



James Ellis
Head of Legal and Democratic
Services

MEETING : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : WEDNESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2021
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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

Substitutes

Conservative Group: Councillors R Buckmaster, A Curtis and
A Ward-Booth
Liberal Democrat Councillor M Goldspink
Group:

*(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. Apologies
To receive apologies for absence.
2. Minutes - 26 May 2021 (Pages 7 - 18)
To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 26 May 2021.
3. Chairman's Announcements
4. Declarations of Interest
To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.
5. Health and Safety Committee Minutes - 27 July 2021 (Pages 19 - 28)
To receive the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on Tuesday, 27 July 2021.
6. Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q1) – April 2021 – June 2021 (Pages 29 - 42)
7. Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2021) (Pages 43 - 54)
8. Annual Equalities Report 2020/21 (Pages 55 - 96)
9. Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report (Pages 97 - 108)
10. Urgent Business
To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2021,
AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Steven King	- Finance Management Trainee
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

28 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2021/22

It was moved by Councillor Newton and seconded by Councillor Alder, that Councillor Ruffles be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources Committee for 2021/22. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Ruffles be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources Committee for 2021/22.

29 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

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

30 MINUTES - 16 FEBRUARY 2021

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor McMullen, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 February 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 16 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked, following a request from Councillor Ruffles, that the Committee's sincere thanks to Officers be placed on record, given the additional work they had taken on during the pandemic period.

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33 LOCAL JOINT PANEL MINUTES - 5 MAY 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Joint Panel held on 5 May 2021, be received.

34 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 27 APRIL 2021

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 27 April 2021, be received.

35 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY STATISTICS/UPDATES (QUARTER 4)

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

36 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Health and Safety Officer briefly introduced the report. He said that quarter four had been a challenging period, largely due to the May elections. The elections had been a success in the main, with good feedback from polling station staff on the COVID-secure measures and general management of the elections.

Councillor Newton asked how many staff had been ill with COVID-19.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) said that he did not have

exact figures to hand, although it had been in excess of ten. He thanked the Health and Safety Officer for all of his work, including acting as Health and Safety Officer for the May elections when a candidate for the role withdrew. More work had been done on collating data from third party service providers. The contract managers were now all attending Health and Safety Committee meetings and further data would be presented to the Committee in next year's annual report. Members were also advised that work on annual risk assessments was up to date.

The Chairman thanked Officers for all of the work highlighted in the report.

It was moved by Councillor Bull 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 report be received and considered; and

(B) the Committee agree the combination of the Health and Safety Quarter 4 and Annual report next year.

37 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -
QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of HR and OD said that in future HR would consider combining the quarter four report with the Annual Turnover Report. This was supported by Members.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

38 ANNUAL TURNOVER REPORT 2020/21

The Chairman said that it was good to see that turnover had reduced over a five year period. She asked about posts on hold and particularly the ten on hold in Planning.

The Head of HR and OD said that the posts on hold in Planning were currently covered by agency staff, rather than vacant. There had been a surge of planning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Five staff had also departed, with the main reasons being retirement and relocating to other areas in the country. However, recruitment was underway and there was ongoing work on the restructure in Planning. Two team leaders had been recruited, although recruitment in Planning was generally difficult and costly due to a lack of Planners. Members could be assured that progress was being made on the restructure.

Councillor Alder asked whether apprentices were receiving the correct training and support given increased workloads for Officers.

The Head of HR and OD said that the Planning framework had been suspended, so no further Planning apprentices would be taken on until this was resolved. However, existing apprentices were still being supported and this included support around

workload.

Councillor Newton said that residents should understand that Planning were facing a 'perfect storm' of problems relating to increased demand and staffing.

Councillor Bull said that there was a perception amongst some residents that applications were being rushed through without due consideration.

The Head of HR and OD said that he could not comment in detail on the work of Planning, however there had been anecdotal suggestions that the situation at the Council was better than at other local authorities in the county. Members were assured that any suggestion that an Officer had not carried out their duties correctly would be investigated.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

39 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT 2020/21

The Chairman said that staff had worked very hard all year and their health and wellbeing was imperative to the Council's continued progress. She said that it was good to see short term absence was down, but drew Members' attention to the fact that stress was the third most common reason for short term absence.

The Head of HR and OD said that working from home had played a part in reducing absence, as discussed by the Committee at previous meetings, although the Council had been making good progress in reducing it

prior to the pandemic in any case. Short term absence had increased slightly in quarter four, with one of the main drivers of this being staff having adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccinations. The target for long term absence had been achieved, but Members were told it would not be advisable to lower this further currently as the gradual return to working in the office may mean absence levels rose slightly again.

Councillor Ruffles said that the Council should be sensitive to staff's wellbeing and not inappropriately encourage them to work through illness just because they were working from home. He also asked whether this pattern of lower absence when working from home had been seen across the sector more widely.

