual reviews
- Updating the RA's where appropriate: The Wallfields RA has been updated to allow the sandwich seller to return with appropriate controls in place

### 9.1.2 **Council Chamber Re-opening**

9.1.3 The Health and Safety Officer has worked closely with the Corporate Property Services Manager to bring the council chamber back into controlled use to allow larger face to face socially distanced meetings to be held. Numbers are limited to 23 in main chamber plus 8 in the public gallery. However, following the recent change in guidance on 2/10/2020 the planned return to holding face to face committee meetings where this could be accommodated has been postponed in line with working from home where possible.

9.1.4 Other meeting rooms have been re-opened where appropriate with capacity and controls processes in place.

### 9.1.5 **Wallfields Reception**

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 planned re-opening of Wallfields Reception following government guidelines. Wallfields reception reopened on 05 October 2020, re-opening was initially delayed due to the time required to receive the Acrylic Screens which were prioritised to the NHS. Further delays have been caused by the time to set up the IT booking system and adjustments in line with emerging guidance.

These measures considered include;

- Bookable access only
- Introduction of one way entry and exit system

- Acrylic screens for reception desks
- Removal of seats to promote social distancing
- Signage displayed to remind customers of good practice
- Enhanced cleaning
- Removal of surplus seating units to prevent customers from breaking social distancing measures (no waiting area)
- Information and signage in place to explain measures.
- Barrier at front entrance to close off payment kiosk from those using reception.
- Signage for no more than 2 people in reception at any one time. Controlled queuing floor stickers in place.
- PPE for relevant officers as appropriate
- The re-opening was delayed due to difficulties obtaining the acrylic screens as resources were being target focused on NHS services.
- A decision was taken to prevent the use of the payment kiosks in the interests of public and staff health to prevent multiple contacts touching the screens and to prevent the risk of congestion in the entrances and potential transmission of covid-19.
- The Customer Services Team and Health and Safety Officer will keep the arrangements under review.

#### 9.1.6 **Charringtons House Reception**

9.1.7 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 planned re-opening of Charringtons House Reception following government guidelines. Charringtons reception reopened on 05 October 2020. These measures considered include;

- Bookable access only
- QR codes for track and trace on display
- Introduction of one way entry and exit system
- Acrylic screens for reception desks
- Removal of seats to promote social distancing

- Signage displayed to remind customers of good practice
- Enhanced cleaning
- Removal of surplus seating to prevent customers from breaking social distancing measures (no waiting area)
- Information and signage in place to explain measures.
- Barrier at front entrance to close off payment kiosk from those using reception.
- Signage for no more than 2 people in reception at any one time. Controlled queuing floor stickers in place.
- PPE for relevant officers as appropriate

9.1.8 In addition to these measures interview rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be repurposed as pre-bookable single use workspaces for officers who need to be on site to support customers. Meeting rooms A and B will be portioned to allow for small (social distanced) meetings as required with clear signage over capacity levels.

## **10. Hertford Theatre**

10.1 The Front of House Manager, supported and advised by the Health and Safety Officer developed and delivered new protocols for the re-hiring of the River Room and Dance Studio and has further updated the procedures for the socially distanced cinema viewing the new protocols and procedures were validated by Unison and these remain under live review for the duration and in response the Government guidance.

10.2 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 continues to be exemplary.

## **11.0. Lone Worker Devices – Guardian 24 Update**

11.1 The Health and Safety Officer is waiting for an update from Stevenage Borough Council on the option of a joint procurement process for the lone worker service provider and will be contacting the Corporate Procurement Manager to discuss options. The current contract has been extended for another year (the re-tendering was due to be progressed at Lockdown but was postponed and years extension sought to ensure coverage). The extension ensures EHC to not lose continuity of service and there is time for the procurement to be made and coverage to be maintained.

## **12.0 Contract and Development Support for Leisure Development Projects / Capital Programmes**

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

- Hartham swimming pool and gym – The Health and Safety Officer participated in a zoom meeting to review tender documents for the pool development.
- The Health and Safety Officer will be participating in the SQ scoring stage of the contract on the 06 November 2020.
- The Health and Safety Officer attended a site meeting and tour of the Grange Paddocks development in September with the Project Manager and is pleased to report that the site is very managed and organised with clear evidence of good safety management and covid secure processes in place. I can further report that work is proceeding well despite logistical obstacles posed by the current covid pandemic.
- The Health and Safety Officer has engaged with the Project Managers responsible for the Northgate End and Old River Lane Developments to ensure health and safety compliance, good practice and monitoring are part of the scope of the development including covid secure risk assessments, these



have been obtained for review and the Health and Safety Officer will also be seeking to arrange observation site visits as the projects evolve.

### **13.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and future events**

13.1 The Health and Safety Officer will be reviewing and refreshing the content of the health and safety modules for Skillsbuild the Council's e-learning platform. Revised versions will be rolled out in November 2020

13.2 As lockdown restrictions are eased the Health and Safety Officer will work closely with the OD and HR Co-ordinator who leads on the Council's development programme to review future training provision and how this can be delivered in an effective and meaningful way, e-learning and limited capacity face to face learning will be considered. Future H&S refresher/new starter events to be rescheduled include:

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

### **14.0 Options**

N/A

### **15.0 Risks**

15.1 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.

### **16.0 Implications/Consultations**

#### **Community Safety**

As covered by the report the measures or controls put in place will

impact positively on community safety e.g. re parks and open spaces or reception re-opening to the public.

**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 November 2020

**Report by:** Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

**Report title:** Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July - September 2020)

**Ward(s) affected:** None

---

### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR HR Committee:

- (a) The Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July - September 2020) be noted.

#### 1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 2 (July - September 2020).

#### 2.0 Background

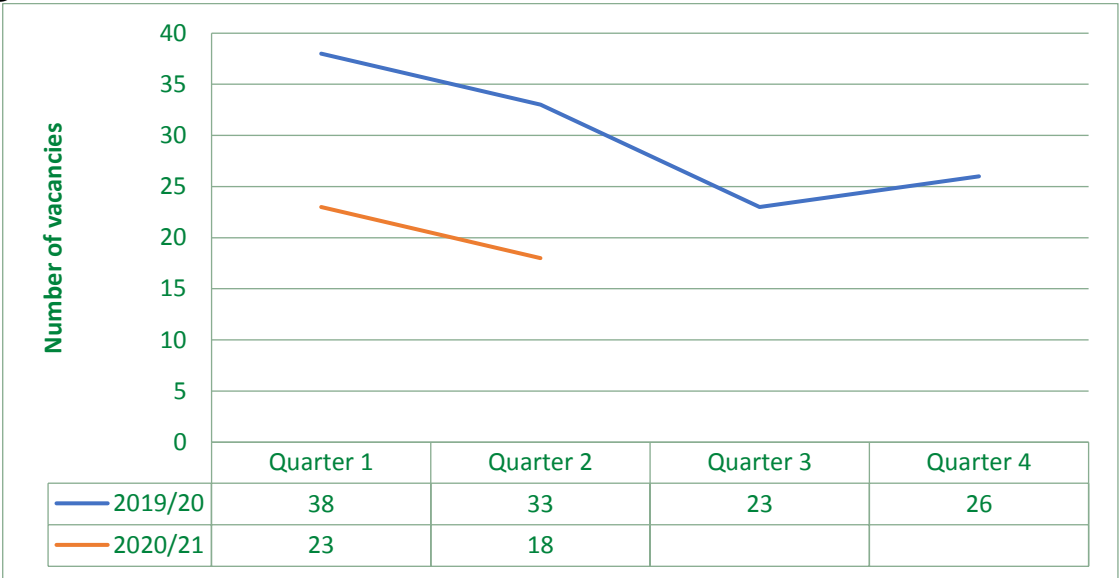
2.1 This report outlines the current performance against the annual HR targets as approved by the HR Committee and available benchmarking data.

### 3.0 Report

#### 3.1 Vacancy Data and Recruitment

3.1.1 Figure 1 below shows that vacancies have fallen from 23 in Quarter 1 to 18 at the end of Quarter 2 and are significantly lower compared to the previous year (33 vacancies at the end of Quarter 2 in 2019/20).

**Figure 1 - Number of vacancies at the end of each Quarter**



3.1.2 At the end of quarter 2, recruitment had progressed<sup>1</sup> for 5 out of the 18 vacancies (28%).

3.1.3 Thirteen posts (72%) were on hold which is a decrease from 18 in Quarter 1. Eight of the thirteen (7 in Planning and 1 in Customer Services) (62%) were being held due to an imminent review of the service structure and were being covered as appropriate by agency staff.

3.1.4 The remaining five posts (38%) were being held due to e.g. pending a review of the job or potentially in relation to channel shift towards more online delivery.

<sup>1</sup> Posts were either out to advert, at shortlisting, interview or pre-employment check stages, or an unconditional offer had been made but the candidate has not yet started.

3.1.5 During Quarter 2 seven posts were advertised. Two posts did not result in appointments being made and HR and the managers are revisiting the job descriptions and adverts before advertising again. The five remaining posts were either at the shortlisting or interview stages when the quarter ended.

3.1.6 A particularly popular role advertised in Quarter 2 was the Sustainability Policy and Projects Officer where 49 applications were received. Managers are currently shortlisting applicants.

**3.2 Employee Turnover**

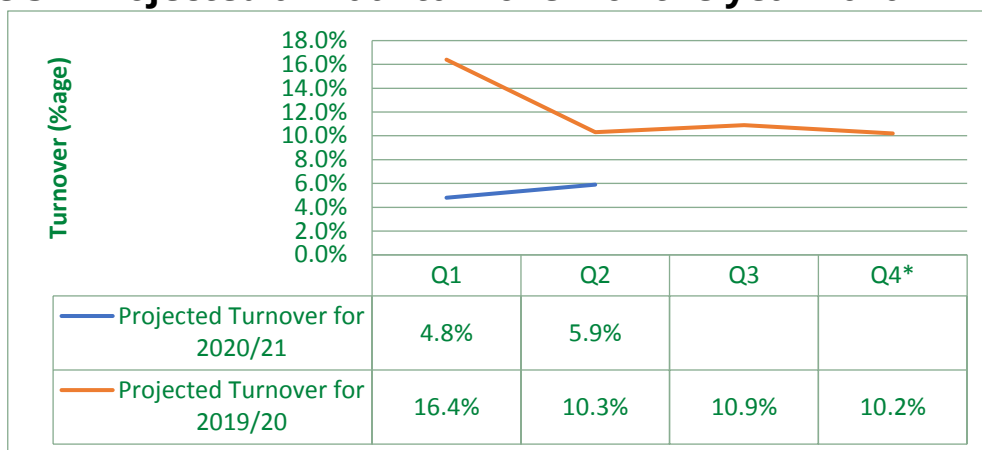
3.2.1 Figure 2 below shows that there were 6 leavers in Quarter 2 giving a turnover rate of 1.8% which is an increase since Quarter 1 (1.2%).

**Figure 2 – Number of Leavers and Turnover in each quarter**

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>
Number of Leavers	4	6
Turnover rate	1.2%	1.8%

3.2.2 Based on the number of leavers for the year so far (10 leavers), Figure 3 below shows that projected annual turnover for 2020/21 is estimated to be 5.9%. It has increased from 4.8% which was the projected figure at the end of Quarter 1 however it is considerably lower than for the same period last year (10.3% in Quarter 2 in 2019/20). It is also lower than the local government average (14% for 2018/19 for Local Authority districts in the UK).

**Figure 3 – Projected annual turnover for the year 2020/21**



### 3.3 Sickness Absence

#### ALL absence

#### ALL Absence – Quarter 2

3.3.1 At the end of Quarter 2, the total number of sickness days taken was 197.61 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 128.04 FTE days (65%) were due to short term sickness and 69.57 FTE days (35%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 0.7% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is also 0.4% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 1.1%.

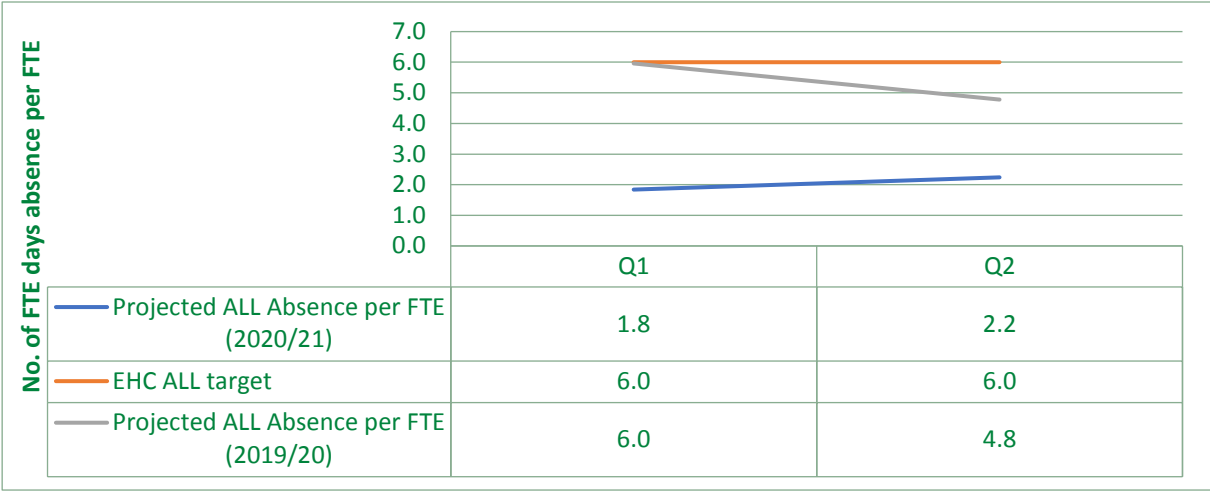
3.3.2 At the end of Quarter 2 (September 2020), the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 1.12 days.

#### ALL Absence - Annual period 2020/21

3.3.3 Based on the absence data at the end of Quarter 2 (September 2020) it is estimated that projected sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 2.2 days per FTE. This is significantly below the council’s annual target of 6 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (4.8 days per FTE in Quarter 2 in 2019/20). See Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4 – Projected annual absence for 2020/21**



**Short term absence**

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

**Short term absence - Quarter 2**

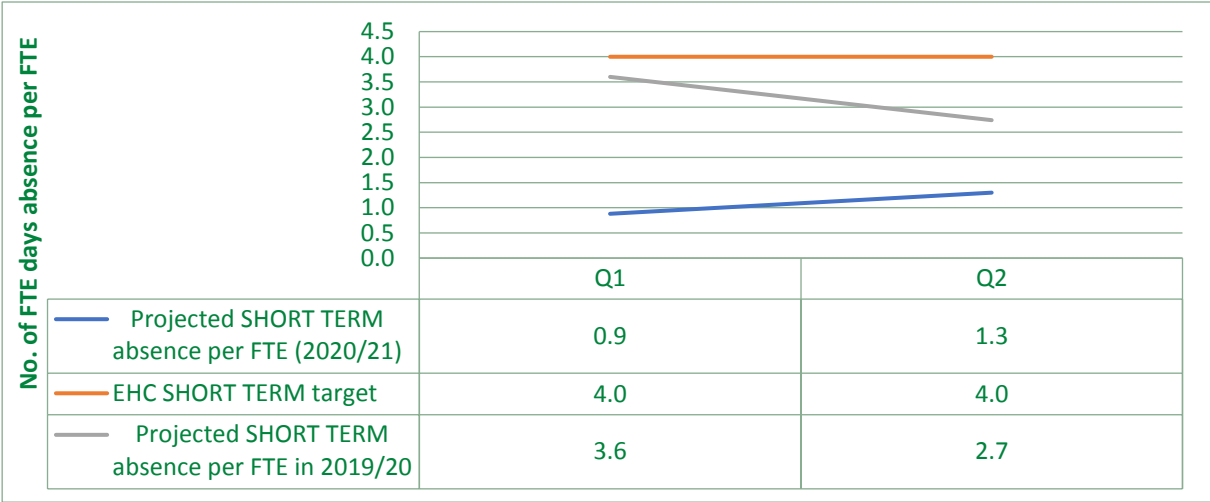
3.3.5 Thirty Three employees (9.8% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 2 totalling 128.04 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 0.7%.

3.3.6 At the end of Quarter 2, the number of short term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.65 days.

**Short term absence - Annual period 2020/21**

3.3.7 Based on short term absence data at the end of Quarter 2 (September 2020), it is estimated that projected short term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 1.3 days per FTE. This is below the council’s short term target of 4 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (2.7 days in Quarter 2 in 2019/20). See Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5 – Projected annual SHORT TERM absence for 2020/21**



**Long Term absence**

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

**Long term absence – Quarter 2**

3.3.9 Two employees (0.6% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 2 totalling 69.57 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 0.4%.

