



James Ellis
Head of Legal and Democratic
Services

MEETING : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2021
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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

Substitutes

Conservative Group: Councillors R Buckmaster, A Curtis and
A Ward-Booth

Liberal Democrat
Group: Councillor M Goldspink

*(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member
to Democratic Services 24 hours before the meeting)*

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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. Appointment of Vice-Chairman for 2021/22
2. Apologies
To receive apologies for absence.
3. Minutes - 16 February 2021 (Pages 7 - 16)
To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021.
4. Chairman's Announcements
5. Declarations of Interest
To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.
6. Local Joint Panel Minutes - 5 May 2021 (Pages 17 - 24)
To receive the Minutes of the Local Joint Panel meeting held on 5 May 2021.
7. Health and Safety Committee Minutes - 27 April 2021 (Pages 25 - 32)
To receive the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 27 April 2021.
8. Health and Safety Quarterly Statistics/Updates (Quarter 4)
(Pages 33 - 46)
9. Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 (Pages 47 - 68)
10. Human Resources Management Statistics - Quarterly Report
(Pages 69 - 80)

11. Annual Turnover Report 2020/21 (Pages 81 - 92)
12. Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2020/21 (Pages 93 - 126)
13. Learning and Development Review 2020/21 (Pages 127 - 138)
14. Employment Policies Developed Report x 5 (Pages 139 - 246)
15. HR and Payroll Team Update (Pages 247 - 260)
16. 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 TUESDAY 16
FEBRUARY 2021, AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

359 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Ruffles.

360 MINUTES - 5 NOVEMBER 2020

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Alder, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 November 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 5 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

361 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 4 April 2020 to enable councils to hold remote committee meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic period. This was to ensure local authorities could conduct business during this current public health emergency. This meeting of Human Resources Committee was being held remotely under these regulations, via the Zoom application and was being recorded and live streamed on YouTube.

The Chairman also advised Members that the Health and Safety Quarterly Statistics/ Updates (Quarter 3) would be brought forward on the agenda and would be considered after the receipt of the Health and Safety Committee Minutes.

362 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

363 LOCAL JOINT PANEL MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 20 January 2021, be received.

364 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 19 OCTOBER 2020 AND 18 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meetings of the Health and Safety Committee held on 19 October 2020 and 18 January 2021, be received.

365 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY STATISTICS/UPDATES (QUARTER 3)

The Health and Safety Officer briefly introduced the report and invited questions.

The Chairman asked that in future the Committee was furnished with more data from contractors on accidents at their respective sites. She also said she was surprised by Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC) decision not to take part in a joint procurement exercise for lone worker devices.

The Health and Safety officer and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) said that work was already being done to establish a framework for contract managers to report more extensively and this data would be presented to the Committee in due course. It was also explained to Members that SBC had now decided to take part in a joint procurement exercise. It was hoped that a

contract could be incepted by 1 April 2021.

366 EMPLOYMENT POLICIES DEVELOPED REPORT X 7
(DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCE, CODE OF CONDUCT FOR
EMPLOYEES, PROBATION, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT,
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT AND APPEALS POLICY)

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and said that the policies had been through extensive scrutiny and been approved by Leadership Team (LT), East Herts Together (EHT) and Local Joint Panel. He also explained to Members that the Code of Conduct would need to be approved at Annual Council in May 2021 as it was a change to the Constitution. The recommendation in this regard would therefore be amended accordingly.

The HR Officer briefly explained the changes that had been made after the meeting of Local Joint Panel.

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor McMullen 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 revised Code of Conduct be recommended for adoption by Annual Council as part of the constitutional review.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Newton 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 revised Disciplinary Policy be approved;

(B) the revised Grievance Policy be approved;

(C) the revised Probation Policy be approved;

(D) the revised Bullying and Harassment Policy be approved;

(E) the revised Absence Management Policy be approved; and

(F) the revised and reduced Appeals Policy be approved.

367 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS FOR
QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020)

The HR Officer briefly introduced the report and invited questions.

The Chairman said that the ongoing low absence and staff turnover levels were encouraging. She also asked if there was still a lack of available benchmarking data, and if there had been less available learning and development opportunities for staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The HR Officer said it had not yet been possible to obtain benchmarking data.

The Head of HR and OD said that in-person training had ceased and therefore reduced the availability of some sessions. However, the report only covered the

in-house learning and development opportunities offered by the Council, so there was still an array of remote training staff could engage with, and this meant there was no shortage of opportunities.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

368 HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and thanked the HR Officer for her excellent work on the wellbeing survey. HR were proud of the results of the in-house survey. Work was still to be done on the performance development scheme, as highlighted by the survey.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their work and listed a number of areas of the survey response which were very positive, as well as an encouraging response rate, despite the timing of the survey around the festive period.

Councillor Alder asked about the redeployment of Council staff to the NHS to assist with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Head of HR and OD said that the Council had volunteered staff in 9 of the 11 areas in which the NHS had requested assistance. Only one member of staff had been deployed, mainly because the pressure on the NHS had reduced and it had then been able to recruit rather than rely on interim staff. The staff member had excelled in her role. She had also been paid her normal wage, which would be reimbursed to

the Council by the NHS, as well as becoming a higher priority for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Chairman asked about the progress of agile working and further redevelopments of policies.

The Head of HR and OD said the move towards agile working was split into three areas: consideration of site/ office space, development and provision of the necessary technology, and the development of an agile working policy. Steady progress was being made in all areas. Five further policies would be redeveloped, but would again need to go through the extensive scrutiny process. This was also being balanced with ongoing work on the HR Strategy – which would hopefully be presented at the May or September meetings of the Committee – as well as other commitments.

Councillor Alder asked about the nine staff whose response indicated they did not understand the priorities and objectives of the Council. The Head of HR and OD said overall there was a positive and encouraging response to this question. However, as the survey was not anonymous this year, these responses could be followed up and the situation rectified.

The Chairman placed on record the Committee's congratulations and thanks to the Payroll Manager for her 40 years of service.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

369 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and explained the main changes. Honorariums had been strengthened and other slight amendments made to reflect changes, such as in pay scales. Members were also advised that UNISON had just submitted its annual pay claim of 10%.

Councillor Bull asked whether UNISON believed this was a realistic and attainable increase.

The Head of HR and OD said that it did and had cited a 25% cut in pay in real terms since 2010. However, the same claim had been submitted last year and resulted in a 2.75% increase. There was also a feeling that central government may scrap its 2024 Living Wage target due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase of the amount claimed for could likely not be accommodated from the Council's budget without redundancies.

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

RESOLVED – to recommend to Council that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved.

370 GENDER PAY GAP

The Head of HR and OD briefly introduced the report and explained the main points. The production of case

studies was in progress but had been delayed by Officers' other commitments, including in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been a slight improvement in relation to the gender pay gap, and although it was a slow process, this would continue.

Councillor Alder asked about LT's decision not to make the presence of both males and females on selection panels mandatory, and also asked about the gender balance of LT itself.

The Head of HR and OD said that LT felt this measure might have been difficult to achieve and instead had decided to move forward with a 'meet the team' approach during recruitment. This meant potential staff met a wider array of Council staff during the interview process and were more likely to feel the Council was an inclusive employer. LT was currently comprised of six males and four females.

It was moved by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Dumont 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 report be noted; and

(B) the 2021/22 action plan be agreed.

371 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman

Date

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LOCAL JOINT PANEL HELD AS AN ONLINE
MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 2021, AT
12.00 PM

PRESENT: **Employer's Side**

Councillors J Dumont, E Buckmaster,
L Haysey and A Ward-Booth

Staff Side (UNISON)

J Bruce, S Forde and P Stevens

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor R Bolton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN FOR
2021/22

It was moved by Councillor Haysey and seconded by
Councillor Dumont, that Councillor Ward-Booth be
appointed Chairman and Jackie Bruce be appointed

Vice-Chairman for 2021/22. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – Councillor Ward-Booth be appointed Chairman and Jackie Bruce be appointed Vice-Chairman for 2021/22.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Nicola Munro. It was noted that Paul Stevens was acting as a substitute for Nicola Munro, but would be a permanent Panel Member going forward. It was noted that Julie Pomfrett had resigned from her role as Panel Member.

3 MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2021

It was moved by Councillor Dumont and seconded by Councillor Ward-Booth, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2021 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 20 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Buckmaster declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had a family member who was an apprentice at the Council.

6 REPORTS BY SECRETARY TO THE EMPLOYER'S SIDE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) briefly introduced the report and explained that four policies had been redeveloped, the Appeals Policy had been reduced, and the addition of minor clauses to three other policies was proposed.

In relation to the Capability Policy, the Head of HR and OD explained that the name of this policy had changed, in line with best practice. The policy had been made more concise and adaptable, as well as the use of 'stages' being introduced in place of 'warnings'. The framework of stages had been made clearer and generally improved. UNISON welcomed the changes.

The Vice-Chairman said that the addition of a flowchart to the policy had been discussed with the Head of HR and OD, as recommended by UNISON and East Herts Together, to provide a visual aid. The Head of HR and OD confirmed that this would be added.

Councillor Dumont asked whether a probationary period would be applicable if a staff member voluntarily redeployed to a new role.

The Head of HR and OD said that the staff member would remain on the same stage, but their targets

would be related to their new role. Voluntary redeployment would be considered subject to business need, and provided a useful alternative to dismissal.

Councillor Buckmaster asked why the use of 'Director' had been removed from the policy in favour of 'member of Leadership Team'. He also asked, in view of the removal of three year reviews, whether new legislation would automatically be added to policies, or whether the Panel would need to review the changes on each occasion.

The Head of HR and OD said that the removal of references to Directors was to bring the policy in line with updated corporate language, as Heads of Service had replaced Directors. He also said that minor changes may be agreed between HR and UNISON, but significant changes would be considered by the Panel.

Councillor Haysey thanked Officers for their work on the policy and welcomed the addition of a flowchart.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice-Chairman that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the revised Capability Policy be approved.

In relation to the Flexible Working Request Scheme, the Head of HR and OD said that this had been strengthened and an appeals procedure added. All flexible working requests would be given fair

consideration.

It was moved by Councillor Ward-Booth and seconded by Councillor Haysey that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (B) the revised Flexible Working Request Scheme be approved.

In relation to the Recruitment and Induction Policy, the Head of HR and OD said that there had been a significant redevelopment. The policy now incorporated safer recruitment, was strengthened on equality, and allowed sensible flexibility within recruitment, such as the use of internal recruitment where beneficial. Temporary roles of fewer than six months could be recruited for from a pool of casual workers. If the role then became permanent, with the temporary employee performing satisfactorily and having been in the role for over three months, they would be guaranteed a ring-fenced interview.

Members were also advised that the policy had been updated to reflect the matrix supply chain framework and encourage the use of diverse recruitment panels where possible, or a 'meet the team' approach where this could not be achieved. There was also ongoing work on the production of case studies regarding diversity. Secondment guidance had also changed and secondments were now less likely to be approved given the challenges posed by the low rate of staff returning to the Council following their secondment.

Councillor Dumont asked whether checks were carried

out on agency staff. The Head of HR and OD said that, when required, Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks could be verified. There were also automatic controls which prevented agencies putting forward candidates without the required documentation.

Councillor Haysey asked about the induction of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

The Head of HR and OD and the Vice-Chairman said that corporate inductions had continued virtually and had been successful, with new starters feeling supported and acknowledged. They thanked Helen Farrell, HR Officer, for her work on the inductions.

It was moved by the Councillor Ward-Booth and seconded by Councillor Haysey that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (C) the revised Recruitment and Induction Policy be approved.

In relation to the Organisational Development Policy, the Head of HR and OD said a new funding programme for professional development had been introduced which allowed more flexibility on the level of funding provided by the Council. This would be a better system and was linked to Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs). HR would now manage training requests centrally, which would allow a fairer distribution of funds between services. UNISON had asked the Council to consider funding all professional memberships, but the Council did not have the

available budget for this.

Councillor Buckmaster said that the policy used the word 'consider' extensively and asked how responses to training requests would be kept consistent.

The Head of HR and OD said professional training requests would be considered by members of Leadership Team (LT), with support from HR, so consistency would be achieved in this way.

It was moved by the Councillor Ward-Booth and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (D) the revised Organisational Development Policy be approved.

It was moved by the Councillor Ward-Booth and seconded by Councillor Haysey that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (E) the revised and reduced Appeals Policy be approved in line with the changes made to the policies (A) and (B) above.

It was moved by the Councillor Ward-Booth and seconded by Councillor Dumont that the recommendation, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (F) additional clauses regarding management of Leadership Team members and ensuring the Chief Executive is available for appeals relating to the three policies, be approved.

Councillor Haysey said that as this was to be the last meeting held virtually, she wanted to give her personal thanks to the Vice-Chairman and the Head of HR and OD, and their respective colleagues, for their hard work and flexibility throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period.

7 REPORTS BY SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

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

8 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 12.34 pm

Chairman

Date

Minutes of Health & Safety Committee **Tuesday 27th April 2021, on Zoom**

Present: Simon O'Hear (SOH), Peter Dickinson (PD), Steve Whinnett (SW), Jackie Bruce (JB) (Unison), Graham Mully (GM), Jennifer Francis (JF) (Unison), Rob Allwood (RA), Rowan Perrin (RP), Ian Sharratt (IS), Chloe Hipwood-Norton (CHN), Tamara Jarvis (TJ), Paul Thomas-Jones (PTJ), Dominique Kingsbury (DK), Kate Collins (KC)

1.0 Apologies: Geoff Hayden (GH) will be joining later.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 The Minutes of the 18th January 2021 meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3.0 Matters Arising from the minutes

3.1 RA still to arrange a tour of Grange Paddocks for SW and Mark Kingsland from Property.

3.2 PD to send JB and JF an update on lone working. Draft has been sent to Unison.

3.3 PD has shared fire safety protocols with JB and JF. Customer Services are aware in case of a fire. PD and GH have discussed reinstating a fire drill now more people are in the building.

4.0 Tenant Representative Matters

4.1 SOH updated that there are no tenants in the building and therefore no issues to raise. PD and GH to discuss parking flow outside of this meeting.

5.0 Q4 Health & Safety Report (Annual Report being developed)

5.1 Work related accidents

SOH detailed that this is a draft report, the full report was presented. After this meeting it will be finalised to go onto LT and then HR Committee.

PD confirmed that there were no work related accidents in this period.

With regards to first aid, PD had a discussion with PTJ about performing CPR in a COVID secure manner and there is a cribsheet around this that will be issued to first aiders.

PD to Action

5.2 Contract Management & Compliance

PD confirmed that he is in frequent communications with the management of the large contract sites and that information is sent to members to update them on a regular basis.

Buntingford Service Centre

PD confirmed that the re-lining had lifted. SW has arranged for it to be re-done. New walkways are now in place to enhance safety.

PD updated the group regarding the newly fitted premises information box. The waterproof box contains all the information you would need such as location of the water mains, electrical input, gas, distribution boards, contact telephone numbers etc. In the future a template of this box will be used for Wallfields, Hillcrest, Rectory Road, Hertford Theatre and possibly Charrington's.

Sport & Leisure Management Contract

PD updated that he has been to Grange Paddocks, which is very well managed and progressing well. Currently the swimming pool is still closed and only the gym is open. There has been lots of work carried out on a one way system with a new footpath.

5.3 On-going Projects

Hartham Play Area

PD and RA inspected the new Hartham play area which is very impressive and due to open in late spring.

Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbots

PD updated that Cedar Cottage is now completed and a new premises information box will be installed.

5.4 Lone Worker Devices

PD updated that the joint contract between EHC and SBC is now being looked at. A market engagement meeting took place at HCC where Unison was present and we are now at the stage ready to liaise with SBC. There are 3 strong contenders.

5.5 Police and Crime Commissioner, County and other Elections on 6th May

PD confirmed that he is working with the elections team regarding health and safety practicalities for the day. PD is sorting out PPE and will meet with Roz in elections tomorrow. PD has supported risk assessments and COVID protocols. SOH

mentioned that there was funding for a health and safety person to help because of Covid-19 this year however they withdrew and there is now no availability due to national demand, PD is instead supporting and will undertake a Polling Station Inspector (H&S) roll in the lead up to the election and on the election day. All of the papers for the count will be quarantined for 24hrs before they are counted and the count can be spread across a few days so it can be managed in a COVID secure way.

5.6 **Agile Working**

PD confirmed that the agile working programme is underway, it is early days and some parts need addressing but it is working well. To book a desk you need to go into the booking system called Skedda. Going forward PD can check to see who has first aid training and will be booked in on what day so that this is also covered. RA mentioned that you still cannot book the old building on Skedda – SOH mentioned that RA should contact Ben Wood or Chris Smith to flag this and in the meantime the bookings for the old building can be kept on a static spreadsheet and that RA should email SOH or Ester Piper to get this data added.

Lateral flow testing (LFT) – PD has registered EHC with the department of health. SOH confirmed that there are more than enough testing kits. All staff working away from home are expected to take the LFT twice a week and report a positive test and follow the protocols, i.e. get a PCR test and isolate. A decision has been made not to record every negative result and only record the positives, staff are required to inform their line manager and HR so potential transmissions can be managed alongside the individual case. SOH reiterated that both EHC and NHS need to know if you have a positive test and this is made clear in the Reporting symptoms or a positive LFT Protocols.

Enforcement/licensing interviews – PD updated that meeting room 27 is now set up for interviews and is made Covid-19 secure with a double row of tables to create a barrier, fitted screens and recording equipment. Sam Wood is managing this going forward. As well as enforcement and licensing, both taxi licensing and R&B can also use this Covid-19 secure meeting room.

5.7 Learning and Development

PD mentioned that the skills build learning platform has been updated. Asbestos awareness and legionella risk management was conducted via zoom and was very well delivered. PD has booked refresher training in the council chamber for the 13th May. In the future there will be Defib awareness training available. Please contact PD if you have any comments on any of these courses.

6.0 Covid Update

- 6.1 SOH updated that agile working is going well with lateral flow tests taking place before staff come into the office. The 2 meter social distancing is in place. There is no allocating of individual desks anymore (bar a few fully-office based staff) and employees must clean the desk area at the beginning and end of use. SOH went on to say that some of the wipes are more hazardless/not so kind on skin than others and GH may look at sprays and paper towels in the future which are more environmentally friendly. The intranet (Risk assessment, Office Protocols and Reporting Symptoms/positive LFT) has been updated with all of this info and shared with relevant staff.

7.0 Regulatory & Legislative Changes (Verbal Report)

- 7.1 PTJ confirmed there were no updates. PD just wanted to note that the amendment to the fire safety bill had not gone through yet.

8.0 Health & Safety Inspections & Compliance Reports

- a. (Any Further updates in addition to Q4 Report)**

- 8.1 This was covered in the Q4 report. No further updates required.

9.0 Projects – Updates/Contractor Compliance

- 9.1 TJ updated that there have been no health and safety issues on any works on site since the last health and safety meeting in January. No incidents have taken place.

10.0 Property – Premises maintenance and repairs

- 10.1 TJ updated that everything is fine and working well other than Emily Coulter had concerns about the number of site visits. She has since spoken to GH regarding this.
- 10.2 Property confirmed that other key updates had been included in the Q4 report.

11.0 Facilities Management

- 11.1 GH asked SW to update the group on a couple of things. The first being the door guard units that have been purchased;

certain fire doors remain open and they will close automatically. The second update is that the cone system for the toilets is still in place and on the whole working well.

12.0 List of Issues

12.1a. Employees side (UNISON):

JB advised that Unison had no issues to raise and were continuing to work with management on health and safety including updating and revising risk assessments.

JF mentioned the need to still have the windows open to ventilate areas and that staff have been reminded to wear layers in the office due to the increased ventilation.

12.2b. Management side:

None

13.0 Health & Safety Training

- 13.1 LT looking at senior H&S training and further H&S manager training being cascaded to service managers. Please email PD if you are or your staff are interested.

14.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 14.1 TBC

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q4) – January 2021 to March 2021

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) **To consider the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q4) – January 2021 to March 2021 and provide comments to the Head of HR & OD and the Health and Safety Officer.**

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report sets out the collation of Health and Safety (H&S) Management Statistics and service updates for Quarter 4 (January 2021 to March 2021).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Officer reports to the HR committee each quarter. This report also been reported to the safety committee (27/4/21) as part of the quarterly meeting and then considered by the Leadership Team, who reviewed the report before it is submitted to the HR Committee. (This report will also be shared with the Executive for information to continue to

raise the profile of Health and Safety.)

3.0 Safety Committee

- 3.1 Safety Committee met via zoom on Monday 27th April 2021.
- 3.2 Contract managers and contract project managers are invited to attend to provide feedback on the main and capital projects.

4.0 Work Related Accident Reports

- 4.1 There were no reportable accidents under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) for the period 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021.
- 4.2 There have also been no non reportable work related accidents recorded during the period 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021; this reduction was due to staff working from home or away from the office.
- 4.3 Due to the last lockdown swimming pools and gyms were forced to close.

Non Reportable Accidents – January, February, March 2021

(as reported there were no non-reportable employee accidents in Q4)

Swimming Pool & Gym	January	February	March	TOTAL
Hartham	0	0	0	0
Grange Paddocks	0	0	0	0
Leventhorpe	0	0	0	0
Ward Freman	0	0	0	0
Fanshawe	0	0	0	0
Employees	0	0	0	0
Contractors	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0

- 4.4 The Health and Safety Officer met with the Leisure & Parks Development Officer, Building Surveyor (Property) and the Contract Manager and Centre Manager (Hartham) (SLM) on Thursday 08th April 2021 to discuss the re-opening of the Swimming Pools and Gyms in response to the Governments roadmap for easing out of lockdown.

Ward Freman, Leventhorpe and Fanshawe swimming pools and gyms re-opened on the 12th April 2021 under full covid secure guidelines.

Grange Paddock swimming pool and gym also re-opened as work continues on the build of the new centre.

Hartham swimming pool remains closed as work commences on the redevelopment of the centre but the gyms have re-opened under covid secure guidelines.

- 4.5 SLM have maintained all statutory checks in respect to water sampling and legionella testing, temperature checks, pool chlorination and sanitising in addition to maintaining pool plant throughout the covid pandemic.

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.
- 5.2 The Operations Area Inspections Team continue to carry out district inspections and have noted an increase in fly-tipping

across the district.

The following updates should be noted:

5.3 **Buntingford Service Centre**

5.3.1 Site re-lining was undertaken and completed in December 2020, however due to a defective batch of line marking paint the surface material lifted this was at first thought to be an isolated incident but was later attributed to the same failure at one of the Councils pay and display car park with a further failure on a site outside of East Herts. The company have undertaken to prepare and reline the two sites.

5.3.2 The Health and Safety Officer, submitted premises safety documents to Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Services County Fire Protection and Safety Team for consideration and these have been approved. The documents will be installed in a Premises Information Box (PIB), this is a weather and tamper proof box that is fitted to the exterior of a building and contains safety information pertinent for the use by the Fire Service, it contains the details of the building layout, site layout, location of hazardous chemicals and materials, position of nearest fire hydrant and mains water and electricity and gas supplies. Once finalised these will be placed in the premises information box and the documents will be used as the template for additional Premises Information Boxes to be installed at Wallfields, Charringtons House, Hertford Theatre, Hillcrest and Rectory Hall Hostels.

5.3.3 The Health and Safety Officer can report that all contractors on site are maintaining robust Covid secure operating procedures on site and in the public domain. Urbaser are the designated lead and contact for co-ordinating Covid secure measures at Buntingford 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.
- 6.2 The Health and Safety Officer receives monthly site inspections from the Service Development Manager and Parking Contract Manager on the overall performance of the contract and it can be reported that there have been no health and safety related issues or concerns requiring investigation.

7.0 Sport and Leisure Management Contract – Covid -19

- 7.1 The five facilities re-opened on the 12th April, SLM are continuing to maintain the five sites and covid secure measures remain in effect.
- 7.2 Health and Safety monitoring by the contract manager (supported by the H&S Officer) continues to be undertaken to verify health and safety compliance across the service.
- 7.3 There are no areas of H&S concern requiring 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 remain open and available to the community and monitoring and inspection continues to be undertaken by East Herts Operations team, supported by grounds maintenance contractor Glendale.

8.2 Hartham Play Area

- 8.2.1 Despite delays due to weather and the delivery of some play equipment arriving from Germany and Belgium as a result in

changes to import regulations due to Brexit in addition to the specification requiring surfacing such as sureset and tiger mulch which are in high demand it is expected that the project will be completed late Spring.

8.2.2 The health and safety Officer undertook a visit to the site on 08th April 2021 to review progress and observe working practices. Significant progress has taken place since a previous visit with some pieces of the new play equipment installed. The area is well organised, tidy and secure with good health and safety observance being undertaken by contractors.

9.0 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbotts

9.1 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbotts, formerly Thele House has undergone extensive upgrades and improvements to bring it in line with regulations governing temporary residential accommodation. New fire safety equipment has been installed with a new fire detection system, the boilers have been replaced and the water storage tanks have been replaced. The adjoining Annexe and Cedar Cottage have also undergone extensive remodelling for use by highly vulnerable homeless persons with high dependency issues, mental health needs etc. In order to ensure privacy the two building have been fenced in order to prevent children from disturbing residents. The garage/store has been converted into an office for the Hostel Officer who can access both buildings.

9.4 The Health and Safety Officer, Corporate Property Services Manager, Property Services Team accompanied by the Homeless Services Manager and Service Manager have carried out site visits throughout the development to identify snagging issues and resolve these.

9.5 The development consists of ;

- 11 Apartments in Rectory Hall
- 4 Rooms in the Annexe
- 2 Rooms in Cedar Cottage
- An office and meeting room for the onsite Hostel Officer.

10.0 Lone Worker Contract Update

- 10.1 The Health and Safety Officer would like to advise the Committee that the joint procurement for the Lone worker Solution contract is continuing, Stevenage Borough Council were able to participate in the exercise having initially withdrawn.
- 10.2 The Health and Safety Officer hosted meetings with 4 suppliers registered on the Procurement for Housing Framework on the 25th and 31st March. The meeting was attended by stakeholders from East Herts and Stevenage Borough Council to review the product options and services offered by the suppliers.
- 10.3 A zoom meeting with the Health and Safety Officer, Procurement Manager, Stevenage Borough Councils lead officer and Procurement for Housing took place on the 21st April to discuss the next stage of the procurement process.

11.0 Contract and Development Support for Leisure Development Projects / Capital Programmes

- 11.1 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 redevelopment. Work commenced on site on March 29th 2021.
 - The Health and Safety Officer continues to receive updates and attends a meeting of the Leisure Officers working group on the progress of the Grange Paddocks development. On

the 24th February 2021 The Health and Safety Officer, Leisure and Parks Development Officer and Project Manager visited the site to review progress and were given a tour of the facility by the developers. The group had an opportunity to view the pool hall, changing facilities, plant room and the gymnasium and finally a viewing from the roof.

- The site is managed professionally and is fully covid secure with sanitiser stations, booking in and out and temperature checking before entry. Excellent health and safety practices are observed by all contractors on site.
- The Health and Safety Officer is providing support to the Hertford Theatre Team when they decant to the ground floor in the old building at Wallfields as work commences on the redevelopment of the Theatre. The Health and Safety Officer will continue to liaise with the team as they develop plans for the provision of public events.

12.0 Police and Crime Commissioner and County Council Elections

12.1 The Health and Safety Officer supported the Elections Team in preparations to get polling stations and the elections count centre covid secure. The Health and Safety Officer acting as Polling Station Inspector (Health and Safety) provided support to develop site risk assessments and identify measures to ensure the election process took place with as minimal disruption as possible.

13.0 Agile Working Programme/COVID Protocols

13.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been working with Leadership Team and Heads of Service in the development of the Agile Working Trial that commenced on the 19th April.

- 13.2 In order to maintain covid security desks are bookable using Skedda a system used by Launchpad to book a desk. Authorised users log onto Skedda and can select a desk from the floor plans and allocated desks displayed, this controls bookings and provides data on use. Staff fully based in the office still have a desk/workstation allocated, all other workstations designated need to be booked per day with before and after use cleaning protocols in place.
- 13.3 Workstations have supplies of hand sanitiser and hard surface wipes to allow users to clean desks before and after use.
- 13.4 Users that require workstation modifications, adapted furniture, equipment and chairs will not participate in the first trial. The trial will be used to determine the viability of the programme and how users with specific needs are accommodated.
- 13.5 There continue to be strict coronavirus protocols that must be adhered to such as one way systems, restricted limits on numbers in shared rooms, use of the kitchens and toilets and entering and leaving the building, these were reviewed and strengthened for the trial and to deal with increased use. A key development in line with the Government's roll out of Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) has been added with the use of twice weekly LFT by staff who are accessing the office or working away from home. The intranet (Wallfields Risk assessment, Office Protocols and Reporting Symptoms/positive LFT) has been updated as well as shared with relevant staff through a briefing. Other risk assessments have been updated to incorporate twice weekly LFT as appropriate e.g. for staff who visit customers (Planning Officers, Outside Officers, Environmental Health Officers etc.)
- 13.6 Public access to Wallfields will continue to be controlled, an appointment system is place for reception/face to face appointments. Public attendance in large numbers is currently

not permitted. The Council chamber social distancing measures remain in place at 2 meters with limited numbers as to reduce this would then require all attendees to wear a face mask or screens being put in place because of the reduced distance between participants required. Now that virtual meetings are no longer allowed this will be reviewed and plans put in place. All meetings except full council should be able to be accommodated in the chamber, alternatives are being considered for full council alongside further mitigation that could be used to reduce to 1m social distancing in the Wallfields chamber to accommodate full numbers including the public. The Chamber has been being used for postal votes as part of the election work with COVID measure including screens in place.

14.0 Enforcement and Licensing Interviews

14.1 The Health and Safety Officer assisted the Area Environment Inspection Officer to reconfigure interview room 3 at Wallfields to allow for the undertaking of interviews under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and the Regulatory and Investigative Powers Act (RIPA). The room has been made covid secure with a dividing screen between the officers and the interviewees and allows for the recording of interviews in accordance with the acts.

14.2 The room can also be used by the Licensing Enforcement Teams for interviews as well as the Revenues and Benefits Teams and by making these changes the Council avoids the costs of hiring an interview room at the local police station.

15.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and future events

15.1 The Health and Safety Officer reviewed and updated the e-learning health and safety content for Skillsbuild the Council's e-

learning platform. Revised versions were launched in December 2020.