The Head of HR and OD said that he was aware that some figures suggested this was a wider trend. The Council would be careful not to foster a culture of staff working excessive hours from home as had been seen elsewhere and to ensure that staff were supported with their wellbeing and work-life balance. The Council's Live Well, Work Well scheme and provision of mental first aiders aimed to prevent burn out and stress, and the results of the wellbeing surveys had been positive.

Councillor Newton asked whether absence caused by stress had increased. She also said that the Council should be aware of the risk of 'long COVID' to staff.

The Head of HR and OD said that although he did not have data to hand, his impression was that absence had not increased due to stress; stress and workloads

had always posed a challenge. Stress factors had increased during the pandemic but attendance levels were positive. HR had an established practice of using stress risk assessments which was enhanced in the revised absence management policy, this had been useful during this period and meant that staff suffering from stress were supported with an action plan. One member of staff had suffered with long COVID, although they had since returned to work. Members were also advised that feedback was being collated from the agile working trial, particularly regarding the COVID-secure measures in the office, and this would be considered when shaping policy going forward.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

40 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW 2020/21

The Chairman noted the underspend in training budgets due to the pandemic and asked what the plans were for learning and development going forward. She also asked if whether mixed media training would continue to be used.

The Head of HR and OD said that the budget for next year would be stretched. Members were advised of a correction to the figure given for the Service Training and Development budget for 2021/22. The figure given included funds for Member development and also costs related to the shared Revenue and Benefits Service. The final figure when these costs were deducted was £22,480. Mixed media training and e-learning would continue. The production of e-learning

course also gave the Council the opportunity to sell these on to other organisations for revenue, which had already been achieved in some cases. Members were also advised that local training budgets would now be centralised and HR and Leadership Team would approve requests for training.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

41 EMPLOYMENT POLICIES DEVELOPED REPORT X 5

The Chairman thanked Officers for their extensive work in developing the policies and noted that they had already been subject to scrutiny from Leadership Team, Local Joint Panel (LJP) and East Herts Together.

The Head of HR and OD said that the one key addition since LJP's last meeting was a flowchart in the Capability Policy. He also said that HR's work on redeveloping policy would now slow down, with customer work coming to the fore. However, the Agile Working Policy and the Re-organisation Policy would still be worked on and would be presented to the Committee when fully drafted.

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor McMullen that the recommendations, 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;

(B) the revised Flexible Working Request Scheme be approved;

(C) the revised Recruitment and Induction Policy be approved;

(D) the revised Organisational Development Policy be approved;

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

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

42 HR AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Chairman asked about ongoing issues with the Resource Link system.

The Head of HR and OD said that the Council had committed significant amounts of time and funds to the system, so problems would have to be worked through. He had secured a refund for a recruitment module and also secured five days' work from the developer to ensure the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) was compatible with other software, an exercise which the developer had previously wanted to charge several thousand pounds for. The system had presented many challenges but work was continuing to

improve performance.

The Chairman said that she was pleased to see that Payroll successfully processed all year end statutory requirements for the 2020/21 financial year to HMRC and the pension provider. She asked that the Committee’s thanks be passed on to staff and in particular to Carmela Bavaro.

The Head of HR and OD said lateral flow testing was an additional measure on top of the Council’s COVID-secure measures to give more assurance, it was not compulsory for staff and Members if this was causing major distress, discomfort or illness.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and considered.

43 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.57 pm

Chairman
Date

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Minutes of Safety Committee **Tuesday 27 July 2021, on Zoom**

Present: Peter Dickinson (PD), Steve Whinnett (SW), Jennifer Francis (JF) (Unison), Ian Sharratt (IS), Chloe Hipwood-Norton (CHN), Tamara Jarvis (TJ), Geoff Hayden (GH) Dominique Kingsbury (DK),

1.0 Apologies: Simon O’Hear (SOH), Graham Mully (GM), Rowan Perrin (RP), Paul Thomas-Jones (PTJ), Kate Collins (KC)

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the 27 April 2021 meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3.0 Matters Arising from the minutes

PD issued First Aid and CPR Covid guidance to all first aiders 26 May 2021.

4.0 Coronavirus Update

PD reported that covid secure measures are still in force in the office and are reviewed by Leadership Team.

5.0 Regulatory and Legislative Changes (Verbal Report)

No new or changes to regulations or legislation.

6.0 Health and Safety Inspections and Compliance

PD to discuss reinstating inspections with SW and GH to agree dates.

7.0 Capital Project Updates /Contractor Health & Safety Compliance

TJ provided an update on the current capital projects in progress;

7.1 Grange Paddocks

Work proceeding well on site with work due to be undertaken shortly on the removal of soil for the 3G pitch. GH advised that there will be an increase in construction traffic and that Archaeological teams are carrying out surveys so extra caution is advised if visiting the site.

Wilmott Dixon will ensure ongoing site safety with SLM to monitor with EHC.