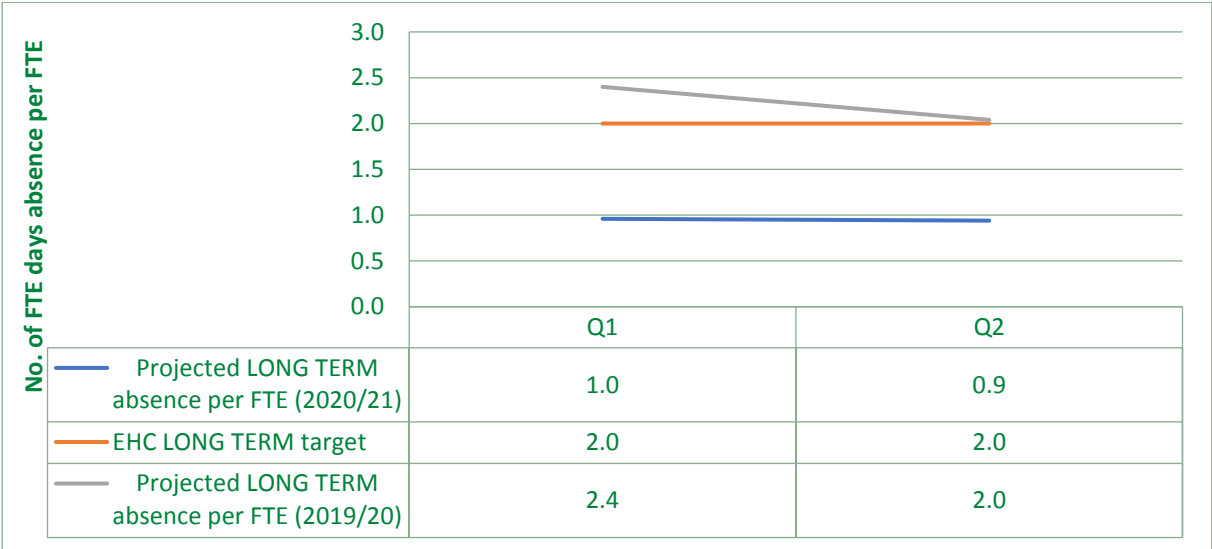
3.3.10 The two employees have been offered support through the employee assistance programme and through referrals to Occupational Health/taking medical advice from Specialists. The reasons for long term absence were for acute medical conditions and reoccurring medical conditions. One employee has now chosen to retire due to their health condition. The remaining employee has an acute medical condition and is receiving Specialist medical support (although this has been impacted/delayed by the Pandemic and difficulties over diagnosis) and is being supported by their manager under the Absence Management Policy.

3.3.11 At the end of Quarter 2, the number of long term FTE days absent per FTE was 0.47 days.

**LONG TERM absence - Annual period 2020/21**

3.3.12 Based on long term absence data at the end of Quarter 2 (September 2020), it is estimated that projected long term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 will be 0.9 days per FTE. This is below the council’s long term target of 2 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (2 days per FTE in Quarter 2 in 2019/20). See Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6 Projected annual LONG TERM absence for 2020/21**



**3.4 Learning and Development**

3.4.1 In Quarter 2 there were 5 corporate learning and development events held and 29 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 The development of the e-learning platform continues and a new course ‘Protecting yourself and others from Coronavirus’ has gone live, having been developed from an Environmental Health Presentation. The following courses are being updated and revised as part of our annual mandatory training programme. The courses will be relaunched in November 2020

so they are available for staff to complete for the annual Performance Development Reviews (PDRs).

- Data Protection (GDPR) updated for 2020 including Brexit changes
- Health and Safety updated for 2020 including references to COVID-19
- Safeguarding updated for 2020 to reflect policy revisions and updated definitions
- Equalities and Diversity - updated for 2020 to include end of course test
- Lone Working (mandatory for lone working officers)

3.4.3 The Organisational Development & Human Resources Officer is working in partnership with the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Service, Risk Management and Legal to launch an e-learning Fraud Awareness Course which will be available to all staff.

3.4.4 To support the East Herts Together project two further e-learning courses are in development. Email Etiquette, which will look at how staff can use emails positively and effectively without feeling overloaded or stressed. Managing Home Working, to support staff and managers by reminding officers how to keep in touch and communicate to avoid feeling isolated, remind individuals to take regular breaks, ensure staff are meeting regularly with their managers and managing their workload.

3.4.5 Discussions are continuing with different providers to be creative with the delivery of learning and development while staff work from home and there continues to be a limited number of staff in the buildings. Courses are being reviewed and amended to enable virtual delivery. The first virtual pre-retirement course will be held in November 2020.

<b>Event/Course</b>	<b>No of participants</b>	<b>Type / Number of sessions held</b>
Dementia Friends	6	1
Corporate Induction	7	1
Introduction to Wellbeing	8	2
Mindfulness	6	1
Able Futures Webinars	2	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>

### **3.4 Equalities Monitoring Indicators**

3.6.1 The table below shows a summary of equalities data for employees at the end of Quarter 2 (i.e. 30 September 2020). The sexual orientation data has been added for Quarter 2 with the comparison data being taken from the latest East Herts Resident data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2018. The comparison data has been revised in line with updated benchmarking data within the annual equalities report for 2019/20. Unfortunately more up to date resident data is not yet available for Ethnicity and Disability however Gender data for 2018 is available and has been reflected in the comparison data below.

	<b>Comparison to population data</b>	<b>EHC Percentage</b>
<b>Disability</b>		
Leadership Team with a disability	5% CENSUS 2011	0.0%
Employees with a disability	5% CENSUS 2011	4.2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	10%
Employees from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	6.9%
<b>Gender</b>		
Leadership Team members who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	40%
Employees who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	72.3%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Leadership Team	2.1% ONS 2018	10%
Employees	2.1% ONS 2018	2.4%

The Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Heads of Service.

#### **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 November 2020

**Report by:** Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

**Report title:** Annual Equalities Report 2019/20

**Ward(s) affected:** None

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### Summary

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Human Resources Committee:**

- (a) The Annual Equalities Report 2019/20 be noted.
- (b) The recommendations set out in the 2020/21 action plan are considered and approved.
- (c) That next year the Annual Equalities report for 2020-2021 be reported to the July 2021 HRC meeting.

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Equalities Report 2019/20, which has been reviewed by the Leadership and updated for this meeting.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Human Resources produce an annual equalities report which provides a detailed analysis of the council's workforce and external applicants applying for jobs, by the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

2.2 The Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

2.3 Public sector bodies with more than 150 employees are required to publish data on equality in their workforces annually.

### **3.0 Report**

3.1 Please see Appendix A for the full report which has been approved by LT.

3.2 HR propose that this report is brought forward to the July HR Committee from 2021 due to the action plan being drawn up 6 months after the data period (1 April - 31 March) which is not timely and means that the effect of any changes implemented are only seen for half of the review period in the following year's report. The Action plan for 20-21 is set to run from July 2020 to June 2021.

### **4.0 Implications/Consultations**

#### **Community Safety**

No

#### **Data Protection**

No

#### **Equalities**

As detailed in the report

#### **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**

Appendix A – Annual Equalities Report 2019/20.

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# Staff Annual Equalities Report

2019/20



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# Introduction

This report provides a detailed analysis of the council's workforce and external applicants applying for jobs, by the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. This report was produced by relates to staff and employment only. The council's Equalities Officer sits outside of HR and has responsibility for wider equalities issues, of which this is just one element.

The Equality Act (2010) consolidated the legislation for groups protected by previous equalities legislation. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics.

The Act sets out the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public sector bodies with more than 150 employees to publish data on equality in their workforces annually.

The council is committed to complying with the Equality Act across all its services and continues to increase awareness and understanding through its policies, training and staff groups.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the available monitoring data for 2019/20.

It covers five areas:

- Employee Profile
- Recruitment
- Discipline and Grievance
- Training
- Leavers

# Executive Summary

## Employee Profile

The council's employee profile as at the end of March 2020 is broadly reflective of the profile of the working population in East Hertfordshire and the East of England in terms of ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability and sexual orientation.

The areas where the employee profile is not as closely reflective are sex (gender) and age. The council has a considerably higher percentage of females than males (72%:28%) compared to the working population of East Hertfordshire (51%:49%), however this is common in the public sector and is further impacted at East Herts by many of the more traditionally male areas of work such as refuse and grounds maintenance being contracted out.

The council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to East Herts residents. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. In recent years the council has introduced more apprenticeships and trainee posts which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers. The council also has a significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile. The percentage of employees under the age of 20 is lower than East Herts residents in this age group (6.2%) however it must be noted that it is compulsory to remain in full time education or training until the age of 18. The percentage of employees in the 20-29 age range has decreased from 9.7% in 2018/19 to 8.8% in 2019/20. This is likely to be due to many of the posts at the council being experience based, as mentioned above.

## Recruitment

The report shows that in 2019/20 the council was successful in attracting a diverse range of external applicants in terms of most of the protected characteristics. The council was particularly successful in attracting applicants from the 30-39 age group, from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and applicants who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, when compared with the overall East Herts population.



At the shortlisting stage, the percentage of males and females being shortlisted for interview closely reflects the percentage of applicants and the male to female ratio at the council overall. Applicants from the 30-39 age group were slightly less successful than the other age groups and those in the 40-49 were slightly more successful. There are some concerns around the conversion of applicants from BAME groups from application to shortlisting (18.2% to 11.6%) although it is positive to note there is a very close alignment in the percentages of applicants from BAME groups moving from the shortlisting to the appointment stage because it is at this stage that the applicant's ethnic origin can be easily identified and there is therefore more opportunity for bias to occur. There is an action in the 20/21 action plan for all managers to undertake unconscious bias training.

At the interview stage, the percentage of females being appointed (52%) is broadly in line with the percentage who applied (58%) and the 7% of unknowns at the application stage might explain some of the increase in males applying (35%) to those being appointed (48%). The number of applicants from BAME groups being appointed has remained the same as last year at 5% compared to white applicants which has increased from 6% to 11%. Also at the interview stage in terms of age, applicants in the 40-49 age group were slightly less successful at interview compared to other groups.

## **Discipline & Grievance and Training**

Due to the small number of disciplinary and grievance cases (3 - from a workforce of 339) any analysis will be limited and not statistically significant. The 3 cases do not demonstrate any pattern in terms of specific protected characteristics.

We are satisfied that training and development is provided on a fair and equal basis across the council and allows all employees to take advantage of the opportunities.

## **Leavers**

The report found that there were no concerns with regard to leavers in terms of religion and belief, disability and sexual orientation.

There was however a disproportionate percentage of male leavers (39%) when compared to the percentage of male employees (28%). HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any gender related points. It is worth noting that the council in part has more female employees due to the flexible working arrangements offered and whilst this can also benefit men it does tend to mean

female employees stay longer whereas men in predominately full-time roles are more able to move on to similar full-time roles in various sectors.

There was a disproportionate percentage of leavers aged 40-49 (33.3%) when compared to the percentage of employees in this age group overall (19.8%) which is likely to be due to the size and structure of EHC meaning that staff may leave for promotional opportunities externally and this age group is likely to be more experienced meaning a promotion is more likely to be suitable.

There was a higher percentage of BAME leavers (18.2%) when compared to the percentage of BAME employees (7.1%). This is higher than 2018/19 where only 1.6% of leavers were from BAME groups and is not therefore indicating any trend but will be kept under review. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any concerns regarding ethnic origin. Of the 6 BAME leavers, all left the council voluntarily and two chose to leave because of personal reasons – one for family reasons and one regarding location of work.

## **Action plan**

All actions in the 19/20 action plan have either been progressed or rolled forward into the 20/21 action plan.

## Achievements against 2019/20 staff & employment equality action plan

Action	Progress
<b>Employee Profile</b>	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2019.	The Council's Gender Pay Gap report for 2019 was published in February 2020.
Develop guidance on supporting employees who are changing gender so that best practice is available to both staff and managers where required.	Some initial work has been produced to feed into the Equality and Diversity policy which is being updated by the Policy Officer in the Communications, Strategy and Policy service. This has been delayed due to the pandemic and the Officer's availability. Will be carried over into the 20/21 action plan and will be supported by the Equality Officer from HCC who is due to begin in November/December.
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have full rather than partial data, reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	The report is run with effect from 31 March. As the HR team were dealing with COVID-19 from February and the closing of the offices around this time it was not possible to prioritise to request staff check their data before 31/3/2020 but this will be actioned this year. A data refresh will be prompted in February 2021 and undertaken before the next report.
Review the exit questionnaire with the intention of including equalities based questions going forward.	The Trainee HR Officer has undertaken an initial broader review of exit questionnaire to improve the level of information collected, including views on equality/diversity that can be reflected in future reports. HR are seeking to implement the revised questionnaire being sent automatically from the HR system. This will be carried over into the 20/21 action plan with the new questionnaire being rolled out in November 2020.

Review the questions in the next staff survey to include a range of equalities questions and analyse these in future equalities reports as data becomes available.	The revised staff survey is due to go out to staff in December 2020. Following the success of the in-house Wellbeing Survey in terms of significantly higher response rate it may be also run in-house to support further analysis and follow up.
<b>Recruitment</b>	
Require managers to return all recruitment paperwork before an offer letter can be sent out to ensure HR have full shortlisting data to be able to report on	This was implemented in October 2019 and has improved the shortlisting data. However this is only a partial impact into this year and despite data now being consistently collected from shortlisting panels, a significant number of candidates are still choosing not to complete the equalities form or choosing 'Prefer not to say'. Communications are developing online forms and the application form will be developed into an online form during 20/21 which will improve completion of the currently separate equality monitoring form.
Review introducing 'name-blind' recruitment (where names are removed during the shortlisting process to avoid sex and ethnicity bias).	It has not been feasible to introduce name-blind recruitment with the current manual system that the HR team use for recruitment. A refund in relation to the Recruitment module of the main HR system (which has proven not to be suitable) has been achieved by the Head of HR and OD and an online recruitment system will be progressed in 20-21 that provides name blind applications. All managers/recruiters will also receive further unconscious bias training, please see the 20/21 action plan for more information.
Include a guidance document on bias when sending managers job applications.	This has been introduced and is sent out to managers with all job applications for each selection process. See Appendix A.
To develop links with Disability Advisors at the Jobcentre to make them aware of our vacancies.	Initial links have been developed and work is progressing.
<b>Performance</b>	
HR to continue to undertake spot checks on PDR documentation to ensure that they are of	This is an ongoing task, any quality concerns have been actioned but it should be noted that generally forms are in line with expectations especially in

good quality and provide sufficient evidence to justify the rating given.	relation to ratings being consistent with the content of the form and there have not been any concerns raised by staff to HR over ratings given.
<b>Disciplinaries and Grievance</b>	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinaries and grievances.	This data has been collected and is contained within this report.
<b>Training</b>	
Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory training programme.	Equality and Diversity E-Learning is required of new starters and all staff on an annual basis. The course was run as part of mandatory e-learning for staff and was also provided to Members. The course is currently being updated and developed for 20/21. All mandatory staff training must be signed off by line managers as part of the annual PDR process to ensure completion – a box is being added to PDR form to ensure this is easily identifiable.
Continue to ensure that managers are trained in the PDR process and that effective and appropriate personal development plans (PDPs) are put in place for all employees, including those rated as ‘exceeding expectations’ and above.	Managers are provided with guidance on the PDR process and HR Officers provide a briefing to new managers in the service areas they support. The OD and HR Co-ordinator reviews PDPs to inform the annual training plan.
Continue to develop Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues.	The council’s trained Mental Health First Aiders meet every two months to discuss any cases they have had (anonymised) to learn from each other’s experiences and to discuss best practice. A mental health first aid course and refresher is planned for 2021. In addition, 37 managers attended mental health training in March 2020 as part of the Management Development programme.

# Employee profile

## Introduction

This section provides information on employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2020. Casual employees, agency workers and contractors are not included. The total number of employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2020 was a headcount of 339. This has increased from 329 in the previous year.

The data has been analysed using 6 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Religion or Belief
- Disability status
- Sexual orientation

Although marital status data is recorded this is not reportable from the HR system.