15.2 The following training sessions have been delivered virtually;

14 January 2021 – Asbestos Awareness

26 January 2021 – Project Risk Management

02nd February 2021 – Legionella Risk Management

15.3 The first of the First Aid at Work 2 day refresher courses have been booked for the 12th and 13th May 2021 in accordance with the Health and Safety Executives guidance and training directive.,

15.4 As lockdown restrictions are further 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, Future H&S refresher/new starter events to be rescheduled include:

- First Aid at Work (Qualifier) 3 day certification course
- Defibrillator Awareness and Refresher
- Evacuation Chair Operator

16.0 Options

N/A

17.0 Risks

17.1 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.

18.0 Implications/Consultations

N/A

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

Yes - Health and Safety practice, reporting and monitoring is in place

to comply with legal requirements and the report has been reviewed by LT which includes the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Specific Wards

No

19.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety – Annual Report April 2020 – March 2021

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) To consider the Health and Safety – Annual Report for April 2020 to March 2021 and provide comments to the Head of HR & OD and the Health and Safety Officer.
- (b) To agree that the Health and Safety Officer combines the Q4 report H&S with the Annual report next year as suggested by the Leadership Team to reduce duplication.

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report sets out a summary of Health and Safety annual activities and project work from April 2020 – March 2021.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Commitment to Health and Safety has remained strong and further re-enforced as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Health and Safety Officer has continued to build, support

and further develop Health and Safety throughout the organisation in 2020/2021.

- 2.2 This report has been considered by the Leadership Team before being submitted and will also be sent to the Executive including the Portfolio Holder for information and to ensure awareness.

3.0 Annual Accident Data

3.1 Accident data Accident Totals 01 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

Year	2020											2021			
Month	Apr	Ma y	Jun	Ju l	Au g	Sept	Oct	No v	De c		Jan	Fe b	Mar	TOTA L	
Staff Non Reportable Accidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Staff Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	1	
Non Reportable Accidents involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013 involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents to Contractors Guests / Visitor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents at the 5 Swimming Pools and Gyms	0	0	0	0	0	6	13	2	3		0	0	0	24*	
TOTAL 20/21	0	0	1	0	0	6	13	2	3		0	0	0	25*	

* Swimming Pools and Gyms were open for a short period between September 2020 and December 2020 prior to the start of the second Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic lockdown.

- 3.2 All accidents that occurred during this period have been reviewed and where appropriate follow up action taken. We can confirm there has been no unusual increase, abnormal patterns or traits identified.
- 3.3 There was one accident reportable under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR), on investigation there was no fault or failure of equipment but a procedural oversight was identified. Following the incident lone workers have been reminded that they should carry the lone worker device at all times. As a result of this the Health and safety Officer will be proposing that where issued the use of the lone worker device in lone working circumstances is a mandatory requirement.
- 3.4 Levels of accidents are not really comparable to the previous year (2019/20) see below, as there has been a significant reduction from the total of 199 (2019/20) to only 25 (20/21). This reduction is explained by the closure of the pools in March 2020, with a limited opening in October 2020 and then further closure until April 2021, the accident figures have also reduced by staff working alone at home. Average monthly accidents in the pools/leisure centres are around 17-18 per month meaning this figure would be expected to around 200 if it was in line, the limited openings and restricted numbers meant this average would reduce significantly and we can see in October 2020 it was 13 accidents which is lower than average but this is explained by limited customer numbers.

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

Year	2019											2020			
Month	Apr	Ma y	Jun	Ju l	Au g	Sept	Oct	No v	De c		Jan	Fe b	Mar	TOTA L	
Staff Non Reportable Accidents	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	0		0	0	0	6	
Staff Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0		0	1	1	5	
Reportable Accidents under RIDDOR 2013 involving Members of the Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents to Contractors Guests / Visitor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	
Non Reportable Accidents at the 5 Swimming Pools and Gyms	16	22	18	21	10	18	21	16	14		14	18	See Note *	188	
TOTAL 19/20	16	22	19	22	11	20	25	16	14		14	19	1	199	

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

- 3.5 Historically the benchmarking against accidents per 10,000 visits provides a degree of rationality, with the monthly accidents around half terms typically seeing a higher rate of accident per 10K visits.
- 3.6 For 2020-21 accident numbers are well below historical performance, this has been significantly affected by Covid-19 and the closure of the facilities. This has meant the cessation of school holiday activities or half terms along with school swimming lessons which are typically more younger users where we see higher accident levels due to the nature of the activities (fun swimming sessions, pool inflatable session for example) they participate in, compared to other user groups.
- 3.7 An analysis provided by the Leisure & Parks Development Officer of a sample of 18 accident reports from 2020 explains the following; 4 are down as natural causes which range from feeling unwell after finishing swimming session and a number of nose bleeds. 2 sporting injuries were during swim club sessions, where on 1 occasion a participant injured their wrist when racing and on 2nd occasion the participant's skill execution during a tumble turn caused them to hit the poolside. From remaining 12 accidents that are classed as "other type," there was 1 accident involving a swimmer getting into difficulty in the pool and required assistance in the water. There were 5 cuts which when reviewed 3 cuts were as result of tiles around the poolside, where these incidents occur we assess, review and complete remedial works to prevent any further issues. The remaining 2 cuts are result of skill execution errors where participants have not exited the pool correctly and have cut shins or elbows where they knocked these areas when trying to

exit the pool. The remaining 6 are contact injuries, which do not necessarily show a pattern, an example of some of these accidents are; Injured Person (IP) was tripped by school pupil; IP jumped off benches in spectator area and bumped knee whilst under parental supervision; After exiting the shower there was some playful behaviour and the young boy slipped; Child ran through wet changing room and slipped over, whilst under parental supervision.

3.8 Benchmarking Data – not available this year, focus has been risk assessments and responding to the COVID Pandemic.

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

4.0 Annual Risk Assessments

4.1 The annual risk assessment review was undertaken and all services Risk Assessments have been completed and published on the intranet.

4.2 The Health and Safety Officer is reviewing the corporate risk assessments in order to reflect current covid arrangements and the Agile Working Programme.

Table of Completed Risk Assessments 2020/21

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

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

5.0 Health and Safety Policy

- 5.1 In 2020/21 the review of operational health and safety policy arrangements was completed. Policies are approved by LT and the Safety Committee which includes Unison. All updated policies have been published on the intranet

6.0 Display Screen Equipment and Workstation assessments

- 6.1 The Health and Safety Officer supported all staff to undertake Display Screen and Workstation Assessments in their home set up and supported adjustments where appropriate. The H&S Officer will be preparing for the next review of Display Screen and Workstation Assessments in June 2021.
- 6.2 All staff including new starters will be issued with the self-assessment questionnaire. The aim of the review will form part

of the Agile Working Programme implemented in April 2021 and to review the impact of coronavirus on home working,

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

7.1 During the period 1 April 2020 to 31st March 2021 three Health and Safety Training courses were successfully delivered using Zoom:

Event/Course	No of participants
Asbestos Awareness and Management	12
Project Risk Management	14
Legionella Risk Management	11
TOTAL Participants	37

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

7.3 Current future events planned include but not limited to:

- First Aid at Work (Refresher) 2 day
- First Aid at Work (Qualification) 3 day
- Defibrillator Awareness and Refresher
- Evacuation Chair User

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

- Health and Safety in the Workplace. All staff – new starters and annual refresher.
- Lone Working for all staff who are designated as lone

workers

- Display Screen Equipment & Workstation Safety all new starters and support for DSE reviews.

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

8.0 Contract Management and Compliance

8.1 The Health and Safety Officer is pleased to report that there has been a positive uptake and engagement with Contract Managers who are now attendees of the Councils Safety Committee providing feedback on the main projects being undertaken which includes;

- Contract management overseeing the new build Grange Paddocks Swimming Pool and Gym
- Hartham Swimming Pool and Gym refurbishment
- Shared Waste Services Contract and the increase in residual waste now being collected
- Parks and Open Spaces – Play Area Developments
 - Hartham Common Play Area
 - Trinity Close Play Area, Bishops Stortford
- Hertford Theatre Redevelopment
- Northgate End and Old River Lane Development

8.2 The Health and Safety Officer will continue to work closely with contract managers and providers for the high risk services being delivered;

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

to the review of health and safety arrangements

The key contract areas include;

- The Sport and Leisure Management contract for the management of the five swimming pools/leisure centres in the district.
- The Grounds Maintenance Contract operated by Glendale.
- The Shared Waste Services Contract

8.3 Heads of Service and Service Managers are required to ensure that any new contract is identified to the Health and Safety Officer during the specification stage to ensure H&S elements are considered and documented.

9.0 Safety Committee

9.1 The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development has actively supported raising the profile of health and safety and has continued to be the permanent chair of the Safety Committee.

9.2 This included a review of how the Committee functioned and reported matters, the quarterly reports are now discussed at draft stage by the committee before being submitted. Reports are then submitted to the Leadership Team for consideration before being submitted to the Human Resources Committee and also shared with the Executive (including the portfolio holder) for information to ensure full awareness and accountability.

9.3 The membership has also been extended to include the Major Project Manager and Contract Managers from Operations to ensure feedback on the main outsourced contracts for the Swimming Pools, Grounds Maintenance and Shared Waste Service. Membership continues to have Unison representation,

the Service Manager for Environmental Health as well as the Insurance and Risk Business Advisor.

10.0 Lone working Solution – Contract Renewal

- 10.1 The Health and Safety Officer, East Herts is the lead project manager for the procurement of a Lone Working Service Provider. The existing contract has expired but has maintained/extended throughout the coronavirus pandemic to ensure safety continuity.
- 10.2 The procurement exercise is being undertaken in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to seek a single provider but operate two separate operational contracts.
- 10.3 In March 2021 the Health and Safety Officer arranged and co-ordinated 4 pre-market engagement presentations with lone worker solution providers through the Procurement for Housing Framework. The meetings were attended by East Herts and Stevenage Council stakeholders in person or via Zoom.
- 10.4 Providers gave a practical presentation on the service delivery and product range and answered questions from stakeholders.
- 10.5 The Health and Safety Officer and lead officer for Stevenage have now finalised the contract specification and quality question set and through Procurement have arranged to test the service providers management portals.
- 10.6 The Health and Safety Officer and lead officer for Stevenage Borough Council will liaise with each other over the lifetime of the contract to discuss performance and value in the service in conjunction with stakeholders and the service provider.

11.0 Defibrillator

- 11.1 Face to face cardiac and defibrillator awareness training will be delivered as soon as the current situation with Covid-19 allows. In the meantime the first aiders are trained in the basics of how to use the machine and the machine also guides users through voice instructions.

12.0 Benchmarking

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

12.3 Results

- 12.3.1 EELGA has 50 member Councils, unfortunately only 7 authorities responded to the survey last year and responses were difficult to compare.
- 12.3.2 It was not possible to gain additional responses for 20/21 and it appears restrictions from COVID have made this more challenging this year but we will continue to explore options of benchmarking with neighbouring authorities and seek a benchmark to compare with next year.
- 12.3.3 There may be difficulties comparing data due to the different ways authorities manage their services e.g. Stevenage Borough Council still have Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance in house in addition to Housing.

13.0 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbots

13.1 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbots, formerly Thele House has undergone extensive upgrades and improvements to bring it in line with regulations governing temporary residential accommodation. New fire safety equipment has been installed with a new fire detection system, the boilers have been replaced and the water storage tanks have been replaced. The adjoining Annexe and Cedar Cottage have also undergone extensive remodelling for use by highly vulnerable homeless persons with high dependency issues, mental health needs etc. In order to ensure privacy the two buildings have been fenced in order to prevent children from disturbing residents. The garage/store has been converted into an office for the Hostel Officer who can access both buildings.

13.2 The Health and Safety Officer, Corporate Property Services Manager, Property Services Team accompanied by the Homeless Services Manager and Service Manager have carried out site visits throughout the development to identify snagging issues.

13.3 The development consists of:

- 11 Apartments in Rectory Hall
- 4 Rooms in the Annexe
- 2 Rooms in Cedar Cottage
- An office and meeting room for the onsite Hostel Officer

14.0 Hertford Theatre

14.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been working with the team at Hertford Theatre as they prepare to decant to Wallfields while work is carried out on the redevelopment of the theatre.

- 14.2 The Health and Safety met with the Front of House Manager to discuss the timetable for relocating to Wallfields and covered the following issues;

Theatre will be closing to the public on the 07th June 2021

Phase 1 Decant Period: 07.06.21 – 28.06.21

- Begin process of moving to Wallfields.

28.06.2021 – 30.07.2021

- Back of House Asbestos removal commences.
- Front of House clearance undertaken.

07.06.2021 – 27.06.2021

- All equipment to be decanted

28.06.2021 - CLOSURE

30.07.2021

- HANDOVER
Contractor takes responsibility for building.

15.0 Buntingford Service Centre

- 15.1 Site re-lining was undertaken and completed in December 2020, however due to a defective batch of line marking paint the surface material lifted this was at first thought to be an isolated incident but was later attributed to the same failure at one of the Councils pay and display car park with a further failure on a site outside of East Herts. The company have undertaken to prepare and reline the two sites.
- 15.2 The Health and safety Officer, submitted premises safety documents to Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Services County Fire Protection and Safety Team for consideration and these

have been approved. The documents will be installed in a Premises Information Box (PIB), this is a weather and tamper proof box that is fitted to the exterior of a building and contains safety information pertinent for the use by the Fire Service, it contains the details of the building layout, site layout, location of hazardous chemicals and materials, position of nearest fire hydrant and mains water and electricity and gas supplies. Once finalised these will be placed in the premises information box and the documents will be used as the template for additional Premises Information Boxes to be installed at Wallfields, Charringtons House, Hertford Theatre, Hillcrest and Rectory Hall Hostels.

- 15.3 The Health and Safety Officer can report that all contractors on site are maintaining robust Covid secure operating procedures on site and in the public domain. Urbaser are the designated lead and contact for co-ordinating Covid secure measures at Buntingford and appropriate covid safe signage is being displayed.

16.0 Police and Crime Commissioner and County Council Elections

- 16.1 The Health and Safety Officer supported the Elections Team in preparations to get polling stations and the elections count centre covid secure. The Health and Safety Officer acting as Polling Station Inspector (Health and Safety) provided support to develop site risk assessments and identify measures to ensure the election process took place with as minimal disruption as possible.

17.0 Agile Working Programme

- 17.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been working with Leadership Team and Heads of Service in the development of the Agile Working Trial that commenced on the 19th April.

- 17.2 In order to maintain covid security desks are bookable using Skedda a system used by Launchpad to book a desk. Authorised users log onto Skedda and can select a desk from the floor plans and allocated desks displayed.
- 17.3 Workstations have supplies of hand sanitiser and hard surface wipes to allow users to clean desks before and after use.
- 17.4 Users that require workstation modifications, adapted furniture, equipment and chairs will not participate in the first trial. The trial will be used to determine the viability of the programme and how users with specific needs are accommodated.
- 17.5 There are still strict coronavirus protocols that must be adhered to such as one way systems, restricted limits on numbers in shared rooms, use of the kitchens and toilets and entering and leaving the building. This has been strengthened with the use of twice weekly lateral flow testing by staff who are accessing the office or working away from home.
- 17.6 Public access to Wallfields will be controlled and no public attendance in large numbers is permitted. The Council chamber social distancing measures remain in place at 2 meters as to reduce this would then require all attendees to wear a face mask because of the reduced distance between participants.

18.0 Enforcement and Licensing Interviews

- 18.1 The Health and Safety Officer assisted the Area Environment Inspection Officer to reconfigure interview room 3 at Wallfields to allow for the undertaking of interviews under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and the Regulatory and Investigative Powers Act (RIPA). The room has been made covid secure with a dividing screen between the officers and the interviewees and allows for the recording of interviews in

accordance with the acts.

- 18.2 The room can also be used by the Licensing Enforcement Teams for interviews as well as the Revenues and Benefits Teams and by making these changes the Council avoids the costs of hiring an interview room at the local police station.

19.0 Health and Wellbeing

- 19.1 The Health and Safety Officer has been supporting the Health and Housing Projects Officer on planning health and wellbeing checks for staff with the NHS, this has been a popular programme delivered over previous years. The Health and Safety Officer and Health and Housing Project Officer met with Rachel Cumming, Health Improvement Specialist, Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service.
- 19.2 Public Health Directorate to review arrangements for the schedule in July 2021.

20.0 Networking

- 20.1 The Health and Safety Officer is a member of a quarterly informal Hertfordshire Health and Safety Advisors Group.
- 20.2 The group consider legislation and regulations, good practice and acts as an information sharing body. In addition it allows the opportunity to share training opportunities and develop shared working and resources.
- 20.3 The Health and Safety Officer will be discussing benchmarking options with the group.

21.0 Options

N/A

22.0 Risks

Health and Safety is a clear risk area, the report sets out the work being done to manage such risks.

23.0 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

Yes - Health and Safety practice, reporting and monitoring is in place to comply with legal requirements and the report has been reviewed by LT which includes the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Specific Wards No

Background papers, appendices and other relevant material
N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January - March 2021)

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) **To consider the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January - March 2021) and provide any comments to the Head of HR and OD.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Leadership Team/Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January - March 2021).

2.0 Background

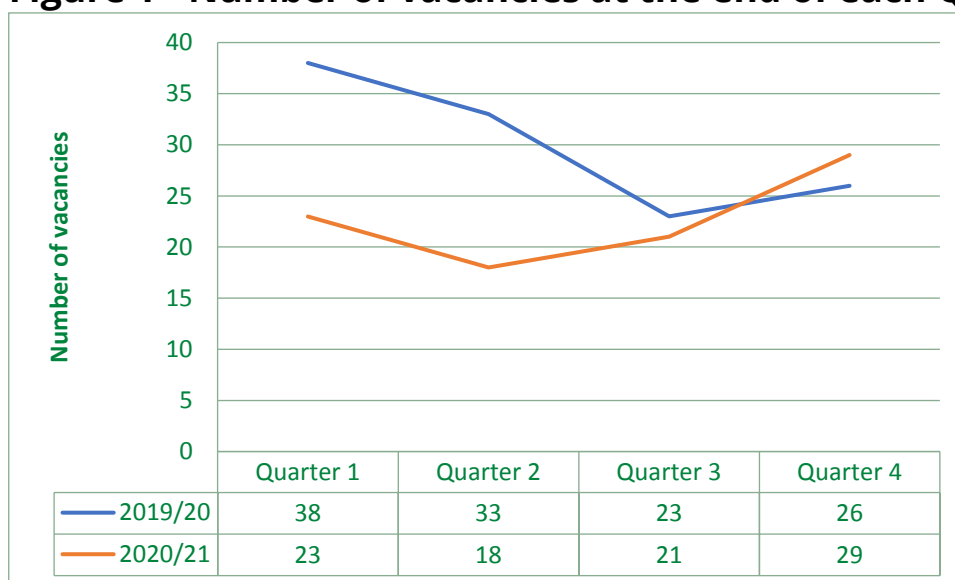
- 2.1 This report outlines the current performance against the annual HR targets as approved by the HR Committee and available benchmarking data.

3.0 Report

3.1 Vacancy Data and Recruitment

3.1.1 Figure 1 below shows that vacancies have increased from 23 in Quarter 3 to 29 at the end of Quarter 4 and are higher compared to the same period last year (26 vacancies at the end of Quarter 4 in 2019/20).

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



3.1.2 At the end of quarter 4, recruitment had progressed¹ for 6 out of the 29 vacancies (21%).

3.1.3 During Quarter 4, ten posts were advertised. Seven of the 29 posts (24%) have resulted in appointments. Two of the 29 posts (7%) had not yet closed at the end of the quarter. One post had not been successful and further options are being considered.

3.1.4 Twenty of the 29 posts (70%) were on hold. 10 posts are in Planning, 3 in Communications, Strategy and Policy, 2 in Strategic Finance and Property, 2 in Housing and Health, 1 in Operations, 1 in Revenues and Benefits, and 1 in Executive Support. The posts are being held due to reviews of the service

¹ 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.

structure and potential savings and are being covered by agency staff where required.

3.2 Employee Turnover

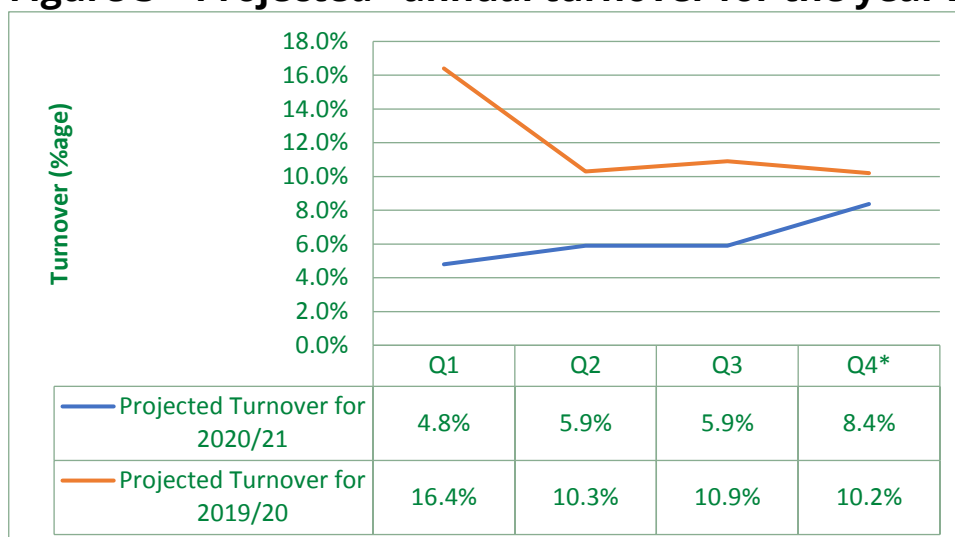
3.2.1 Figure 2 below shows that there were 13 leavers in Quarter 4 giving a turnover rate of 3.9% for the quarter which is an increase since Quarter 3 (1.5%). 5 of the 13 leavers in Quarter 4 were involuntary leavers due to redundancy (all were all Hertford Theatre staff).

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of Leavers	4	6	5	13
Turnover rate	1.2%	1.8%	1.5%	3.9%

3.2.2 Figure 3 shows the turnover projections that were estimated at the end of each quarter during 2020/21 with the exception of this quarter (Quarter 4) which shows actual turnover. Actual turnover at the end of Quarter 4 (for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021) is 8.4% which is lower than the same quarter in 2019/20 (10.2%) and 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



Q4* is *actual* turnover

3.3 Sickness Absence

ALL absence

ALL Absence – Quarter 4

3.3.1 At the end of Quarter 3, the total number of sickness days taken was 367.73 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 180.78 FTE days (49%) were due to short term sickness and 186.95 FTE days (51%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 0.97% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 1% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 1.97%.

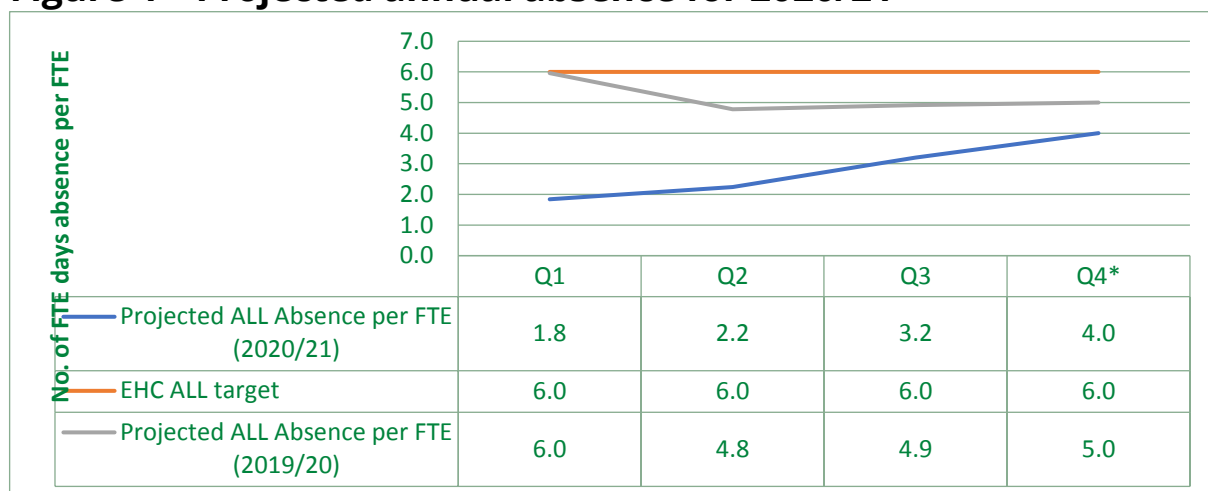
3.3.2 At the end of Quarter 4 (31 March 2021), the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 4.0 days.

ALL Absence - Annual period 2020/21

3.3.3 Sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 (4.0 days per FTE) is significantly below the council's annual target of 6 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (5 days per FTE in Quarter 4 in 2019/20). See Figure 4

below.

Figure 4 – Projected annual absence for 2020/21



Q4* is *actual* absence

Short term absence

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

Short term absence - Quarter 3

3.3.4 Fifty Four employees (16.1% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 3 totalling 180.78 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 0.97%.

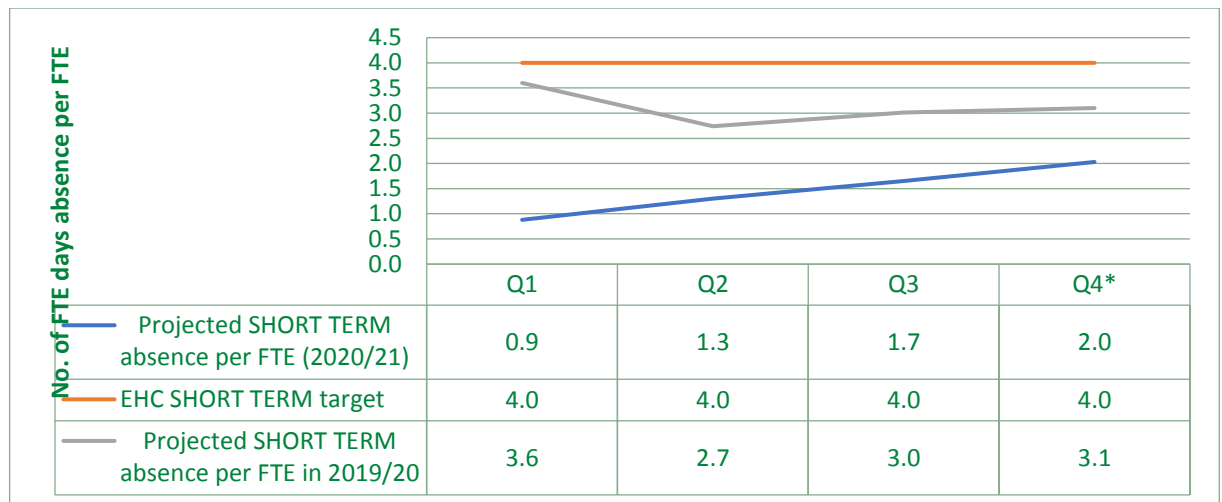
3.3.5 At the end of Quarter 3, the number of short term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 2.0 days.

Short term absence - Annual period 2020/21

3.3.6 Short term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 (2.0 days per FTE) is below the council's short term target of 4 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (3.1 days in Quarter 4 in 2019/20). Working from home has impacted on sickness absence in that staff are more willing to work whilst not feeling fully well as they don't need to

commute and can manage breaks/rest more easily. There has been an increase in Q3 and Q4 and some this relates to COVID and COVID Vaccinations which can result in 1-3 days of feeling unwell based on current experience. See Figure 5 below.

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



Long Term absence

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

Long term absence – Quarter 3

- 3.3.8 Six employees (1.8% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 3 totalling 186.95 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 1%.
- 3.3.9 The six employees have been offered support through referrals to Occupational Health/taking medical advice from Specialists where appropriate. The reasons for long term absence were for acute medical conditions (1 employee), reoccurring medical conditions (1 employee), minor illnesses (2 employees), work related stress (1 employee) and Covid (1 employee). The two employees with minor illnesses have now returned to work. The employee with Covid and the employee with work related stress returned to work shortly after the quarter ended. The 2

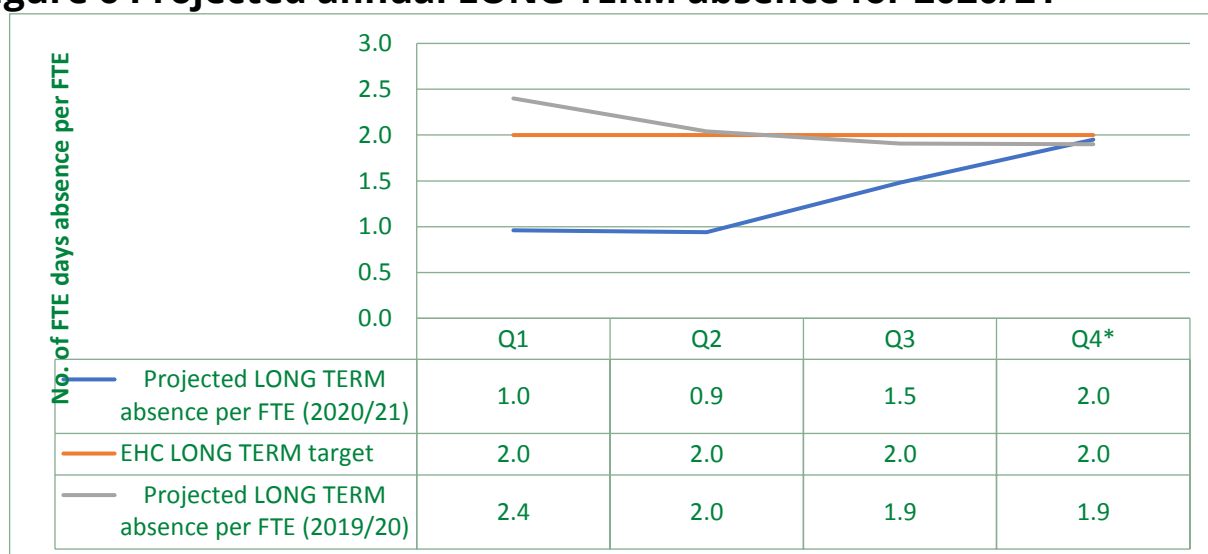
employees who remain absent are being supported by their manager under the Absence Management Policy.

- 3.3.10 At the end of Quarter 4, the number of long term FTE days absent per FTE was 2.0 days.

LONG TERM absence - Annual period 2020/21

- 3.3.11 Long term sickness absence for the whole year 2020/21 (1.5 days per FTE) is below the council's long term target of 2 days and lower than the projected annual level for the same period last year (1.9 days per FTE in Quarter 4 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 4 there were eight types of corporate learning and development events held over 14 sessions and 93 employees participated 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 Three more Performance Development Review (PDRs) training events were held for managers in February to capture the

managers who couldn't attend in December and to ensure the new managers were trained on the council's PDR process. The events were delivered in-house through Zoom.