No accidents reported on site or adjacent to the site of the build.

7.2 Hartham Pool

Issues identified with the screed under the floor tiles in the pool hall has generated a delay however to mitigate the lost time Cadman will finish the refurb of the pool changing room early to hand back to SLM for customer use. The reworked schedule will make up some of the time lost. Demolition work is due to commence August.

7.3 Hertford Theatre – Growth and Legacy

TJ advised that Decontaminate UK are on site and undertaking controlled asbestos removal. GH is monitoring for EHC

Decontaminate UK have sent through their risk assessments, method statements and action plan.

TJ further advised that selection of the contractor for the build work will take place in September 2021

IS raised a query concerning some of the services that function through the Theatre in regard to the sump pumps and the weir, TJ and SW both assured that these were in operation and that the Project Manager was liaising with the Estate and Asset Management Teams drainage expert.

PD will be included in the next phase when the contractor for the main works has been appointed.

Hertford Theatre completed a full decant prior to work commencing and have now relocated to Wallfields.

TJ advised the committee that there have been no on-site accidents or covid related incidents.

8.0 Northgate End

Proceeding with no reported on site accidents, incidents or covid related issues.

9.0 Contract Health and Safety Compliance

9.1 Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas

IS provided an update on the current provision of the grounds maintenance contract.

There have been no accidents, incidents or near misses to report involving the contractor for parks, play areas and open spaces.

The tree inspection and survey contract is due to be retendered, the contract has expired but the current contractor has been maintaining inspections and all stock has been inspected.

IS advised committee that he has been liaising with local swimmers concerning the matter of Wild Water Swimming at Hartham, the activity is undertaken by experienced swimmers and Wild Water Swimming is seen as a benefit to mental and physical health and wellbeing. IS is keen to support the activity but wants to ensure that the Council has taken into account all the safety and insurance elements. IS has asked if there is any capacity to assist in finalising the project, PD happy to provide assistance and support but unable to take the lead on the project. Risk and Insurance have sought advice from Risk Management provider.

Action: PD to discuss with Risk and Insurance.

9.2 Shared Waste Service

C H-N advised the committee that the client monitoring team will be reinforcing its relationship with the waste services contractor Urbaser to improve communication.

C H-N and IS to arrange discussion with Urbaser and Glendale regarding the layout and use of the depot yard at Buntingford.

GH advised committee that following discussions at the Buntingford Depot User Group it was agreed that all visitors to the site or the offices must sign in at Urbasers office as part of

Urbasers remit to oversee the site and for fire safety management.

GH also advised that following some concerns regarding the cleaning he has addressed this with the cleaning contractor.

C H-N advised that the client team will be undertaking a more detailed approach to site inspections and monitoring.

9.3 APCOA

DK advised committee that APCOA are currently experiencing recruitment and retention issues but are continuing to maintain the service provision. There were no health and safety concerns or matters to note.

10 Property – Premises Maintenance and Repairs

SW advised committee that there were no property related issues and that property compliance checks were all up to date.

PD reported that the Premises Information Boxes for Buntingford and Rectory Hall are now on line.

Documents are in the process of being produced for Wallfields and Hillcrest.

11 Facilities Management

GH reported that the Council Chamber at Wallfields has been reinstated for full use. PD advised that the Risk Assessment had been updated to reflect current guidelines and this has been sent to the Head of Finance to brief Leadership Team.

Under current guidelines, H&S Officer has advised that the guidelines still emphasise opening windows and face coverings for larger gatherings if these are to proceed.

IS – Queried acceptable temperature as the autumn / winter months approach. PD advised that this would need to be reviewed in accordance with covid guidelines.

GH – Has been asked by the Housing Team to consider installing a panic button in the office at Rectory Hall.

Committee discussed the pros and cons and viability and value of installing a panic button.

Points raised and to be discussed with Housing were;

- Lone workers are issued with the portable microguard device and on activating the SOS feature the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) can listen in and if needed can contact the emergency services directly bypassing the call operators to call for help.
- The panic button would link to the security company who would need to verify the situation before placing a call for the emergency services.
- The Council have a paid for contract with a Lone Worker service, installing a panic button would incur a separate cost with the security company.
- Meetings and interviews with high risk residents must never be conducted alone and this should be reflected in Housings Risk Assessments and working procedures.

- Repeat false alarms will result in police response being withdrawn, accidental lone worker activation will simply close the call and the service will not be affected.
- The device is discreet and portable and can be carried whereas the panic button would be fixed to one location and rendered ineffective if assistance is required at any other location.

Action: PD to contact Housing to discuss.

12 List of Issues

12.1 UNISON

JF advised committee that UNISON had received a number of expressions of concern from members about returning to the offices as covid restrictions are eased or lifted.

JF also explained that the branch secretary has reassured employees that covid measures are in place at Wallfields and remain robust and that UNISON are confident that safety is paramount.