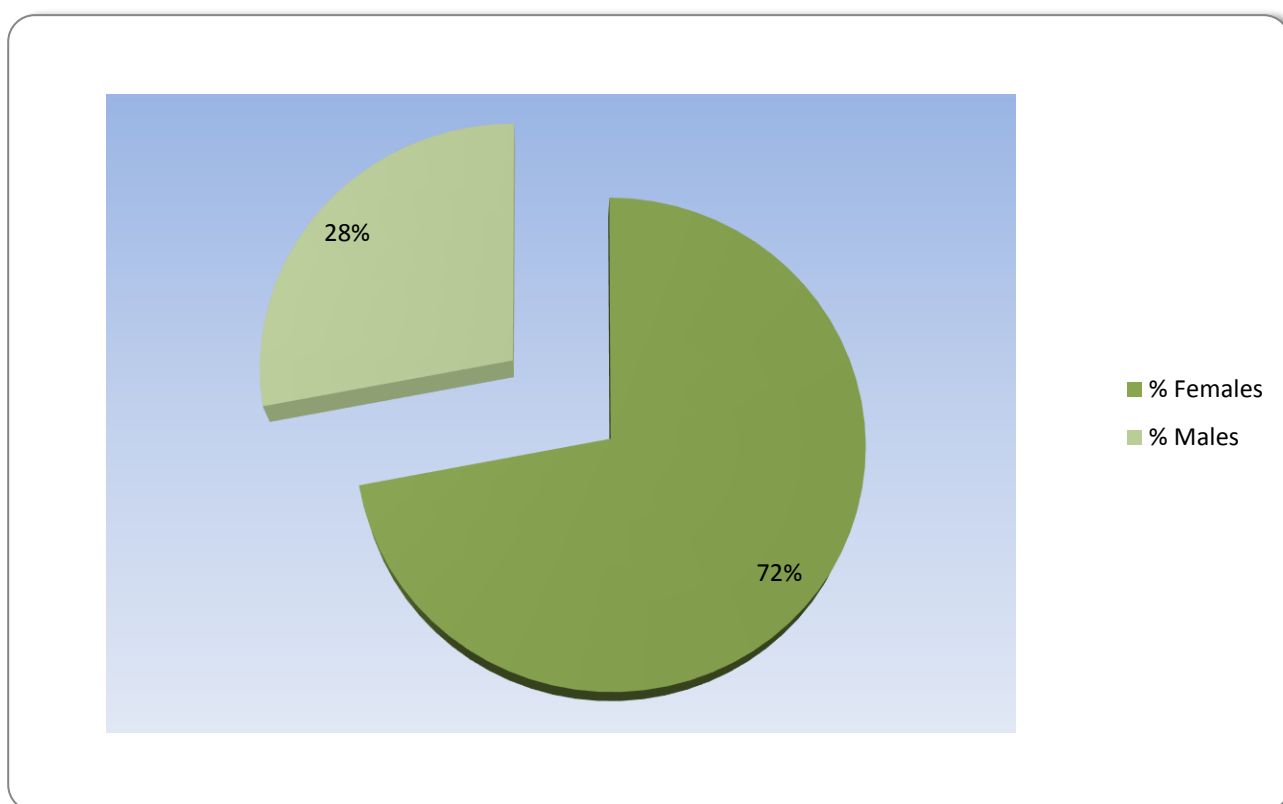
Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 2 employees took maternity leave in 2019/20 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

Although the HR system has capacity for employees to indicate if they are transgender the new starter forms do not request this and instead the council has focused on the current gender and not the past in line with our recruitment forms. It is worth noting there have never been any complaints in this area. The council does employ staff who have changed gender without any complaints being made and HR and the Equalities Officer are going to develop guidance on supporting employees who are changing gender so that best practice is available to both staff and managers where required.

Various comparison data has been used to understand how the employee profile of the council compares to the wider context in which it operates and to identify whether there are any areas of concern which the council needs to take action on.

Where possible, comparisons have been made at the most local level (i.e. with East Herts residents) and using the most recent data available. However where this data has been unavailable at this level, comparisons have been made with East of England residents. Most of the comparison data has been taken from either the Nomis or Office for National Statistics (ONS) websites. It is noted that the Census data is now almost 10 years out of date but we have been unable to source more up to date data for religious belief, ethnic origin and disability.

## Sex (Gender)



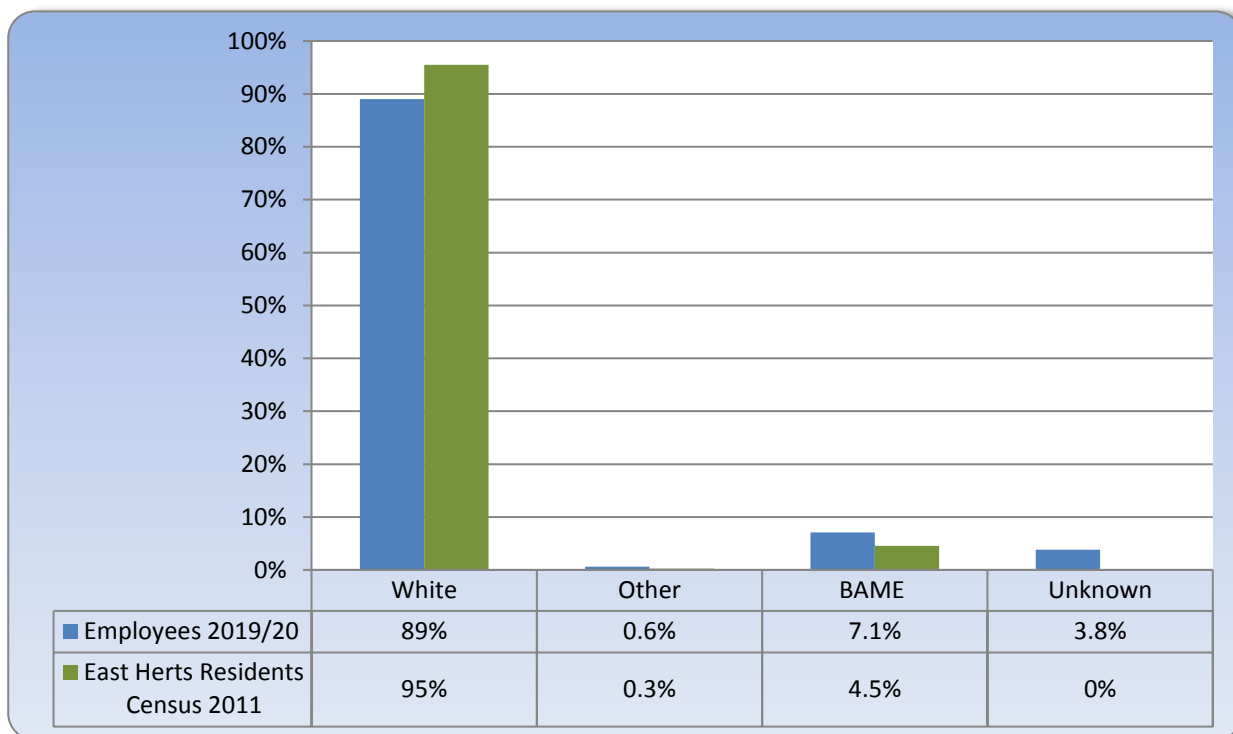
**Figure 1.0 Employee profile by sex**

Figure 1.0 shows the sex profile of employees at the council. The profile does not closely reflect that of the East Herts working population. The council has a considerably lower percentage of male employees (28%) compared to the overall male working population in East Herts (49%) (Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics (East Herts residents 2019)).

A high female to male workforce ratio is common in public sector with 68% being female and 32% being male (ONS: Public sector employment by gender (2015)). In addition, the council has contracted out many of the more traditionally male

dominated areas of work such as refuse, grounds maintenance and IT which has affected the male to female ratio further. The percentage of males working at the council has increased slightly by one percentage point from 2018/19 where 27% of employees were male, this figure was the same in 2017/18.

## Ethnic origin



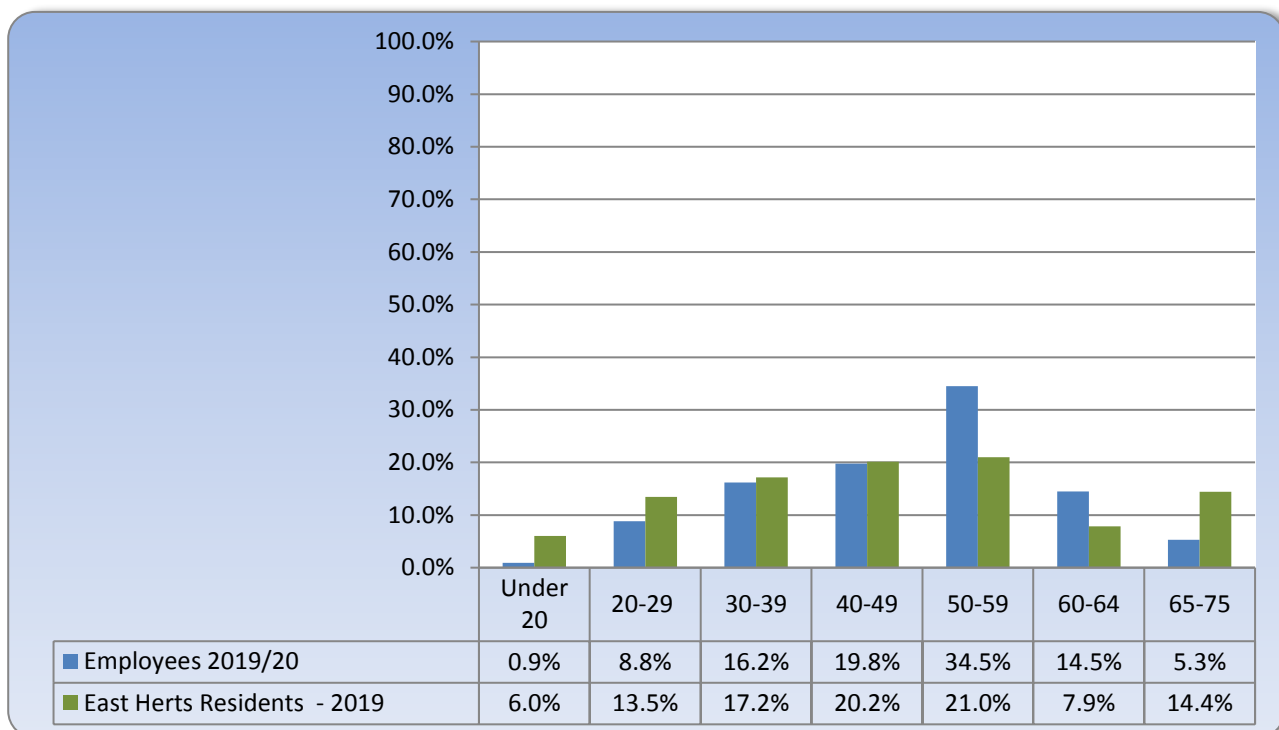
**Figure 2.0 Employee profile by ethnic origin**

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Ethnic Group by Measures

Figure 2.0 shows that the ethnic origin of employees is slightly above that of East Herts residents as at the Census in 2011. The EHC White origin compared to the census is 6 percentage points down, 3.8% of staff are unknown (EHC will seek to reduce unknowns by reminding all staff to review their details on the HR system). There is no more recent data available from ONS for East Herts, Hertfordshire or the East of England for comparison purposes. The census will be re-run in 2021. The total percentage of BAME employees has increased over the last 3 years (4.6% in 2017/18, 6.4% in 2018/19 and 7.1% in 2019/20) and is higher than the BAME residents in East Herts (4.5%). It is positive to see that the council is attracting and retaining a wider diversity of staff in terms of ethnicity.



## Age



**Figure 3.0 Employee profile by age**

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics – Population Estimates in East Herts (2019)

*Note: The percentages shown for East Herts residents are the percentage of 16-75 year olds, not the total population.*

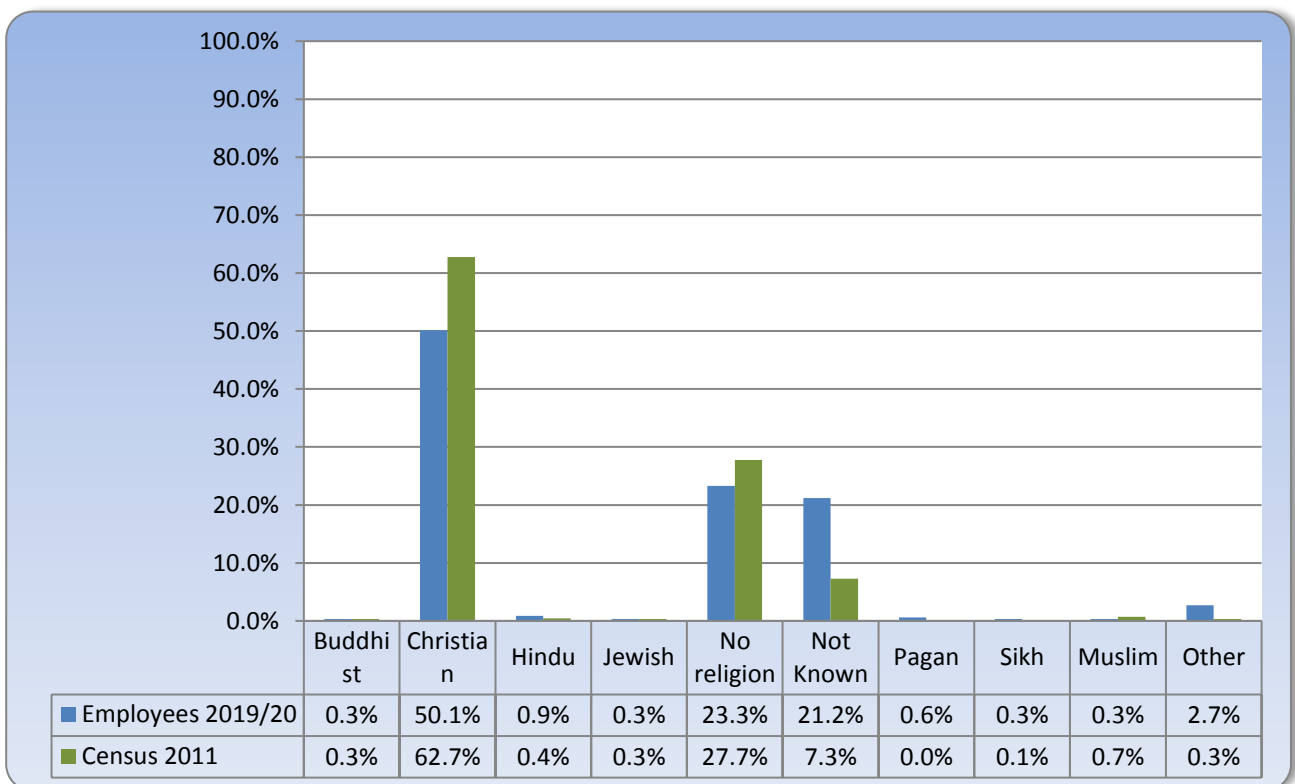
Figure 3.0 shows that the council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to East Herts residents. 49% of employees are in the 50-59 and 60-64 age groups compared to 28.9% of East Herts residents in these age groups. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. The council has introduced more apprenticeships and trainee posts (in recent years) which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers with appointment based on merit. The council also has a significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile.

The percentage of employees under the age of 20 is lower than East Herts residents in this age group (4.5%) however this is likely to be due to it being compulsory to remain in full time education or training until the age of 18. The percentage of employees in

the 20-29 age range has decreased from 9.7% in 2018/19 to 8.8% in 2019/20. This is likely to be due to many of the posts at the council being experience based, as mentioned above. The percentages in the other age groups have not substantially changed from 2018/19.

Although there are differences in the age profile of the workforce to that of the East Herts residents there are no significant concerns or evidence of discrimination or bias.