3.4.3 A second pre-retirement course was delivered by Affinity. This course was delivered virtually through Microsoft Teams.

3.4.4 Three virtual events were held to ensure the council was health and safety and risk compliant:

- Asbestos Training
- Project Risk Management
- Legionella Risk Management

3.4.5 The annual PACE refresher (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) training took place in March and a date is being arranged for the RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000). These courses are run annually and the attendance is externally audited. This event was held over Zoom and delivered by an external provider.

3.4.6 Two corporate inductions took place in January and March welcoming our new starters to East Herts. These were virtual in-house events.

3.4.7 The roll out of the Corporate Sustainability and Climate Change Training commenced and is being delivered to all employees via Zoom, presented by David Thorogood and Helen Farrell.

3.4.8 Employees continue to complete the annual mandatory training programme through SkillsBuild, the council's e-learning platform. The following courses are available for employees to complete as part of their annual Performance Development Reviews (PDRs).

- Safeguarding 2020/21
- Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace 20/21

- Annual Health & Safety Refresher 2020/21
- Data Protection Briefing
- Lone Working (mandatory for lone working officers)

3.4.9 The OD & HR Co-ordinator continues to work with our training providers to ensure key training is delivered in a safe way.

Event/Course	No of participants	Number of sessions held
Pre-Retirement Course	10	1
Corporate Induction	09	2
Management PDR Sessions	08	3
Asbestos Training	12	1
Project Risk Management	14	1
Legionella Risk Management	11	1
PACE Refresher	05	1
Corporate Sustainability and Climate Change Training	24	4
Total	93	14

3.4.10 The OD & HR Officer has commenced the development work for the 2021 Electoral Training. An e-learning course will be

available for all poll clerks and a virtual course will be prepared and delivered in-house through Zoom for the presiding officers.

3.5 Equalities Monitoring Indicators

3.5.1 The table below shows a summary of equalities data for employees at the end of Quarter 4 (i.e. 31 March 2021).

3.5.2 Employees were asked to update their personal details on MyView in March 2021 and therefore the data below will reflect this.

	Comparison to population data	EHC Percentage
Disability		
Leadership Team with a disability	5% CENSUS 2011	0.0%
Employees with a disability	5% CENSUS 2011	4.6%
Ethnicity		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	10%
Employees from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	7.7%
Gender		
Leadership Team members who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	40%

Employees who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	73.7%
Sexual Orientation		
Leadership Team	2.1% ONS 2018	20%
Employees	2.1% ONS 2018	1.9%

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: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Annual Turnover Report 2020/2021

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) To consider the Annual Turnover Report 2020/2021 including the actions (in section 11.0) planned for 2021/22 and provide any comments to the Head of HR and OD.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Turnover Report 2020/2021.

2.0 Background

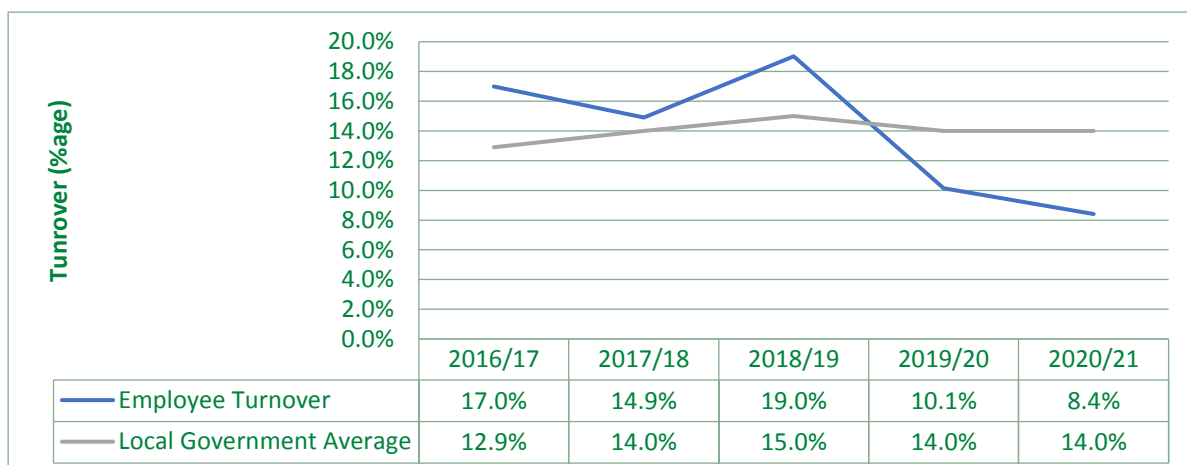
- 2.1 The council recognises that having a certain level of employee turnover is healthy. It can help maintain high levels of motivation and ensure fresh blood is injected to generate new ideas and working practices which will, in turn, help the council to grow.

- 2.2 The council monitors and reports on turnover on a quarterly basis in the HR Quarterly Statistics report which is also considered at Leadership Team and HR Committee.
- 2.3 The Annual Turnover report provides a more in-depth analysis of turnover data for the year. This report considers the period April 2020 to March 2021. It explores the reasons employees are leaving and whether there are any improvements the council could make.
- 2.4 The report includes benchmarking data against previous years and from other local authorities across England.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1 There were a total of 28 leavers in 2020/21: twenty one of those were voluntary leavers and seven were involuntary leavers, one whose temporary contract had come to an end and six who were made redundant.
- 3.2 Figure 1 below shows the council's turnover rate (for all leavers) over the last 5 years compared with the local government average. Global Turnover (both voluntary and involuntary) in the council in 2020/21 (8.4%) was the lowest it has been over the last 5 years and lower than the local government average (14% in 2018/19*).

Figure 1 – Annual Turnover trends



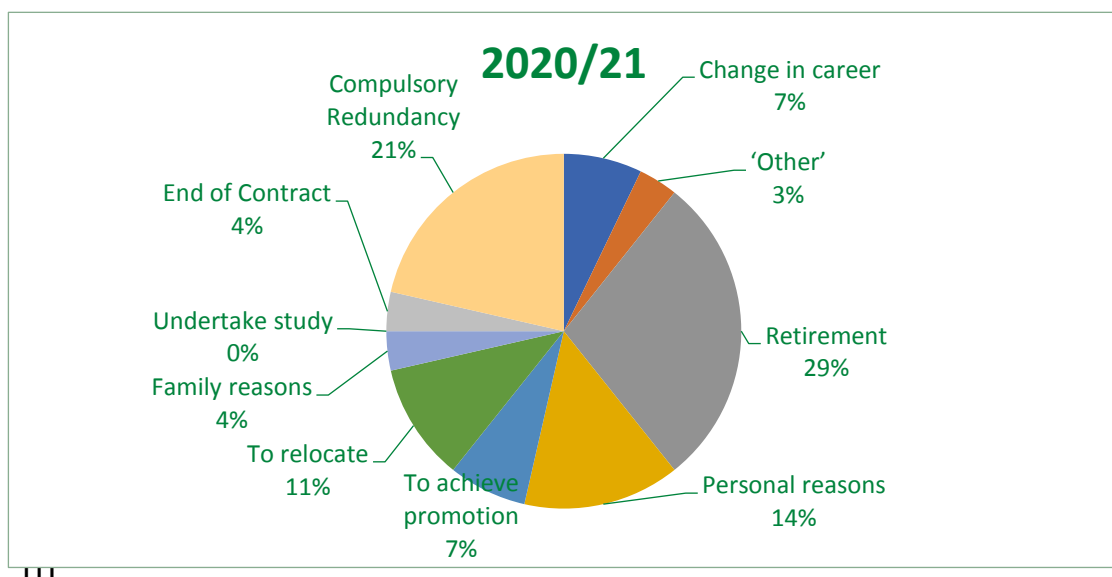
*The Local Government Average is the mean for all local authorities in England and is taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking -Workforce Metrics 2018/19' (the latest annual turnover data available at the time of writing the report).

- 3.3 Similarly, the voluntary turnover rate in 2020/21 (6.3%) was the lowest it has been over the last 5 years.

4.0 Reasons for Leaving

- 4.1 The reasons employees gave for leaving the council in 2020/21 can be found in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Reasons for leaving



The most common reason for leaving in 2020/21 was retirement (29%, 8 employees).

- 4.3 Retirement is very much a personal decision made by an employee and is largely outside the influence of the council. Employees are auto-enrolled in the Local Government Pension Scheme which is a much-valued scheme. The council has an older workforce and therefore retirement is likely to continue to be a common reason for leaving. The council has a flexible retirement policy which gives employees the potential option of reducing their hours whilst drawing their pension.

4.5 The second most common reason for employees leaving in 2020/21 was compulsory redundancy (21%, 6 employees). These are leavers who were made redundant for the impending closure of Hertford Theatre.

4.6 Four employees (14%) stated personal reasons for leaving.

5.0 Stability Rate

5.1 The council reports its stability rate to understand whether it is retaining employees in their first year of service.

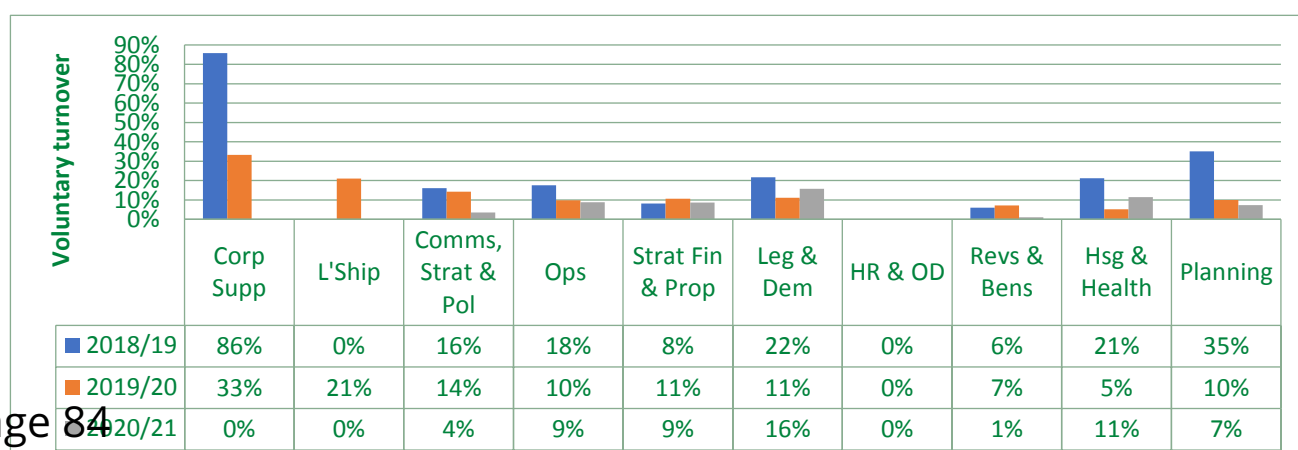
5.2 The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of leavers with 1 or more years' service by the total number of voluntary leavers (multiplied by 100 to express as a percentage).

5.3 In 2020/21 the council's stability rate was 90% which meets its target of 90%. This means that 7% of voluntary leavers (2 employees) had less than 1 years' service. 1 employee left for personal reasons (e.g. family responsibilities, to travel) and the other to achieve promotion.

6.0 Voluntary turnover in each service area

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

Figure 3 – Turnover in each service



Average headcount in 2020/21: Corp Supp – 2.5; L'Ship – 9.5; Comms, Strat & Pol – 28.5; Ops – 34; Strat Fin & Prop – 35; Leg & Dem – 19, HR & OD – 8; Revs & Bens – 97.5; Hsg & Health – 61; Planning – 41.

- 6.2 Turnover in 2020/21 has increased in 2 out of the 10 services since the previous year (Legal and Democratic, and Housing and Health) however the increases were small and were no cause for concern.
- 6.3 The Legal and Democratic Team had the highest turnover rate of 16% (3 employee).

7.0 Exit Questionnaire analysis

- 7.1 All voluntary leavers are asked to complete an exit questionnaire to help the council identify any improvements it could make e.g. to its policies and practices. The questionnaires are returned to HR however leavers are asked whether their feedback can be shared with their manager.
- 7.2 Just over half of voluntary leavers (57%, 16 out of 28 leavers) completed an exit questionnaire (this is a slight reduction on last year where 65% completed a questionnaire).
- 7.3 The key highlights from the exit questionnaires are as follows:
- 94% (15 employees) said that they would rate the council 7 or higher out of 10 as an employer (only 1 employee rated the council less than 5 out of 10);
 - 94% (15 employees) said they 'mostly' or 'completely' enjoyed working at the council;
 - 94% (15 employees) would recommend the council to others

as a good place to work (6%, 1 employee did not respond to this question

- 75% (12 employees) said that pay was 'good' or 'very good'. This remains the same as 2019/20 (75%). The improvement in pay scales in April 2019 has clearly has a continuing positive effect on how leavers view the council's pay;
- 69% (11 employees) said they agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that their pay and benefits were reasonable for the work and responsibility undertaken.
- 75% (12 employees) said that prospects for promotion/advancement were 'good'. This is a 35% increase from 2019/20. (19%, 3 employees said they were 'poor' and 6%, 1 employee did not answer the question). The council will continue to upskill employees through e.g. designing career graded posts, funding professional study, arranging training and development opportunities such as secondments;
- 100% (16 employees) said their relationship with their manager was either 'good' or 'excellent'.
- 100% (16 employees) said their relationships with colleagues were either 'good' or 'excellent';
- 94% (15 employees) agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that they had received adequate training/coaching;
- 94% (15 employees) said that flexible working options at the council were either 'good' or 'very good' (1 employee, 6% did not answer the question).

8.0 Vacancy rate

- 8.1 The council monitors its vacancy rate as this can have an impact on employee turnover e.g. employees may feel under additional pressure to cover the work of any vacant posts.
- 8.2 The vacancy rate in 2020/21 was 8.8% which is higher than in 2019/20 (7.7%) but significantly lower than the local government average (the mean for all English authorities was 15% in 2018/19).
- 8.3 As at 31 March 2020, there were 29 vacant posts across the council. Twenty (20) posts were on hold (e.g. pending job or structure reviews), and 9 were being actively recruited to. Clearly the number of posts on hold continues to impact on the vacancy rate.
- 8.4 Of the 20 posts on hold, 10 posts were in Planning, 3 in Communications, Strategy and Policy, 2 in Strategic Finance and Property, 2 in Housing and Health, 1 in Operations, 1 in Revenues and Benefits, and 1 in Executive Support. The posts are being held due to reviews of the service structure and potential savings and are being covered by agency staff where required.
- 8.5 The council has focussed on upskilling employees through introducing career graded posts and funding professional study as well as employing apprentices. Career graded posts allow the recruitment of candidates with more transferable skills which can then be developed.

9.0 Recruitment Costs

- 9.1 Recruitment costs have fallen in 2020/21 (£26,963 compared to £34,900 in 2019/20). Recruitment costs include external advertising costs, agency and search fees.

- 9.2 The cost per hire in 2021/21 is £963. This is lower than the UK average cost per hire of £1000 (CIPD Survey 2017).
- 9.3 The council has aimed to keep recruitment costs as low as possible by using social media platforms (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter), university job boards and advertising with the leading generalist job board 'Indeed' for an annual provision of job adverts (60 jobs across the year)

10.0 Actions taken in 2020/21 to improve recruitment and retention

10.1 Recruitment processes were reviewed

- 10.1.1 The 'Working for Us' page on the council's website was updated and improved to better promote the benefits of working for the council.
- 10.1.2 The council monitored the success of the new two part job application process. Candidates preferred the option to submit a CV and said this process 'was more straightforward and prevented duplication'.
- 10.1.3 From June 2020 the council advertised all jobs on the Indeed website (the largest online general job board) on a 1 year's trial basis. The package included a branded page giving the ability to promote the benefits of working for the council, can include case studies and videos, and employees/applicants can leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer.
- 10.1.4 We advertised 19 roles through indeed from July 2020 – March 2021 and received 144 applications. From this 63 (44 %) said they saw the advert from Indeed and 20 applicants (14 %) did not specify where they saw it. 7 (14%) of applicants shortlisted were from indeed. The figures are slightly skewed this year due to the pandemic, so therefore we are having a meeting to review the package and consider if the trial should be extended for a

further period or replaced with advertising packages on a range of websites through a new Applicant Tracking System (online Recruitment) provider.

10.1.5 The council's exit questionnaire form has been developed for 21/22 to increase the range of feedback from leavers.

10.3 Promotion of the council's health and wellbeing programme

10.4.1 The council has continued to promote its employee health and wellbeing programme, Live Well, Work Well. The programme has included NHS Health checks, Flu jab voucher campaign, Time to Talk Day promotion, and lunchtime health walks. A full list of events can be found in the Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2020/21. Positive feedback has been received from employees on the wellbeing programme being offered.

10.5 Staff Recognition Scheme

10.5.1 The council's Staff Recognition Scheme, which was launched in February 2019, has continued to reward employees throughout 2020/21 for excellent work or exceptional modelling of the council's values and behaviours. This is due to be reviewed in 2021/22 by the East Herts Together Group.

11.0 Actions planned for 2021/22 to improve recruitment and retention

11.1 East Herts Together Group will review the staff recognition scheme with LT and HR seeking to add annual awards and spread recognition further through categories.

11.2 Further develop wellbeing support and the wellbeing offer to help support resilience and improve retention (see Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 20-21).

- 11.3 Implement an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to manage online recruitment and on-boarding. This will allow name blind recruitment, fully online applications, online shortlisting, self-service interview booking and then support pre-employment checking/on boarding. This will improve the candidate and new starter experience as well as making the process easier for managers.
- 11.4 Review online advertising with Indeed, consider extending the provision or replacing with a multi-site advertising package linked to the ATS. Consideration will also be given to using Google Jobs which is potentially a free advertising source.
- 11.5 Following on from a recruitment webinar, a trial on hard to recruit posts will be undertaken in terms of shortlisting and interviewing throughout the recruitment process rather than waiting until the job closes, to ensure EHC don't lose out on skilled candidates who are in demand.
- 11.6 As part of the East Herts Together programme, core competencies are being developed to allow more transferable skills to be recognised in the selection process and to help develop staff further. Person Specifications were recently developed to include a commitment to safeguarding and welcoming diversity, core competences will be added once developed.
- 11.7 Employee case studies are being developed for the recruitment section online to show case progression and welcome diversity.
- 11.8 The recruitment policy and procedure has been developed to strengthen safer recruitment and support more flexible recruitment, this is due to approved by HR Committee at this meeting.
- 11.9 The 2020 staff survey had very positive responses, a number of actions were agreed by LT and East Herts Together to build on

improvements, which were shared at the last all staff briefings. These will be actioned and should also support retention and the employer brand re recruitment. Key actions include improving the PDR process for 2021/22 with competences and improved form, this will help with retention in terms of recognition and development.

12.0 Options

N/A

13.0 Risks

Recruitment and retention relate to corporate risk of Staff capacity and skills to deliver services meaning it is an important area to ensure is managed and developed. The reductions in turnover demonstrate the risk is being well managed currently.

14.0 Implications/Consultations

N/A

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

As covered in the report, practices must be in line with equality legislation and welcome and support diversity.

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As covered in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

15.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2020/21

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) To consider the annual Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2020/2021 including the actions (in section 8.0) planned for 2021/22 and provide any comments to the Head of HR and OD.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 HR Committee Members are invited to consider the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2020/21.

2.0 Background

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

3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 The Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2020/21 considers sickness absence levels across the council and compares them with previous years and benchmarking data. It also considers what the council can do to support employee health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 The council measures sickness absence in two ways: the number of full time equivalent (FTE) days absence per FTE employee and the percentage time lost due to absence.
- 3.3 The number of FTE days absence per FTE employee is calculated by dividing the number of FTE days sickness absence by the total number of FTE employees in the council.
- 3.4 Percentage time lost due to absence is calculated by dividing the total number of FTE days sickness absence by the total number of available working days.
- 3.5 This report breaks down absences into short and long term.
- 3.6 Comparisons have been made with local government averages which are taken from the LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19 (the latest report available at the time of writing this report). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey April 2021' has also been used to make comparisons with other organisations.

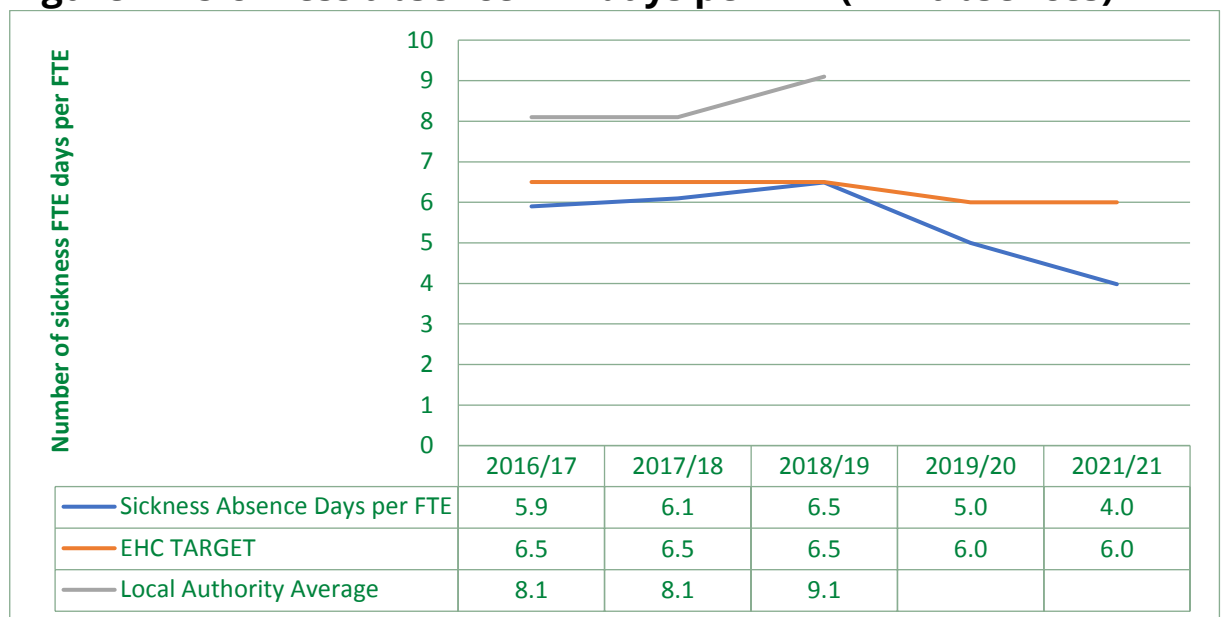
4.0 Sickness Absence Levels

4.1 ALL Absences

- 4.1.1 In 2020/21, the number of sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 4 days which is below the council's target of 6 days and lower than in 2019/20 (5 days). It is also lower than

the local government average in 2018/19 (9.1 days). Please see Figure 1 below.

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



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

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

4.1.2 The total number of days taken as sickness absence in 2020/21 was 1068.56 FTE days. Fifty-two percent (554.08 FTE days) of these were due to short term absence and 48% (514.48 FTE days) were due to long term absence. The total percentage time lost in 2020/21 due to all absences was 1.4%. This is lower than the local government average (4.9%).

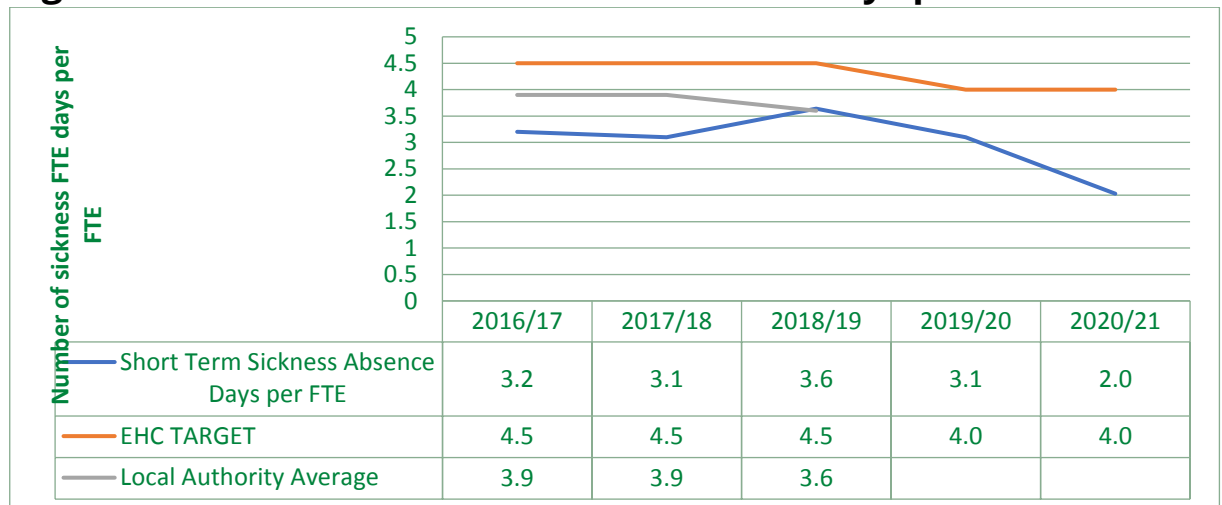
4.2 Short Term absence

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

4.2.2 In 2020/21, the number of short term sickness absence FTE

days per FTE employee was 2 days which is below the council's target of 4 days and lower than in 2019/20 (3.1 days). It is also lower than the local government average (3.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Short Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE



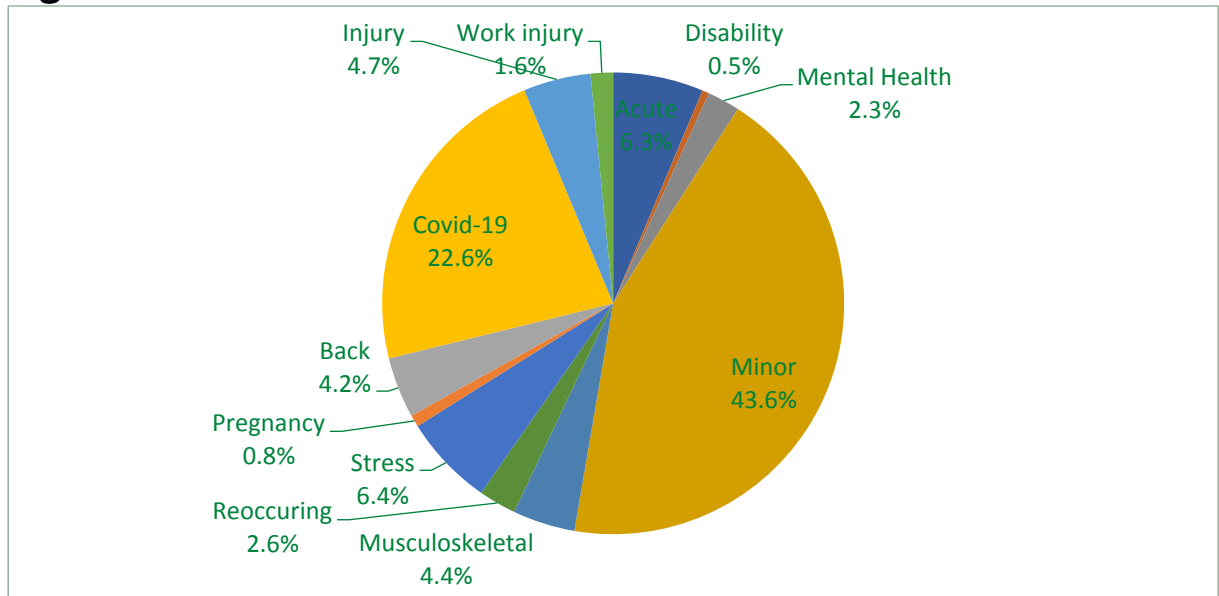
The council's short term absence target was reduced from 4.5 days to 4 days in April 2019.

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

4.2.3 The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness in 2020/21 was 0.75% which is lower than the local government average (2.6% in 2018/19).

4.2.4 Figure 3 below shows the causes of short term absence in 2020/21.

Figure 3 – Causes of Short Term absence in 2020/21



KEY:

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

4.2.5 The most common cause of short term absence in 2020/21 was minor illnesses, such as colds/flu, headaches/migraines, stomach upsets, and minor operations, accounting for 43.6% (82 employees) of all short term absences. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey April 2021' 88% of organisations responding to their survey reported that minor illnesses were in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.2.6 The second most common cause of short term absence was Covid-19, which accounted for 22.6% of all short term absences (17 employees). According to the CIPD Survey 39% of organisations responding to their survey reported that Covid-19 (including confirmed cases, self-isolation, quarantine and

shielding) was in their top three causes of short term absence. It is also worth noting that short-term absences ranging from 1-3 days have been seen in late Q3 and Q4 due to staff feeling unwell following a COVID Vaccination.