PD thanked JF for advising the committee and also affirmed that steps remain in place. PD also reminded committee that the Councils blended working project is still ongoing and under review by Leadership Team. Desk booking is still in operation and levels of sanitiser and hard surface wipes are being monitored in addition to the provision of Lateral Flow Testing kits.

JF also advised that there are some employees not adhering to the one way system in place.

Committee also keen to emphasise that despite restrictions being lifted and eased Covid remains and can still affect those with serious health issues and or compromised immunity.

Action: PD to investigate concern raised by UNISON.

12.2 Management

Nothing to report.

13 Q1 Health & Safety Report

(Being developed)

14.0 Work and Non Work related accidents

PD confirmed the following:

May

7 minor non reportable accidents reported across the 5 swimming pool and gyms. 6 in respect to users and 1 SLM employee. None as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure.

No accidents reported in respect to EHC employees or members of the public

June

5 minor non reportable accidents reported across the 5 swimming pool and gyms all users of the facilities. None attributable to a failure of process or equipment.

1 non reportable accident involving a minor (IP under the age of 18) at Hartham Wild Play. Cause investigated by Operations and RoSPA all equipment pre-inspected by RoSPA and RPII prior to opening and all equipment checked and compliant with industry safety standards. RA (Operations) has submitted a full response to IP's parents. H&S Officer satisfied that due diligence has been undertaken and the accident fully investigated.

July

1 non reportable accident involving an employee as a result of human error.

15.0 Lone Worker Contract

PD updated committee and advised that the tender has now opened and being co-ordinated by Procurement for Housing using their framework.

The framework has 4 suppliers and we have received 4 expressions of interest.

Stakeholders have been invited to participate in evaluating and scoring the returns.

The planned go live date for the contract is anticipate to be 06th September 2021.

16.0 Learning and Development

PD advised that training has been arranged for new first aiders in October and a one day emergency first aid course has also been scheduled for the Housing Options, Homeless Team.

17.0 Date of Next Meeting

TBC

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 15 September 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q1) – April 2021 to June 2021

Ward(s) affected: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) **To consider the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q1) – April 2021 to June 2021 and provide comments to the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Health and Safety Officer.**

1.0 Executive Overview

- 1.1 This report sets out the Health and Safety (H&S) Management Statistics and service updates for Quarter 1 (April 2021 to June 2021) and includes a summary of;

Non-Reportable and Reportable Accidents

Accidents involving employees and members of the public on council premises.

Accidents at the councils swimming pools and gymnasiums. 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. The report narrative provides further background information on the nature and cause of these accidents. **The level of accidents in this quarter is as expected but lower than normal due to closures of Leisure and restrictions.**

Contract compliance and monitoring

Shared Waste Services
Grounds Maintenance
Leisure
Car Parking and Parking Enforcement

The Health and Safety Officer can report that there have been no safety incidents or site accidents in respect to the contracts.

Capital Projects

The Health and Safety Officer can report that progress is continuing with the large capital projects in progress.

There have been no recorded on-site accidents or Incidents recorded for this period.

Premises and Sites

Inspections are being resumed with the co-operation of Unison, Property and Facilities Management.

The Health and Safety Officer participated in a review of pedestrian and vehicle movement at Buntingford Depot. The Head of Operations is reviewing the final report from the Councils insurance claims handler Gallagher Bassett.

Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas.

One minor accident was reported for Wild Play Hartham,

this has been investigated by the Operations Team, RoSPA and the accident was not as a result of any failure of the newly installed play equipment.

Lone Working Contract

East Herts and Stevenage joint stakeholders are evaluating the tender returns. The expected contract launch date is September 06th 2021.

Covid-19 / Blended Working

The Health and Safety Officer continues to support and assist Leadership Team with the Blended working programme. Wallfields has continued to managed as COVID secure with all protocols still in place to minimise transmission (e.g. one way flow, desk booking, entry/exit recording), supported by twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Health and Safety Officer reports to the HR committee each quarter. This report also been submitted to safety committee 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). Leadership team asked for an Executive Summary to be added which has been done above, the HR committee are encouraged to provide feedback on this so it can be developed further for future reports.

3.0 Safety Committee

3.1 Safety Committee met via zoom on Tuesday 27th July 2021. This report was shared with the Committee.

3.2 Contract managers and contract project managers are invited to attend to provide feedback on the main and capital projects.

4.0 Work and Non 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 April 2021 to June 2021.

4.2 There were no non reportable work related accidents recorded for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021; this trend is due to staff working from home or away from the office.