## Religion and Belief

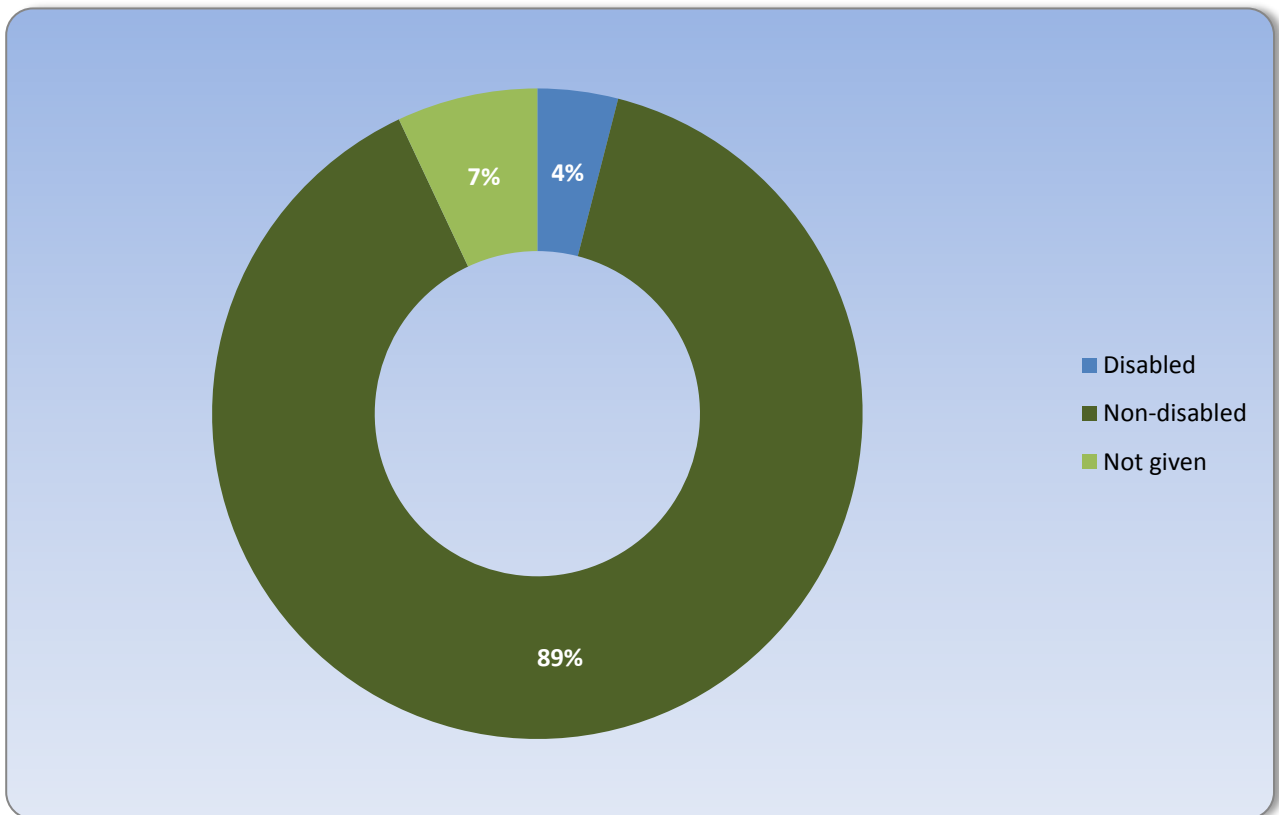


**Figure 4.0 Employee profile by religion and belief**

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Religion

Figure 4.0 shows that the religions and beliefs of employees are generally reflective of East Herts residents and therefore there are no suggested concerns in this area, although it should be noted that the census data is somewhat out of date. As is common with employment data on Religion (staff often do not wish to state) a significant amount of staff (21.2%) have not stated or have indicated they do not wish to. The percentages of staff under each religion remain very similar to the past two years.

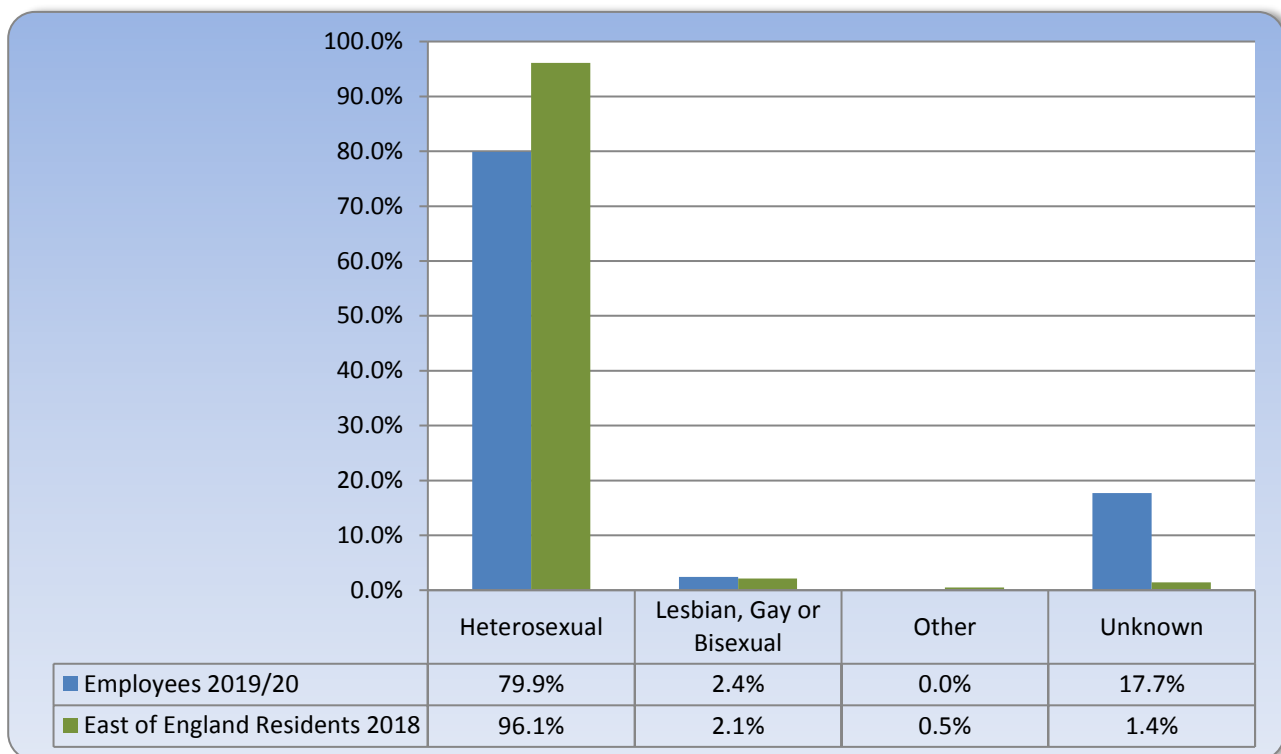
## Disability



**Figure 5.0 Employee profile by disability status**

Figure 5.0 shows that as at 31 March 2020, 4% of employees had a disability, which is the same as 2018/19 and 2017/18. This is slightly lower than East Herts residents with a disability (5%) (ONS Census 2011 - Long Term Health Problem or Disability). It is worth noting however that the 2011 Census data was household based (not individual) and in addition people with a long term health problem may be unfit to work.

## Sexual Orientation



**Figure 6.0 Employee profile by sexual orientation**

Source: ONS – Sexual Identity by Region (East of England) – 2018

Figure 6.0 shows that there are no indicated concerns with regard to the council’s employee profile in terms of sexual orientation when compared to much more recent 2018 data. The council has less heterosexuals in terms of percentage but has a higher unknown percentage which would mostly close the gap. There is close alignment with lesbian, gay and bisexual employees where EHC had a very slightly higher percentage of 2.4% compared to residents in the East of England in 2018 (2.1%). The percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees has increased this year; the figure was 1.7% and 1.8% in 2017/18 and 2018/19 respectively.

# Recruitment

## Introduction

This section provides information on external applicants who applied for jobs at the council between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. Data has been collected at the application, shortlist and appointment stages. There were 49 external recruitment campaigns between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. A total of 582 external applicants applied for jobs with the council.

Recruitment data has been analysed using 5 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Disability status
- Sexual orientation

The council's position is that Transgender people should be respected as part of the gender they have chosen and therefore does not monitor separately in terms of their past gender or transition they have undertaken.

In terms of pregnancy and marital status these are not asked for at the recruitment stage. Regarding pregnancy, individuals may not wish to disclose this and by asking the wrong message maybe given to potential candidates and this also applies to a lesser extent to marital status (this is also a protected characteristic that can change and again could cause concern for candidate if asked based on previous discrimination in the employment market to newly married women re potential pregnancy/maternity in the future).

Although data is collected for religion or belief, this has not been reported on due to the low number of applicants reporting a religion other than Christian or not stated (4% in total across all other religions).

Due to the small numbers in each of the individual BAME groups, they have been combined and include:

- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic – includes White & Black Caribbean, White & Black African, White and Asian, Other mixed.

- Asian/Asian British – includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian.
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – includes African, Caribbean, Other Black.
- Other – includes Arab, Any other ethnic group.

'White' includes English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other White.

(Definitions of Ethnic Groups taken from the 2011 Census)

The data has been collected from the Equalities Monitoring Forms which are part of the application form and are detached before sending to managers. For candidates that were appointed, their equalities data has been taken from their new starter forms to ensure we have a full data set for those who were appointed this has reduced 'other' in most areas but although this provides some distortion the importance of showing the known data has taken precedence.

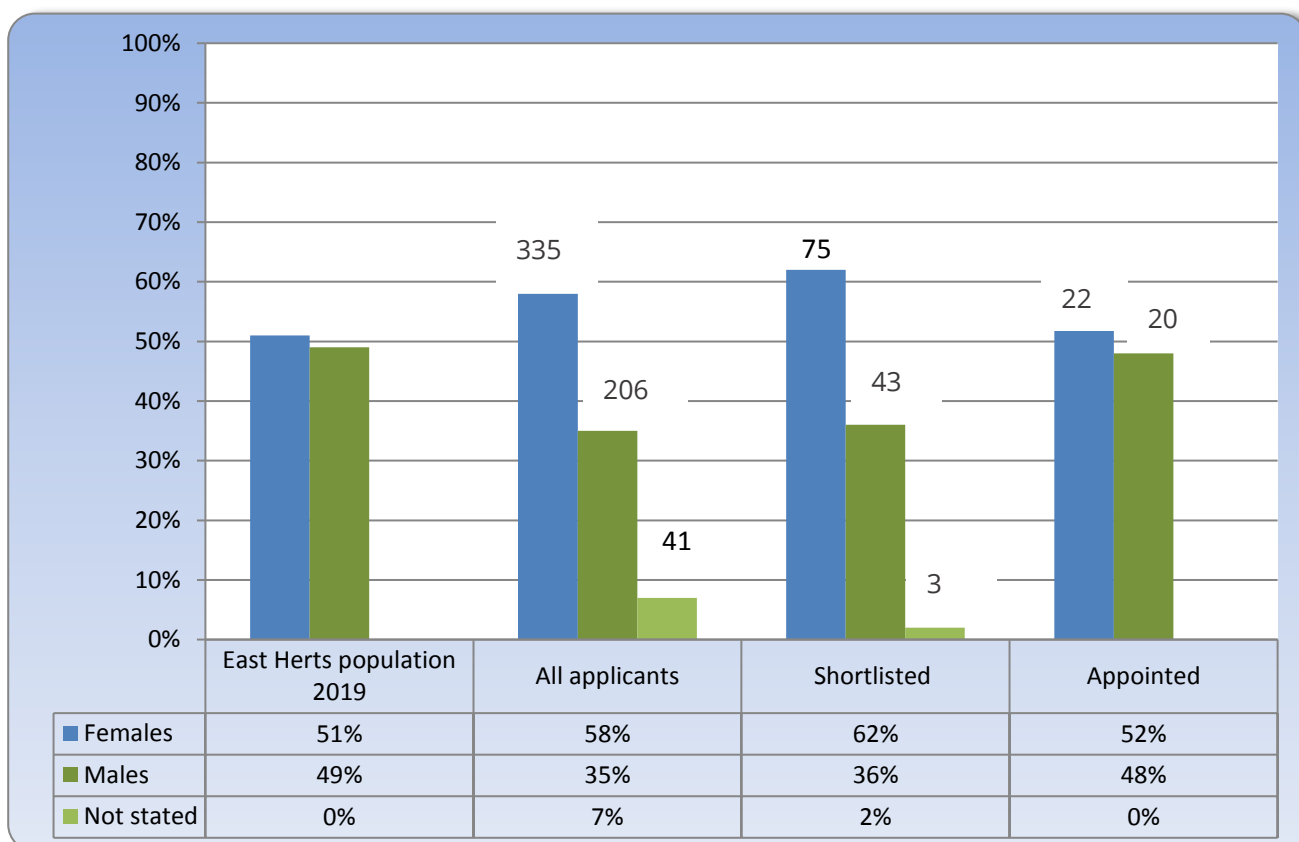
Comparisons have been drawn to the profile of the working population of East Herts to understand whether the council has been successful in attracting a diverse range of applicants that are reflective of the local population. Where possible, comparisons have been made at the most local level (i.e. with East Herts residents) and using the most recent data available. However where this data has been unavailable at this level, comparisons have been made with East of England residents. Most of the comparison data has been taken from either the Nomis or Office for National Statistics (ONS) websites. It is noted that the Census data is now almost 10 years out of date but we have been unable to source more up to date data for religious belief, ethnic origin and disability.

The equalities data of applicants reaching the shortlisting and appointment stages has been compared to the data of all applicants to understand whether certain groups are being disadvantaged and at what stage of the recruitment process. At the application stage applicants will drop out of the process where they do not meet the required criteria and at this stage in the process the recruiting manager does not have any equalities information regarding the applicants. Therefore it is particularly important to note the shortlisting to appointment data as it is at this point that there is more opportunity for bias to occur once the recruiting manager has met the applicants.

It should be noted that in October 2019 Leadership Team agreed to put in place a requirement for shortlisting and interview paperwork to be returned before a conditional job offer is made as we had large gaps in the equalities data at the shortlisting stage. As this was only implemented half way through the data period for this year (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020) there are still some data gaps at the

shortlisting stage and candidates do not always provide the data or choose not to state.

## Sex (Gender)



**Figure 7.0 Applicant profile by sex compared to the population of East Herts**

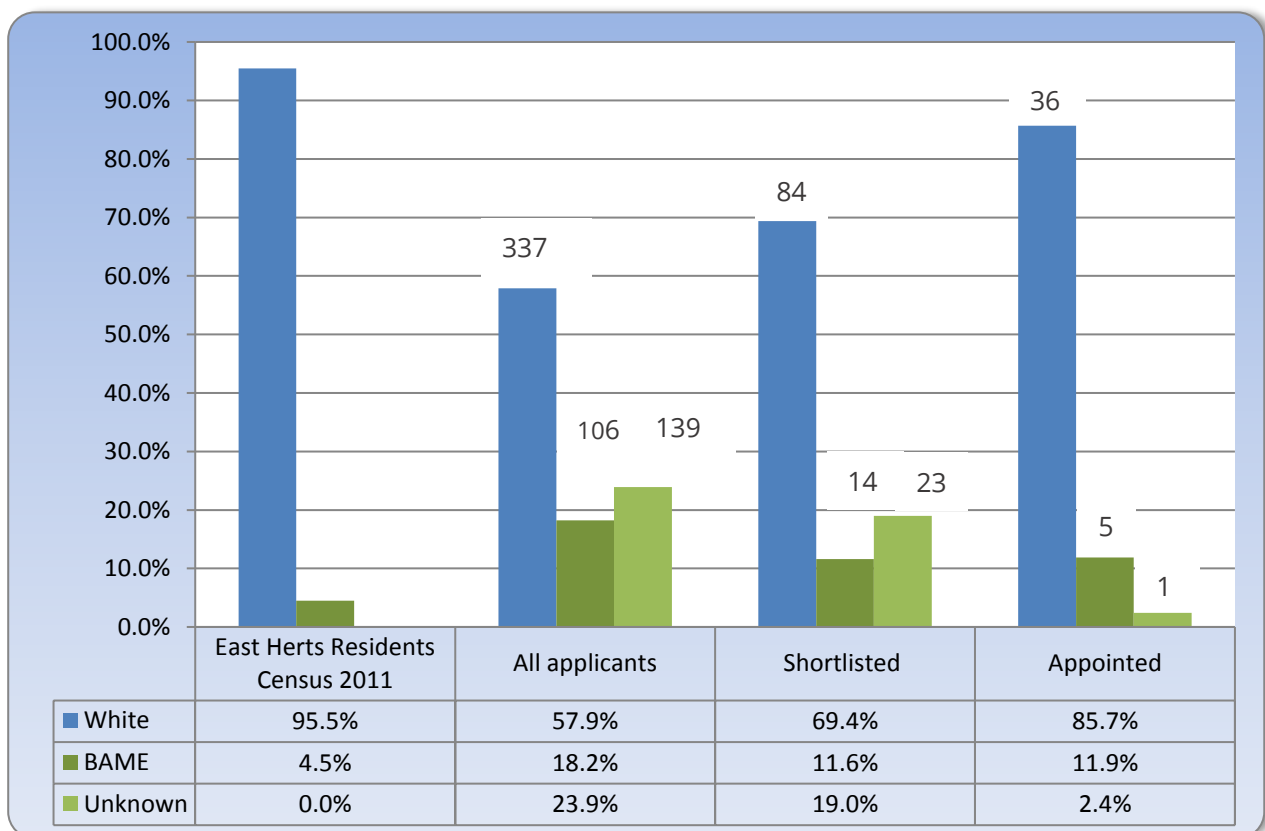
Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics (East Herts residents aged 16-64 (2019))

Figure 7.0 shows that in 2019/20 the council attracted a higher proportion of female applicants than male applicants: 58% (335) of applicants were female and 35% were (206) male compared to the profile of the working population of East Herts (51% and 49% respectively).