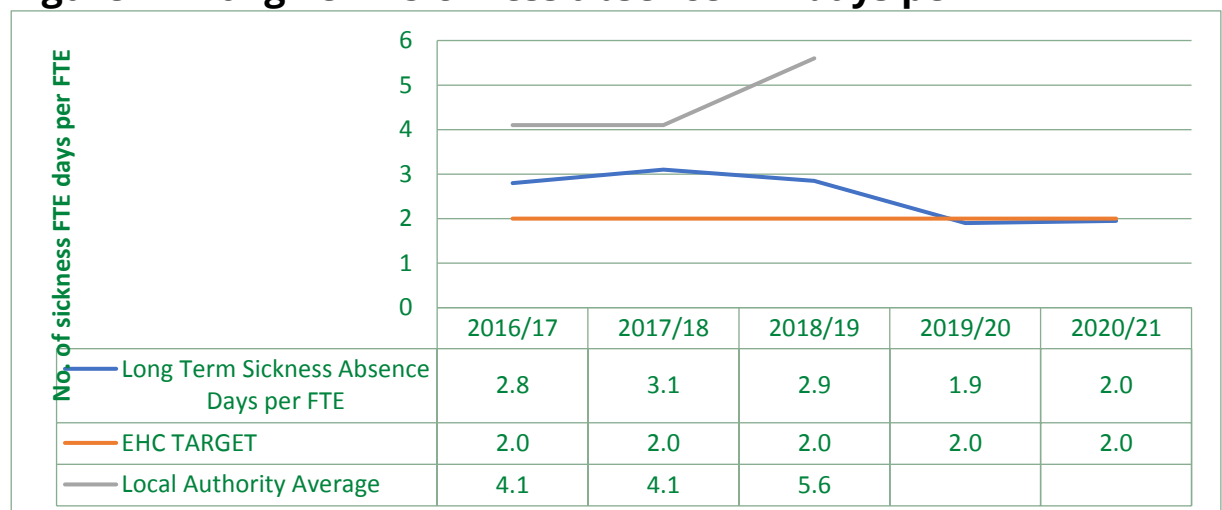
4.2.7 Stress was the third most common cause of short term absence accounting for 6.4% of all short term absences (5 employees). The CIPD Survey reported that 33% of organisations said that stress was in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.3 Long Term Absence

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

4.3.2 In 2020/21, the number of long term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 2 days which is the same as the council's target of 2 days and slightly higher than in 2019/20 (1.9 days). It is also lower than the local government average (5.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 – Long Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE



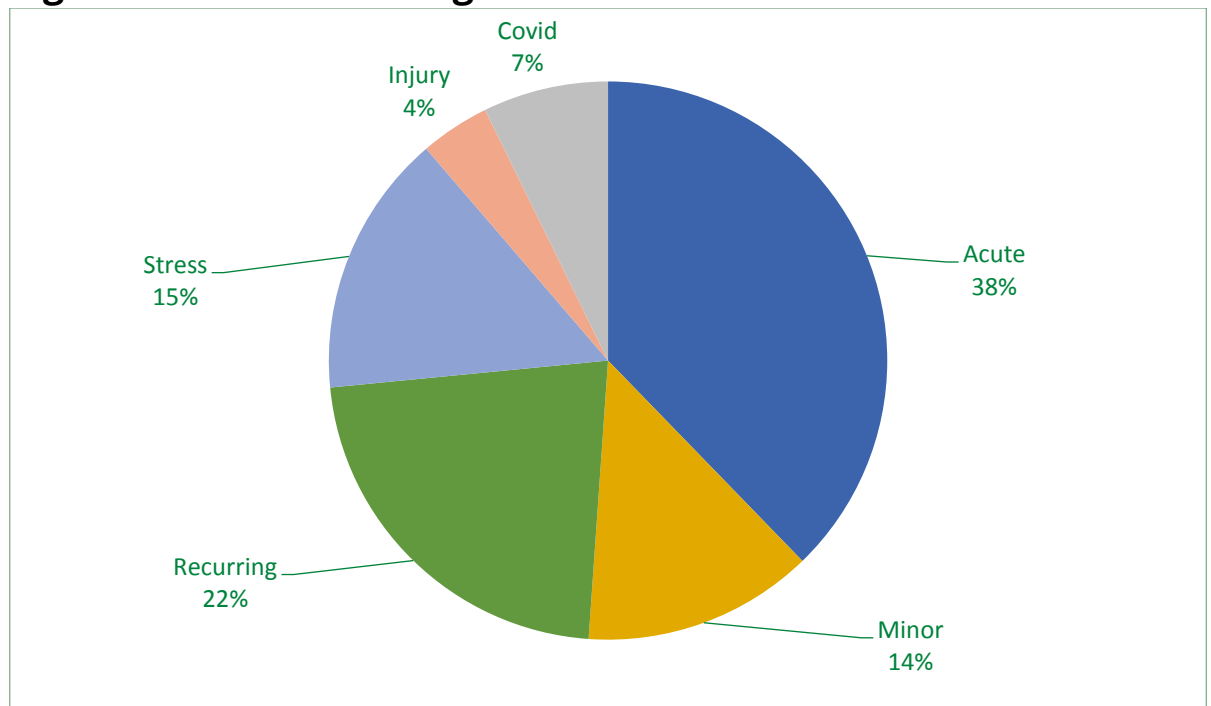
The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

4.3.3 The percentage of time lost due to long term sickness in

2020/21 was 0.7% which is lower than the local government average (2.3% in 2018/19).

4.3.4 Figure 5 below shows the causes of long term absence in 2020/21.

Figure 5 – Causes of Long Term absence in 2020/21



KEY:

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

4.3.5 The most common cause of long term absence was for acute reasons (e.g. stroke, heart attack and cancer). Two of the four employees have returned to work, one has taken retirement and the third remains absent and is receiving support through their manager, HR and Occupational Health. According to the CIPD Survey, 45% of organisations reported that acute reasons

were in their top three causes of long term absence.

4.3.7 The second most common cause of long term absence was recurring medical conditions, such as asthma, angina and allergies, which accounted for 22% of all long term absence (2 employees).

4.3.8 The third most common cause of long term absence was stress which accounted for 15% (1 employee) of all long term absence. The employee is receiving support from their manager and HR and is likely to be due back to work in April 2021 on a phased return to work. According to the CIPD Survey, 48% of organisations reported that stress was in their top three causes of long term absence.

5.0 How is the council addressing employee absence

5.1 Absences due to minor illnesses are mostly unavoidable. Managers hold return-to-work meetings with employees after every absence, provide support, monitor absences against the council's triggers and take the appropriate action in line with absence policy and procedures.

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

5.3 It is important that managers recognise the signs of stress at an early stage so that action can be taken to support employees. Employees experiencing stress are referred to the council's occupational health service where appropriate and are supported through a stress risk assessment. Managers use the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) stress risk assessment tool (with HR support) which looks at the key causes of stress (e.g. demands of the job, control over their work, support from their

manager and colleagues, relationships at work, the role, and organisational change) and identifies actions to help reduce the stress. Employees can also seek confidential support from the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

5.4 Absences due to Covid-19 were carefully monitored by HR and a special Covid-19 reason code was set up on the HR system to enable this. Monitoring also ensured that employees with Covid-19 (including those who were not absent but were well enough to be able to continue to work from home) did not attend the workplace without completing the full isolation period and thereby avoiding the potential spread of the virus to other employees.

5.4 Although absences due to mental health were low in 2020/21 (2.3% of all short term absences and 0% of all long term absences), the council recognises that there may be under-reporting in this area due to the perceived stigma of having mental health issues. The council has taken the following action to support employee mental health in 2020/21:

- Promotion of the support available from the council's trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs),
- Promotion of mental health awareness through events such as Time to Talk and mental health awareness week,
- Arranging lunchtime bitesize wellbeing sessions on topics such as mindfulness,
- Arranging Mental health awareness training for all managers (some sessions have been delayed due to Covid-19),
- Promotion of the mental health services available via Able Futures, the council's partner, which provides up to 9 months free mental health support for employees.

5.5 Managers and HR are supporting all employees with health issues through e.g. home visits, referrals to Occupational Health, undertaking stress risk assessments and implementing action plans, making adjustments to their work/workplace to

assist them in returning to work at the appropriate time, and offering flexible working.

6.0 Ongoing support for employee health and wellbeing

The council has a lot in place to support the health and wellbeing of its employees (for a full list please see the Employee Wellbeing Framework in Appendix 1) including:

6.1 Employee wellbeing programme, 'Live Well, Work Well' (LWWW)

6.1.1 The council has an employee wellbeing programme, 'Live Well, Work Well' (LWWW), which includes a variety of offers/activities to support employees' physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Community Wellbeing and Partnerships Team in conjunction with Human Resources develops and delivers a comprehensive programme of events each year to support employee health and wellbeing.

6.1.2 The LWWW programme, which was launched in 2018, has three overarching principles, to:

- support greater social interaction, thus strengthening informal support networks;
- provide practical help and advice in a fun and inclusive way;
- demonstrate employer care.

6.1.3 The programme runs each year from 1 April - 31 March and the wellbeing offers are intended to support chosen national awareness campaigns e.g. stress awareness month. Many offers are provided at no cost to the council however where a cost is incurred a small budget is sought from existing budgets before the programme is finalised. The vast majority of offers are free for employees.

6.1.4 The programme is refreshed each year taking into account:

- feedback from employees, for example from the 2020 Staff Survey and in the future will be from, for example Pulse Surveys and via Wellbeing Champions;
- national and local wellbeing initiatives throughout the year, for example Mental Health Awareness Week;
- activities already scheduled as part of the Healthy Hub East Herts programme;
- the success of previous events based on employee feedback and attendance levels;
- value for money of events;
- the diverse wellbeing needs and working patterns of employees;
- to cover a variety of wellbeing offers, for example mental, physical, financial health and wellbeing.

6.2 Wellbeing Hub

6.2.1 The council has a wellbeing hub on its intranet which provides a one stop place where employees can access wellbeing support. It is where employees are signposted to sources of support e.g. how to contact a Mental Health First Aider, access to support from the Samaritans, how to contact the employee assistance programme. It will also include upcoming events in the LWWW programme.

6.3 Wellbeing Centre on the MyRewards website

6.3.1 Through the council's contract with MyRewards, employees have access to the Wellbeing Centre on their website. Support includes free education, support and tools e.g. helping improve their quality of sleep, healthy recipes, online exercise programmes and advice on how to improve their financial wellbeing.

6.4 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

6.4.1 The council has continued to offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The service is 24/7, easy to access, confidential and free of charge. Employees have unlimited access to information, support and guidance on a wide range of topics including work/career, relationship/family, money management/debt and health/wellbeing.

6.5 Mental Health Support from Able Futures

6.5.1 The council actively promotes the services available from Able Futures which delivers the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

6.5.2 Employees (and family members provided they are in employment) who wish to access the service can receive 9 months of mental health support from a qualified professional called a Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC). The service is 100% confidential and employees can self-refer which means that they don't need to go through their manager or HR to access it.

6.5.3 A VRC will support the employee through providing information and advice on a range of issues; coaching and teaching on how to manage mental health difficulties; as well as help in accessing services. Able Futures is not a counselling, treatment or diagnostic service.

6.5.4 The support available via Able Futures is designed to help with a range of mental health issues which result from both inside and outside the workplace, including:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression

- Financial Management
- Bereavement

6.6 HR Officers continue to support managers in consistently and proactively managing sickness absence

6.6.1 HR Officers meet regularly with managers to ensure they are consistently and proactively managing sickness absence in their teams

7.0 Actions taken in 2020/21 to improve employee health and wellbeing

2020/21 was a difficult year due to the Coronavirus pandemic and therefore some of the scheduled wellbeing events were unable to take place face to face. Where possible, events were held virtually and where that wasn't possible they were cancelled or postponed. In addition to the ongoing support already mentioned in Sections 5 and 6 above, the council has achieved the following in 2020/21 to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees:

7.1 Promotion and delivery of the 2020/21 Live Well, Work Well Wellbeing programme.

7.1.1 A variety of events were held each month to support employee mental, physical and social wellbeing.

7.1.2 The national awareness campaigns that were supported and promoted included Stop Smoking Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, Diabetes Awareness, Talk to Us Month (promoting the local Samaritans), National Fitness Day (included finding out about and promoting Everyone Active staff discounts), Suicide Prevention Day, and Back Care Awareness.

7.1.3 Events included Everyone Active delivering a pilates taster session, Living Streets leading a guided health walk, and

lunchtime bitesize sessions were held on different days on Introduction to Wellbeing, Sleeping Soundly and Mindfulness.

7.2 Promotion of Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May 2020)

7.2.1 A series of articles were developed to appear in Connect each day during Mental Health Awareness Week to support employees during lockdown including:

Day : Introducing the theme of Kindness and how Able Futures can help support employee mental health;

Day 2: Promoting the role of the council's Mental Health First Aiders, how they can be contacted and their tips on managing wellbeing during lockdown;

Day 3: Highlighting how physical activity can improve mental health and promoting the council's various offers such as online yoga, online exercise videos on the MyRewards website, home workouts from Everyone Active, promotion of the Cycle to Work Scheme, and Virtual Walk and Talk events;

Day 4: Explaining why kindness was chosen as the year's theme by the Mental Health Foundation and three things you could do during the week to improve your mental health and wellbeing;

Day 5: Providing advice from the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neuroscience at the University of Oxford on how to improve sleep during lockdown.

7.3 Development of an Employee Wellbeing Framework

7.3.1 The council has developed an Employee Wellbeing Framework outlining the council's commitment to supporting employee wellbeing. Having a Framework ensures the council has a

joined up holistic approach to wellbeing.

7.3.2 The Framework compliments the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23 which outlines the council's commitment to helping the community to look after their health and wellbeing.

7.3.3 The aims of the Employee Wellbeing Framework are:

- to empower staff to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing;
- to create a wellbeing culture;
- for the council to be recognised as an employer that supports employee wellbeing, adding value to recruitment and retention.

7.4 Organisation of a Virtual Health and Wellbeing Week in December 2020

7.4.1 The council held its first virtual health and wellbeing week for staff in the week commencing 14 December 2020. The event was planned by members of the Live Well Work Well Steering Group. It was arranged in response to the difficult year during the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance of looking after our wellbeing.

7.4.2 There were a range of activities (22 in total) to choose from including a Christmas singalong and laughter yoga as well as physical activity sessions to get employees moving more. Most of the sessions were led by external organisations who were experts in the areas and all sessions could be done from employees' homes. Most of the sessions were between 30 to 40 minutes and were held during the lunchtime period however there were some sessions taking place at different times and some were slightly longer.

7.4.3 To encourage and support participation employees staff were

able to record their attendance (with the exception of the evening sessions) as work time as long as service provision was not affected and their manager had agreed.

7.5 Recruitment of Employee Wellbeing Champions

7.5.1 The recruitment of wellbeing champions has been delayed due to the pandemic however progress has been made in defining the role and outlining the plan to seek volunteers. Volunteers will be sought in April/May 2021.

7.5.2 The role of Wellbeing Champions will be to:

- represent their service on matters of employee wellbeing;
- input into wellbeing offers for the Live Well, Work Well programme;
- ensure employee wellbeing offers are promoted in their service area;
- play an active role in the Wellbeing Group which will include Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.

7.5.3 Wellbeing Champions will not require any formal training for their role. It is anticipated that some of the existing Mental Health First Aiders may wish to also become Wellbeing Champions.

7.6 To pledge publicly to support employee mental health

7.6.1 In 2019 the council had planned to sign the Time to Change Pledge however this has now been superseded by the Mental Health at Work commitment. The Commitment is based upon the Thriving at Work standards and is a set of actions that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their employees. Signing up to the Commitment is a way of declaring publicly that mental health at work is a priority for the council which will help support the council to become an

employer of choice.

7.6.2 The council has measures in place that mean it is likely that it already meets the six standards however the proposed framework sets out our commitment more clearly and joins up current/emerging practice. By signing the commitment, the council will also be able to access tools that will help identify potential improvement and access best practice.

7.6.3 The council will sign the commitment as soon as possible and will work on the actions throughout 2021/22.

7.7 Promotion campaign to support employees' financial wellbeing

7.7.1 In the lead up to Christmas 2020, several articles on financial wellbeing were written and appeared each week in Connect including:

Article 1: Advice from Citizens Advice East Herts on how to maximise income, minimise expenses, manage debts and budget plan, and their contact details for further support.

Article 2: Practical tips from the mental health charity, Mind, on managing money and improving mental health. The support available from the Samaritans was also provided for those struggling.

Article 3: Promotion of the various shopping discounts available for employees on the MyRewards website and signposting to financial advice on their website e.g. how to talk to your children about money when you're on a budget.

Article 4: Advice from Able Futures on managing money worries over Christmas.

7.8 The council's Sickness Absence Management Policy has been reviewed

7.8.1 The Absence Management Policy and procedure has been significantly redeveloped and was approved by HR Committee in February 2021. A reminder of the key changes are:

- It ensures greater consistency and a clearer framework which allows matters to move from short-term to long-term and vice-versa. HR will be rolling out management training on the new policy shortly.
- Short-term absence triggers have been changed from 7 days sickness absence within any twelve-month period and 3 separate periods of sickness absence in a 6 month period to 3 spells or more in any 3-month period, and/or where an employee has been absent for 10 days or more over the previous 12 months.
- Stress management guidance (which was an appendix in the previous policy) has been incorporated into the policy itself with addition of the stress risk assessment form to ensure transparency.
- An addition of 4-weekly face-to-face catch up (on top of weekly telephone calls) for long term sickness cases to ensure employees are supported appropriately.
- Makes it clear that employees should be referred to Occupational Health at the 4 week point for long-term sickness. The old policy was not as prescriptive to use Occupational Health but the medical opinion is best sought at this stage to inform reviews so is sought up front (this was a possible outcome at the informal stage if considered appropriate previously).

7.8.2 Managers will be trained on the new Sickness Absence

Management Policy shortly.

7.9 To review the impact of Covid-19 on employee wellbeing via a Wellbeing survey and put actions in place to support employees;

7.9.1 A Wellbeing Survey was developed by HR and sent to all employees in June 2020 to identify how they could be supported further whilst working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The response rate was excellent (89% of all staff completed the survey) and the results were very positive overall. Where staff experiences have not been so positive, managers with HR support contacted staff to follow up discussions and put further support in place.

7.9.2 The results of this survey were communicated in full to the HR Committee in August 2020 in the HR & Payroll Update Report.

7.9.3 Employees were also asked to respond to questions concerning their wellbeing as part of the Staff Survey in December 2020. The results on wellbeing were positive overall, actions were followed up as appropriate, and the findings were communicated in full to the HR Committee in February 2021 in the HR & Payroll Update Report.

8.0 Actions planned in 2021/22 to improve employee health and wellbeing, to:

- Deliver the Live Well, Work Well programme, seeking feedback from employees and input from the Wellbeing Champions (once recruited)
- Conduct another Wellbeing Survey c. June 2021 to ensure employees continue to be supported during the pandemic
- Seek volunteers to become Employee Wellbeing Champions

- Roll out management training on the new Sickness Absence Management policy.
- Review the council's Occupational Health Provider to find a more proactive provider in helping advise on complex cases and supporting employees back to work.
- Sign the Mental Health at Work Commitment and work towards demonstrating the actions within it
- Organise a further financial wellbeing promotion campaign in the lead up to Christmas
- Promote Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

9.0 Reason(s)

N/A

10.0 Options

N/A

11.0 Risks

The risks are that if wellbeing is not supported or managed that staff absences increase, staff resilience is weakened which affects the corporate risk: Staff capacity and skills to deliver services.

12.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As covered by the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

13.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix 1 - Employee Wellbeing Framework (this will be finalised with a statement from the Deputy CEO (as Wellbeing Sponsor) outlining commitment to employee wellbeing.)

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Employee Wellbeing Framework

[Include a statement from the Deputy CEO (as Wellbeing Sponsor) outlining commitment to employee wellbeing]

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Employee Wellbeing Framework outlines the council's commitment to helping and encouraging its employees to look after their wellbeing.
- 1.2 The Framework compliments the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23 which outlines the council's commitment to helping the community to look after their health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 Investing in employee wellbeing means more engaged and motivated employees, which in turn improves the customer service experience and the overall performance of the council.
- 1.4 The Framework supports:
 - the key themes of the council's HR and OD Strategy;
 - employees to model the council's values and behaviours – Here to help, We Work Together, and We Aim High;
 - increasing employee morale and engagement, a healthier and more inclusive/supportive workplace culture, and lower sickness absence/increased productivity to support delivery of the Corporate Plan (SEED – Sustainability at the heart of everything we do, Enabling our communities, Encouraging Economic Growth, and Digital by Design).

2. What is employee wellbeing?

- 2.1 The *East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23* states that:

“Wellbeing is closely connected to our health and is associated with a sense of purpose and contentment; it often relates to our values and beliefs. A sense of wellbeing can be experienced through a mix of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual wellbeing”.

2.2 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) says that:

“Fostering employee wellbeing is good for people and the organisation. Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals and organisations can thrive. Good health and wellbeing can be a core enabler of employee engagement and organisational performance”.

It adds that’s:

“Investing in employee wellbeing can lead to increased resilience, reduced sickness absence and higher performance and productivity”

2.3 The (CIPD) makes reference to the research undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which was commissioned by the Health Work Wellbeing Executive. The research “points to a wealth of evidence suggesting a positive link between the introduction of wellness programmes in the workplace and improved business key performance indicators”.

2.4 The CIPD added that “the research shows that health and wellbeing does not have to be treated as an ‘add-on’ or ‘nice-to-have’ activity by organisations – if employers place employee wellbeing at the centre of their business model and view it as the vital source of value creation, the dividends for organisational health can be significant”.

2.5 The CIPD's 2020 Health and wellbeing at work survey identified the top three benefits of employers increasing their focus on employee wellbeing:

- better employee morale and engagement;
- a healthier and more inclusive culture;
- lower sickness absence.

3. Aims of the Framework

3.1 The aims of the Framework are:

- to empower staff to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing;
- to create a wellbeing culture;
- for the council to be recognised as an employer that supports employee wellbeing, adding value to recruitment and retention.

4. How will the council support employee wellbeing?

4.1 The council has a lot in place to empower staff to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing. In addition to the Live Well, Work Well (LWWW) programme (see paragraphs 4-3 to 4.6) which is refreshed each year in response to, for example employee feedback and national and local awareness campaigns, the table below shows the key elements of support the council provides in relation to:

- Health (Mental, Physical, Financial and Social);
- Work (Work environment, Line management, Work demands, Pay and Reward);
- Values and Principles (Leadership, Ethical Standards);

- Personal Development (Career Development, Lifelong learning).

4.2 The support included in the table, and in the LWWW programme, demonstrates the council's commitment to creating a wellbeing culture. This in turn will help the council to be recognised as an employer that supports employee wellbeing, thus improving recruitment and retention.

Table 1 – Key elements of wellbeing support for employees

Key Area	Elements	Wellbeing Opportunities
Employee Health	Mental Health	Access to trained Mental Health First Aiders
		Mental Health Support from Able Futures
		Occupational Health Support
		Counselling via the Employee Assistance Programme
		Wellbeing Hub on the intranet for sources of support (for example Samaritans)
		Wellbeing Centre on MyRewards, for example access to articles and tools
		Stress Management including the use of the HSE Stress Risk Assessment Tool
		Mental Health training for Managers
		Bitesize sessions for employees, for example Mindfulness, sleeping well
		Promotion of local and national mental health awareness events, for example Time to Talk Day, Mental Health Awareness Week.
		Training managers to have difficult

		conversations
		Signed up to the Mental Health at Work Commitments
		Wellbeing Champions
		Buddy Scheme for new starters
	Physical Health	Cycle to Work Scheme
		Subsidised yoga classes
		Weekly lunchtime health walks
		Employees Badminton Club
		Onsite NHS Health Checks/Health MoTs
		Flu jab provision
		Health and wellbeing calendar of events and Health education information campaigns to promote and support both national and local initiatives
		Disability Confident Employer
		Occupational Health Support
		Subsidised leisure centre membership
		Supportive absence management, phased return to work, adaptations and adjustments to work environment
		Smoking cessation initiatives
	Financial	Financial support via the Employee Assistance Programme (for example debt management advice)
		Financial support and tools via the MyRewards Wellbeing Centre, for example budget calculator, money management advice
		Financial Wellbeing signposting, for

		example articles from Citizens Advice East Herts
		Pensions information workshops including pre-retirement seminars
	Social (sense of belonging)	Employee Volunteering Scheme
		Positive co-worker relationships
		Generous annual leave allowance
		Employee-led social responsibility events, for example Macmillan Cake sales, tree planting
		Encouragement of Self Organised Groups (SOG), for example carers group
		Celebrating different communities, for example Black History Month
		Dress down days
		Book swapping
		Give as You Earn
Work	Work Environment	Ergonomically designed working areas
		Breakout areas including a reflection room
		Kitchens with lunch making facilities and free tea and coffee
		IT system which supports agile working
		Risk Assessments
		Shower and changing facilities
		Safe Cycle Storage
	Line Management	Effective People Management Policies

		Regular one to ones
		Training for line managers
		Sickness Absence Management
		Participative management practices
	Work demands	Clear job roles and design
		Flexible working including start/finish times, part time and moving towards further agile working
		Culture of work/life balance
		Job satisfaction
		Based on output and not hours or 'presenteeism' culture
	Pay & Reward	Fair pay and benefits
		Employee Benefits Scheme
		Employee Recognition Scheme
		Employee Suggestion Scheme
		Performance Development Review Scheme
Values & Principles	Leadership	Clear corporate priorities
		Core values and behaviours (these are being developed)
		HR and Organisational Development Strategy
		Leadership Team and Senior Management Team
		East Herts Together group
		Trust Culture
		Open and approachable
		Workplace Wellbeing Plan

		Quarterly all staff employee Briefings
	Ethical Standards	Welcomes and supports equality and diversity, providing equal opportunities for all
		Social responsibility for example Dementia Friends training
		Disability Confident Employer
		Wellbeing Framework in place to support staff wellbeing and demonstrate commitment
		Clear values and behaviours
		Work experience and volunteering opportunities
		Commitment to sustainable practices
Personal Development	Career Development	Performance Development Plans
		Career Development
		Performance Management
		Work Experience
		Apprenticeship Programme
		Work placements
		Succession planning
		Secondments
		Training opportunities including e-learning
		Mentoring and Coaching
		Cross-service working groups
	Lifelong learning	Corporate Training Programme
		Flexible training programmes that meet current trends and changes
		Management Training

		Career opportunities
		Challenging and rewarding work

Live Well, Work Well (LWWW) programme

4.3 The council has an employee wellbeing programme, 'Live Well, Work Well' (LWWW), which includes a variety of offers/activities to support employee health and wellbeing.

4.4 The LWWW programme has three overarching principles, to:

- support greater social interaction, thus strengthening informal support networks;
- provide practical help and advice in a fun and inclusive way;
- demonstrate employer care.

4.5 The programme runs each year from 1 April - 31 March and is refreshed each year taking into account:

- feedback from employees, for example from the 2020 Staff Survey and in the future from, for example Pulse Surveys and via Wellbeing Champions;
- national and local wellbeing initiatives throughout the year, for example Mental Health Awareness Week;
- activities already scheduled as part of Healthy Hub East Herts;
- the success of previous events based on employee feedback and attendance levels;
- value for money of events;
- the diverse wellbeing needs and working patterns of employees;
- to cover a variety of wellbeing offers, for example mental, physical, financial.

- 4.6 The agreed programme for the year will be communicated to employees, for example via Connect and Team Update, and will be located on the Wellbeing Hub on the intranet.

Wellbeing Champions

- 4.7 The council will engage Wellbeing Champions from each service to help support employee wellbeing across the council.
- 4.8 The role of the Wellbeing Champions will be to:
- represent their service on matters of employee wellbeing;
 - input into wellbeing offers for the Live Well, Work Well programme;
 - ensure employee wellbeing offers are promoted in their service area;
 - play an active role in the Wellbeing Group which will include Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.
- 4.9 Wellbeing Champions will not require any formal training for their role. It is anticipated that some of the existing Mental Health First Aiders may wish to also become Wellbeing Champions.

Mental Health at Work Commitment

- 4.10 The council will sign the Mental Health at Work Commitment which is based upon the Thriving at Work standards and is a set of actions that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their employees. Signing up to the Commitment is a way of declaring publicly that mental health at work is a priority for the council which will help support the council to become an employer of choice.

4.11 The six standards are:

1. Prioritising mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity
2. Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes
3. Promote an open culture around mental health
4. Increase organisational confidence and capability
5. Provide mental health tools and support
6. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

4.12 The council has measures in place that mean it is likely to already meet the six standards however the proposed framework sets out the council's commitment more clearly and joins up current/emerging practice. By signing the commitment, the council will also be able to access tools that will help identify potential improvement and access best practice.

5. How will we measure the outcomes?

5.1 There are a number of ways of measuring the outcomes of this Framework such as:

- reduced absence especially in relation to work related stress;
- reduced accidents;
- low turnover/retention of talent;
- higher performance through the performance development review (PDR) process;
- reduced performance and people management issues;
- higher levels of customer satisfaction and feedback;
- feedback from employees via, for example, pulse surveys;

- feedback from employees on Live Well, Work Well events;
- increased employee engagement;
- greater participation in health and wellbeing initiatives offered;
- council recognised as an employer who supports employee wellbeing (e.g. demonstrated by employee testimonials);
- third parties offering to work with the council on wellbeing issues.

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Learning and Development Review 2020/21

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) To consider the Learning and Development Review for 2020/2021 and provide any comments.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The committee is asked to consider the learning and development undertaken in 2020/21 and provide comments to the Head of HR and OD.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The 2020/21 learning and development programme focussed on delivering a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate and individual needs in the most cost effective way.
- 2.2 The development needs were identified corporately, through individual PDR's and corporate projects.
- 2.3 Development opportunities were delivered by virtual facilitated

events, virtual mentoring, virtual coaching, webinars and e-learning due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19.

3.0 Report

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

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

	Budget 2020/21	Spend 2020/21	Budget 2021/22
Central/Corporate	£ 20,000	£11,197	£20,000
Service Training & Development	£ 60,860	£31,608	£50,620
Professional Training	£ 20,000	£9,126	£20,000
Health & Safety	£ 3,000	£1,019	£ 3,000
Total L & D Budget	£103,860	£52,950	£93,620

The total spend for learning and development corporately in 2020/21 was £52,950 an underspend of £50,910.

The central/corporate budget, service training and development budgets and health and safety budget were underspent due to the impact of the pandemic:

- Booked Face to Face events were initially cancelled to comply with the COVID restrictions.
- Training opportunities were initially limited as training providers adapted and changed their training delivery to virtual, e-learning or webinars.
- Practical (hands on) training was put on hold due to social

distancing restrictions.

- More internal courses were designed and delivered virtually through Zoom reducing the cost to the council.

The professional budget was underspent; three trainee professional qualifications were funded through the apprenticeship levy instead of being funded from the central professional budget. The total Apprenticeship Levy spend in 2021/21 was £15,338 which funded apprenticeship and trainee qualifications.

The average development cost per employee in 2020/21 was £158 (excluding apprentices) based on the headcount of 335 in April 2020.

3.2 Central Training Budget

The OD & HR Co-Ordinator continues to review any spending costs associated with the central training budget. The officer negotiates with training providers and contractors to improve the costs being charged for all events. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator consults with other local council's to arrange shared training to minimise costs, share learning and build relationships. The OD & HR Co-ordinator has continued to work with the Heads of Services and Senior Manager, designing and delivering internal events when appropriate and applicable. These events can be face to face, virtual or e-learning.

The 2020/21 Learning and Development programme was delivered by external facilitators, internal presenters, webinars and e-learning. These events are funded from the corporate training budget.

Employees are informed of training opportunities via email, individuals are approached directly when they have requested specific training in their PDR or there is training specific to their roles.

In 2020/21 216 delegates attended or participated in some form of face to face corporate or health and safety training (detail of the Health and Safety Training is included in the annual Health and Safety Report).