4.3 Swimming Pools and Open Spaces. There were 14 minor non reportable accidents reported across the 5 swimming pool and gyms. 13 in respect to users and 1 SLM employee. None as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure. These include:

- Minor bruising to toe after kicking wall.
- Minor friction graze.
- Splinter.
- Muscular strain due to skill execution in gym.
- A slip on poolside.
- A cut toes as result striking the pool wall whilst swimming – As has been checked by DM and no issues found.
- IP knocked their ankle whilst getting off a stationary bike – this is down as skill execution error when getting off the bike.
- IP felt sick after leaving pool – IP had over exerted themselves whilst swimming.
- IP bumped head executing a tumble turn in the pool.
- IP The child was splashing around mother and hanging of her, mother panicked as child was pulling her down, Lifeguard provided assistance to mother and Daughter to get them both out of the water – SLM have discussed this

with the team to be proactive, where summer holiday programme is in place to ensure appropriate reactive responses are carried out to avoid similar situations with weak swimmers. IP mother and daughter both fine.

- IP Child slipped off float whilst in swimming lessons – lifeguard assisted IP to side of pool safety. IP required no treatment.
- IP child slipped off Noodle whilst swimming in lessons – lifeguard assisted IP to side of pool safety. IP required no treatment.
- Both accident 3 -4 have been discussed with Swim Teachers and Lifeguard team, both skills execution error, however SLM are being prudent raising this with the swim teachers to maintain and reinforce poolside safety awareness.

Note Accident 2, 3 and 4 at Grange have been recorded as accidents but should be recorded as an incident.

1 non reportable accident involving a minor (IP under the age of 18) at Hartham Wild Play. Cause investigated by Operations and RoSPA all equipment pre-inspected by RoSPA and RPII prior to opening and all equipment checked and compliant with industry safety standards. RA (Operations) has submitted a full response to IP’s parents. H&S Officer satisfied that due diligence has been undertaken and the accident fully investigated.

Non Reportable Accidents – April, May, June 2021

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

Swimming Pool & Gym	April	May	June	TOTAL
Hartham	0	1	1	2
Grange Paddocks	1	3	3	6
Leventhorpe	0	0	0	0
Ward Freman	0	0	0	0

Fanshawe	0	2	1	3
Employees (SLM)	0	1	0	1
Contractors	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	7	5	13

Parks, Open Spaces, Members of the Public	April	May	June	TOTAL
Play Area	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	0	0	1	1

COMBINED TOTAL	1	7	6	14
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4.4 The Health and Safety Officer met with the Leisure & Parks Development Officer, Building Surveyor (Property) and the Contract Manager (SLM) on Thursday 24th June 2021 to discuss the operation of the leisure contract as the pools have re-opened in response to the Government's roadmap for easing out of lockdown.

SLM's Contract Manager provided an overview of the current position for each of the centres.

All swimming pools have now re-opened with two facilities currently undergoing significant changes and improvements.

Ward Freman – It was reported that the filter media will need to be replaced, water microbiological tests are still coming back with satisfactory results but if the results start to show any increases in colony counts then this could be an indicator that the media is no longer working. SLM will continue to work with the Leisure team to monitor this.

Leventhorpe Pool – A fascia board had fallen at the rear of the pool hall and the Council's Property Team arranged for a contractor to attend the site and make repairs. SLM Contract

Manager reported that Leventhorpe School had engaged contractors to undertake building works and had moved their site boundaries in such a way that 2 out of the 3 fire exits were effectively blocked. The Leisure and Parks Development Officer contacted Leventhorpe School who confirmed that work was due to be completed by July 7th. The Leisure and Parks Development Officer also visited the site and confirmed in the short term the works are not causing a problem and will not affect the safe operation of the facility.

SLM reported no operational or safety issues in respect to Fanshawe swimming pool.

Grange Paddock swimming pool and gym is progressing well with an anticipated delivery date of the new facility by September / October.

SLM reported that there were no operational issues with the existing facility.

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

- 4.5 SLM continue to maintain 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 has been planned for August to replace the lining that degraded.

- 5.3.2 The documents have now been installed in the Premises Information Box (PIB) and all contractors have been issued with an E-Copy of the documents held in the PIB.

- 5.3.3 The Health and Safety Officer can report that following the Buntingford User Group Meeting:

Urbaser raised concerns regarding visitors to the site, as lead contractor Urbaser are required to oversee site safety in liaison with other contractors on site. In order to manage the site effectively all visitors to Buntingford Service Centre where entering the yard or visiting the offices must sign in at Urbaser's office in order to ensure they are briefed on site safety.

- 5.3.4 The Councils Insurance and Risk Business Advisor arranged for Carl Dunkley from Gallagher Bassett, the council's claims handlers, to undertake a review at the depot on the 17th June with the Health and Safety Officer and Property Manager. Carl also met and interviewed Officers and staff from each contractor. A report has been produced with recommendations and is currently being reviewed by the Head of Operations.

6.0 Parking Enforcement Contract

- 6.1 There are no health and safety concerns to report this quarter.
- 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 Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract – Covid-19

7.1 Hartham Play Area

- 7.2.1 Hartham Wild Play is now open and in full use

7.3 Trinity Close Play Area

- 7.3.1 The surface that had been vandalised has now been repaired.