This is a change from 2018/19 where 65% of applicants were female and 34% were male so it appears that a better balance of male and female applications was achieved in 2019/20 although the number of unknowns increased from 1% to 7%. It is pleasing to note that the percentage of male applicants (34%) has remained higher than the male EHC profile of 28% and this continues at the shortlisting stage and in fact increases to 48% at the appointment stage.

Figure 7.0 also shows that of the 121 applicants shortlisted for interview, 75 (62%) were female and 43 (36%) were male, with 3 (2%) unknown. Figure 4.0 shows that of the 42 applicants appointed, 22 (52%) were female and 20 (48%) were male. The conversion from application to shortlist are closely aligned for both genders (male 35% to 36% & female 58% to 62% with variation in 'not stated') and does not therefore indicate any gender bias (or support the benefit of name blinding applications to further protect gender indications). There is an increase of 13 percentage points between the number of males being shortlisted to appointed and a reduction in 6 percentage points between the number of females being shortlisted to appointed. This may indicate some potential bias, however the change is based on 42 appointments where each individual will affect the appointment percentage by 3 percentage points. The percentage of females being appointed (52%) is broadly in line with the percentage who applied (58%) and the 7% of unknowns at the application stage might explain the increase in males applying (35%) to those being appointed (48%).

## Ethnic origin



**Figure 8.0 Applicant profile by ethnic origin compared to the population of East Herts**

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Ethnic Group by Measures



Figure 8.0 shows that in 2019/20 the council attracted applicants from a diverse range of ethnic origins reflective of those of East Herts residents; 106 applicants (18.2%) were from BAME groups which is significantly higher than the percentage of East Herts residents in these groups (4.5%). However the figure is slightly lower than 2018/19 where 22.9% applicants were from BAME groups. There have been no changes in where we have advertised our jobs that could have caused this. The total percentage of BAME employees at the council has increased by a third since 2017/18 from 4.6% to 7.1% in 2019/20/ over the last 3 years.

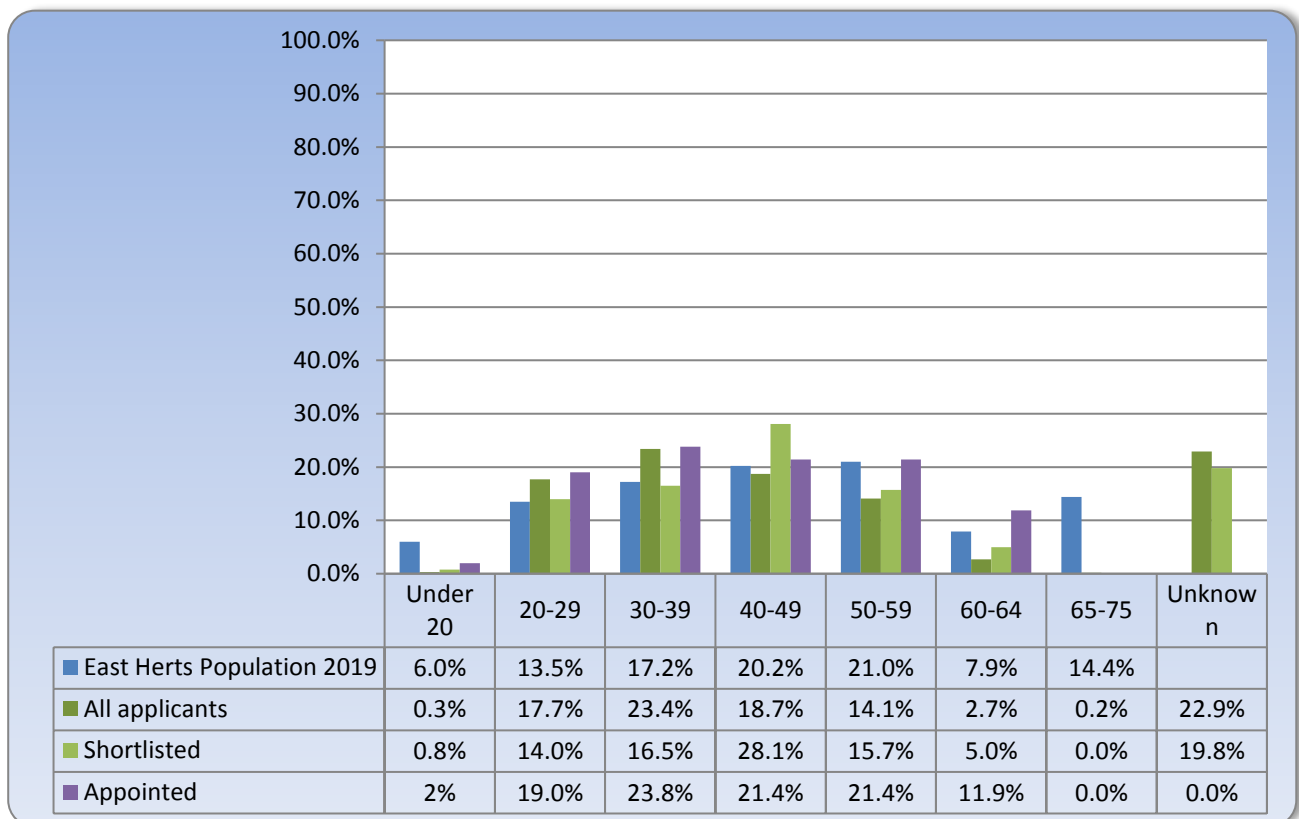
There is a consistency in the percentages of applicants in the different ethnic groups at the application, shortlist and appointment stage. It is particularly pleasing to see that there is a very close alignment in the percentages of applicants from BAME groups moving from the shortlisting to the appointment stage because it is at this stage that the applicant's ethnic origin can be identified and there is more opportunity for bias to occur.

There is however an increase in the percentage of white applicants from application (57.9%) to shortlisting (69.4%) but this may be in part due to the number of Unknowns reducing at this stage. The increase for white percentage also sees a decrease for BAME applications shortlisted (6.5 point reduction), this indicates some potential bias but it should also be noted that there is very close alignment at shortlist to appointment where the opportunity for bias is more available. As reported, equality data is removed from applications, names are currently shared as the HR system cannot 'blind' these but no bias is suggested to gender from names being shared as outlined above. Managers are trained in equality and avoiding bias so there are sufficient measures in place (but this will be strengthened and remain an area of focus). There is a noticeable increase in the percentage of white applications from application (57.9%) to appointment (85.7%) but at this stage there is only 2.4% of Unknowns compared to 23.9% at application stage. The action plan below will include unconscious bias training for all managers.

In terms of progression within ethnic groups, of the 106 applicants from BAME groups, 14 (13%) were shortlisted for interview and of the 337 white applicants, 84 (25%) were shortlisted for interview. In 2018/19 11% of BAME were shortlisted for interview and 15% of white applicants were shortlisted for interview. So while there is an increase in both ethnic groups being shortlisted it is positive that the percentage of BAME applicants being shortlisted has increased this year. However with much smaller numbers of applicants from BAME groups, one individual can make a difference to the percentages. Of the 106 applicants from BAME groups, 5 (5%) were appointed compared to 36 of the 337 white applicants (11%). This gap between these

percentages has increased from 2018/19 where 5% of BAME applicants were appointed compared to 6% white applicants. However there were more Unknowns at the appointment stage in 2018/19 (25.5%) as this year we have populated any Unknowns at appointment stage from the new starter forms so although this looks like a worse picture than last year in reality it is likely that the Unknowns at the appointment stage were White as the percentage of BAME applicants being appointed has remained consistent at 5%. It is disappointing that the ratio of BAME applications to appointment drops however it should be noted that East Herts has not had challenge from a candidate suggesting any bias or discrimination over a shortlisting decision. The shortlisting process involves a panel scoring candidates against the job person specification criteria and these forms are collected by HR to evidence the merit based scoring undertaken. As covered above, all managers will receive unconscious bias training in 2020/21.

## Age



**Figure 9.0 Applicant profile by age compared to the working population of East Herts**

Source: Nomis Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2019).

*Note: The percentages shown for East Herts residents are the percentage of 16-75 year olds, not the total population. Numbers could not be added to this chart due to the size of the columns.*

Figure 9.0 shows that the council attracted applicants from a wide range of age groups broadly reflective of those of East Herts residents.

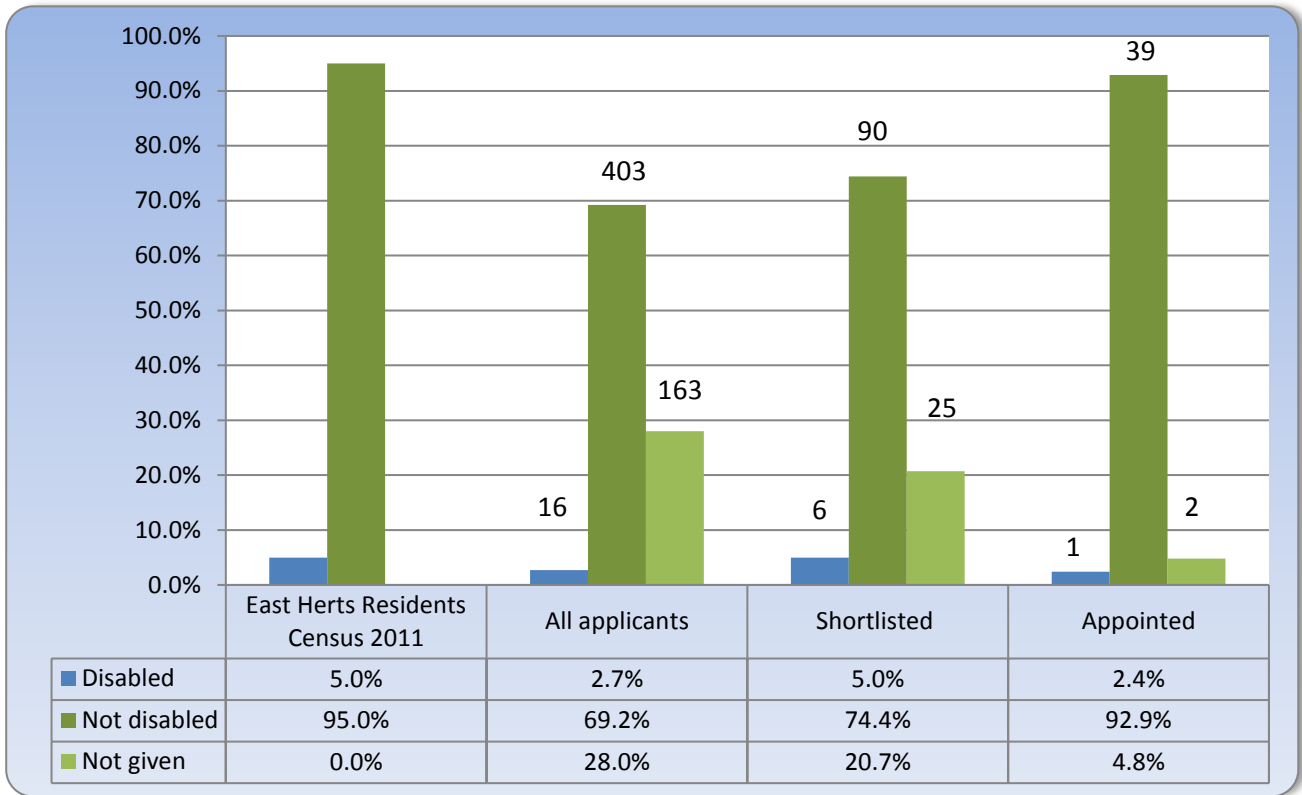
The percentage of applicants in both the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups are higher than that of East Herts residents in those age groups and then for all other age groups the percentage of applicants is lower than the percentages of East Herts residents in these age groups. In the older age groups this is likely to be due to people taking retirement.

The percentage of applicants under the age of 20 is particularly low (0.3%) compared to East Herts residents in that age group (6%), however this is likely to be due to it being compulsory to remain in full time education or training up to the age of 18.

There is some variation in the percentages of applicants at the various age groups and the percentage of those shortlisted. For the Under 20, 20-29, 50-59, 60-64 and 65-75 the percentages of those applying to those shortlisted are closely aligned. For the 30-39 group the percentage of applicants (23.4%) drops to 16.5% at shortlisting. For the 40-49 group the percentage of applicants increases from 18.7% to 28.1% at shortlisting stage.

From the shortlisting to appointment stage the percentages increased for all of the age groups apart from the 40-49 age group which decreased from 28.1% to 21.4%. The increases in all of the other age groups is due to the number of Unknowns reducing to 0% as this year we have populated any Unknowns at appointment stage from the new starter forms. Despite the slight variation at the different stages there are no obvious areas for concern.

## Disability status



**Figure 10.0 Applicant profile by disability compared to the working population of East Herts (Disability status)**

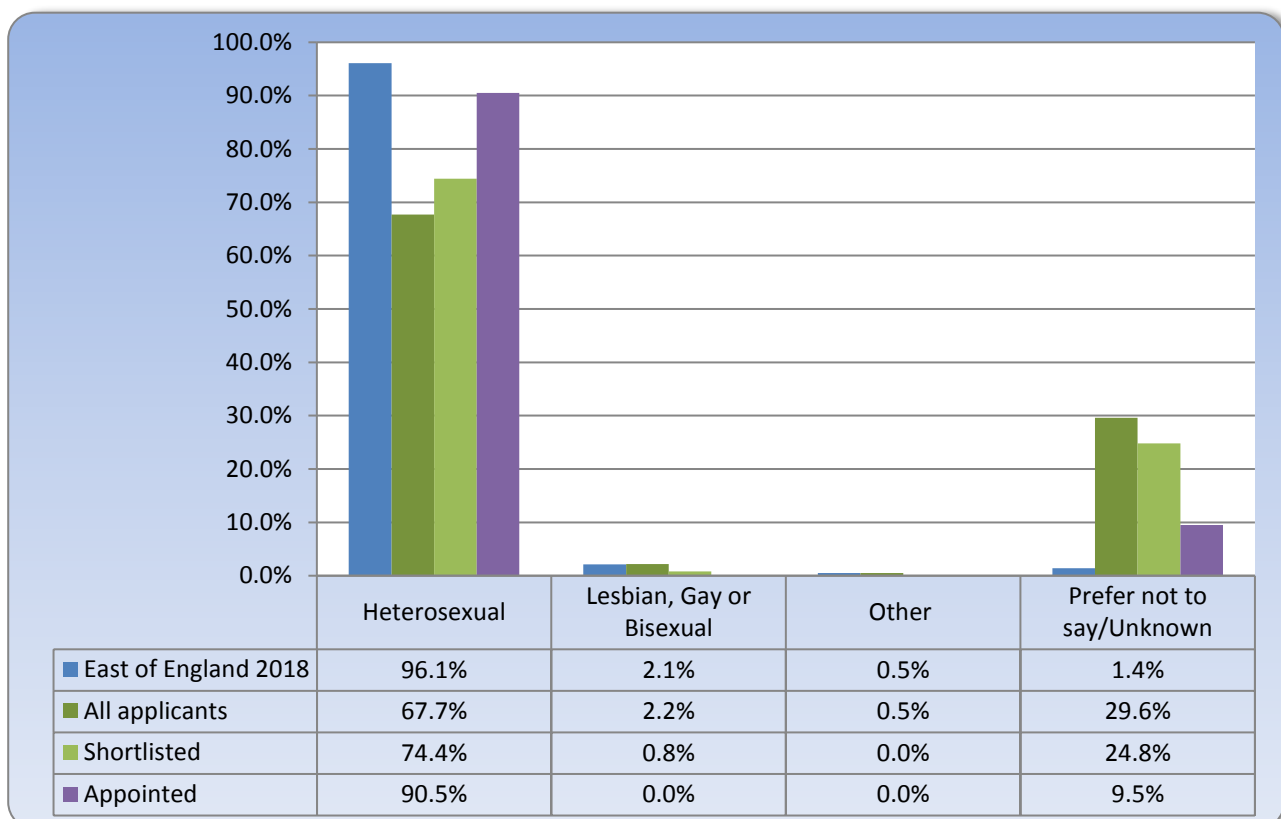
Source: ONS Census 2011 - Long Term Health Problem or Disability

Figure 10.0 shows that 2.7% of applicants had a disability in 2019/20 which is lower than East Herts residents with a disability (5%) but is a slight increase from the 2018/19 of 2.4%. It is also worth noting the figure for East Herts residents includes those with a long term health problem which may mean they are unfit to work and is based on households rather than individuals. In addition, the disability status of over a quarter of those at the shortlisting and appointment stage was unknown.