The table below shows the breakdown of the 29 events:

Event/Course	No of participants	Type/ Number of sessions held
Customer Service Complaints Process	8	2
Supplier GDPR Assurance Training	5	1
Members enquiry service	18	2
Introduction to wellbeing	8	1
Able Futures webinar	3	1
Mindfulness	6	1
Dementia Friend	6	1
Corporate Induction	22	4
Pre-Retirement Course	39	2
PDR Training for Managers	35	6
Asbestos Awareness	12	1
Project Risk Management	14	1
Legionella Risk Management	11	1
Sustainability and Climate Change	24	4
PACE Refresher	5	1
Total	216	29

The revised 2020/21 mandatory training programme

commenced in December 2020 and it was delivered through SkillsBuild the Council's e-learning platform. All employees, agency staff and new starters were asked to complete the e-learning courses. In total 889 'completed' training episodes were recorded between March 2020 and April 2021.

Course	Participants
Display screen equipment (DSE)	New starters
Micollab	New starters
Diversity and inclusion in the workplace 20/21	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Data Protection Briefing	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Annual Health and Safety Refresher 20/21	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Safeguarding 2020/21	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Lone Working 2020/21	For lone working officers
Working arrangements – Protecting you and others from coronavirus	Available to all employees

The OD & HR Co-Ordinator works with the Leadership Team, Senior Officers and East Herts Together to develop the e-learning programme to ensure the programme continues to

grow and is fit for purpose. The e-learning platform is funded from the central training budget.

3.3 Service Training and Development

The total service training and development budget for 2020/21 was £60,860, which was divided amongst the services for additional training and development. This budget is predominantly used for service specific training, one day conferences, seminars, training and team building events.

The budget breaks down to £182 per employee based on the employee head count on 1 April 2020 (335). The training and development budgets were managed by each Head of Service in 2020/21. In 2021/22 the training and development budget, revised to £50,620, will be managed centrally by the HR & OD Service. This will enable the training needs to be recorded and analysed to ensure all training needs and budgets costs are being met in the most appropriate way with sufficient spread for employees and the council.

3.4 Professional Training

The professional training budget was set at £20,000 for 2020/21 and was underspent by £10,874. The total budget was not spent as three trainee qualifications were eligible for funding through the Apprenticeship Levy, redirecting the costs.

The Council sponsored employees undertaking various vocational qualifications, which included:

- 2 x MSC Town Planning
- MSC Environmental Health
- BSc (Hons) Building Surveying

In addition to the corporate professional development budget the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services continued to sponsor four Officers towards gaining their IRRV qualification.

The qualifications were funded in 2019/20 and exams, costing £150, were funded in 2020/21. The exams were delayed due to the pandemic and they will be held in June 2021. The IRRV qualification and exam fees were funded from the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services' professional budget.

All employees funded for professional qualifications sign training agreements in line with the revised Organisational Development Policy; which allows the council to reclaim a percentage of funding if an employee leaves the Council within two years. The training agreements are held centrally in Human Resources.

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

3.5 Apprentices

The Council sponsored four apprenticeships and three trainees in 2020/21 from the Apprenticeship Levy:

- 2 x Town Planning – Level 3
- 2 x Business Administration Level 3
- 1 x Accountancy – Level 3 & 5
- 1 x Chartered Town Planner Degree – Level 7
- 1 x HR Consultant/Partner – Level 5

One new apprentice Customer Service Apprentice (Level 2) was employed in April 2021 and HR & OD Service will continue to work with managers and training providers to develop the Council's Apprenticeship Programme within the current limitations of COVID-19.

4.0 An overview of Learning and Development 2021/22

- 4.1 The learning and development needs for this year are being collated from the PDR's and the OD & HR Co-Ordinator will work

members of the Leadership Team to ensure the learning meets the needs of the council to deliver its priorities.

- 4.2 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will continue to support corporate projects such as sustainability, elections, safeguarding, and East Herts Together by designing and delivering training and presentations to help embed the projects throughout the Council, ensuring the best use of project budgets and resources.
- 4.3 The courses available on the e-learning platform will continue to be developed ensuring they are up to date and further courses will be designed and developed for Officers and Members to help implement policies and projects.

The OD & HR Co-Ordinator designs, creates and uploads the e-learning courses so each course is bespoke.

The Data Protection Briefing e-learning course was sold on to a college bringing in an income of £969. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator assisted in the rebranding of the course, setting up users, dealing with any signing on issues and producing completion reports for the college.

- 4.4 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator continues to work with all our training providers to review the way learning is delivered within the current COVID-19 guidelines so employees have a variety of development opportunities available to them.

Training will be delivered on line, virtually and face to face as we continue to develop and engage with staff. The range of delivery will give officers more options to access different training events and opportunities.

- 4.5 The Training and Development Policy has been revised and has been renamed; Organisational Development Policy this has ensured the policy is fit for purpose in 2021. The revised policy

is being considered for approval by HR Committee at this meeting.

- 4.6 In 2021/22 the organisational development intra-net pages will be reviewed to provide further information on the opportunities available to all employees.
- 4.7 The Council's Apprenticeship Programme will continue to be developed and reviewed. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will support the apprentices and managers during their apprenticeship and will work with the Leadership Team to review the programme taking into consideration the limitations of on-the-job training due to the current restrictions and the opportunities available through the Agile Working Scheme.
- 4.8 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will continue to review and revise the Corporate Induction programme to ensure it reflects the council and the services provided. The course was moved to a virtual environment during 2020/21 and received positive feedback from the participants.
- 4.9 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will continue explore options to share and develop learning with the Town and Parish Council's and other organisations where appropriate.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 None

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 None

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

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

Environmental Sustainability

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

Financial

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

Health and Safety

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

Human Resources

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

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes, the learning and development provision supports legal updates and compliance.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Employment Policies Developed Report x 5 (Capability, Flexible Working Request Scheme, Recruitment & Induction, Organisational Development and Appeals Policy), and Updates to Probation, Managing Absence and Disciplinary for Leadership Team (LT) members in line with Capability.

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) To approve the revised Capability Policy (Appendix 1), including the addition made as Appendix A to the policy setting out the procedure in flow charts
- (b) To approve the revised Flexible Working Request Scheme (Appendix 2)
- (c) To approve the revised Recruitment & Induction Policy (Appendix 3)
- (d) To approve the revised Organisational Development Policy (Appendix 4)
- (e) To approve the revised and reduced Appeals Policy in line with the changes made to the policies (a) and (b) above (Appendix 5)
- (f) To approve the additional clauses regarding management of LT members and ensuring the Chief Exec is available for appeals to:
Probation Policy – Clauses 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7

Absence Management Policy – Clause 2.3

Disciplinary Policy – Clause 1.3

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. Four key HR policies have been updated in line with legislation and best practice. Appeals processes have been incorporated back into the Capability and Flexible Working policies as the 'one size fits all' approach we currently have with a generic Appeals Policy does not work well so the appeals processes have been tailored to each individual policy. As such, the Appeals Policy has been updated to remove reference to these policies. The only policy still covered in the Appeals Policy is the Redundancy Policy, once this has been updated, the Appeals Policy will then be deleted.
- 1.2 It also proposed to add clauses to the Probation Policy, the Absence Management Policy and the Disciplinary Policy to outline how members of LT (excluding Chief Officers and Statutory Post Holders who are managed in line with constitution and with member involvement) will be managed to ensure that the Chief Executive is available/suitable to hold a final stage appeal in those policies.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Upon starting at East Herts Council the new Head of HR and OD identified the need to update the full suite of HR policies and in particular, the key formal policies to incorporate further best practice. This work was then delayed in order to establish the East Herts Together (E.H.T) Group who have worked with HR, LT and Unison to develop the policies and serve as a further cross service group to engage with and consult with to ensure the policies are fit for purpose and user friendly.
- 2.2 The East Herts Together also agreed some terms of reference to be used when developing policies which has been followed:

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

2.3 These policies are the second tranche of HR policies to be reviewed by the team.

2.4 The policies have been updated in line with best practice and legislation.

2.5 The policies were approved at the Local Joint Panel meeting on 5 May 2021 with the following change to be made before progressing to HR Committee for approval:

- The addition of flow charts to the Capability Procedure in line with the terms set by East Herts Together (see 2.2 above) to make procedures clearer through flow charts. This has been added as Appendix A to the policy and is referred to in section 1.3.

3.0 Summary of changes to policies

3.1 Managing Performance / Capability

Main Changes

3.1.1 General

- The title of the policy will change to Capability Policy in line with best practice
- More concise wording, making the policy shorter.
- The procedure is less prescriptive to ensure more ability to adapt to circumstances.
- A paragraph has been added to explain the process for managing the performance of members of the Leadership

Team as well as Chief Officers and Statutory Post Holders.

3.1.2 Informal Stage

- Paragraph has been added to state that notes taken at the informal stage should be saved on the employee's personnel file.
- Paragraph added that managers will explore whether it is appropriate at this stage to refer the employee to Occupational Health, after seeking agreement from the employee beforehand.

3.1.3 Formal Stages

- The formal stages of the procedure are now referred to as Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 meetings (they were previously called First Performance Review Meeting, Second Performance Review Meeting and Performance Capability Meeting)
- Introduction of the right to withhold an incremental increase at the formal stages of the procedure.
- Removal of written warnings label, the employee will be clear what stage they are at and warned that if they do not improve they move to the next stage. If the employee's performance does not improve during the review period they would move to the next stage of the procedure.
- Makes it clear that should there be any further concerns with performance within 12 months (18 months for Stage 3) of the review date the procedure will continue from the beginning of the same stage (the current policy is silent on this).
- The option to consider voluntary redeployment is added at Stages 1 and 2 (currently only mentioned at Stage 3) and it is made clear that pay protection would not normally apply.
- The option to extend the review period as an outcome at Stages 1 and 2 has been added in.

- Stage 3 meetings will be held by a member of the Leadership Team usually they will have also held the stage 2 hearing (was previously a Director at stage 3).
- Removal of set timeframes to confirm outcome of meetings and changed to 'as promptly as possible'.
- The notice required for a Stage 3 meeting has been reduced from 10 working days to 5 working days.
- The Performance Improvement Plan template will be updated so that it is fit for purpose.

3.1.4 Appeal Stage and Review

- The appeals procedure for capability matters is now included within the policy rather than in a separate Appeals Policy.
- The right to appeal can now only be taken against a decision to dismiss or redeploy (in the current policy an employee could appeal against any formal sanction).
- As with all policy revisions we are removing the 3 year review and instead saying reviewed in line with best practice and legislation.

3.1.5 Unison Comments

- Unison have agreed to the changes above, they welcomed the removal of warning labels aligned to conduct matters being removed and replaced by stages. Unison wanted to ensure the policy was developed to ensure that the employee is aware that if the set targets and the required improvement is not sufficiently met during the review period the procedure will continue at the next stage, this was strengthened to ensure the clarity.

3.2 Flexible Working Requests Scheme

3.2.1 Main Changes

- Renamed to make more transparent to all from the title to Flexible Working Request Scheme (was previously called Flexible Working Scheme).
- It has been made clear that the whole process, including any possible appeal against the decision, must be conducted within a maximum period of 3 calendar months in line with statutory requirements.
- An optional reason has been added to the flexible working request for the employee to state their reason for flexible working request, especially if it's for equality & diversity reasons.
- HR must now attend the meeting with the manager and employee to discuss the request (this will ensure greater consistency and support).
- The manager must get Head of Service approval before confirming back to the employee the decision (again this is to ensure greater consistency).
- The appeals process has been added back in as the Appeals policy is being deleted.
- Guidance for managers has been added as an appendix to improve the process and support managers to follow the policy.
- As with all policy revisions we are removing the 3 year review and instead saying reviewed in line with best practice and legislation.

3.2.2 Unison Comments

- The revisions have been agreed with Unison who in particular welcome HR involvement and Head of Service sign off to ensure decisions are well considered and to ensure greater consistency.

3.3 Recruitment and Induction

3.3.1 Main changes

- The equality section has been strengthened and now states that the council's recruitment pages will include a set of varied staff case studies that demonstrate diversity in our workforce to help attract and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates (6 employees have agreed to do a case study and these will be written and published in due course).
- Safer recruitment practices have been added into the policy in line with the work agreed with the Safeguarding group – Person Spec criteria for all, DBS checks where applicable, as well as probing at interview, gaps in employment etc.
- Guidance on the recruitment process has been added back into the policy – this was previously guidance on the intranet but was not in the policy.
- The agency worker section has been updated to reflect the Matrix SCM framework now in place for the recruitment of agency workers.
- Information has been added about consultants/IR35 which was previously only guidance on the intranet.
- All jobs are to be advertised internally and externally at the same time as the standard approach to support diversity of applications (wider pool) – the recruitment request form should be used to justify if this is not the approach taken, e.g. internal only advertising re suitable development opportunity for an existing member of staff.
- The option to offer a ringfenced interview for employees where they have been acting up in a post has been added.
- More options are now available to fill posts for 6 months or less, i.e. casual bank, speculative applications.
- The option for internal transfers has been added.
- The policy has been updated to reflect the new part 1/part 2 application form that is now in use.
- It has been added that interview panels should try to show

diversity if possible in respect of gender and race and if not, meet the team or similar should be considered to allow this to welcome a diverse range of applicants.

- Increased the time external applicants should wait before assuming they have not been shortlisted from 2 to 3 weeks.
- Added that panels should consider if they have any 'reserve' candidates and that these should be treated differently to other unsuccessful candidates.
- Added that if a new starter starts with their DBS check pending, that a risk assessment takes place before they can start in line with Safer Recruitment practices.
- Added the approval process for appointing above the bottom of the scale (which has been in practice for some time now).
- Deleted all references to probation as we now have the separate Probation Policy.
- Guidance on asking probing questions at interview for Safer Recruitment added as an appendix to the policy.
- Added secondment guidance as an appendix to the policy. This was previously only guidance on the intranet. This has also been updated to reflect that the council will not normally support full-time external secondments but will support partial secondments where possible. Data from the past 7 years shows that of the full-time external secondments, over one third did not return showing that there is not a great return for the council. 100% of partial secondments to external secondments came back to East Herts at the end of the secondment.
- As with all policy revisions we are removing the 3 year review and instead saying reviewed in line with best practice and legislation.

3.3.2 Unison Comments

- The revisions have been agreed with Unison. Unison asked for an further addition to Person Specification criteria for all posts being to be added regarding equality and diversity as

well as the commitment to safeguarding criteria that was added. This has been incorporated into 6.4: *An understanding of and commitment to diversity and equality as it applies to council services and employment*. This will be added to all updated person specifications once the policy is implemented. A number of other areas where strengthened in line with Unison feedback e.g. recording decisions on the recruitment request form.

3.4 Organisational Development

3.4.1 Main changes

- Title amended to organisational and development policy.
- The range of development opportunities available to all has been revised.
- The annual PDR has been added to individual responsibilities.
- The introduction of a three tier funding programme for professional sponsorship 100%, 75% and 50% to allow more support and flexibility re funding.
- Clarification of additional funding required on top of the professional qualification fee; so the full cost is explicit with no hidden costs.
- 20% off the job training has been clarified for apprentices or those staff that are Levy funded.
- Reimbursement of out of pocket travel expenses from core development budgets.
- Added detail of the Revenues and Benefits shared service training budget.
- New application form for Training and Development funding as local training pots have been centralised to ensure a greater spread across staff and services.

3.4.2 Unison Comments

- The revisions have been agreed with Unison. Unison were

especially supportive of more flexible funding for professional development (50%, 75% and 100%). Unison also requested that a mandatory training section was added in line with this practice, which has been added as section 2.0. Unison asked for professional membership funding to be added in line with supporting staff to achieve professional qualifications or expecting staff to hold these memberships. This was considered by the Leadership Team on 12th April 2021 but was not agreed due to the agreed pay policy statement and need to make savings from reduced income. The Pay Policy Statement for 21-22 agreed by HR Committee in February and then full Council in March 2021 states that the council will only fund the cost of a legal practicing certificate for employees where it is a requirement of their employment (see clause 6.3). Whilst the Leadership Team would like to support this, the costs would be significant and were removed some years ago in line with austerity cuts, staff are encouraged to claim tax relief on professional membership (the intranet will be updated to remind staff how to do this). A number of other areas where strengthened in line with Unison feedback to ensure clarity e.g. repayment of professional development where the employee leaves before it has expired.

3.5 Appeals Policy

The Appeals Policy has been updated to remove the appeals process for the Capability Policy and Flexible Working Scheme as these have been incorporated back into these policies. The 'one size fits all' approach we currently have with a generic Appeals Policy does not work well as generic framework across all areas so the appeals processes have been tailored to each individual policy.

3.6 Additions to other policies re LT Members

3.6.1 Probation Policy:

New Clauses to be added: 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7 in the Purpose and Scope section 1.0:

1.5 This policy applies to all employees except for Chief Officer level or any other nominated statutory posts, for these postholders the principals and structure will apply but it should be used in conjunction with procedures set out in the Constitution and will involve Members as appropriate.

1.6 Where members of Leadership Team (LT) (excluding the Statutory Post Holders and the Chief Officers as set out above) are required to be considered for a formal probationary hearing the following will apply: the investigating manager role will be allocated by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to a statutory post holder who will investigate and produce the formal report and the matter can then be heard by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and any appeal can be heard by the CEO.

1.7 At all stages of the following procedure, where specified staff/managers are designated to handle different stages, East Herts Council reserves the right to reasonably substitute suitable alternatives.

3.6.2 Absence Management Policy:

New Clause to be added at 2.3 in the Scope section 2.0:

2.3 Members of Leadership Team (LT) (excluding the Statutory Post Holders and the Chief Officers) will be managed through this procedure with the manager role allocated by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as all LT members report to the CEO. In order to ensure that the CEO is available to consider any appeal the following roles will be allocated at stages 1 to 3:

- *Stage one – the CEO will allocate the Manager role to a Statutory Post Holder either the Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer as appropriate.*
- *Stage two – the manager role would remain with the Statutory Officer designated by the CEO.*
- *Stage three – the statutory officer would remain in the manager role with Deputy Chief Executive Officer hearing the matter at stage 3.*
- *Appeal – should the matter reach the appeal stage this would be heard by the CEO.*

3.6.3 Discipline Policy:

New Clause to be added at 1.3 in the Purpose, Scope and Principles section:

1.3 Members of Leadership Team (LT) (excluding the Statutory Post Holders and the Chief Officers as set out above) will be managed through this procedure with the investigating manager role at both the informal and formal stages being allocated to one of the Statutory Post Holders by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer would normally hear the matter at any formal hearing. This will ensure that the CEO is available to consider any appeal.

3.6.4 Unison Feedback on these additional clauses added:

- Unison agreed the wording to be used in the Capability Policy and agreed that similar clauses for LT members and ensuring appeals can be held by the CEO should be added to the three policies recently agreed.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

The policies have been updated in line with equalities legislation and with consideration to the Council's Equality Policy.

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

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

Human Rights

No

Legal

The policies have been updated in line with employment legislation.

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

5.1 The updated policies are attached as Appendices 1 to 5.

Contact Officer

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East Herts Council

Capability Policy

Policy Statement

**Policy Statement No 2 (Issue No 4)
May 2021**

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CAPABILITY POLICY

Policy Statement No 2 (Issue No 4) May 2021

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PROCEDURE

- 1.1 East Herts Council aims to provide a high quality service to all our residents, customers and stakeholders. In order to do so we require all employees to achieve and maintain a high standard of performance in their work. We provide explicit standards and training to all our managers to ensure their commitment and capability to support, guide and develop employees.
- 1.2 In cases where despite an appropriate level of support, guidance and training, an employee is failing to or unable to meet the required standards of performance, this procedure will be used to ensure that fair, effective and reasonable action is taken.
- 1.3 The procedure is designed to give employees the opportunity to improve individual performance and not to be punitive. Flowcharts summarising the procedure can be found in Appendix A.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all employees except for Chief Officer level or any other nominated statutory posts, for these post holders the principles and structure will apply but it should be used in conjunction with procedures set out in the Constitution and will involve Members as appropriate with exceptions as set out in 1.6 below.
- 1.5 Members of Leadership Team (LT) (excluding the Statutory Post Holders and the Chief Officers) will be managed through this procedure with the manager role allocated by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as all LT members report to the CEO.
- 1.6 This procedure does not apply to the following:

- (a) Employees during their probationary period of employment, or any probationary extension period. Please refer to our Probationary Procedure.
 - (b) Incompetence (gross or otherwise), gross negligence and or incapability or other poor performance where it arises out a wilful or deliberately neglectful derogation of duties. Please refer to our Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.7 In cases where lack of capability or difficulties with performing all aspects of the job are considered to be attributable to ill health or a disability, this may be dealt with either under this procedure or the Absence Management Policy (or both) as considered appropriate by East Herts Council on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.8 Any incremental increase that would normally be due will be withheld at the formal stages of this procedure. If by the end of the review period at any formal stage the required improvement has been made and therefore the employee is no longer at a formal stage, the incremental increase will resume and take effect from the 1st of the following month and then continue from 1st of April as appropriate.
- 1.9 East Herts Council is firmly committed to meeting its responsibilities towards employees with a disability in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration will be given to whether poor performance may be related to a disability and, if so, whether there are reasonable adjustments that the Council could make to working arrangements. The Council may seek recommendations by relevant medical advisers, in consultation with the employee.
- 1.10 If an employee is subject to additional allegations (e.g. misconduct or issues with attendance), then this procedure may run concurrently with the other relevant procedure(s).
- 1.11 At all stages of the following procedure, where specified staff/managers are designated to handle different stages, East Herts

Council reserves the right to reasonably substitute suitable alternatives.

- 1.12 This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment with East Herts Council and it may be amended at any time.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 East Herts Council managers will set out clear expectations of the performance standards expected of staff in relation to the:

- job description / performance objectives for their role
- competence profile for their role

- 2.2 East Herts Council will offer appropriate support, supervision and training to any employee where there is a significant change in the content or level of his/her job.

- 2.3 Where there is a change in required standards of performance, the new standards will be explained to the employee and appropriate support will be offered to achieve the standards.

- 2.4 Any review period set by a manager under this procedure will be at the manager's reasonable discretion in line with targets set however it will normally be between 1 and 3 months.

- 2.5 Managers may be supported by a member of Human Resources at all stages of this procedure (or any other support the Council determines as appropriate).

- 2.6 Managers may, in exceptional circumstances, deem it necessary to temporarily redeploy an employee immediately from their normal job.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Managing performance is the responsibility of both managers and employees.

3.2 Employees are expected to:

- Take full accountability for their own performance and behaviour
- Make sure they understand what is expected of them
- Perform to a satisfactory level in line with council objectives, values and behaviours
- Commit to improve where concerns over performance have been raised
- Work with managers to address any underlying issues which may be affecting performance
- Take ownership of their personal learning and development needs and meeting the council's values and behaviours

3.3 Managers are expected to:

- Have completed the managing performance training events arranged by HR and any refresher training as appropriate or recommended
- Seek advice and guidance from HR on the interpretation and implementation of this policy and adhere to advice given
- Try to rectify any performance issues as early as possible with the aim of resolving them at an informal level
- Ensure that employees are aware of the performance standards, values and behaviours expected and support employees in achieving them
- Monitor the performance of employees and ensure that 121 and Performance Development Review (PDR) meetings are carried out in order to identify any issues
- Set realistic and measurable standards of performance for the job and share these with the employee
- Ensure that employees are made aware of the consequences of failing to meet the required performance standards
- Ensure that any employees rated as Immediate Improvement required under the PDR process, their performance is being formally managed under this policy.

3.4 Leadership Team members (excluding Chief Officers and Statutory Post Holders who will be managed by the constitution and this policy see 1.4):

In order to ensure that the CEO is available to consider any appeal the following roles will be allocated at the informal stage and formal stages 1 to 3:

- Informal Stage – the CEO will allocate the Manager role to a Statutory Post Holder either the Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer as appropriate.
- Stage one – the manager role would remain with the Statutory Officer designated by the CEO.
- Stage 2 – the statutory officer would remain in the manager role with Deputy Chief Executive Officer hearing the matter at stage 2.
- Stage 3 – the statutory officer would remain in the manager role with Deputy Chief Executive Officer hearing the matter at stage 3.
- Appeal – should the matter reach the appeal stage this would be heard by the CEO.

4. THE RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED

4.1 The employee will have the right to be accompanied at all meetings/hearings from Stage 1 (formal stages) onwards by a work colleague or a trade union representative of their choice.

4.2 The accompanying person has the statutory right to:

- address the meeting to put the employee's case
- sum up that case, and
- respond on the employee's behalf to any view expressed at the meeting

- 4.3 The accompanying person does not have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf. They may ask questions and will be permitted to confer with the employee.
- 4.4 It is the employee's responsibility to request their chosen companion to accompany them to the formal interview or appeal, and to supply all relevant information and documentation to them.
- 4.5 If the accompanying person is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days after, the employee may be asked to choose someone else.

5.0 Informal Stage

- 5.1 In the first instance, performance issues should normally be dealt with informally between the employee and their manager as part of day-to-day management. However, in serious cases it may be considered appropriate to deal with the issues under the formal procedure from the outset (see 6.0 below).
- 5.2 The Informal meeting should cover the following:
- clarify the required standards;
 - identify areas of concern;
 - establish the likely causes of poor performance;
 - identify any training needs or other support e.g. coaching;
 - set targets for improvement and a time-scale for review; and
 - ensure the employee is aware that if the set targets and the required improvement is not sufficiently met during the review period the procedure will continue at formal stage 1
- 5.3 A note of any such informal discussions should be placed on the employee's personnel file and a copy should also be provided to the employee for their records.
- 5.4 Managers should explore whether it would be useful at this stage to refer the employee to Occupational Health, seeking agreement from the employee beforehand.

- 5.5 Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without previous warnings.

6.0 Formal Stage

- 6.1 If East Herts Council has concerns about an employee's performance, it will undertake an assessment to decide if there are grounds for taking formal action under this procedure. The procedure involved will depend on the circumstances but may involve reviewing an employee's personnel file, gathering any relevant documents, monitoring their work and, if appropriate, interviewing the employee and/or other individuals confidentially.
- 6.2 East Herts Council reserves the right, in very serious cases, to omit one or more of the earlier stages set out below.
- 6.3 At least 5 days' prior to any formal meeting under Stages 1, 2 or 3 below, East Herts Council will notify the employee in writing of the meeting, together with its concerns over performance, the reasons for those concerns and the likely outcome if it is decided after the hearing that the employee's performance has been unsatisfactory. The letter will also include, where appropriate:
- a summary of relevant information gathered as part of any investigation;
 - a copy of any relevant documents which will be used at the hearing; and
 - a copy of any relevant witness statements, except where a witness's identity is to be kept confidential, in which case as much information as possible while maintaining confidentiality will be provided.
 - should the employee wish to submit any documents to be discussed at the hearing, they should provide them at least 2 working days before the hearing.

6.4 Stage 1

6.4.1 The aims of the meeting will be to:

- Explain clearly how the employee's current performance fails to meet the required standards and go through any evidence gathered.
- Allow the employee to ask questions, present evidence, call witnesses, respond to evidence and make representations.
- Identify the likely causes of poor performance and whether there are further measures that may improve performance (e.g. additional training or supervision).
- discuss with the employee if they want to be considered for voluntary redeployment if appropriate. HR support will be provided if the employee wishes to explore this to determine what may be available within the Council as potential options. This would only be explored if the employee requests this. Pay protection will not normally apply in a capability redeployment and priority for redeployment would be given to staff at risk of redundancy or due to a disability (link to redundancy policy section to be added).
- Discuss targets for improvement and a time-scale for review (as a guide the review period should normally be between 1 to 3 months). The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) template in Appendix B should be used or adapted as appropriate to set out clearly the improvement required and any support agreed.
- Explain to the employee that if their performance does not improve sufficiently it may become necessary during or at the end of the review period to review their performance in line with Stage 2 of the procedure.
- During the review period the manager must continually monitor the employee's performance and hold regular progress meetings with the employee.

- 6.4.2 The manager reserves the right to adjourn a hearing to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at the hearing. The employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.
- 6.4.3 The outcome of the meeting and the action to be taken must be recorded by the manager in writing through the stage 1 letter and a copy given to the employee with the PIP as promptly as possible. The letter must warn the employee that unless performance improves to the required standard during or by the end the review period then the process will move to stage 2. A copy should also be placed on the employee's personnel file.
- 6.4.4 If by the end of the review period the required improvement has been made, the employee will be told of this and advised that should there be any further concerns with performance within 12 months of the review date the procedure will continue from the beginning of Stage 1.
- 6.4.5 If the line manager feels that there has been some improvement in performance but there are still some areas of concern they should seek HR support to consider the option to extend the review period.

6.5 Stage 2

- 6.5.1 If the employee's work performance does not improve to a satisfactory level during or by the end of the review period, the line manager must prepare a report to refer the matter to a member of the Leadership Team.
- 6.5.2 The Leadership Team member will write to the employee asking them to attend a formal stage 2 hearing in accordance with 6.3 above.
- 6.5.3 At the meeting, the employee's line manager will present the details of the matter, including earlier discussion(s), the steps taken to

encourage improvement and any supporting facts and/or material. The employee will then be given the opportunity to present their views in response to the manager's case.

6.5.4 Following the hearing, the Leadership Team member will consider their decision and the action, if any, to be taken. The Leadership Team member may wish to retire to consider their decision. The decision should be confirmed in writing to the employee.

6.5.5 Where the LT member decides that performance is sufficient this will be confirmed and the employee will be informed that if performance is unsatisfactory again in the next 12 months from the end of stage 2 review period they will be subject to stage 2.

6.5.6 Where it is established that the performance is unsatisfactory, the Leadership Team member will do the following:

- consider whether voluntary redeployment is appropriate and available within the Council. Any offer should be made in writing, explaining why it is being made and the consequences of refusing it. The post does not have to be on the same scale and pay protection would not normally apply ([Add link to re-org](#)). The employee should be given reasonable time to consider the offer and be advised to discuss it with their accompanying person (if applicable).

(Where such redeployment is agreed, the employee's performance must continue to be reviewed and if the line manager of the new post considers performance is unsatisfactory the matter should be re-referred to a member of the Leadership Team at the stage 2 or stage 3 level depending on the circumstances.)

- If voluntary redeployment is unsuitable, unavailable or declined by the employee, inform the employee of the improvement that is required, set a reasonable review period (as a guide the review period should normally be between 1 to 3 months) and confirm the arrangements for monitoring during this period (a revised PIP

should be provided).

- Consider what further support (e.g. training or shadowing etc.) is appropriate.
- Issue the employee a stage 2 outcome letter and warn the employee that unless performance improves to the required standard during or by the end the review period then the process will move to stage 3 where dismissal maybe considered.