8.0 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbots

- 8.1 Rectory Hall, Stanstead Abbots, formerly Thele House has now opened and providing much needed accommodation to homeless and vulnerable persons.
- 8.2 The Premises Information Box for Rectory Hall has now been populated and passed by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue.
- 8.3 The Health and Safety Officer has discussed the Premises Information Boxes with Neil Dolman, Herts Fire and Rescue Service who has expressed thanks to East Herts for its forward thinking.

9.0 Lone Worker Contract Update

- 9.1 The Health and Safety Officer would like to advise the

Committee that the tender has now been opened on the Procurement for Housing Framework. There are four suppliers and we have received expressions of interest from three suppliers. Stakeholders have been invited to participate in the scoring and evaluation of the tenders. The contract start date will be 6 September 2021.

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

- 10.1 The Health and Safety Officer continues to liaise with the Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) on the progress of the improvement programmes.
- 10.2 The Health and Safety Officer provided support to the Hertford Theatre Team during the 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.
- 10.3 The Councils Improvement and Insight Manager has advised that Decontaminate UK are on site and are undertaking controlled asbestos removal. The Corporate Property Services Manager is monitoring for EHC.
- 10.4 Decontaminate UK have sent through their risk assessments, method statements and action plan.
- 10.5 The Insight and Improvement manager further advised that selection of the contractor for the build work will take place in September 2021
- 10.6 The Health and Safety Officer will be included in the next phase when the contractor for the main works has been appointed.

10.7 The Health and Safety Officer can advise the committee that there have been no on-site accidents or covid related incidents.

11.0 Agile/Blended Working Programme/COVID Protocols

11.1 The Health and Safety Officer is continuing to work with Leadership Team and Heads of Service on the Agile Working Trial that commenced on the 19th April.

11.2 Covid secure measures remain in place and staff may book a desk using the Skedda booking system.

11.3 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. Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) is being done by staff working away from home on a twice weekly basis, a positive test must be notified and isolation followed.

11.4 Workstations have supplies of hand sanitiser and hard surface wipes to allow users to clean desks before and after use.

11.5 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.

11.6 The Health and Safety Officer supported the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy to re-open receptions at Wallfields and Charringtons House. Wallfields is open between

10.00am and 4.00pm on Tuesdays and between 10.00am and 4.00pm at Charringtons House.

11.7 The Health and Safety Officer can advise the Committee that the Corporate Property Services Manager the Risk Assessment had been updated to reflect current guidelines and this was sent to the Head of Finance to brief Leadership Team.

11.8 Under current guidelines, H&S Officer has advised that the guidelines still emphasise opening windows and face coverings for larger gatherings if these are to proceed.

12.0 Learning and Development – Partnership training and future events

12.1 The next block of First Aid at Work 3 day qualification training will take place in October 2021.

12.2 A one day Emergency First Aid Course for the Housing Options Homeless team has been booked for October 2021.

13.0 Options

N/A

14.0 Risks

14.1 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.

15.0 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: 15 September 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2021)

Ward(s) affected: None

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

(a) To consider the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 2021) and provide any comments to the HR Officer/Head of HR and OD.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management Statistics for Quarter 1 (April - June 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 There were 29 vacancies at the end of Quarter 1 (30 June 2021).

This is higher than the same period last year (23 vacancies at the end of Quarter 1 in 2020/21).

3.1.2 At the end of Quarter 1, recruitment had progressed¹ for 8 out of the 29 vacancies (28%).

3.1.3 During Quarter 1, nine posts were advertised. Five of the 29 posts (17%) have resulted in appointments. Four of the posts had not been successful. Three of the four posts are being re-advertised to try to attract recent graduates leaving university. For the remaining post further options are being considered.

3.1.4 Twenty-one of the 29 posts (72%) were on hold. 9 posts are in Planning, 4 in Communications, Strategy and Policy, 2 in Strategic Finance and Property, 4 in Housing and Health, 1 in Operations, and 1 in Executive Support. The posts are being held due to reviews of the service structure as part of the transformation project and potential savings and are being covered by agency staff where required.

3.2 Employee Turnover

3.2.1 There were 12 leavers in Quarter 1 (April – June 2021) giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 3.6%. Based on the number of leavers so far in Quarter 1, it is estimated that the turnover rate for the annual period 2021/22 will be **14.5%**. This is higher than the projections in the same quarter in the previous year (4.8% in Quarter 1 in 2020/21) and it is higher than the local government average (14% for 2018/19 for Local Authority districts in the UK). With the exception of 2020/21, historically turnover in Quarter 1 every year has been high (26.3% in 2018/19, 16.4% in 2019/20) and then it gradually decreases throughout the rest of the year. It is anticipated that turnover for 2021/22 will follow the same pattern.

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.