The council would like to attract more applications from disabled people. An emerging move towards more agile working practices for relevant jobs may help to attract more disabled people, as well as the links created with job centre plus disability advisors. The council guarantees that disabled applicants under the Disability Confident Scheme will be invited for an interview if they meet the minimum essential criteria for the role (the Symbol is displayed on our recruitment messages and our website to help attract disabled candidates). In 2019/20, there were 16 applicants (2.7%) who stated that they have a disability. Of these, 6 met the essential criteria and were shortlisted for interview and 1 was appointed. This is positive, particularly at the

shortlisting stage, when compared to 2018/19 where out of 16 applicants only 1 met the essential criteria and was shortlisted for interview but they were not appointed.

## Sexual orientation



**Figure 11.0 Applicant profile by sexual orientation compared to the East of England**

Source: ONS – Sexual Identity by Region (East of England) – 2018.

Note: Numbers could not be added to this chart due to the size of the columns.

Figure 11.0 shows that 2.2% of applicants in 2019/20 were lesbian, gay or bisexual, This is slightly higher than the percentage for the East of England population (2.1%). Unfortunately this reduces to 0.8% (1 applicant) at shortlisting stage and 0% at appointment stage. However with much smaller numbers of lesbian, gay or bisexual applicants (only 13 in total), this reduction is not statistically significant or reliable.

The figure of applicants in 2019/20 who were lesbian, gay or bisexual has dropped slightly from 2.9% in 2018/19. In 2018/19 there was a better consistency between the percentages at the application, shortlist and appointment stages than this year but as stated above due to the very small numbers one applicant will have a big impact on percentages. In 2018/19 there were 19 applicants who were lesbian, gay or bisexual, 2 of those were shortlisted and 1 was appointed so the numbers are not very different but the percentages are impacted more significantly when the numbers are small.

## **Disciplinary and Grievance**

**(Grievance includes Bullying & Harassment complaints)**

There was 1 formal disciplinary case and 2 grievances in 2019/20, compared to 4 formal disciplinary cases and 5 formal grievances in 2018/19. Full details of protected characteristics are not provided due to the sensitivity of the data and the small number of cases. However it is possible to state that 2 of the employees were white and 1 was black, 1 was female and 2 were male, and no employees stated they had a disability. Neither of the formal grievances were upheld and no appeals were raised. It is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions but there is nothing to suggest that there is any bias or cause for concern.

## **Training**

The 2019/20 Learning and Development Programme offered a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate, service and individual needs. Development needs were identified both corporately and through individual PDRs. Development opportunities were delivered by facilitated events, workshops, job shadowing, mentoring, coaching, webinars and e-learning. All employees are trained in equality and diversity as part of the mandatory training programme.

Corporate training courses are advertised to all staff via an email bulletin. Access to the courses is subject to manager approval and places are offered on a first come first served basis. Requests for funded professional and vocational training are approved by Leadership Team. No requests for professional or vocational training were refused in 2019/20.

We are satisfied that training and development is provided on a fair and equal basis across the council and allows all employees to take advantage of the opportunities.

# Leavers

## Introduction

This section provides information on employees who have left the council (both voluntarily and involuntarily) between the period 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. The figures exclude casual employees who have left the council and those who are on a career break.

The total number of leavers during the period is 33. Of these, 30 left voluntarily and 3 left involuntarily. The involuntary leavers include those temporary contract had come to an end or dismissal e.g. as a result of compulsory redundancy or misconduct. Please refer to the Annual Turnover Report for 2019/20 (Human Resources Committee August 2020) for full details in terms of reasons for leaving, leavers by length of service, leavers by service area etc. This section looks at leavers in terms of equalities and protected characteristics but does not going in the same details as the Turnover Report.

Leaver data has been analysed using 5 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Religion or Belief
- Disability

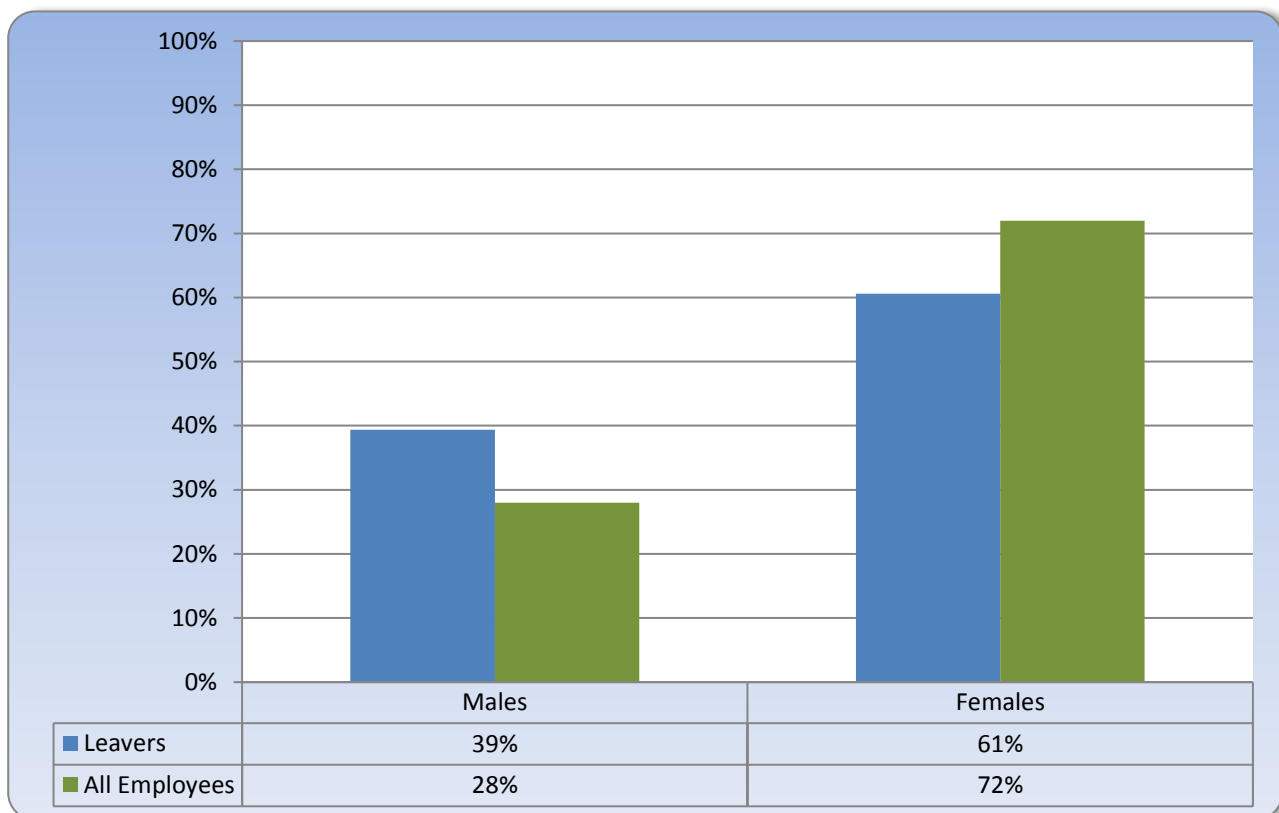
Sexual orientation was not provided due to the small numbers of employees in some categories which may identify individuals. There are no concerns in this area.

Although marital status data is recorded this is not currently reportable from the system.

Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 1 employee took maternity leave in 2019/20 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

Although the HR system has capacity for employees to indicate if they are transgender the new starter forms do not request this and instead the council has focused on the current gender and not the past.

## Sex (Gender)



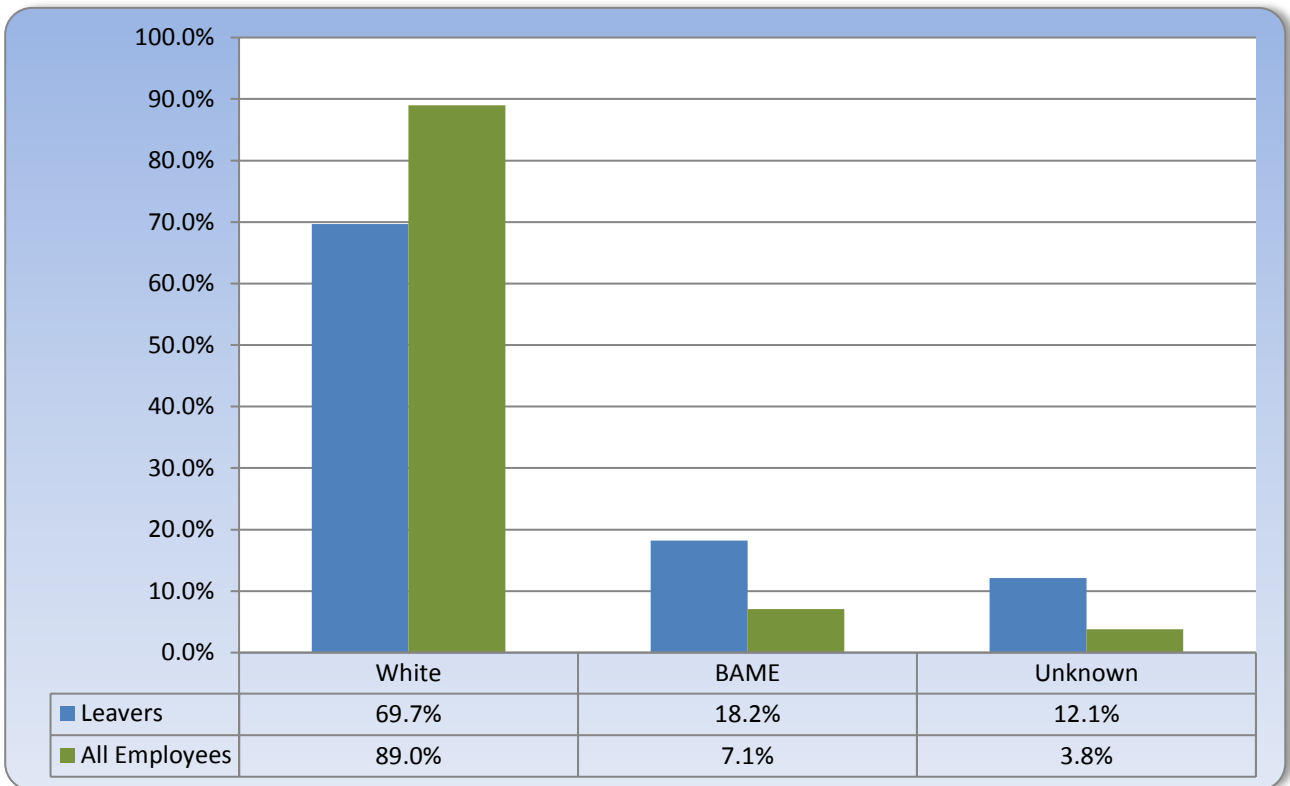
**Figure 12.0 Leavers by sex**

Figure 12.0 shows that there was a higher percentage of male leavers when compared to the percentage of male employees; 39% of leavers were male and 61% were female which is not reflective of the current employee profile (28% and 72% respectively). The percentage of male leavers has increased slightly since 2018/19, where 36% of leavers were male.

HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any gender related points, however it is also worth noting that the council in part has more female employees due to the flexible working arrangements offered and whilst this can also benefit men it does tend to mean female employees stay longer whereas men in predominately full-time roles are more able to move on to similar full-time roles in various sectors.



## Ethnic Origin

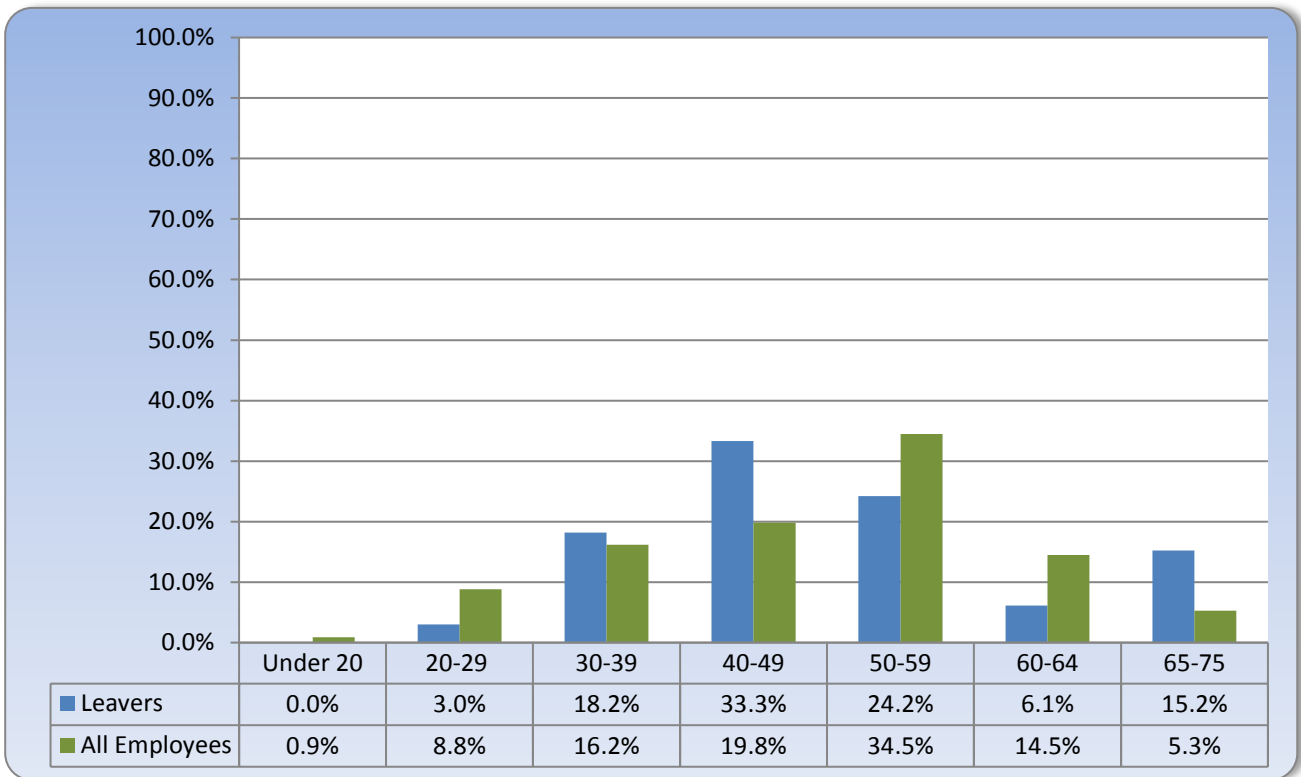


**Figure 13.0 Leavers by ethnic origin**

Figure 13.0 shows that there was a higher percentage of BAME leavers when compared to the percentage of BAME employees; 18.2% of leavers were from BAME groups and 69.7% were white which is not reflective of the employee profile (7.1 and 89% respectively). This is higher than 2018/19 where only 1.6% of leavers were from BAME groups and is not therefore indicating any trend but will be kept under review. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any concerns regarding ethnic origin. Of the 6 BAME leavers, all left the council voluntarily and two chose to leave because of personal reasons – one for family reasons and one regarding location of work.

In addition due to the small numbers involved in terms of one leaver representing 3 percentage points and the number of BAME leavers was 6 out of 33 leavers in total the figures are not statistically significant as three leavers would represent 9.1% and there is also a high number of Unknowns.