6.5.7 The outcome of the stage 2 hearing and the action to be taken (if any) will be recorded in writing and a copy given to the employee as promptly as possible. A copy should also be placed on the employee's personnel file. Where the Leadership Team member determines no further action is required this will be confirmed.

6.5.8 If by the end of the review period the required improvement has been made, the employee will be told of this and advised that should there be further concerns with performance within 12 months of the review date the procedure will continue from the beginning of Stage 2.

6.5.9 If the Leadership Team Member feels that there has been some improvement in performance but there are still some areas of concern, they have the option to extend the review period but should seek HR support before determining.

6.6 Stage 3

6.6.1 If the employee's work performance does not improve to the required standard during or by the end of the stage 2 review period (or there are further concerns with performance within 18 months of the stage 3 review period), the line manager must prepare a report to refer the matter to a member of the Leadership Team who would normally be the LT member who heard the matter at Stage 2.

6.6.2 The Leadership Team member will write to the employee asking him/her to attend a formal interview in accordance with 6.3 above.

6.6.3 Conduct of the hearing will be as outlined in Section 6.4.1 above.

6.6.4 The Leadership Team member hearing the case may consider a range of options including (but not limited to):

- dismissing the employee;
- redeploying the employee into another suitable job at the same, or a lower, grade; or
- setting a further review period (in exceptional cases where it is believed that a substantial improvement is likely within the review period). As a guide the review period should normally be between 1 to 3 months.

6.6.5 Whichever action is decided upon, the Leadership Team member should confirm this in writing with the employee as promptly as possible. The letter should remind the employee of their right to appeal where applicable (see 7.0 below).

7. APPEALS

7.1 An employee has the right to appeal against any decision taken by the Leadership Team member after a hearing at Stage 3 of the above procedure, except for the setting of a further review period.

7.2 The employee must lodge the appeal in writing with the Head of HR & OD no later than 5 working days after the employee has been notified in writing of the decision to redeploy or to dismiss.

7.3 The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.

7.4 The appeal will normally be heard by a Chief Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive or where they have already been involved the Chief Executive.

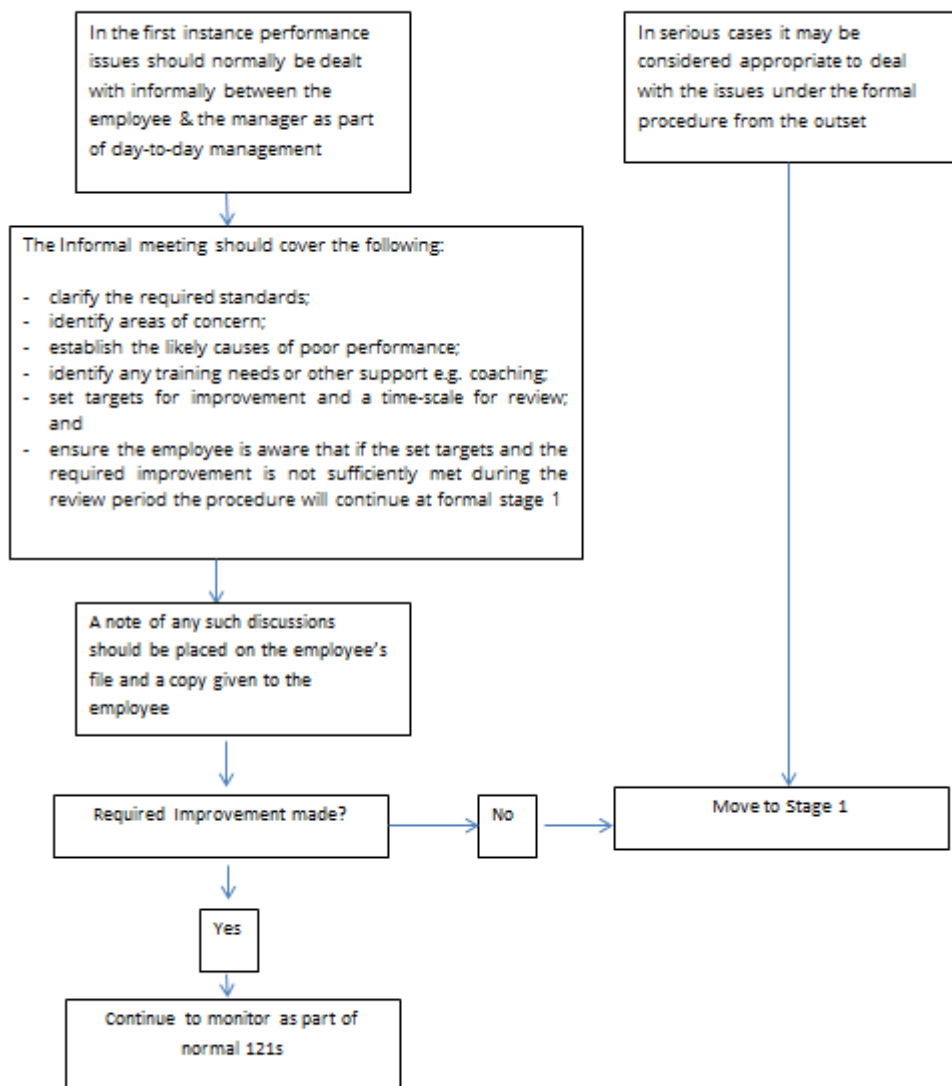
- 7.5 The employee must be notified in writing of the date and time of the appeal hearing and his/her right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The letter should explain that the matter may be dealt with in the employee's absence if s/he fails to attend, and that if unable to attend s/he may be represented by a trade union representative or work colleague and/or send written submissions.
- 7.6 The decision of the Chief Officer shall be final and will be confirmed in writing with the employee. There will be no further right of appeal.

8.0 Policy review and amendment

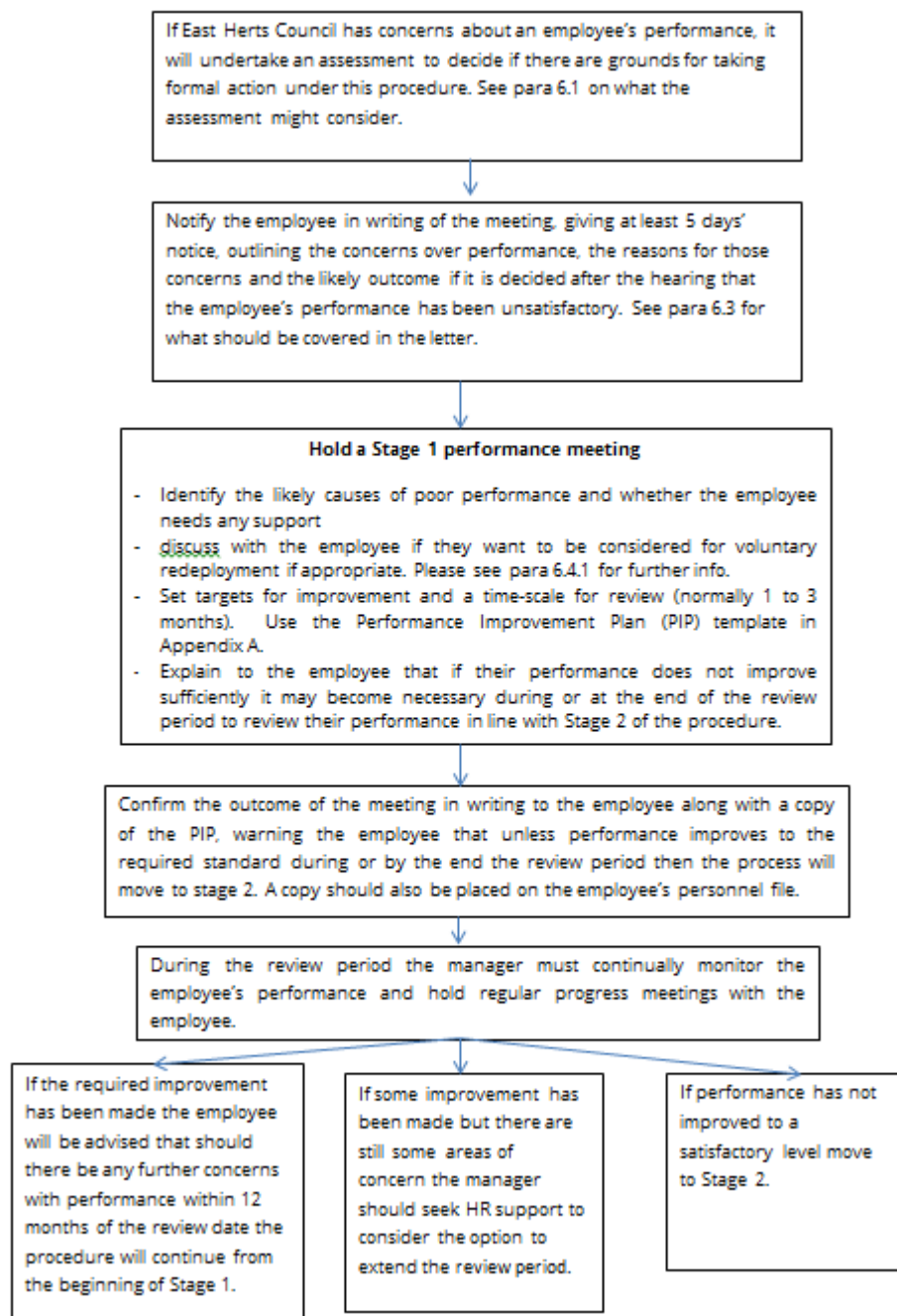
- 8.1 This policy shall be reviewed in line with legislation and best practice to reflect the best possible level of support and management.

Appendix A – Capability Procedure Flowcharts

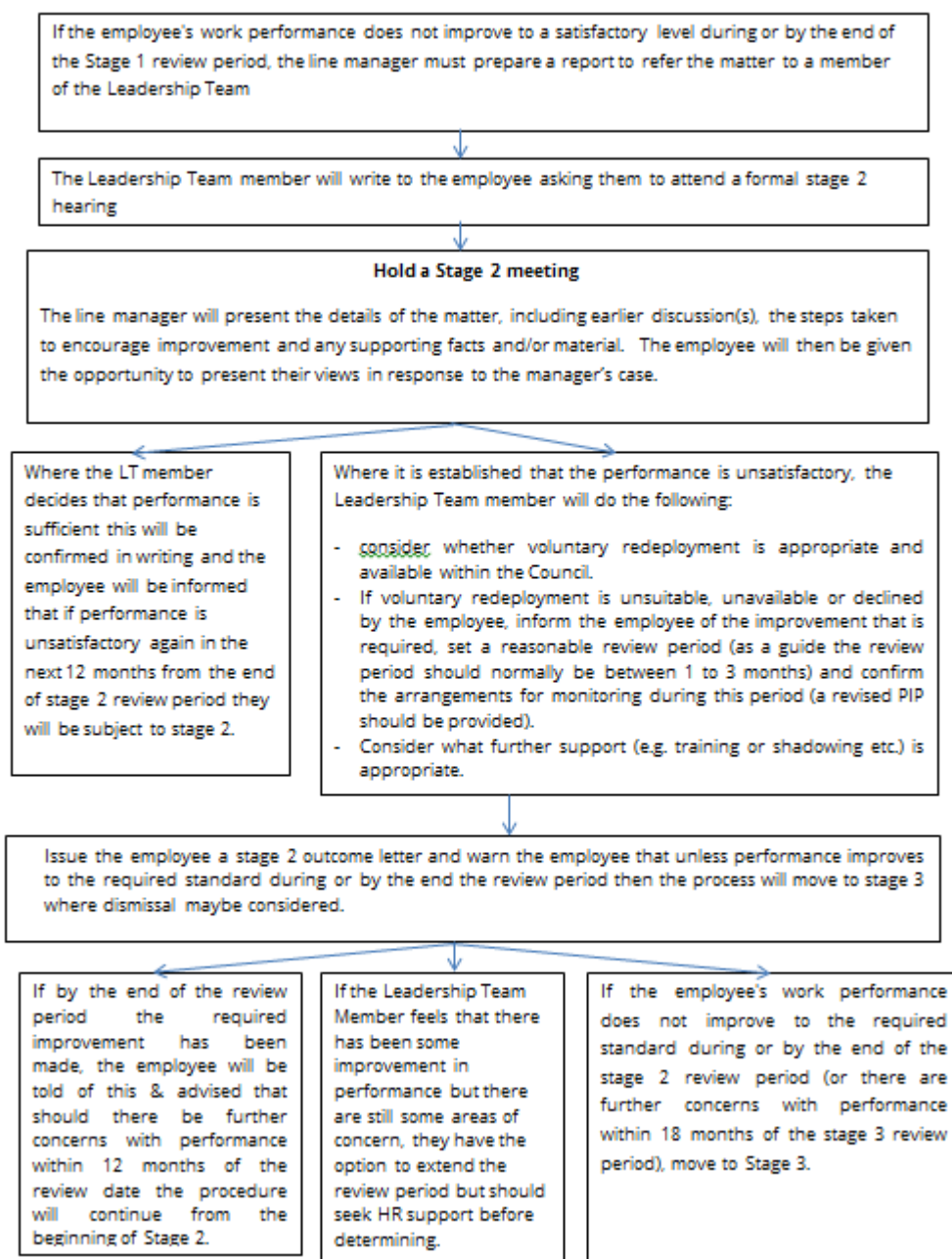
Informal Stage



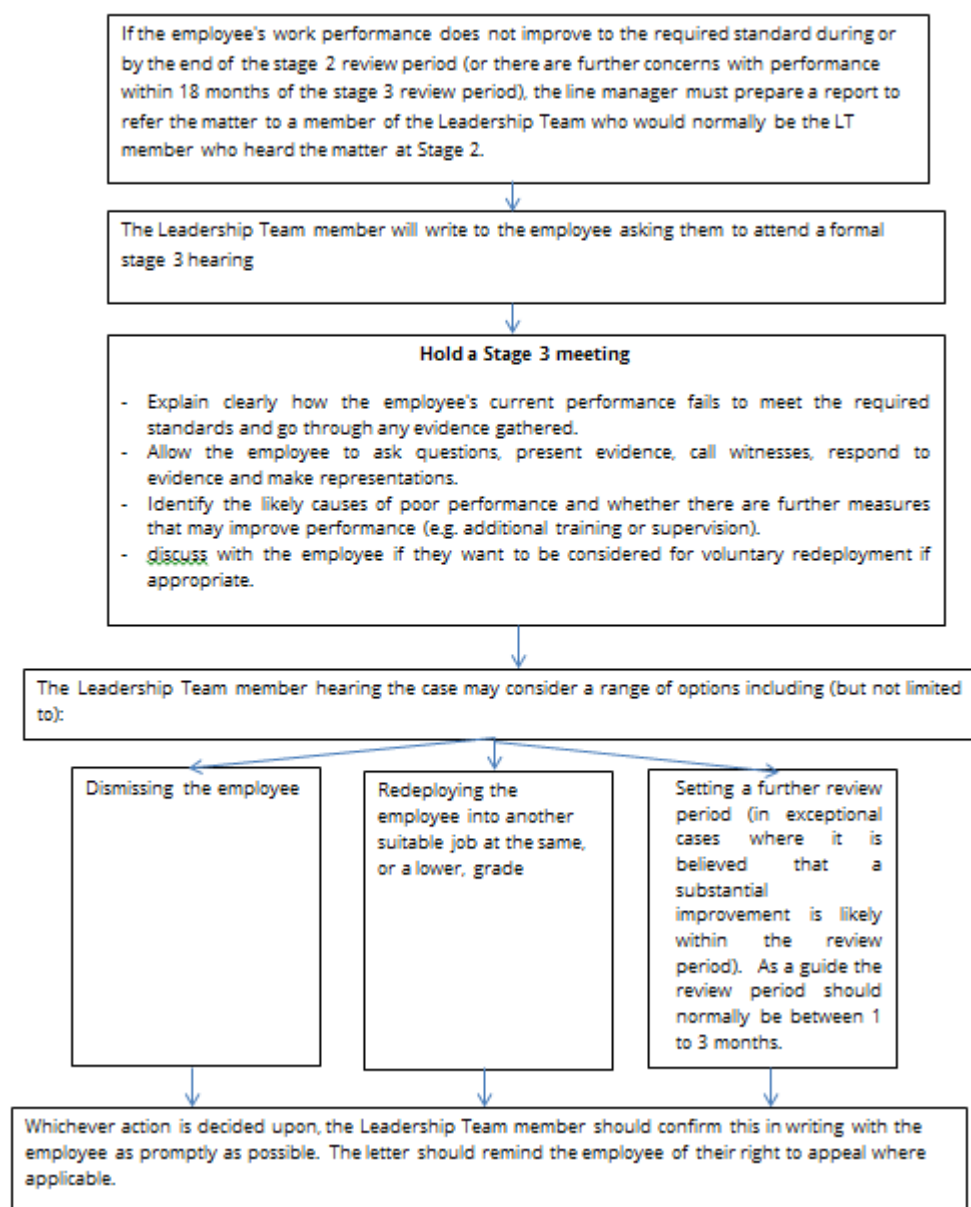
Stage 1



Stage 2



Stage 3



Appendix B - Performance Improvement Plan

To be completed and signed by the manager and employee as part of the Capability Policy

Name: Team: Service: Review Period Date.....

Performance standard/values and behaviours not being met	Objectives/targets required to meet the standard	Support and training to be given to assist reaching the standard	Evidence required to demonstrate the standard is met	Target/deadline for standard to be met and reviewed

I agree to the content of this document, the actions that are required of me and the objectives as set out in the PDR objectives form (please note the actions required by the manager will be to ensure the appropriate support is given to the employee)

Signed (Manager) Signed (Employee)

APPENDIX 2

Policy Name	Flexible Working Request Scheme
Date	May 2021
Statement No	8
Version	6

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out the council's approach to flexible working arrangements which is in accordance with the ACAS code of practice and guidance on handling requests to work flexibly in a reasonable manner.
- 1.2 The council recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore the organisation wants to support its employees achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests. The council is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.
- 1.3 Requests for flexible working may be for any reason and are not restricted to employees with family care commitments.

2.0 Eligibility

- 2.1 The Employment Rights Act 1996 gives every employee the statutory right to request to work flexibly provided they have worked for the council for 26 weeks continuously at the date the application is made. This policy does not include agency workers. An employee

can only make one statutory request in any 12 month period.

- 2.2 The Employment Rights Act 1996 gives the right for employees to request unpaid time off for training. Employees must have been continuously employed for 26 weeks and must show that the time off to train will increase their effectiveness in their job or is relevant to their employer's business. See the Organisational & Development Policy for further guidance on training and development.

3.0 Principles

- 3.1 An employee does not have a right to work flexibly but has a right to request to do so.
- 3.2 The council will try to accommodate requests where possible and may also, if appropriate, explore alternative flexible arrangements with the employee in order to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement.
- 3.3 All requests will be considered as quickly as possible. This will normally be within a calendar month of the line manager receiving the request. The whole process, including any possible appeal against the decision, must be conducted within a maximum period of 3 calendar months. This timescale may be extended, if necessary, with the agreement of both parties, for example to allow for a trial period if there are some concerns as to whether any new arrangements will work.

4.0 Legal Issues

- 4.1 Managers should consider the Working Time Regulations 1998 when considering flexible working requests.
- 4.2 This Policy has been written taking into consideration the ACAS Code of Practice on handling in a reasonable manner requests to work flexibly.

5.0 The Business Need

- 5.1 Although the council is committed to providing the widest possible range of working patterns for its workforce, some flexible working options will not be appropriate for all roles across all service areas.
- 5.2 Where an instance of flexible working is proposed the council will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on the service;
 - the effect of the proposed arrangement on other employees, customers and the council;
 - the cost of the proposed arrangement;
 - the level of supervision that the post-holder requires;
 - the structure of the service and staff resources;
 - other issues specific to the employee's service;
 - an analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration;
 - analysis of the workload of the role.

6.0 Flexible Working Options

- 6.1 The policy considers the following options, but the council recognises that there may be alternatives, and

that the working pattern that may suit any particular individual could be a unique one involving a combination of options:

- part time working;
- compressed hours;
- temporary voluntary reduced working time;
- term-time working;
- job share.

Please see Appendix A for further details on the types of flexible working options.

6.2 For the avoidance of doubt, flexi time and home working are not covered by this policy. Please refer to the flexi time guidance and Home Working policy on the intranet.

7.0 Process

7.1 Considering the Request

7.1.1 The employee is required to submit a request to work flexibly in writing to their manager using the Flexible Working Request form. The request must include the following:

- the date of their application, the change to working conditions they are seeking and when they would like the change to come into effect;
- what effect, if any, they think the requested change would have on the employer and how, in their opinion, any such effect might be dealt with, including consideration of any impact of their request upon their own work, other team members and service delivery. The employee will be expected

to offer constructive suggestions about how these can be managed;

- a statement that this is a statutory request and if and when they have made a previous application for flexible working.
- (optional) the reasons for their request, especially if the council's Equality and Diversity Policy may be relevant, for example, if the request concerns childcare or other family commitments, religious or cultural requirements, or adjustments because of a disability;

7.1.2 On receipt of the request the manager should arrange a meeting to discuss the request with the employee within 10 days of receipt of the request. An HR Officer must be present at this meeting. The discussion does not have to be face to face and if the manager and employee agree it can be held by phone or another means agreeable to both parties. This will provide an opportunity to explore the desired work pattern in depth and to discuss how this might be accommodated. It will also provide an opportunity to consider other alternative working patterns, should there be problems in accommodating the desired work pattern outlined in the employee's application. The manager may determine they need more time to make a decision i.e. to investigate how the request can be accommodated or to complete a job advertisement i.e. to see if a job share can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff, they will discuss this with the employee and agree a time period which may include a timescale extension in line with 3.3 above.

7.1.3 Employees have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or Trade Union representative if they wish. This should be made clear

to the employee before the discussion takes place and sufficiently in advance so that they can arrange the attendance of their companion.

7.1.4 When considering the request the manager should view it as objectively and fully as possible, taking into account the business needs (see 5.0) and the employee's current role. The manager should take into account:

- the workload (of the employee making the request, and the team)
- options for re-scheduling / re-prioritising work
- alternative options for flexible working
- implications for conditions of service
- financial implications to the council.

7.1.5 There may also be other issues that are unique to the situation and these should be considered. Please see Appendix B for further guidance for managers.

7.2 Making the Decision

7.2.1 The manager must seek approval from the Head of Service before informing the employee of the decision. If the decision is to approve the request, the manager must send HR the employee's request form, along with a completed contract amendment form. HR will confirm the manager's decision in writing and confirm any impact on pay and annual leave as appropriate. Please see section 7.5 if the decision is to refuse the request.

7.3 Multiple Requests

7.3.1 Where a manager receives a number of flexible working proposals at or around the same time, or a joint

proposal from a group of employees, the requests will be considered collectively.

7.4 Trial Periods

- 7.4.1 All approved flexible working requests should include a trial period (usually for 3-6 months) for both the benefit of the employee and the service. This is to establish whether the arrangements requested are sustainable in the council, the impact on the role, colleagues and service(s). The trial period will be agreed between the employee and manager taking into consideration the role of the employee and needs of the service.
- 7.4.2 A review date will be agreed for the manager and employee to jointly discuss how the new arrangements are working and make any necessary adjustments.
- 7.4.3 It is the manager's responsibility to ensure this review takes place, if there are concerns HR support should be sought upfront to ensure consistency.
- 7.4.4 A successful trial period should be confirmed in writing stating that the arrangement is now permanent (or for a fixed term if it is agreed the flexible arrangements are temporary).
- 7.4.5 If it is considered that the trial period has been unsuccessful, the reasons for this decision must be communicated to the employee(s), by meeting (either face-to-face, by phone or another means agreeable to both parties), and followed up in writing. Managers should use one or more of the business grounds outlined in point 7.5.2 when explaining their decision, taking advice from HR.

7.4.3 Employees will have the right to revert back to their original pattern of working within the trial period subject to the employee giving appropriate notice to the manager.

7.5 Refusing the Request

7.5.1 Managers in consultation with the Head of Service should contact their HR Officer for advice before refusing a flexible working request.

7.5.2 If it is considered that a post is unsuitable for the specific flexible working option proposed by the employee or group of employees, the reasons for this decision must be communicated to the employee(s), ideally by discussion and followed up in writing. Your HR Officer will help you draft a letter. Requests for flexible working should only be refused on one or more of the following 10 business grounds:

1. burden of additional costs
2. detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand
3. inability to reorganise work among employees
4. inability to recruit additional employees
5. detrimental impact on quality
6. detrimental impact on performance
7. insufficiency of work during the period the employee proposes to work
8. planned structural changes, e.g. a pending or current restructure
9. other relevant business grounds
10. Working Time Regulations 1998 are not met.

8.0 Monitoring

- 8.1 All flexible working arrangements should be reviewed on an annual basis, through the PDR process. Any changes to flexible working arrangements once they have been confirmed as permanent must be with agreement from both parties.
- 8.2 All flexible working arrangements are subject to a proviso that the employee may be required to revert back to their original pattern of working if there are identifiable and significant operational problems identified at any time. Such action will not be taken unreasonably and will be subject to full discussion with the employee(s) concerned and the giving of appropriate notice.

9.0 Appeal

- 9.1 The employee may appeal the decision within 5 working days of the decision being notified to them. The grounds for the appeal should be put in writing to the Head of HR and OD.
- 9.2 A member of Leadership Team (not previously involved with the application) will review the application. If the Leadership Team member considers it to be necessary, they may request further information and/or evidence, and may wish to meet with the employee and/or the line manager. The employee may, if they so wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union representative at any meeting they are invited to attend. The employee's companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with the employee, but may not answer questions on the employee's behalf. The Leadership Team member may

also, if they wish, be accompanied by a representative from Human Resources and/or an appropriate note taker where a meeting is called.

9.3 The Leadership Team member will review whether the Head of Service was justified in refusing the request.

9.4 The Leadership Team member will notify the employee of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 20 working days of being asked to review the application. Their decision will be final.

10.0 Policy Review and Amendment

10.1 This Policy shall be reviewed in line with legislation and best practice to reflect the best possible level of support and management.

Further information on flexible working options

Part-time working

Part time working is where an employee is contracted to work fewer than 37 hours a week, the full time equivalent contractual hours per annum.

Compressed Hours

Compressed hours is a system that permits employees to work their total number of contractual hours over fewer working days. Usually a 5 day week is compressed into 4 days or 4.5days, a 10-day fortnight into 9 days or 18 day month (based on a 4 week month).

Temporary voluntary reduced working time

Temporary voluntary reduced working time is a system whereby it is agreed that the employee will work reduced hours for a certain period of time, with a return to their substantive working hours at the end of this period. Pay would be pro-rated during this time accordingly.

Term Time Working

Term time working is a system of flexible working where the employee's working weeks mirror schools' term weeks and pay is adjusted accordingly. All requests for term time working will be considered subject to operational needs.

Term time working will not be suitable for all roles or services and managers are required to ensure there is no detriment to service provision and the required level of service is provided at all times.

A term time working employee will be expected to make themselves available for key training initiatives or service meetings even if they fall during school holidays. Adequate notice will be given to make alternative arrangements for those days and compensatory time off will be offered. In exceptional circumstances where alternative time off is not an option, other alternatives may be considered.

Job share

A job share is where two employees voluntarily share the duties and responsibilities of one full-time position, dividing the hours between them. The full-time salary and leave entitlement are allocated on a pro-rata basis to each of the job share partners.

All full-time positions are deemed to be potentially suitable for job sharing. In some instances it may also be feasible to share a part-time position (for example a 4 day week split between job sharers).

The way in which the actual hours of a job share position are divided between the job share partners should be decided by the manager/supervisor in consultation with the job share partners, taking into account the following:

- the needs of the service, section and/or department;
- any limitations on accommodation, equipment etc.;
- the requirement for a handover period (the total hours worked by the job share partners should not exceed the normal full-time hours of the post);
- if there is a requirement for job share partners to cover each other's annual leave and the service budget needed to support this.

Job Sharing can be introduced into a post in a number of ways:-

- The manager may decide that a vacant role is best suited for job share in order to accommodate the needs of the service. It will then be advertised accordingly and two separate candidates appointed on a job share basis.
- An existing employee formally applying for a job share arrangement to be agreed in respect of the post they occupy.
- An application being made by one employee/external candidate to share a vacant post.
- A joint application being made by two or more employees/external candidates to share a vacant post.
- Two or more separate applications being made, whether internal or external, which can be matched together to form a job share.

Some services may choose to make it a requirement that the job sharing partner shall make themselves available to cover their job sharing partner's annual leave. If this is the case the following conditions will apply:-

- given three weeks' notice, the cover for absence shall be full time.
- given a lesser notice period, the job sharing partner shall use their best endeavour to attend on a full time basis.
- only one job-sharing partner shall have annual leave in the same period.

The extra hours worked to cover annual leave will be paid to the employee as Job Share Allowance (this is plain time rate).

If the employee prefers they may request that some or all of their extra hours are used to accrue flexitime provided the flexitime policy is adhered to. The manager will consider this request based on the needs of the service.

In the case of unplanned/emergency absence, the job sharing partner shall use their best endeavours to attend. In the case of long-term sickness, the remaining job share partner may be requested to consider increasing their hours to cover. If the job share partner does not wish to increase their working hours, a temporary job share partner may be appointed or other arrangements made as appropriate.

Flexible Working Requests – Guidance for managers

Line Managers must not speculate on what the outcome will be in relation to any flexible working request, any decision must be approved by the Head of Service before the employee is informed of the decision.

1. Flexible working arrangements can be beneficial to both employees and the council. Keep an open mind and view requests positively and objectively as they may open up new possibilities in the way the service is provided. Finding the right work-life balance is important for all of us in terms of motivation and commitment to our work.
2. As the nature of the discussion is confidential and potentially sensitive, the meeting between the manager and the employee should be held in private, at a mutually convenient time, to discuss their request. Allow sufficient time for the employee to arrange to bring a workplace colleague or Trade Union representative with them, should they wish to do so.
3. Meeting with the employee provides the opportunity to ensure that the proposal put forward is the best solution.
4. The aim of the discussion is to explore the potential benefits of their request, the impact it may have on the section/school/service and the rest of the team and how it might be accommodated. Encourage the employee to put forward his or her ideas about how the working pattern sought could be made to work, as s/he may have some sound ideas about how the job might be done differently, but equally effectively.