3.2.2 It should also be noted that during the pandemic in 2020/21, resignations stalled and a number of redundancies were made at Hertford Theatre as a result of the latter’s closure. Please see Figure 1 below. The table shows that in Quarter 3 of 2020/21 the turnover rate was 1.5% and it increased in Quarter 4 2020/21 to 3.9% (annual turnover was 8.4%) as resignations were delayed. The 13 leavers in Q4 included 5 redundancies from Hertford Theatre.

Figure 1 - Leavers and Turnover throughout 2020/21

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

3.2.3 In terms of Quarter 1 in this year 2021/22 there were 12 leavers, this included 4 retirements and 3 staff leaving due to personal reasons (including relocation), which had clearly been affected by the pandemic, the leavers also included 1 dismissal. Good progress is however, being made to replace staff especially in Planning where most of the retirements were. You will note the number of positions on hold in Planning (all of which are being covered) have reduced this period by 1 and will be reduced further by next quarter’s report as they begin to develop the structure and convert agency staff to permanent staff where achievable. As stated in 3.2.1 turnover is expected to reduce and is unlikely to hit the 14.5% predicted.

3.3 Sickness Absence

ALL absence

ALL Absence – Quarter 1

3.3.1 At the end of Quarter 1, the total number of sickness days taken was 450.70 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 196.29 FTE days (44%) were due to short term sickness and 254.41 FTE

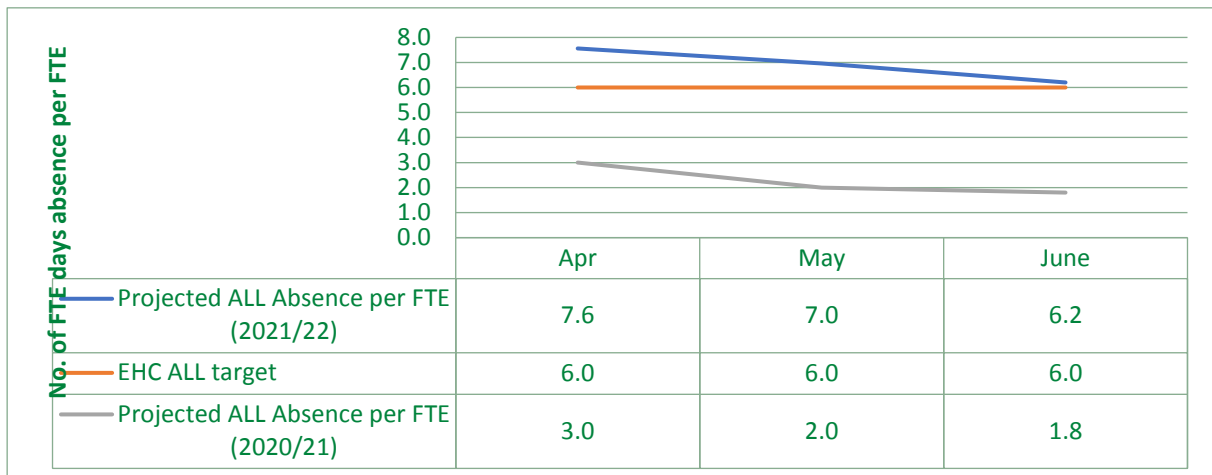
days (56%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 1.1% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 1.4% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 2.5%.

3.3.2 At the end of Quarter 1, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 1.55 days.

ALL Absence - Annual period 2021/22

3.3.3 Figure 2 below shows that, based on absences for the year so far (i.e. absences as at the end of June 2021), projected sickness absence for the annual period 2021/22 is estimated to be **6.2 days per FTE**. This is slightly above the council's annual target of 6 days. The increases in Quarter 3-4 last year and Q1 this year have been impacted by COVID (both COVID itself and reactions to the vaccination). It is considerably higher than the projected annual level for the same period last year (1.8 days per FTE in Quarter 1 in 2020/21) although absences in 2020/21 (Quarter 1-2) were unusually low due to Covid-19 and the fact that almost all staff were working from home and were more willing to work whilst not feeling fully well as they didn't need to commute and could manage breaks/rest more easily. When comparing with the same period the year before Covid the figure is lower (projected annual absence at the end of Quarter 1 in 2019/20 was 7.2 days per FTE). Of note however is that there is a downward trajectory during this Quarter as more staff have had the vaccine with projected annual absences falling each month (7.6 days in April, 7.0 days in May and 6.2 days in June).

Figure 2 – Projected annual absence for 2021/22



Short term absence

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

Short term absence - Quarter 1

3.3.5 Thirty Seven employees (11.2% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 1 totalling 196.29 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 1.1%.