# Age

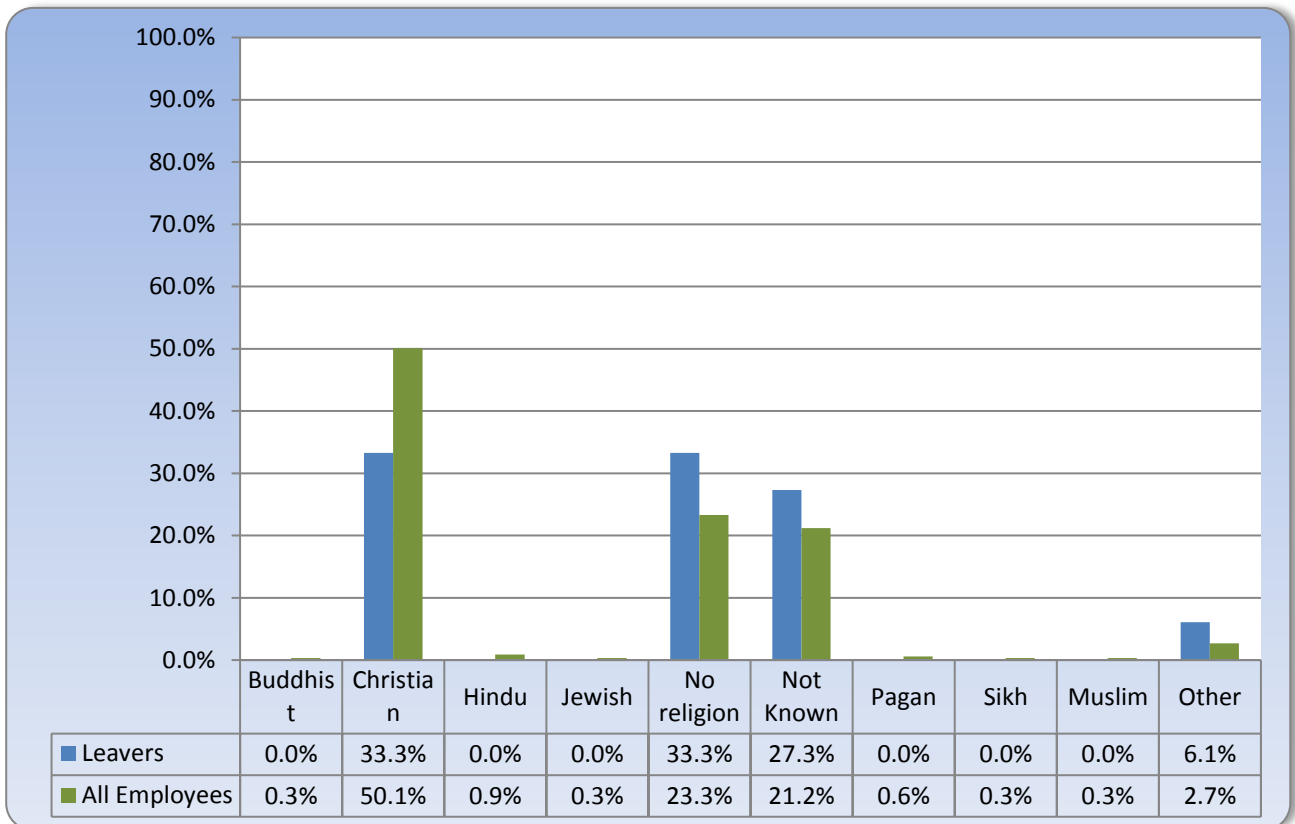


**Figure 14.0 Leavers by age**

Figure 14.0 shows that there was three times the percentage of leavers in the 65-75 age group than employees in this age range but this is due to employees in this age group taking retirement.

The percentage of leavers in the 40-49 age group (33.3%) was higher than the percentage of employees in this age range (19.8%). There is no obvious reason for this although it is most likely to be for career progression and due to the small teams at the council employees may have to seek this progression outside of the council. This is an area the council continually tries to address but is ultimately limited by the overall size and structure.

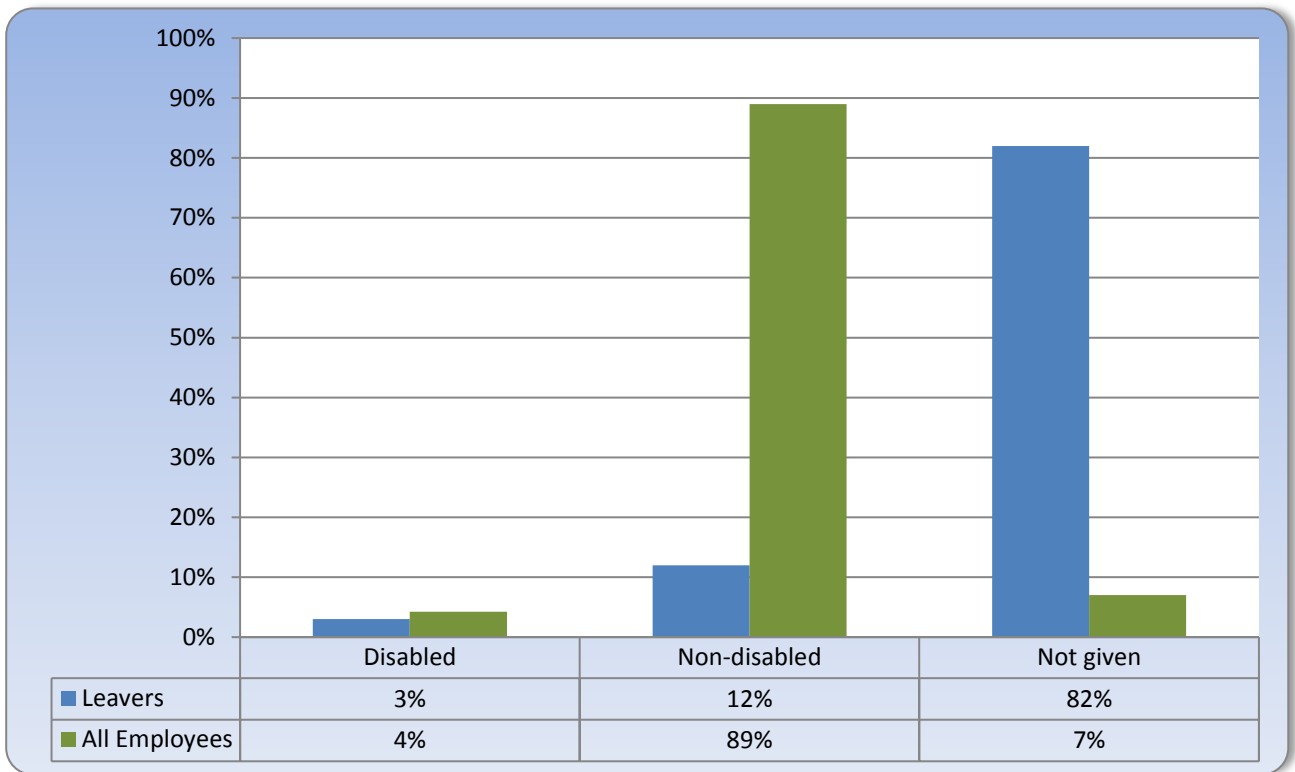
## Religion or Belief



**Figure 15.0 Leavers by religion**

There are no concerns in this area, the religious belief of leavers in 2019/20 were generally reflective of the overall employee profile given the small numbers involved.

## Disability



**Figure 16.0 Leavers by disability**

Figure 16.0 shows the percentage of leavers with a disability (3%) was slightly lower than the percentage of employees with a disability (4%). Therefore there are no indicated concerns in this area, however 82% of leavers are unknown. . Employees' disability status can change during the course of their employment and HR will be encouraging all employees to check and update their equalities details as necessary. This will be prompted in February 2021 for data to be up to date for 31 March 2021.

# Staff and Employment Equality Action plan 1 July 20 – 30 June 21

The actions listed below refer to staff and employment only. The Council’s Equalities Officer will be responsible for generating a general equalities action plan.

Action	Timescale
<b>Employee Profile</b>	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2020.	Published by March 2021
Develop guidance on supporting employees who are changing gender so that best practice is available to both staff and managers where required. This will be supported by the HCC Equalities Officer.	January 2021
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have fuller rather than partial data (especially religion, sexual orientation and disability) reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	February 2021
Review the exit questionnaire with the intention of including equalities based questions going forward.	Initial review undertaken to include question on equalities at EHC as well as seeking more feedback on other areas, will be implemented in November 2020.
Review the questions in the next staff survey to include a range of equalities questions and analyse these in future equalities reports as data becomes available.	The revised staff survey is due to go out to staff in December 2020. Following the success of the in-house Wellbeing Survey in terms of significantly higher completion it may be also run in-house to support further analysis and follow up.

<b>Recruitment</b>	
Continue to require managers to return all recruitment paperwork before an offer letter can be sent out to ensure HR have full shortlisting data to be able to report on	Ongoing. Implemented November 2019.
Investigate whether a link can be added to the new Application form that takes candidates straight to the Equalities Monitoring Form. If this is not possible look at setting up an auto reply on the HR inbox reminding candidates to submit their Equalities Monitoring Form if they have not already done so.  HR will ensure that new recruitment (ATS) system spec will include an online form that can automate the separation of the equalities form to increase completion rates as well	November 2020  In line with implementation – system, will be implemented by HR during 20-21 and therefore this will be completed no later than June 2021
Arrange for all recruiting staff to complete further mandatory unconscious bias training, this will be a joint task for the OD&HR Co-ordinator and the new Equalities Officer and will build upon the guidance already provided and the elements already covered by the current recruitment training. EHC will either source a suitable provider or develop a suitable in-house course which will be made mandatory for recruiters.	January 2021
Each interview panel chair to give consideration to the diversity of the interview panel and where possible try to ensure the panel is as diverse. Where this is not possible try to ensure that other elements of the panel show staff diversity, for example 'meet the team' sessions to demonstrate the diversity at East Herts and to appear as welcoming as possible to applicants of all backgrounds.	Ongoing
Continue to develop links with Disability Advisors at the Jobcentre to make them aware of our vacancies. Promote agile working practices where relevant.	Ongoing

Work with Communications to build a set of varied staff case studies that demonstrate diversity in our workforce and use them as part of our recruitment literature	June 2021
HR have secured a refund for the recruitment module of the main HR system and will invest this money into an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that will include an electronic application form and enable name blind recruitment.	By June 2021
<b>Discipline and Grievance</b>	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinaries and grievances. Extend this to include formal probationary cases.	Ongoing
<b>Training</b>	
Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory e-learning training programme. Offer further equalities based training as identified by annual training needs analysis undertaken by the OD and HR Co-ordinator.	Ongoing
Continue to ensure that managers are briefed in the PDR process and that effective and appropriate personal development plans are put in place for all employees, including those rated as 'exceeding expectations' and above.	Ongoing
Continue to develop both wellbeing programmes/guidance and maintain sufficient Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues.	Ongoing

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# Avoiding Unconscious Bias in the Recruitment Process

## What is unconscious bias?

An unconscious bias is when our background, personal experiences and social stereotypes influence the decisions we make. These elements influence automatically and without us being aware of it, because they are often so ingrained in culture and sub-conscious.

The recruitment process is one area where we must become more conscious about how under-pinning beliefs can impact on the decisions we make as unconscious bias can run through every element of the process. It is also important not to make assumptions about a candidate and instead we need to look for the evidence or explore assumptions so that they can be established or not, e.g. rather than assuming an absence of a grade on a qualification means the candidate did not complete or pass we should ask.

It is important to treat people as individuals, and avoid making assumptions about anyone on the basis of broad categorisations or in some cases prejudices. Don't make assumptions which can be influenced by unconscious bias – ask the candidate and discuss with the rest of panel to avoid unconscious bias influencing you to make unfounded assumptions. We recruit in panels to make decisions considered, merit based and to avoid individual assumptions or bias influencing.

### Shortlisting

- ✓ **Make decisions based on the quality of the candidate's experience, not the amount of time they have spent doing this.**
- ✓ **Measure each person against the person specification**
- ✗ **Don't build stories about candidates or making assumptions about why they have made job changes/career decisions or make decisions based on your belief of what is in the candidate's best interest**

For example:

- The candidate is 'overqualified'. They may have more qualifications and

experience than this role demands, but this does not mean that they are not the best person for the role

- The candidate has worked previously at a more senior level – does this matter, if they are motivated and capable of carrying out this role?
- The candidate lives a distance from where the job is based. You may not want to commute, but the candidate may be quite happy with the journey or indeed planning to relocate.



**Don't use dates to work out a candidate's age because this is irrelevant**



**Don't typify a candidate from their application form**



**Don't compare candidates to each other**

## Interviewing and Testing

### First impressions

First impressions can be powerful and can influence the way we interpret a candidate's performance during an interview. If you have a strong first impression it is important that you are aware of this and do not let it influence the next impressions or answers given.



**Set first impressions aside to concentrate on interview/selection performance. It is important to update your first impression on the whole process rather than letting this dictate the whole process.**

### Gut Feel

Gut instinct is natural but can be fatally flawed as these feelings are based on an internal view of how a person 'sits' measured against our own unconscious belief systems. It is pointless to tell you not to have gut feelings, as you often will.



**Do be aware of your instincts, but,**



**don't let these influence the way you ask questions and interpret the answers**



**After the interview, share any gut feel you had with your panel members; it may well be that your colleagues are able to provide evidential reasons which**

**explain your internal reaction.**

### **Confirmation Bias**

Because of strong first impressions or gut feel, an interviewer may be inclined to steer the conversation into a certain direction in a subconscious desire to confirm their own bias or assumptions or first impressions. This is known as **confirmation bias** and can result in either the '**halo**' effect – which is a positive affirmative bias – where everything the candidate says is funnelled through a positive filter; or the '**horns**' effect where the candidate's answers are interpreted negatively.

Research suggests that in job interviews, people are often inclined to judge someone more positively when the candidate reminds the interviewer of themselves, known as **Similar to Me bias**. Not only does this create unconscious bias, but this flawed type of recruitment can result in a team of people who are very similar to each other and lack diversity in personality, experiences, behaviours and skills.

### **Testing**

Testing should be carried out based on the business needs of the role, testing will strengthen the validity of the recruitment decision and tends to be less subjective and therefore provide less opportunity for bias to creep in.

- ✓ **Test for the level of skill required and model outcomes so that you know before you administer the assessment what a good result looks like.**
- ✓ **Use English tests with care, ensuring that they represent the level of language required for the candidate to be effective in the role.**
- ✓ **Remember to ask HR for advice about 'reasonable adjustment' for tests and interview processes for a candidate who has declared a disability.**

### **Decision-Making**

- ✓ **Base your recruitment decisions based on the candidate's suitability to carry out the role, measured against the person specification you are recruiting against, and evidencing this against the whole selection process and not just one aspect like the interview.**
- ✗ **Avoid introducing any new or spurious criteria which is irrelevant and based on personal bias or prejudice.**

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## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 5 November 2020

**Report by:** Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

**Report title:** Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

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### Summary

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOR (Human Resources Committee):**

##### **(a) To note the Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report**

#### **1.0 Proposal**

1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on during Quarter 2 2020/21 (July 2020 to September 2020).

#### **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 received the NJC Pay Award for 2020/21 applicable from 1 April 2020 notification on 24 August 2020 detailing new rates of pay. The Head of HR and OD ensured that staff were aware of the award through internal communications and that it would be processed in September payroll.

- 2.3 The Pay Award required an extensive payroll process including updating all scale points with the new rates of pay plus all elements linked to these rates being updated. The Payroll team were then required to calculate the back pay required for the previous 5 months (April to August) which currently relies on manual calculations and input followed by an independent check.
- 2.4 Payroll worked hard to ensure that the award was processed in full in the September payroll and staff received both their new salary and any backdated salary in the 15<sup>th</sup> of September pay run. This was followed by overtime arrears/backpay being processed in 15th October pay run due to different calculation process required and need to focus on the main award.
- 2.5 The Head of HR and OD would like to highlight this achievement as one to be congratulated as not only did the team manage to get this into system for the 15th of September pay run (i.e. within 2 weeks of receiving the notification that the award had been agreed) but no queries have been received from staff over the revised payments and back pay.
- 2.6 Payroll have also during the period completed a key improvement by updating costing codes on payroll system as required by Finance following changes to codes on general ledger system. The payroll system interfaces all relevant costs from all on the payroll including pay and deductions which are balanced on a monthly basis and is an annual audit check so this will mean that Finance will be able to take the information straight in and will not need to re-code.
- 2.7 Payroll have continued to manage furlough payments and supporting the furlough payment reclaims during the period. The Furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) come to an end at the end of October and has reduced to a 70% reclaim for September and a 60% reclaim for October in addition to no claims for NI and Pension, Furloughed staff have continued to be paid at 80% with EHC making up the shortfall and some staff

have been flexed back into work (as allowed by the flexible scheme) on occasion where this occurs they revert back to 100% of pay for that day and there is no furlough reclaim.