5. Remember that if the working hours reduce, the workload will need to be reduced proportionately. Would you need to find a replacement/cover or could the work be done at a different time or in a different way? Are there any potential costs or savings? Does this present development opportunities for others in the team? Consider whether the probation period will be affected or need to be extended.
6. You are free to explore alternative suggestions in order to try to find a compromise solution (Appendix B provides examples of various flexible arrangements you may consider). You may agree a temporary or trial period if you have justifiable reservations, or agree a different start date if other measures need to be put in place, in order to make their request workable, such as training up a colleague to cover when they are not there.
7. Be careful not to discriminate inadvertently, for example, by being more sympathetic to requests from one particular sex. If you receive requests from more than one employee do not make value judgements about which is the most deserving case. Look at each case individually based on the impact on the service; consideration may also be given to reasons for the application e.g. if it relates to a disability. Ensure any decision is based on justifiable business grounds.
8. If two or more requests are made very close together it may be helpful to hold separate discussions with each of the employees and explain the situation. Through discussion you might find a compromise which enables you to accommodate all or more of the requests.

9. If you find you are unable to approve any further requests due to the impact on the service, where you already have a number of other employees working flexibly, you may call for volunteers from the existing flexible working employees to change their hours (some may be happy to do so if their situation has changed) thereby creating capacity to approve new requests.
10. Having weighed up the situation, you are under no legal obligation to grant the request if it cannot be accommodated. You can turn down a request as long as the reason for turning it down is one of the business reasons set out in the policy.
11. Once a decision has been made by the Head of Service:
 - i. If you are agreeing to some form of flexible working arrangements, inform the employee verbally and send the employee's request and a contract amendment form to HR who will write officially to the employee to confirm the contractual changes.
 - ii. If you are rejecting the request you may wish to meet with the employee to explain your reasons but you do not have to do so. Please contact your HR Officer who will help you draft a letter confirming your decision in writing to the employee. The written confirmation should specify which of the statutory grounds for refusing a request applies and should also explain why that reason applies in the individual case.
12. Informal short-term temporary arrangements to deal with personal issues, such as reduced hours for a couple of months to care for a sick relative, may be dealt with outside of this policy where appropriate. Contact your HR Officer for further advice and guidance.

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APPENDIX 3

Policy Name	Recruitment and Induction
Date	May 2021
Statement No	35
Version	5

1.0 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that the council selects and appoints staff with the right skills for the job through a fair and consistent recruitment and selection process, that is non-discriminatory, complies with legislation and follows good practice.
- 1.2 The procedure covers the following kinds of appointments:
- Permanent and fixed-term contracts
 - Temporary agency staff appointments
 - Appointments to casual staff bank
 - Internal transfers
- 1.3 East Herts Council has a responsibility to ensure safer recruitment and employment practices. All staff are checked appropriately before they start employment, including where applicable a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people working with vulnerable adults, children, and young people.

2.0 Equality and diversity

- 2.1 All applicants are treated equally during the recruitment process and that only those factors related to the vacancy to be filled will be used to make selection decisions. The council will take no account of gender, marital status, carer commitment, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic or national

origin, religious or political belief, age, colour, race or socio-economic background. The council undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

- 2.2 The council will support applicants with disabilities through the Disability Confident Scheme and is committed to interviewing all candidates who meet the essential criteria for a job in line with the scheme. The council will also make reasonable adjustments to accommodate applicants and employees with disabilities.
- 2.3 The council's recruitment pages will include a set of varied staff case studies that demonstrate diversity in our workforce to help attract and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates.

3.0 Agency Workers/Consultants

- 3.1 The use of temporary agency workers to cover vacancies in the short-term must be authorised within budget by the Service Manager/Head of Service.
- 3.2 All agency workers should be engaged using the Matrix SCM framework/system to ensure best value in terms of agency fees and potential conversion costs. The manager (with support from HR) will make the arrangements to take on agency workers and will ensure that appropriate pre-employment checks have been undertaken by the agency concerned. All agency workers must be subject to a process of interview and testing appropriate to the length of the assignment to ensure they have the appropriate skills and competences to do the job properly.
- 3.3 The use of consultants may be appropriate where the work is of a highly skilled and fixed-term nature and it is unlikely the

council will be able to recruit an employee on the council's pay and grading structure to complete the work. The relevant HR Officer should be consulted before it is decided that a consultant should be engaged to ensure all other options have been considered.

- 3.4 Before engaging a consultant, managers must liaise with their HR Officer to complete the HMRC 'employment status for tax' questionnaire. The questionnaire will determine whether the individual falls under the IR35 regulations. The IR35 regulations apply where someone provides their services via an intermediary but would be an employee if they were providing their services directly. Where IR35 applies, the council has an obligation to inform the individual that they fall under the regulations and their tax and National Insurance (NI) contributions must be deducted at source through the payroll.
- 3.5 IR35 can apply to individuals working through agencies, umbrella companies or those with their own limited companies. IR35 cannot apply to sole traders as there is no intermediary but HMRC can class some sole traders as 'employed for tax purposes' and tax and NI must also be deducted at source through the payroll for these individuals.
- 3.6 IR35 status is already applied to roles on the Matrix SCM so the 'employment status for tax' questionnaire does not need to be completed for agency workers.
- 3.7 Agency workers and contractors may apply for internally advertised vacancies at the council however to do so they must complete the external application form.

4.0 Volunteers

- 4.1 If a recruiting manager would like to use volunteers in their service, they should refer to the Volunteering Policy for further guidance.

5.0 Secondments (Internal and External)

- 5.1 Secondments are a temporary arrangement to fill a post and can be used as a learning and development opportunity for employees. Please see Appendix B for further details.

6.0 Review of vacancies and job documentation

- 6.1 Every new vacancy will be subject to a review of the council's needs in the area by the line manager with support and guidance from the HR section.

Management will consider:

- Whether it is necessary to fill the vacancy.
 - Whether the job description has changed.
 - Whether changing work patterns, organisation or technology have produced a different job, or the work can be distributed in a different way.
 - The nature of the replacement, e.g. full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, etc.
- 6.2 If the job has changed the manager should update the current job description and person specification. Where there are significant changes to the job description and person specification, a job evaluation process should be considered and managers should contact their HR Officer.

- 6.3 For brand new posts, recruiting managers will need to write a job description and person specification and submit it to HR for job evaluation.
- 6.4 In line with Safer Recruitment and the Council's commitment to Equality and Diversity all Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will include the following criteria:

Job Description:

Ensure awareness of the council's Safeguarding Policy and take a proactive approach to ensure the safeguarding of residents at all times.

Person Specification

The council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its residents specifically children and vulnerable adults. The council expects all its staff to have an understanding of Safeguarding and to share this commitment.

An understanding of and commitment to diversity and equality as it applies to council services and employment.

- 6.5 Before recruiting to any post, recruiting managers need to seek the appropriate approval using a Recruitment Request Form. If the vacancy is for the same job and does not increase the service's budget or headcount, the recruiting manager should complete the first page of the form and obtain a signature from the Head of Service, and where required, Leadership Team, e.g. during a recruitment freeze or in relation to a restructure.
- 6.6 If the vacancy requires additional funding and/or increases the service headcount, the recruiting manager should discuss how the post will fit into the structure and how it will be funded with both the finance team and HR and then complete both

pages of the form before seeking approval to recruit from Leadership Team.

- 6.7 In cases of a service restructure, requests to recruit should be 'packaged up' so that the leadership team can see the overall picture of a restructure rather than a piecemeal approach.

7.0 Means of recruitment to vacant posts

- 7.1 **The decision on how a vacant post is to be recruited to**
Posts will normally be advertised internally and externally to ensure diversity of applications, however internal only advertising will be considered where appropriate and this decision will be recorded on the recruitment request form. The decision will be guided by a number of considerations, including the following (Heads of Service should seek support from HR to ensure consistency):

- First and foremost, the most appropriate and cost effective manner to successfully attract the most suitable candidate.
- The range and level of skills, experience and competences required by the post.
- Fairness, diversity and equality of opportunity.
- The council's commitment to staff development.

- 7.2 **Sources of recruitment** may include any of the following, but no permanent appointment will be made without an appropriate selection process to ensure the quality of the appointment, fairness, diversity and equality of opportunity:

- Online recruitment advertising
- Internal advertising
- Press advertising

- Recruitment agencies
- Approaches to known potential candidates (who may include ex staff and reserve candidates from previous recruitment campaigns within the last 6 months).

7.3 **Vacant posts lasting longer than 6 months** will normally be advertised both internally and externally, provided that budgetary resources for external advertising are available. Exceptions to this, where the post might be advertised internally in the first instance, would include the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Where redundancies are being made and the council is seeking to redeploy staff (temporary and fixed-term vacancies may also be offered as options). In this situation, consideration will be given to redeploying existing staff into another suitable vacant post subject to fair selection being carried out. (The separate Reorganisation and Redundancy Policy applies).
- Where it is decided that a post would provide a suitable internal development opportunity for existing employees. Whether or not a post is suitable as an internal development opportunity will be decided by the Head of Service (or Leadership Team for a new post) with advice from HR through the Recruitment Request Form, taking into account the views of line managers, on the basis of:
 - a) judgements as to whether there are internal candidates who are likely to be able to demonstrate the necessary skills and competences for the post. These judgements would be based on objective knowledge of previously demonstrated skills, competences and experience obtained via the council's normal performance management processes.

b) diversity/equality considerations, taking into account the make up of the organisation as a whole and our commitment to diversity and equality.

- Where an employee has been acting up in/on secondment to a post on a temporary or casual basis which then becomes available on a longer-term or permanent basis, and that employee has been (a) covering the post or additional responsibilities for at least 3 months and has (b) been fully assessed as having met their performance objectives and competence requirements during the period. In such circumstances the invitation to apply for the post may be ring-fenced to the individual employee in the first instance.

7.4 **Casual Staff:** The council maintains a bank of casual workers who are paid on an hourly basis for ad hoc and short term assignments. The council is under no obligation to offer work and the worker is under no obligation to accept work. Where the person has not previously been through a selection process they should normally be interviewed by the line manager to determine suitability. Before a person is added to the casual bank and offered any work the required pre-employment checks must be undertaken.

7.5 **Reserve candidates** Where a post/similar post has been advertised in the previous 6 months and suitable reserve candidates were identified as part of that recruitment process these candidates can be contacted and asked if they would like to be considered for the role. In this case the role would also be advertised internally as well but not always externally.

7.6 **Fixed term contract posts of 6 months or less:** Where a fixed term contract vacancy arises (e.g. to cover for long-term absence or due to limited funding etc.) and it is expected to

last for 6 months or less the post can be filled in the following ways:

- By advertising the post internally where the vacancy can be seen as suitable development opportunity (either within a specific team where appropriate or council-wide) and then offered as internal secondment. Where applicable the cover for the secondment can then be considered in the first instance from the casual employee bank. Please see Appendix B for further guidance on secondments.
- By offering it as an acting up opportunity for an existing member of the team
- Using agency staff
- Using the council's casual bank
- Through speculative applications
- By advertising internally and externally (external may be restricted to previous applicants being approached alongside internal)

Whatever method is used, it must be agreed by the Head of Service with support from HR to ensure consistency.

7.7 Internal transfers: Nothing in this policy shall prevent a member of Leadership Team temporarily or permanently filling a post by means of internal transfer where:

- a vacant post is similar in its content and on the same salary grade or lower as that currently held by an employee, with the same or similar person spec criteria, in another team or division, and/or
- where management decide that transfer is in the best interests of the organisation or the employee. This may be decided as a consequence and in line with other procedures or processes – e.g. disciplinary, capability or sickness – or for operational or other reasons

An employee wishing to be considered for a transfer should email HR and the relevant manager.

7.8 Safer Recruitment The council's online recruitment pages contain the following statement:

East Herts Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff to share this commitment.

All external advertisements contain the following statement where the post falls within regulated activity:

This post is subject to an enhanced DBS disclosure and barring list check as it is within regulated activity due to the nature of the post.

8.0 The application process

8.1 The person specification will comprise a list of criteria (qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills, specific job requirement and competences) required to fulfil the requirements of the job. Candidates will be assessed on their ability to meet these criteria. The job description and person specification will be made available to all candidates for the role. All documentation should be checked for equality impact implications by the recruiting manager with HR support. All information must be available in an appropriate accessible format on request.

8.2 Applicants may be given the choice of either completing a full application form or submitting a CV accompanied by reduced application form and a written statement evidencing the applicant's skills and past achievements against the person

specification for the post. The application form requires applicants to outline any gaps in employment and provide explanation of these gaps, this can then be further explored at interview if appropriate. Applicants are also required to provide the reason for leaving a post again in line with 'Safer Recruitment' practice. Applicants are required to declare any unspent or spent (in certain cases) criminal convictions or allegations so these can be considered by HR who will action in line with the Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-offenders.

- 8.3 Internal applicants will be required to complete an internal application form evidencing their skills and past achievements against the person specification for the post.

9.0 Selection panel

- 9.1 The panel will normally consist of at least two persons and be chaired by the line manager or an appropriate manager. The panel may include an external specialist where appropriate. In the case of short-term agency appointments the line manager may complete selection alone.
- 9.2 The council will aim to ensure all staff involved in recruitment have received training or adequate briefing. Staff will be supported by the HR section to operate a fair and transparent selection process. The Chair of the recruitment panel or at least one member of the Panel is required to undertake Recruitment Training or a Briefing with HR prior to their first recruitment at East Herts. This should cover EHC processes including Equality and 'Safer Recruitment' to ensure that the selection process is probing to ask questions in respect of areas of concern and ensure that suitable people are selected.

9.3 Efforts should be made, where possible, to achieve diversity of representation on the interview panel and/or as part of the selection process (e.g. meet the team) .

9.4 It will be the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to:

- Ensure that there are proper arrangements for the administration of the recruitment and selection process.
- Ensure that appropriate questions and tests are designed for the panel's approval.
- Complete and collect full documentation on the panel's decision-making from the shortlisting and interviewing stages and ensure it is sent to the HR section to be stored centrally for purposes of feedback or response to any claim of unfairness or discrimination.

10.0 Shortlisting

10.1 Shortlisting will be carried out with the aim of assessing objectively, against the person specification for the post, which applicants seem to meet the criteria most closely. Any gaps in employment should be noted to probe further at interview in line with Safer Recruitment. Shortlisting will normally be carried out by the people who constitute the interview panel. They will discuss their individual assessments with a view to reaching a consensus on the most suitable candidates for interview. This will be recorded on the shortlisting grid provided by HR and must be returned to HR at the end of the selection process.

10.2 The recruiting manager should invite the shortlisted applicants to an interview using the template. They should also ask applicants if they need any reasonable adjustments at the interview.

- 10.3 Recruiting managers should contact unsuccessful *internal* applicants and provide feedback if requested. For *external* applicants, the council's website states that if they haven't heard within 3 weeks of the closing date they should assume they've been unsuccessful.

11.0 Interview and tests

- 11.1 The assessment will consist of an interview and, in some cases, further exercises and tests relevant to the job requirements.
- 11.2 All interviews will be conducted on an objective basis, concentrating on the knowledge, skills and abilities of the applicant and their ability to fulfil the job requirements. Questions asked of the applicant will relate to the requirements of the job only and their abilities to undertake them. Any gaps in employment or short-term employment periods should be probed at interview in line with Safer Recruitment (please see Appendix A for guidance).
- 11.3 The recruiting manager should make the candidate feel at ease and carry out introductions:
- They should also explain the format of the interview and selection process, making it clear that there will be an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions at the end.
 - If a job involves working unusual hours or shift work, these hours should be clearly set out in the job description and if necessary, discussed at the interview.
 - Practical issues may be discussed during the interview, but comments about childcare, other domestic arrangements, disability, gender (including marital status), age, religion, ethnic origin, socio-economic group or sexual orientation must be avoided. Such comments may well be taken as being intrusive or maybe unlawfully discriminatory.

- Where a candidate has a disability for which adjustments may need to be considered, the candidate's requirements should be discussed with him/her once the planned questioning is complete.
 - Candidates should be told by the Chair when they could expect to hear the outcome of the interview.
 - Candidates must be given an opportunity to ask any questions of the panel.
- 11.4 Each panel member should take notes during the interview using the Interview Assessment Sheet. The panel should collectively agree the scores for each applicant and record them on the panel chair's interview assessment form. The chair can also use the last section of the form to summarise the applicant's overall performance to use for feedback purposes. The panel will select the applicant who is the most suitable overall against the person specification. The interview assessment sheet must be returned to HR, candidates will not be provided with a conditional offer in writing until this has been received.
- 11.5 The panel will discuss which, if any, of the other candidates is most appointable as an alternative if the first choice candidate declines the post or is unable to satisfy the pre-employment checks which include providing suitable and satisfactory references. Where another suitable candidate is identified as appointable, the candidate may be contacted as a reserve candidate and some pre-employment checks may begin.
- 11.6 All offers will be made subject to the receipt of satisfactory references, right to work evidence and medical clearance. For relevant posts, offers will be made subject also to relevant DBS checks.
- 11.7 If no appointable candidate is identified, the chair of the panel should discuss with HR the next steps to be taken. Options

may include reviewing the job description, person specification and job grade/conditions; re-advertising; approaching recruitment agencies; re-designing the job as an appropriate internal opportunity.

12.0 Informing the candidates

- 12.1 A member of the panel, normally the chair, should contact the successful candidate at the earliest opportunity to make the offer of the post – always stating that the offer is subject to references that are satisfactory to the council, medical clearance, right to work checks and any DBS checks, and any other information that might come to light during the referencing period.
- 12.2 Recruiting managers should then complete a Statement of Employee Particulars form and send it to HR. HR will email a conditional offer letter and a contract detailing the terms and conditions of employment to the applicant. HR will obtain pre-employment checks. Identity, Right to work in the UK, Qualifications, Medical fitness, Employment History, Employment/educational references are required for successful candidates who are given a conditional offer whilst these checks are undertaken. Full references rather than statement of facts are sought wherever possible. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks must be sought where employees have substantial or regular or unsupervised contact with children, young people or adults at risk as part of their duties or responsibilities for or on behalf of the organisation.
- 12.3 Once the pre-employment checks are received, HR will contact the recruiting manager to approve them. Once approved, the recruiting manager should contact the applicant to agree a start date and inform HR. Where a DBS disclosure has not been received before a candidate is due to start employment then a Risk Assessment will be undertaken by the recruiting

manager with HR support and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (or in their absence the Deputy Chief Executive Officer) to ensure that it is appropriate for the candidate to start work. All other pre-employment checks should be complete to inform this risk assessment. The offer of employment will remain conditional on the outcome of the DBS check. Please see Appendix A for further information on Safer Recruitment.

- 12.4 Recruiting managers are responsible for informing unsuccessful applicants in writing and offering feedback if requested. It may be necessary to delay this in the case of any suitable runner(s) up until the first choice of candidate has confirmed their acceptance of the post.

13.0 Starting salary

- 13.1 Each job is advertised with the relevant salary range. Applicants should be offered the post on basis of starting on the beginning of the scale unless previous earnings and/or skills and experience warrant consideration to start above the bottom point within the range; any proposal to offer the candidate above the starting point within the agreed range must be agreed and approved by the Head of Service in consultation with the Head of HR and OD or in their absence an HR Officer (to ensure consistency).

14.0 Feedback for unsuccessful candidates

- 14.1 The methodical approach adopted for assessment will enable the panel to offer comprehensive feedback to all candidates, if requested. The chair of the panel will normally undertake this. Feedback should identify where the panel recorded clear evidence of the applicant's strengths and weaknesses. Feedback may be given orally or in writing. Where given orally,

the giver of feedback should forward brief notes of the conversation with the candidate to the HR team.

15.0 Documentation

- 15.1 Recruiting managers should send all recruitment paperwork (i.e. shortlisting and interview documents) to HR.
- 15.2 The application and panel notes of the selection process for the successful candidate will be kept on their personnel file.
- 15.3 The application and panel notes of the selection process for all applicants will be kept in HR for 12 months in case of litigation, and will then be destroyed/deleted.
- 15.4 The staff annual equalities report will be produced for the Leadership Team and HR Committee in respect of equal opportunities monitoring so that trends can be analysed and action agreed where appropriate.

16.0 Eligibility to remain and work in the UK

- 16.1 To ensure that the council follows employment and immigration legislation as detailed in the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, if candidates receive a conditional offer of employment, they will be required to provide suitable document(s) which confirms their eligibility to remain and work in the UK. Suitable documents may include, but are not limited to a passport, full birth certificate, work or residency permit or suitable correspondence from the UK Home Office. The exact details of the documentation that may be accepted will be given to candidates. Copies of these documents will be taken and retained for the appointed candidate before they start employment with the council.

17.0 Work permits and visas

- 17.1 A sponsorship licence is required to employ someone from outside the UK. This includes citizens of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland who arrived in the UK after 31 December 2020. The council **does not** have a sponsorship licence and therefore cannot employ anyone outside of the UK, apart from certain exceptions. The council will need to abide by this restriction when recruiting to posts.
- 17.2 Settled workers can work in the UK without restrictions and therefore they do not need to be sponsored and can be employed by the council.

A 'settled worker' is any one of the following:

- a British citizen
- an Irish citizen – unless they are subject to a deportation order, an exclusion order, or an international travel ban
- a European Economic Area (EEA) national who arrived in the UK before 11 pm on 31 December 2020 (and their eligible family members), provided they apply for status under the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 and that application is granted
- a person with leave to remain (settled or pre-settled status) under Appendix EU (the EU Settlement Scheme)
- a British overseas territories citizen, except for those from sovereign base areas in Cyprus
- a Commonwealth citizen (including a citizen of Zimbabwe) who has been granted permission on the UK Ancestry route on the basis they have a grandparent born in the UK and Islands
- a Commonwealth citizen (including a citizen of Zimbabwe) with the right of abode in the UK
- anyone who has indefinite leave to enter or remain (settlement) in the UK

Sponsorship is also not required for workers who either:

- has immigration permission to be in the UK which does not prevent them from doing the work in question – examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a person with permission under Appendix FM to the Immigration Rules as the partner of a British citizen or settled person can take any kind of employment
 - a person with permission as a Student may be allowed to work for 10 or 20 hours per week during term-time, depending on the type of course they are following. A student with permission can also work full time in their breaks.
- is exempt from requiring permission – for example:
 - a diplomat, government official or senior official of an international organisation – see ‘Exempt from immigration control’ on GOV.UK
 - an EEA national who qualifies as a frontier worker

18.0 Induction

- 18.1 All new employees to the council will be required to attend a corporate induction, which may be held virtually or face to face.
- 18.2 Managers should also arrange a local induction with the new starter (including agency workers and contractors). The induction checklist should be followed which will cover practical information (such as building orientation, health and safety, and information about systems, policies and procedures), an understanding of the council’s values and culture, alongside job specific information (including department information, discussion about what the job requires and objectives), and an introduction to the wider team.

- 18.3 Managers can seek a volunteer to act as the new starter's 'buddy'. A buddy can be someone who works within the same service or in a different service to the new employee who can help ease them into their role by e.g. taking them for lunch on their first day, introducing them to colleagues, showing them where things are. The buddy will not take on those more formal responsibilities usually undertaken by the manager or HR during the induction process.
- 18.4 There is no formal training required to become a buddy, just a willingness to take on the extra responsibility, good communication skills and availability.
- 18.5 For further information on induction, including useful information for new starters to read, please refer to the intranet.

19.0 Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

- 19.1 The HR service have the responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed in line with legislation and best practice.

Safer Recruitment Interview Guidance

Asking Probing Questions

We use probing questions in order to get a better and deeper understanding of an individual's situation and experience. These can be divided into the following areas:

- Clarification
- Purpose
- Examples
- Extension

Clarification

When they are vague or have not given enough information, seek to further understand them by asking for clarification.

What exactly did you mean by 'XXX'?

What, specifically, will you do next week?

Could you tell me more about YY?

Purpose

Sometimes they say things where the purpose of why they said it is not clear. Ask them to justify their statement or dig for underlying causes.

Why did you say that?

What were you thinking about when you said XX?

Examples

When they talk about something vaguely, you may ask for specific examples. This is particularly useful in interviews, where what you want is to test both their truthfulness and the depth behind what they are claiming.

Sorry, I don't understand. Could you help by giving an example?

Could you give me an example of when you did XXX?

Tell me about a time when you ____.

Extension

When they have not given you enough information about something, ask them to tell you more.

Could you tell me more about that, please?

And what happened after that?

Secondment Guidance

1.0 Definition and types of secondment

- 1.1 A secondment is defined as the temporary transfer of an employee to another part of the same organisation or to a different organisation for a set period of time, which is agreed between both parties.
- 1.2 **Internal secondments** could include project work or temporary cover, for example to cover maternity leave.
- 1.3 **External secondments** could include within another public sector organisation (e.g. County Council, Police and Health authorities) or to other not for profit organisations or private companies. The council remains the employer. **The council will not normally support full-time external secondments to other organisations but may consider partial secondments.**
- 1.4 **Incoming secondments** are where employees from partner organisations join the council on a temporary basis where the council will be the host rather than the employer.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
- all permanent employees excluding casual staff,
 - all secondments taking place within the council and where appropriate, will apply to secondments outside the council

3.0 Approval

- 3.1 The substantive manager of anyone wishing to apply for an internal secondment must have given approval to the member of staff concerned by signing the internal recruitment application being submitted.
- 3.2 If an employee wishes to apply for an external secondment they must discuss this with their manager and get their approval before submitting an application.
- 3.3 If the employee considers that they have unreasonably been denied an opportunity, they should speak to their Head of Service.

4.0 Timescales

- 4.1 Secondments will normally be for a period of between 3 months and a year depending on circumstances. The time frame will be agreed and clearly defined in the secondment agreement. An extension to the secondment time frames must be discussed and agreed by both managers involved and Human Resources. Services need to track secondments to ensure they do not continue indefinitely.
- 4.2 The substantive manager can expect a minimum of 4 weeks' notice prior to the secondee taking up an internal secondment. External secondments will require notice in line with the contract of employment.
- 4.3 Generally, a minimum of six months between each secondment opportunity would apply but exceptions may be agreed by the substantive manager in order to ensure continuity of service.

5.0 Terms and Conditions

- 5.1 East Herts policies will apply except for employees who are seconded externally who will be subject to the host organisation's policies.
- 5.2 A post offered as a secondment will be offered at the grade for the post. If the grade of the seconded post is a lower graded post, the seconded employee will be placed at the top of the relevant grade.
- 5.3 All East Herts seconded staff will remain under the contract of employment with East Herts Council, retaining the majority of their substantive terms and conditions (except where the post to which they are seconded has a higher rate of pay and holiday entitlement); this may not include all special allowances unless relevant for the job such as, standby or other additional allowances. Continuity of employment will be protected and annual leave entitlement (where appropriate) will be adjusted accordingly for the duration of the secondment.
- 5.4 All annual leave taken during the secondment period should be signed off by the secondment manager and annual leave applied for outside of the secondment period should be signed off by the substantive manager via email and then processed in the HR system.
- 5.5 PDR arrangements and development plans will be agreed with the host manager.
- 5.6 Employees who are seconded have a requirement to keep in touch with their substantive manager and vice versa, to ensure the employee is job ready when they return.
- 5.7 HR will confirm all secondments in writing to the employee, including written confirmation of the terms and conditions that will apply during the secondment.

6.0 Conduct and Capability

- 6.1 The host manager (internal) will deal with any concerns regarding conduct and capability under the Managing Performance or any other relevant policy. The host manager must liaise with the substantive manager. If there are any concerns about work performance in the seconded post, consideration will need to be given to reverting the employee to their previous post. The host manager must ensure that adequate training and support has been provided to the employee. For partial secondments to an external organisation, East Herts policies will still apply. Where an employee is seconded full-time to an external organisation the policies and procedures of the host organisation will prevail. However, as stated in section 1.3, the council will not normally support full-time external secondments.
- 6.2 The East Herts Code of Conduct will apply to secondments within East Herts and partial external secondments. For full-time external secondments the code of conduct for the receiving organisation will apply.

7.0 Returning to the Substantive Post

- 7.1 Secondment opportunities should generally be allowed to run their course in line with the terms of the secondment agreement. However, the substantive manager reserves the right to recall the secondee prematurely, if required in exceptional circumstances. There may also be the occasion where a secondee is not meeting the requirement of the secondment and an early return to the substantive post would be beneficial to all. The secondment agreement should stipulate an agreed notice period for all parties to notify of early termination of the secondment agreement, which should not exceed one month.

- 7.2 Secondees will have the right to return to their substantive post unless a redundancy situation arose during the period of secondment or in exceptional circumstances there is some other reason why it is not reasonably practicable to return to the original job. In such cases secondees will be fully consulted at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.3 It is recognised that in certain circumstances there may be organisational needs to fill the substantive post on a permanent basis. In these circumstances secondees must be consulted first and given the opportunity to return to their substantive post.
- 7.4 At the end of the secondment, if the employee is successful in gaining a consecutive secondment, or an extension to the secondment which takes the arrangement over 2 years, then they will no longer retain the right to return to their substantive post, but will retain their permanent employment status and in line with the council's redeployment policy will be considered as an 'at risk' candidate for any applications made for posts at their previous substantive level or below, when their secondment ceases. HR will inform employees of the implications of extending their secondment past two years at that time.

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

Organisational Development Policy

Policy Statement

Policy Statement No. 33

Policy owner: Human Resources and Organisational Development Service

Policy date of last review: April 2021

Policy date of next review: April 2022

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The council is committed to staff development. The key purpose is to facilitate personal, professional and organisational development enabling individuals, teams and groups to achieve their full potential at work.
- 1.2 Organisational development includes any activity, which contributes to the enhancement of an individual's knowledge, skills, competence and working practices. Organisational development is therefore a key contributor to the success of individuals and ultimately to the success of the council as a whole.
- 1.3 A range of development methods can be used to meet these needs: this may include (but is not limited to) formal training courses, seminars, e-learning, webinars, presentations, conferences, secondments, training for professional qualifications, on the job training, coaching and mentoring, apprenticeships, background reading and project work.
- 1.4 Central to the implementation of the policy is the corporate training plan, which identifies general training needs across all services. The plan will be devised from the annual performance development reviews (PDRs) including key topics and priorities identified by the Leadership Team.
- 1.5 Involvement in organisational development will be determined by service need, job specific requirements, succession planning or personal merit/performance. Training and development funding is subject to approval through the employees manager and Human Resources. All training will be funded within the specified budget limits.
- 1.6 Employee and organisational development will continue to be monitored and evaluated to assess the effectiveness of in-house and external training providers and programme to ensure continuous improvement and the cost effectiveness of a provision or development activity being offered to employees.