- 2.8 Payroll have been assisting HR with any calculation requirements (potential redundancy payments) for Hertford Theatre Staff in line with the proposed restructure and current consultation period (see section 6.0 for more details).
- 2.9 Both Payroll and HR have continued to work from home with only 1 or 2 days in the office as required in line with the work from where possible guidance. To keep visual communication with the rest of the HR Team weekly zoom meetings have continued to be chaired by Head of HR & OD. At the meeting 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 and details regarding the learning and development events from July to September 2020. Currently all training events are being delivered virtually although face to face options are being looked at for some training where practical/face to face elements are required e.g. First Aid at work and Evac chair training.
- 3.2 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator has been working with external organisations and officers across the council as part of the review and development of the e-learning programmes available on SkillsBuild; the council's e-learning platform. A new course has been developed, others are currently under development or are being revised and refreshed. The 2020/21 mandatory courses have been agreed and will be ready for staff to access at the end of November 2020 in line with the annual PDR process.

Mandatory Courses being revised for relaunch:

- Data Protection 2020
- Health and Safety 2020
- Safeguarding 2020
- Equalities and Diversity 2020
- Lone Working (for selected officers)

New and available:

- Protecting yourself and others from Coronavirus
- In development:
- Fraud Awareness
- Email etiquette
- Managing Home Working

The consistency of the reporting from SkillsBuild is also being investigated and a more regular and defined programme of reporting is being finalised to support the implementation of the training and to provide direct updates to managers.

- 3.3 The corporate induction slides have been updated following feedback and consultation from the East Herts Together Team. The first virtual corporate induction event has taken place and received positive feedback. The format has been updated and 5 guest speakers join the OD and HR Co-Ordinator who hosts the event. Regular corporate inductions have been scheduled with this format across the next year.

Further training will be provided to managers to ensure the local induction is being delivered effectively, the staff handbook will continue to be developed and the induction process will be reviewed in line with any feedback received. This is an ongoing



piece of work and it is essential that new ways of working are added to induction process once implemented to ensure new starters are supported and clear on expectations.

- 3.4 A date for a virtual pre-retirement course was released; this event is now fully booked. If the on-line presentation of this course is a success future dates will be advertised in this format.
- 3.5 The OD and HR Coordinator is supporting the Wellbeing Programme through the in-house training budget and by helping to commission and deliver suitable courses to support and develop employee well-being. Clearly this is very relevant form of training and support in the current climate and staff will be provided with a range of bite sized online courses which will help them to manage in these difficult times; ensuring continued and further well-being support.
- 3.6 Apprentice Levy Pot

Two apprentices have progressed onto a further stage of their training and now in trainee posts and are now studying for the next level of their qualification; a level 5 and level 6 respectively. One apprentice continues with their level 3 qualification, while we research the next level of training for one other apprentice. The council continues to fund three officers studying for degrees through the professional training budget.

## **4.0 Human Resources Update**

### **4.1 East Herts Together (EHT) Development Update**

The East Herts Together Group has continued to meet on Zoom whilst most employees work from home and has made good progress on actions.

- 4.1.1 The One page plan for the Eats Herts Together project has been updated to reflect changing priorities. All updated actions have

been assigned to members of the East Herts Together (cross service) Group and target dates agreed. Due to conflicting priorities some work has had to be delayed and moved forward on the plan.

#### 4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- Staff calendars were made public on 3 August by IT and Outlook calendar protocols were circulated.
- The Customer Charter was approved by Leadership Team and has been implemented.
- Zoom Etiquette guidance has been developed to support staff use and ensure balance and has been circulated to staff and published on the intranet.
- Email Etiquette guidance has been drafted to be reviewed and following approval from the group will be used to train staff to use email effectively via the mandatory e-learning programme.
- A best practice guide for Managers and Staff on effectively working remotely has been developed and circulated to staff.
- The corporate values have been refreshed and a new more simplified graphic has been drafted which is easily understandable for staff. This is now with the Design team to be finalised and to ensure it meets accessibility guidelines.
- 7 HR policies have been drafted and are on target to be taken to LJP in January and HRC in February 2021:

1. Discipline Policy
2. Officer Code of Conduct
3. Grievance Policy
4. Absence Management Policy
5. Bullying and Harassment Policy
6. Recruitment Policy
7. Probation Policy and Procedure

- The content of the corporate induction has been developed/improved and also adjusted to work as a virtual

meeting. The session continues to be co-ordinated by the OD&HR Coordinator with 5 further presenters now included.

4.1.3 The drafting of the HR & OD Strategy has been delayed until November which will allow the refreshed values to be used and allow agile working developments to be supported. The draft will be worked up by HR with support from a EHT sub-group (as set out in the plan), then full EHT group and LT. The draft will be brought to the HR Committee in February for consideration.

4.1.4 The development of staff/management competencies has also had to be revised, work will now take place in December 2020. The work that will follow i.e. PDR redevelopment, Management training etc. has also been moved forward in line with competencies development. This year's PDR's which begin in November will use the current form and process and this will be replaced following the competencies development for the 21/22 PDR cycle.

**Please see updated EHT plan in landscape view on next 2 pages**

## 1. We will set the standards for customer service, and remove the barriers to working as 'one team'

1a	Introduce a new Customer charter	Su Tarran	Aug-20	✓
1b	Develop calendar management protocols	Ciaran MacCullagh	Apr-20	✓
	IT to switch all accounts to reviewer and Comms to promote	Helen Standen/Vicky M	Jul/Aug 20	✓
1c	Introduce a corporate email signature	Vicky Mullins	Apr-20	✓
1d	Roll out/promote photos for outlook, Micollab, and Outlook	Tyron Suddes	Apr-20	✓
1e	Roll out/promote use of Micollab by all	Emily Cordwell	Jul-20	✓
1f	Survey all staff on strengths and weaknesses of our 'one team' to help inform Strategy and Competencies	Claire Kirby	Apr-20	✓
1g	Develop Zoom Etiquette to support staff use and ensure balance	James/Vicky M/Jackie	Sep-20	✓
1h	Re-implement Email Etiquette and train all staff to use email more effectively	Helen F/Geoff/Alex	Nov-20	
1i	Produce best practice guide for Managers and Staff for effectively working remotely	Su/Vicky M/Simon B/ Sara	Oct-20	✓
1j	Refresh Values - make more simple	Emily T/Simon B/Geoff H	Oct-20	✓
1k	Develop a staff charter which sets out expectations from EHC and also expectations from staff/ this may be linked with revised Values	Claire/Simon/Richard	Dec-20	
1l	Develop Agile Working Policy and Practices which include use of tools such as voicemail	Helen Standen/Ben Wood/LT/EHT	Jan-21	
1m	Corporate Induction improved	Helen Farrell/Ciaran/LT	Jan-21	✓

2. We will review our policies and ensure they are fit for purpose and interact effectively with each other

2a	Develop HR &OD Strategy up to end of the new corporate plan, this needs to be considered/approved by EHT, then LT and then HRC	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie LT Review HRC	Nov-20 Dec-20 or Jan -21 Feb-21
2b	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	HR/Tyron/Su T/Alex C	In line with LJP meetings: Jan-21 Apr-21 July-21
2c	Review polices which provide support for staff to manage work life balance/wellbeing	Vicki D/Tyron/Emily T/Alex C	see box above

3. We will develop competencies and training to underpin the values and behaviours of our 'One Team'

3a	Develop staff and Management competencies	Simon O/ Claire/Simon B/Jackie	Dec-21
3b	Develop a new PDR process to support competencies	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	April-21 Nov-21 roll out
3c	Develop recruitment tools to support competencies	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	Mar-21
3d	Develop a management training programme to support staff in their roles	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	From June-21
3e	Review the staff recognition process	Vicky M/James/Geoff	Dec-20

#### 4.1.5 3 year Staff Survey and re-run of Staff Wellbeing Survey

4.1.6 The staff survey is due to run in December 2020, LT have also agreed to re-run the staff well-being survey in relation to continued remote working arrangements and updates to wellbeing needs. The Communications team will support an online in-house survey again and have suggested the surveys are combined; development will begin in November with roll out expected in early December. HR will review and develop questions, seek feedback from EHT and these will then be approved by LT and then the joint survey developed.

4.1.7 The survey will be run in-house rather than externally as in previous years which will allow quicker turn arounds and focused follow up where required. The success of the well-being survey where we had nearly a 100% return has proved successful in terms of participation and in line with working as One Team; we want staff to provide feedback and be willing to have follow up discussions to ensure clarity and potential improvements can be made so it will not be anonymous and will be a more transparent process. This is also for budget saving reasons as well as in keeping with the spirit of 'one team' we want staff to feel empowered to give their honest opinions without anonymity.

## 4.2 Recruitment

### 4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

EHC have advertised 4 posts since the trial with Indeed began in June this year. As at the time of writing this report, two of the four posts had reached conditional offer stage, one post was at the shortlisting stage and one post reached the interview stage however the one candidate being interviewed withdrew from the process.

Candidates are asked to state on their application form where they saw the advert and this data is recorded in HR. Analysis of the data shows that Indeed is attracting a good proportion of the candidates overall. Of the total number of candidates for all four posts, 37 out of 66 candidates (56%) saw the advert on Indeed. It is likely that more candidates were attracted via Indeed than the data reflects as candidates are directed from Indeed to the East Herts Council (EHC) Website to complete their application. This can sometimes mean that candidates state on their application form that they saw the advert on the latter.

For the 2 posts that have reached conditional offer stage, 4 out of the 12 candidates (33%) invited to interview said they saw the advert on the EHC website, 3 said Indeed (25%), 2 were internal candidates (17%), 1 said LinkedIn (8%), and 2 did not say (17%).

The 2 candidates who were given conditional offers said they either saw the advert on the EHC website or they didn't say where they saw the advert.

We are still at the early stages however the data is encouraging and indicates that Indeed is attracting good quality candidates. We will continue to monitor performance as more posts are advertised under the new arrangement.

We have developed a branded page on the Indeed website where we are able to sell the benefits of working for the council and employees/candidates are able to leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer. The page will be developed further to include case studies and videos and will help to build the council's brand.

#### 4.2.2 Improved Job Application Form

The new two-part application form (where candidates only have to complete part of the application form if they also submit a

CV) appears to be working well and we have not been made aware of any issues with candidates completing it. There are concerns with the completion of the separate equality monitoring form as candidates do not always complete it, as highlighted in the equalities report this will be tackled through a full online form as part of bringing in recruitment software to replace recruitment module in the HR system which was not suitable.

#### 4.2.3 Corporate Web Site

In line with the update to the council's page on the Indeed website, the council's website has also been updated to include a 'Why join us' page and will be developed with case studies etc.

#### 4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

The Head of HR and OD and HR Officers has developed the offer with revised/increased rates for pay as you go services to ensure EHC staff costs (including on costs) are fully met as well contribution/margin which can support running costs going forward as the rates have not been updated for a number of years. The offer has been 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. As well as revised 'pay as you go rates' the service now requires a retainer and offers a number of proactive pre-scheduled/paid services i.e. HR and H&S Audits, management coaching, HR Surgeries and H&S Surgeries meaning income can be better predicted and is not just reliant on pay as you go which may or may not be requested.

The bid to provide services (HR, L&D and H&S) to Ware Town Council has been successful and work will officially begin from 1/11/2020 although a few services have already been purchased and delivered.



Revised costings for Hertford Town Council have been developed (in line with the WTC package) and discussions will take place with the intent for revisions to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

Further developments are being considered to determine if Payroll services could also be offered from the existing payroll team, pricing is yet to be determined by some initial interest has been received.

Hertfordshire Building Control has also expressed interest in HR Services. A meeting has taken place with the Head of HR and OD and a HR Audit has been agreed which then made lead on to a full HR external service being provided.

In line with budget reviews HR are now providing an increased income target to reflect to work being generated and to support HR staff costs.

## **5.0 Casework**

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

## **6.0 Hertford Theatre Restructure**

- 6.1 A 30 day consultation period began on 13 October with Unison and staff at Hertford Theatre regarding a proposed restructure. The purpose of the restructure is to ensure staffing resources are allocated appropriately to manage the current programme offer at the Hertford Theatre. The proposals aim to create a smaller core team of staff that ensures the Hertford Theatre is adequately resourced in line with COVID-secure requirements including social distancing requirements and encouraging cashless transactions. In addition to this, there is a pending capital refurbishment programme due to be delivered from

next August 2021 (subject to planning permission and final review of the business plan). With the combination of a reduced programme due to COVID-19 and a closure of the Hertford Theatre for the construction programme, it has been necessary to review the staffing requirements for the current programme running up to the closure of the building.

- 6.2 The proposed restructure has put 10 members of staff at risk of redundancy. 4 roles remain unchanged in the proposed structure, one existing role will be ring fenced to 3 of the at-risk staff and a new role has been created which will be ring fenced for 2 of the remaining at risk staff. It is hoped that 2 of the 10 staff at risk of redundancy will be retained following a ring fenced selection process.
- 6.3 Many of the staff at Hertford Theatre were furloughed and this ends on 31 October. All but one of these staff cannot return to the theatre at the end of the furlough period due to the COVID-secure requirements. The Head of Operations is working with other Heads of Service to find temporary redeployment elsewhere in the council for these members of staff during the consultation period, and for those that do not secure a role in the new structure, for their 12 weeks' notice period. Current roles being explored include COVID Wardens, supporting Revenues and Benefits and supporting IT. These staff will also be placed on the redeployment register to try and find them permanent redeployment elsewhere in the council before their leaving date.

## **7.0 Wellbeing Support**

- 7.1 A comprehensive list of measures to support staff wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic was provided in the last HR & Payroll Update and most of these have continued over the last quarter (July – September). Further measures that have been implemented in the last quarter include:

- More regular office based working has been accommodated where employees have requested it (although since the recent government advice changed to work from home where possible, this has reduced again)
- More teams have been meeting face to face in line with social distancing guidelines to support staff wellbeing and help overcome feelings of isolation

7.2 World Suicide Prevention Day was promoted on 10 September encouraging staff to download the Stay Alive App which includes practical tools and information.

7.3 National Fitness Day on 23 September was promoted encouraging staff to share how they keep fit and upload their photos, giving ideas how to keep fit, promoting a mindful walk organised by Mind in Mid Herts and offering a free 7 day pass to gyms, swimming pools and fitness classes at Everyone Active.

7.4 The cycle to work limit has gone up from £1,000 to £2,000 following a change in legislation and after feedback from staff that £1,000 wasn't enough to buy a high spec bike. This increased limit means that staff can buy higher spec and also electric bikes. They don't have to buy a bike from Halfords as Halfords also works with lots of independent bike shops.

7.5 Daily mindfulness sessions throughout August were on offer to staff via Zoom through Mind in Mid Herts

7.6 Promotion of the national Talk to Us campaign by the Samaritans which highlighted their free listening service, and encouraged staff to listen to the really important things their friends, family and colleagues need to tell them, giving 5 simple tips on being a better listener.

## 7.7 Flu Vaccinations

In 2019 the council offered flu jab vouchers under the Boots Scheme however this was unavailable this year due to excess demand as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, staff are able to obtain a flu jab from a provider of their choice (e.g. Tesco, Lloyds Pharmacy, Boots) and will be reimbursed by the council. The council has secured additional funding from Public Health Hertfordshire to support this.

## 7.8 Mental Health First Aiders

At their networking meetings during the quarter the Mental Health First Aiders discussed the importance of staff taking annual leave during the pandemic, and how they could encourage staff to take breaks now that we are approaching the Winter time by sharing hints and tips e.g taking walks at lunchtime, having a virtual chat with a friend/colleague, bitesize yoga.

## **8.0 HR and Payroll System Development**

8.1 Progress with the provider has continued to be poor which led to the Trainee Officer and the Head of HR and OD raising further concern and insisting that senior staff from the provider take action. The provider Zellis have now assigned East Herts with the Commercial Director and Client Success Manager to ensure all outstanding issues get resolved. A product demonstration has now been arranged for early November to ensure we are making effective use out of the system and to review unimplemented modules. A refund has now finally been received for the recruitment module which was not fit for purpose and therefore not implemented. Agreement has also been made to refund the H&S module as this is not suitable either. The combined refunds and reduction to annual costs going forward will allow HR to look in to purchasing a third party ATS (Applicant Tracking System) which will manage the

end-to-end recruitment process, on line application forms, online shortlisting, onboarding option and will allow for name blind recruitment.

- 8.2 The HR Trainee Officer has begun further development of the HR and Payroll system which provides approximately 2 days per week to maintain and develop the system. We are now looking to implement BAM (Business Alert Manager) which is an application that allows trigger alerts on dates. (For example, alerting managers when a probation is due 6 weeks before). Work has also begun on testing the pay-back work so that this can be automated in the future.

## **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**

Yes – as described in the report

**Human Rights**

No

**Legal**

No

**Specific Wards**

No

**12.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

None

**Contact Officer**

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