2.0 Mandatory Training

2.1 All staff will be expected to complete the required mandatory training as a new starter and on an annual basis. The current mandatory training includes:

- Safeguarding Awareness
- Equality & Diversity
- Health & Safety
- Data Protection/GDPR and ICT Security Awareness training
- Lone Working (for specific employees)

The Leadership Team will continue to identify developmental areas for the mandatory training programme which will be developed for all employees or selected roles with support from the OD and HR Co-ordinator. Details of the mandatory training will be communicated to employees with realistic deadlines for completion.

3.0 Identification of Development needs

3.1 Individual and organisational development needs will be discussed, reviewed and captured as part of the PDR and 1-2-1 process and during the setting of objectives for new employees. In addition, development needs may be identified in a variety of ways, e.g. a skills audit, individual feedback or the specific needs of a project or job role. These additional needs need to be feedback back into the 1-2-1's and ultimately the PDR process.

3.2 It is policy that all employees will have an annual performance development review (PDR) with their manager, where their development needs and options of how to meet those needs will be discussed and recorded.

4.0 Training budgets

4.1 The council's training budgets are divided into four areas:

- A corporate training budget to deliver the corporate training plan which is managed by the HR and OD Service.

- A training and development budget which is calculated per capita and is split appropriately by service and is managed by the HR and OD Service.
 - A corporate Health and Safety training budget to support the compliance of Health and Safety throughout the council which is managed by the HR and OD Service.
 - A professional training budget for professional qualifications and courses over a £1,000 (see section 9) where the council's investment is protected by a training and development agreement. Expenditure for this budget is approved by Leadership Team and managed by HR and OD Service.
- 4.2 In addition to the corporate training budgets the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service have a separate training budget defined in the shared service partnership agreement with East Herts and Stevenage Borough Council. The budget supports the learning and development needs of the service.

5.0 The responsibilities of the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of the HR and OD Service to oversee implementation of the Organisational and Development Policy and the corporate training plan (including Health and Safety).
- 5.2 The HR and OD Service will be responsible for the delivery of the corporate training plan devised by the PDR's and the Leadership Team's priorities. The HR Officers will also work with Heads of Service to identify any additional training requirements and ensure these are met where appropriate.
- 5.3 The HR and OD Service will manage the various corporate training budgets effectively to ensure good value and good quality training is delivered.

6.0 Heads of Service/Manager responsibilities

- 6.1 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will provide guidance to Heads of Service/Managers in meeting their obligations listed below.

Heads of Service/Managers will be responsible for:

- Identifying development areas in their own projects and work undertaken by employees for whom they are responsible which could be assisted by training and development activities
- Ensuring their employees attend all statutory training requirements
- Prioritising development requests within their budget fairly
- Ensuring that new employees reporting to them are provided with appropriate induction training and their objectives are set
- Ensuring that all employees for whom they have line management responsibility receive regular feedback on their performance, and that end of probation performance reviews and annual performance development reviews are completed on time, with clear objectives set, and any training needs clearly identified
- Developing a service training and development plan as part of the Service Plan completed by Heads of Service; which supports the council and service objectives, this should be regularly reviewed to ensure that planned development is delivered on time and that it meets the stated objectives
- Ensuring that employees who are attending organised development know the reasons for the training, its objectives, the expected outcomes and standard of performance; then ensuring that their performance is measured against this and the training is properly evaluated
- Ensuring that employees who undertake professional development are given the appropriate support and encouragement, and that regular monitoring is carried out to ensure they proceed well with their studies
- Managing their own service training and development budget which should be used to support service needs e.g. conferences/seminars

- To discuss with leavers whether training and development booked within their notice period should be attended
- To ensure that succession planning is considered for the roles within teams and when employees leave the council
- Supporting the HR and OD Service in the implementation of this policy

7.0 Individual responsibilities

- 7.1 The council aims to create an environment where employees take shared responsibility for their own individual effectiveness, personal and career development with support from management. All employees are required to participate in an annual PDR and to attend training and development when identified and agreed.

8.0 Individual training expenses for training not covered by a Professional Study and Career Development Agreement

- 8.1 The council is fully committed to the career development of all its employees and is therefore willing to meet the out of pocket expenses associated with attending a training event or development opportunity. Expenses incurred when attending short term training courses, seminars, a coaching session etc. during normal working hours, will be dealt with in accordance with the normal expense procedures.

9.0 Training and Development funding for development opportunities

- 9.1 The council will consider funding conferences, events, webinars, etc that are associated to an employee's post, identified in an individual PDR or they are a legal part of the employee's role e.g. Safeguarding or RIPA training.
- 9.2 Employees who wish to apply for event funding will be required to complete a training and development form. The form will be reviewed

and agreed by the employee's manager and passed to the HR and OD Service to be approved and the appropriate funding allocated. The funding request should be clear and include the benefits to the individual and service. Once approved the form will be return to the service for the event to be booked and administered by the appropriate service.

10.0 Professional Study and funding for development opportunities at £1,000 or more

- 10.1 The council will consider funding or part funding costs associated with professional qualifications that are associated to an employee's post and/or identified in individual PDR. The council will also consider part funding development opportunities to support individual career development identified in the PDR process that costs £1,000 or more from the central professional training budget.
- 10.2 The council will consider 100% funding for qualifications if they fulfil the following criteria:
- The qualification is essential to the role; as outlined in the person specification
 - A trainee post where the qualification is a condition of the role e.g. Trainee Planner
- 10.3 The council will consider funding qualifications up to 75% to support hard or difficult to recruit posts. For example the current posts identified in the 2019 Local Government Workforce Survey are Planning Officers and Legal Professionals.
- 10.4 The council will consider funding qualifications up to 50% for employees to support career development as part of the council's on-going succession planning; as the council continues to support employees and grow its own talent.
- 10.5 Employees who wish to apply for full or part funding for their professional qualification or a career development opportunity (over £1,000) will be required to complete an application process; the application will be

reviewed and is required to be approved by Leadership Team. The application should be clear what the funding is being requested for i.e. is it just the study/course fee, does it include exam fees, books, registration fees, the cost for a specific IT application etc. Out of pocket travel expenses can be claimed; these will be reimbursed at a local level and should be included in the application form so the service is aware of the cost of their contribution. Subsistence cannot be claimed and should not be included in the application process.

- 10.6 The time commitment should also be identified as part of the application process. Is morning/afternoon or day release being requested? Normally one days study leave and one days examination leave is granted per examination paper (no more than 5 days may be granted for study and exam leave in any 12 month period); does the application include a request for study leave and exam leave to be considered and/or approved?
- 10.7 When a professional qualification or career development opportunity is approved it commits the employee to the full repayment of the contribution agreed if the employee withdraws, fails to attend, fails to pass an exam without good reason or shows unsatisfactory progress.
- 10.8 In order to protect the council's investment, if the employee were to leave the council's employment before two years had elapsed since they completed the professional qualification, they will be required to pay a proportion of the fees and expenses back to the council. The proportion payable shall be dependent on the number of months remaining on the agreement when the employee left the council's employment. E.g. Employee A undertakes a professional qualification at a total cost of £1,500 but leaves the employment of the Council 13 months after completing the course i.e. 11 months short of the two year period. To work out what proportion of the fees is repayable, the £1,500 total is divided by the 24 month agreement period giving a figure of £62.50 per month. This figure is then multiplied by the number of months remaining on the agreement; in this example 11 months. $£62.50 \times 11 = £687.50$

- 10.9 If the funding agreement includes exam fees this will not include exam re-sits. In the event of examination failure, the employee will be expected to pay for any re-sits unless there are exceptional circumstances for the manager to consider.
- 10.10 The council will work with the education/course providers to support the employee's progress and reserves the right to ask education providers or course organisers for periodic reports on the employee's progress.

11.0 Apprenticeship Levy

- 11.1. The Apprenticeship Levy is a UK tax on employers which can be used to fund apprenticeship training. It is currently payable by all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million at a rate of 0.5% of their total pay bill.
- 11.2 To access the funding the employee must be classed as an apprentice. Apprentices are employees aged 16 or over and they have to combine working with studying (20% off the job) to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. Apprentices can be new or current employees.
- 11.3 The levy funding can be used to fund qualifications that fulfil specific criteria under an apprenticeship framework. The qualifications range from NVQ's to degree level. HR and OD can advise on the suitability of a qualification under the levy guidelines.
- 11.4 Currently a funding agreement does not have to be signed to access the levy funding but the employee does have to commit to signing an apprenticeship contract alongside their employment contract.

12.0 Training evaluation

- 12.1 The benefits of development activities undertaken by individuals or teams should be reviewed within the relevant service following each activity. Evaluation may also take place via informal feedback and service meetings etc.

- 12.2 Evaluation and review will also be undertaken centrally by HR and OD; particularly where training is offered to a group of employees or where substantial investment is involved.

13.0 Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

- 13.1 HR and OD Service have overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1 - Professional Study and Career Development Application

Appendix 2 - Professional Study and Career Development Agreement

Appendix 3 - Training and Development Funding Application

APPENDIX 1



Professional Study and Career Development Application

Service:

Employee:

Post:

Course applied for:

Qualification/Course details:

Level of qualification:

Level of funding being requested:

Duration of study:

Details of attendance (e.g. day release, work based assessment, virtual):

Expected commencement date:

Complete the table below for the financial support required:

Detail of funding	£ Value of funding	Additional Comments
Registration fees per year		
Tuition fees per year		
Exam fees		
Books per year		
Cost of IT application		
Residential		
Estimated travel costs		

Total funding required: £

(Please indicate in the table below the funding required for each business year for the duration of the course)

Name of qualification/course	Business year	Total amount

Supporting statement by employee:

Please include the following information to support your application:

- What are the benefits the course will have on your objectives and personal development?
- How will the course support your career development?
- How does the course support the council's priorities and values?
- How does the course support succession planning in your service and/or the council?

- Is this development opportunity a requirement of the post?
- How does the course support the employees learning and development?
- How will the course support the employee's individual objectives?
- How does the course support succession planning?
- What is the impact of the employee attending this course on the service delivery and employee's ability to complete their objectives?

.....

.....

.....

Signed Employee:

Date:

Signed Manager:

Date:

Signed Head of Service:

Date:

Approval by Leadership Team

Date:

Is a copy of syllabus/other relevant course information attached? YES/NO

The employee has read the Organisational and Development Policy and agrees to all the terms of the policy including section 9 regarding funding and the repayment conditions? YES/NO

The employee is aware that if the professional study and career development agreement is not signed; no fees or expenses related to the application will be paid? YES/NO

APPENDIX 2



Professional Study and Career Development Agreement

Name of Employee:

Conditions of agreement:

- ☐ I hereby agreed to the financial terms and conditions of study as outlined in my application for professional study and career development funding.
- ☐ Signing this agreement commits me to the full repayment of fees and expenses agreed in the application; if I leave or withdraw from the course, fail to sit/pass an exam without good reason or shows unsatisfactory progress.
- ☐ I am aware that if my application is not signed, no fees or expenses related to the application will be paid.
- ☐ I agree that if I leave the Council within two years of completion of a course I will be expected to repay the funding as outlined in the Organisational and Development Policy.
- ☐ If exceptional circumstances have not been identified I accept and agree I will be responsible for the payment of exam and college year resits.

Signed Employee:

Date:

Signed manager:

Date:

Signed Head of Service:

Date:

Signed Head of HR and OD:

Date

A copy of this agreement must be sent to HR to be held on your HR file

APPENDIX 3



Training and Development Funding Application

Service:

Employee:

Post:

Name of event/course applied for:

Event/course date:

Event/Course details:

Complete the table below detailing the financial support required; include all costs relevant to this event/course:

Detail of funding	£ Value of funding	Additional Comments

Total funding required: £

Supporting statement by employee:

Please include the following information to support your application:

- Is this development opportunity a requirement of the post?
- How does the event support the employees learning and development?
- How will the event support the employee's individual objectives?
- Was the event identified in the officers PDR?
- What is the impact of the employee attending this course on the service delivery and employee's ability to complete their objectives?

.....

Signed Employee:

Date:

Signed Manager:

Date:

Approval by the HR & OD Service

Date:

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APPENDIX 5

Policy Name	Appeals
Date	March 2019
Statement No	5
Version	3
Review Date	March 2022

1. Purpose/Aim

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a standardised appeals process for the policies listed in section 2. Where a policy is not listed below it is because it has an appeal process incorporated within the policy.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, except for Chief Officer level and above, where procedures set out in the Constitution are used.

- 2.2 The Appeals policy refers to the following policies:

- Redundancy Policy (excluding voluntary redundancy)

and,

- Process for dismissal for Some Other Substantial Reason (SOSR)

- 2.3 Any formal appeal received that is not directly covered by any of the policies listed above and is not subject to a specific appeals process should also be dealt with following the process detailed in Sections 3 and 5.

- 2.4 This policy is based on legislation and the ACAS code of practice, and has been agreed with UNISON.

3. Who to Appeal to and Time Limits

- 3.1 An employee has a right to appeal against formal action taken in accordance with the stated policies.
- 3.2 The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of the date of the written notification of the decision to be appealed. The appeal should be submitted to the Head of HR and Organisational Development using the Appeal Submission form (Appendix A), stating their grounds of appeal and the resolution sought. Appeals submitted late without mitigating circumstances will not be allowed to proceed.
- 3.3 The appeal hearing should be held without unreasonable delay.

4. Grounds for Appeal

4.1 Appeal against Redundancy Decisions

- 4.1.1 Under the Redundancy Policy, employees can appeal against decisions on the following grounds:

That their post is not redundant

The employee needs to specifically state why they believe their role is not redundant and where their duties have transferred to.

That they should have been slotted in to/ring fenced for a new post

The employee needs to specifically state which post/s it would have been appropriate to slot them in to / ring fence them for and why, setting out the similarity of tasks carried out (this may be different to the employee's job specification) and any transferable skills not already identified.

That the selection criteria during interview / management selection unfairly applied

The appeal hearing will have available anonymised information on the assessment of the other candidates, which will be taken into consideration when reaching a decision. This information will be made available to both sides before the appeal hearing and both sides will be invited to comment on how the appeal might impact on other staff. If the appeal is successful, the member of staff who is selected for redundancy in their place will also have a right of appeal.

That the post offered is not suitable alternative employment

The employee needs to state why they believe the role that has been offered to them is not suitable alternative employment.

4.1.2 Where notice of redundancy has already been served, any appeals will run concurrently with the employee's notice period.

4.2 Appeal against a Dismissal for Some Other Substantial Reason (SOSR)

4.2.1 A member of staff who wishes to appeal the decision to dismiss for SOSR should state their full grounds of appeal using the Appeal Submission form.

5. Appeal Hearing Process

5.1 HR will allocate an appropriate manager who has not been previously involved in the case to hear the appeal (the Hearing Manager). This may be a service manager, Head of Service or the Deputy Chief Executive depending on the nature of the appeal. Appeals against dismissal will be heard by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution.

- 5.2 For grievances concerning a Chief Executive or Chief Officer, appeals will be heard in accordance with the Constitution.

5.3 PROCESS: Step 1 - Written Notification

- 5.3.1 Human Resources will write to the employee confirming the date, time and location of the appeal hearing, giving at least 7 working days' notice and informing of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative/work colleague.
- 5.3.2 No later than 5 working days prior to the hearing the employee must submit any new evidence or inform the Head of HR of any witnesses they intend to call at the hearing.
- 5.3.3 The manager responding to the appeal (the Responding Manager) will be required to submit a response to the appeal. This should present the circumstances of the case and the action taken to date, and should include a full set of the key documents to be presented at the appeal hearing, including witness statements, a full summary of the circumstances of the case, copies of all correspondence relating to the case and the outcome of previous stages of the procedure.
- 5.3.4 Copies of all relevant documents will be circulated by Human Resources to all those attending the appeal no later than 3 working days before the date of the hearing.

5.4 The Role of Human Resources

- 5.4.1 The Hearing Manager will be accompanied by an HR Officer. It is the HR Officer's role to advise on procedure, to advise on ensuring consistency of decision making and equity of treatment. The HR Officer may also ask questions of

clarification of either side. If possible, the HR Officer supporting the Hearing Manager will not have previously been involved in the case.

5.4.2 The Responding Manager may also be accompanied by an HR Officer. It is their role to advise the manager and answer any questions on the circumstances of the case.

5.4.3 Either HR Officer may take the notes of the hearing unless the Hearing Manager decides that an additional note-taker should be present.

5.5 Witnesses

5.5.1 Original witnesses are not required to attend the appeal hearing. The employee can only recall witnesses or ask new witnesses to attend the appeal hearing if their contribution relates to new evidence that is relevant to the grounds of appeal.

5.5.2 The employee must notify the Head of HR no later than 5 working days before the hearing if they intend to call a witness. It is the employee's responsibility to arrange their witness's attendance at the hearing.

5.5.3 Witnesses will only be present in the hearing when giving evidence.

5.6 Step 2 - Appeal Hearing

5.6.1 Appeal hearings will not rehear the whole case, but will focus on the grounds of appeal. Further evidence may be introduced by either side if it is relevant to the grounds for the appeal and provided it is received within the specified timescale of 3 working days before the date of the hearing.

- 5.6.2 The Hearing Manager will ensure that all the parties have the relevant documents and ensure that both sides understand the grounds of appeal that are to be considered.
- 5.6.3 The employee or their representative will set out the grounds of the appeal, calling any witnesses and referring to the documents that have already been submitted.
- 5.6.4 At the conclusion of the case for the appeal, the Responding Manager, the Hearing Manager and the HR Officer may question the employee or their representative.
- 5.6.5 The Responding Manager will then respond to the case for appeal.
- 5.6.6 At the conclusion of their response they may be questioned by the employee or their representative, the Hearing Manager and the advising HR Officer.
- 5.6.7 Both parties will make final statements which summarise the key points of their case. The employee will sum up after the Responding manager. It is not appropriate for new evidence to be presented at this stage.
- 5.6.8 The Hearing Manager will then close the hearing to consider the matter, advised by the HR Officer.
- 5.6.9 At any time during the hearing either party can make a request for an adjournment to the Hearing Manager.

5.7 Step 3 - Written Notification of Outcome

- 5.7.1 The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing within 3 working days of the appeal hearing. If the decision can be made on the day the employee will also be notified verbally. The decision made at the appeal will be final and there is no further right of appeal within East Herts Council.

5.7.2 The employee cannot use the Grievance Policy by way of further challenge to the decision.

5.7.3 No increased penalty will result from an appeal being raised.

5.7.4 When an appeal is against a decision to dismiss, the dismissal will have taken effect in accordance with the original decision, either summarily or by notice. Should the appeal be successful the member of staff will be reinstated with full back pay or, if it is considered that disciplinary action less than dismissal is appropriate this will be implemented and backdated to the date of the original decision.

6. Policy Review and Amendment

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

Appeal Submission Form

Date.....

I am writing to appeal against the recent decision that was made to:

Please give details of which policy was used, what decision was made and who made the decision.

My grounds of appeal are:

Please outline your grounds of appeal.

Resolution sought:

Please outline the outcome you are looking for.

(Name)

Please send the completed Appeals Submission form to the Head of HR and Organisational Development within 10 working days of the date of the written notification of the decision.

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

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

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on since Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (January 2021 to March 2021) and up to early May 2021.

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 have continued to manage furlough payments and supporting the furlough payment reclaims during the period. The Furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) has been extended until 30 Sept 2021. Furloughed staff have continued to be paid at 80% with EHC making up the shortfall where required to the 80% level and some staff have been flexed back into work (as allowed by the flexible scheme) on occasion to

provide ad hoc work or to take annual leave. Where this occurs they revert back to 100% of pay for that day and there is no furlough reclaim. Staff who are working their notice and on furlough cannot be reclaimed from HMRC, this has been actioned in claims made.

- 2.3 Payroll continued to assist HR with any calculation requirements (redundancy payments) for Hertford Theatre Staff in line with the agreed restructure and temporary redeployments made. Two of these temporary redeployments have been extended with agreement and payroll have actioned these and recalculated any payments.
- 2.4 The Payroll Manager and the part-time Payroll & HR Administrator attended Pension Employer Forums via Microsoft Teams. These were on various pension regulation updates and a refresh on information required upon submission of all pension information for Staff including new starters/Leavers/Retirements and Change of hours.
- 2.5 Payroll successfully processed all year end statutory requirements for 2020/21 financial year to HMRC and LPP (Pension provider). This included balancing the general ledger and closing down the Resourcelink system for the year and then requesting IT to install the 2021/22 new year service pack (on the test system) which was then fully tested by Payroll (before agreeing to install on live) to begin the 2021/22 monthly processing with updated parameters and rates for tax, national insurance and pension.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the pension year end return requires very thorough checking and manual calculations to ensure it is correct and avoid lots of queries coming back. EHC did invest in a customised report from ResourceLink but this has not proved reliable, the matter has been raised and remedial work has been done by Zellis but it still contains errors. The new S151 Officer is confident he can write a customised report through Business Objects which can work with Resource Link this will be

investigated and progressed if possible. The report details Staff circumstances throughout the year such as maternity/sick/unpaid leave and changes in hours to ensure individual data is correct on their pension record for the future. This is a very detailed task and thanks are especially made to Carmela Bavaro (Payroll and HR Administrator) for the quality of work undertaken which resulted in no significant corrections or explanations.

- 2.7 Payroll processed P60's for all Staff & Councillors for the 2020/21 tax year onto 'my view'.
- 2.8 Both the Payroll Manager & Payroll and HR Administrator (who work 4 days and 3 days respectively) are piloting the agile working arrangements by going into Wallfields one day a week on the same day to support joined up working which is working well.

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 January to March 2021. All training events have continued to be delivered virtually in response to the current COVID-19 and lockdown regulations.
- 3.2 Employees continue to complete the revised mandatory e-learning courses made available from December 2020 for employees to complete as part of the annual PDR process:
 - Data Protection Briefing 2020/21
 - Annual Health and Safety Refresher 2020/21
 - Safeguarding 2020/21
 - Diversity and inclusion in the workplace 2020/21
 - Lone Working (for selected officers identified as lone workers)

Members continue to work through the first four e-learning courses in line with policies agreed or they can provide evidence that they have completed a similar update from another organisation as this can also be recorded.

- 3.3 The corporate induction programme continued to be delivered virtually via Zoom. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator is the main presenter with guest speakers which normally include the Chief Executive (or the Deputy Chief Executive in his absence) , the Service Manager – Community Wellbeing & Partnerships, Communications Manager, Democratic Services Manager and a member of the Unison Executive. Each presentation is reviewed to ensure it contains the most up to date information on the services and the council's project and priorities.
- 3.4 In January 2021 managers continued to receive bite-size training to support them through the council's PDR process; the training was designed and delivered by the OD & HR Co-Ordinator. Additional sessions were run to support the new managers recruited to the council in January 2021.
- 3.6 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator supported the Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator in the delivery of the Bite-size Climate and Carbon Training. The initial sessions took place via Zoom in March and further events have been booked/delivered in April and May. The first sessions have received positive feedback from the participants. A separate training presentation is being devised for the Leadership Team and Senior Managers. The training objective is to roll out the events to all employees of the council.
- 3.7 The revision of the Organisational Development Policy has been completed (previously known as the Training and Development Policy). The revised policy includes the new process for the Training and Development budget which is to be centralised and managed by HR & OD Services from the 1 April 2021. Previously the budget was managed by the Heads of Service, the change will enable the training requests to be recorded and

analysed to ensure all training needs and budgets costs are being met in the most appropriate way for the employees and the council.

- 3.8 The new Customer Services Apprentice has been employed and they will complete the NVQ level 2 in Customer Services during their apprenticeship. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will mentor the new apprentice while continuing to work with the Leadership Team to achieve the council's target to have four apprentices each year funded by the central budget with trainee costs directly managed by services.
- 3.9 Work continues on developing the courses available on the e-learning platform. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator has worked with CLS (the provider of the e-learning platform), the council's elections team and Luton Council to develop a bespoke e-learning course for the Poll Clerks to complete as their part of the election training. If the training is delivered successfully all further Poll Clerk training will take place through the e-learning platform. Other areas currently in development include an Email Etiquette course and a new Data Protection Course.
- 3.10 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator supported an external partner who approached the Head of HR and OD to request that the council deliver the Data Protection Briefing e-learning course by accessing the council's e-learning platform, SkillsBuild. The course was rebranded for them, the partners employees were added to the platform, employees were supported to gain access to SkillsBuild and completion reports were produced for the partner. The course was prepared as part of their training and development day. This project brought income into the service and the OD & HR Co-Ordinator will continue to investigate opportunities to share training and develop income streams for the service.

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 progress on actions but work has been impacted by other priorities including elections, policy development and customer work.

4.1.1 The One Page Plan for the East 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 and these are also now in the Pentana performance tracking system. Due to conflicting priorities some work has had to be delayed and moved forward on the plan. In particular the HR Strategy and Core Staff & Management Competencies has been delayed to allow work to be progressed on Agile Working first. The aim is to bring this to the HRC in September.

4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- 5 HR policies have been approved by Leadership Team and LJP and have been brought to this meeting for approval:
 1. Capability Policy
 2. Flexible Working Scheme
 3. Recruitment and Induction Policy
 4. Organisational Development Policy
 5. Appeals Policy (reduced version due to appeals being incorporated in the relevant policies above)
- In addition amendments have been made to three other policies: Probation, Disciplinary and Managing absence to

manage LT members and ensure the CEO is free to manage appeals.

- The re-organisation, redundancy and redeployment policy is being developed alongside a draft agile policy. The draft agile policy will be informed by the agile working trial currently underway.

4.1.3 The drafting of the HR & OD Strategy has been delayed due to other work pressures as above but the group agreed that the key aims of the strategy are that it:

- supports corporate SEED priorities
- supports creativity and innovation
- includes the development of core competencies
- celebrates success / improves staff recognition
- addresses how we promote wellbeing
- covers change management regarding agile working and varied ways of working
- should reflect societal change, the 'new normal' and be pandemic resilient but not COVID focused only

4.1.4 The development of staff/management competencies has also had to be revised; work will now take place in the summer with work being brought to the September HRC. 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 PDRs which began in December used the current form and process and this will be replaced following the competencies development for the 21/22 PDR cycle.

4.2 Recruitment

4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

EHC have been monitoring the performance of Indeed when advertising posts for almost 12 months. In conclusion, Indeed is attracting candidates to apply for our roles however the

quality of candidates is poor as the vast majority are not being shortlisted for interview. We have a meeting with Indeed this month and it is likely that we will not continue with the arrangement.

4.2.2 Improved Job Application Form/Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

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 remain concerns with the completion of the separate equality monitoring form as candidates do not always complete it, as highlighted previously this will be tackled through a full online form as part of bringing in recruitment software/ATS to replace the recruitment module in the HR system which was not suitable. HR are working with Stevenage on purchasing an ATS system, this work will be led by the Head of HR and OD with two HR Officers and Stevenage counterparts. This work has progressed with three providers shortlisted as part of a joint project with Stevenage. The providers also offer an advertising package which is being explored to replace the Indeed package. See system section 8.0 below for more details.

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 from a diverse range of staff and key staff survey headlines etc.

4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

The HR audits of both Hertfordshire Building Control (HBC) and Ware Town Council (WTC) (who were also audited for H&S) have been completed.

HBC have subsequently commissioned a variety of development work (policies, revised contract etc.) which has begun. The Head of HR and OD has also undertaken a review of salaries for HBC on staff who moved under TUPE from EHC as specific piece.

Hertford Town Council have had surgeries and are being supported under the revised offer.

Development work has also been undertaken for Datchworth Parish Council.

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.

4.4 COVID Update

The Head of HR & OD with support from the team has revised the Office Protocols for staff and members as well as updating the Wallfields risk assessment and reporting symptoms or a positive test. The protocols now include twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing with resources in place. The agile working trial begun on 12 April 2021 and staff are required to book desks so that activity can be managed and monitored.

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 new consultation on the restructure of Hertford Theatre opened on 7 April and closed on 5 May 2021. The purpose of the restructure was to ensure staffing resources are allocated

appropriately to manage the significantly reduced offer as a result of the closure of the Hertford Theatre for redevelopment.

- 6.2 3 members of staff were put at risk of redundancy as a result of the restructure proposals, leaving a core team of 3 left at the theatre during the closure. We will seek both temporary and permanent redeployment opportunities for those at risk of redundancy but due to the technical nature of the roles it will be challenging to find suitable alternative employment.

7.0 Wellbeing Support

Live Well Work Well events promoted/held

- 7.1 The council's employee wellbeing programme, Live Well, Work Well, promoted and delivered the following sessions during January – March 2021:
- Promotion in January of Public Health England's new phase of the Better Health - Every Mind Matters campaign to support the nation's mental wellbeing with the encouragement that "When things aren't so good out there, make inside feel better";
 - Time To Talk Day was promoted in February supporting mental health;
 - Mind in Mid Herts held daily 30 minute Mindfulness sessions throughout February on Zoom;
 - Health Recovery/gentle stretch sessions were held by Nuffield Health in March;
 - Promotion of Living Streets campaign to encourage people to make a pledge to walk more;
 - Promotion of International Women's Day via a zoom session

over lunch encouraging employees to join and celebrate the fantastic achievements of women across the world;

- Promotion of Stop Smoking Day in March – theme was “Quitting smoking doesn’t have to be stressful”.

7.2 A regular link titled ‘Need someone to talk to’ now appears at the bottom of each issue of Connect which directs employees to the Wellbeing Hub where they can find sources of information and guidance if they are struggling

7.3 Wellbeing Strategy/Plan

The Wellbeing Steering Group has developed a 3 year Employee Wellbeing Framework for EHC, this work is being led by Vicki David from HR with support from Claire Pullen. The Framework and a wellbeing budget has been agreed by Leadership Team and will provide a clear direction for the wellbeing work being undertaken. Further information can be found in the Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2020-21.

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

- 8.1 Progress with the provider has continued to be frustrating. HR staff undertook training on the Training module as planned (see previous update) only to determine it was not fit for purpose and the Head of HR and OD has negotiated a 50% refund on this module for EHC (as Stevenage had already implemented). The provider Zellis were seeking to charge around £8,000 for an ATi to allow the new ATS once implemented to connect to the main system in terms of data extract and input re on-boarding, the Head of HR and OD has managed negotiate that 5 days non-chargeable support will be provided meaning that this should not be an additional cost.
- 8.2 The pension report is still not working as expected, remedial work seems to have caused more errors, the task had to be done manually again as reported in section one of this report.

Investigation will begin on using Business Objects (which the council already has licenses for) to run reports on the system, the new section 151 officer is well placed at writing such reports but there will be a cost to get Business Objects to connect to the Resource Link system however this should improve reporting which is proving insufficient currently.

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 expect for budget issues in relation to recruitment systems and purchasing an ATS.

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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