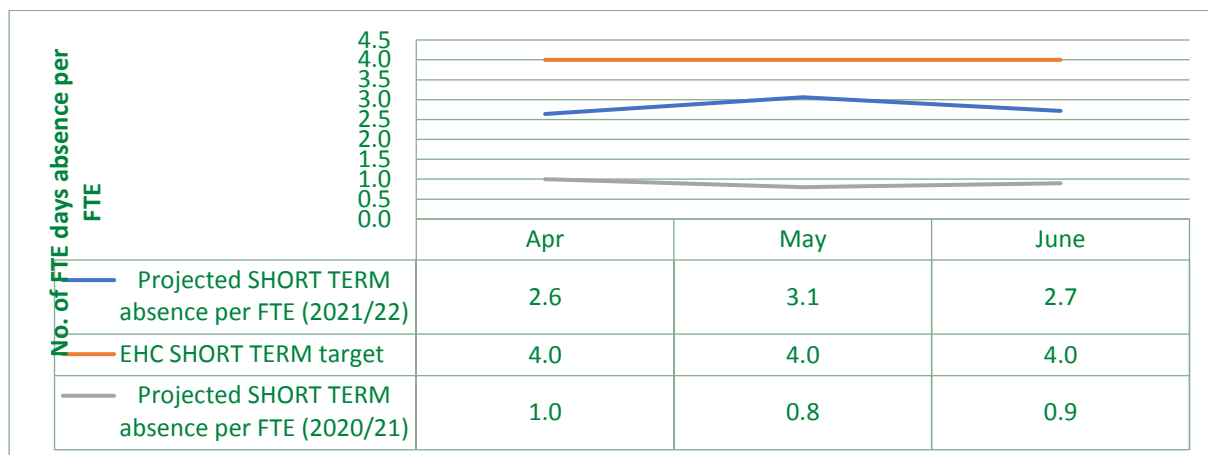
3.3.6 At the end of Quarter 1, the number of short term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.68 days.

Short term absence - Annual period 2021/22

3.3.7 Figure 3 below shows that, based on short term absences for the year so far (as at the end of June 2021), it is estimated that short term sickness absence for the annual period 2020/21 will be **2.7 days per FTE**. This is below the council’s short term target of 4 days. It is considerably higher than the projected annual level for the same period last year (0.9 days in Quarter 1 in 2020/21) although short term absences in 2020/21 were unusually low due to Covid-19 and for the reasons explained in 3.3.3 above. When comparing with the same period the year

before Covid the figure is lower (projected annual short term absence at the end of Quarter 1 in 2019/20 was 4 days per FTE).

Figure 3 – Projected annual SHORT TERM absence for 2021/22



Long Term absence

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

Long term absence – Quarter 1

3.3.9 Nine employees (2.7% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 1 totalling 254.41 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 1.4%.

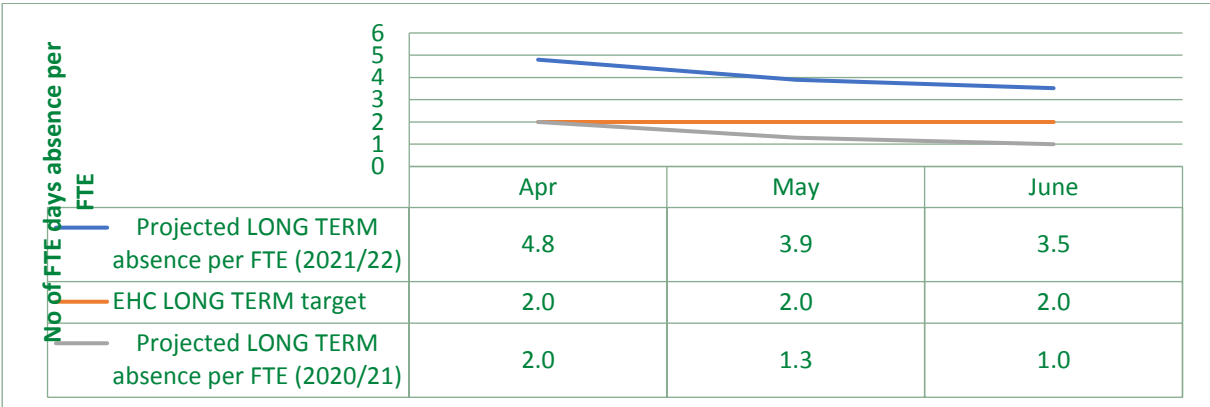
3.3.10 The nine employees have been offered support through referrals to Occupational Health/taking medical advice from Specialists where appropriate. The reasons for long term absence were for injuries (3 employees), mental health (2 employees), acute medical conditions (1 employee), reoccurring medical conditions (1 employee), stress (1 employee) and Covid (1 employee). Five employees have now returned to work. One employee has left the council. The 3 employees who remain absent are being supported by their manager and HR under the Absence Management Policy.

3.3.11 At the end of Quarter 1, the number of long term FTE days absent per FTE was 0.88 days.

LONG TERM absence - Annual period 2021/22

3.3.12 Figure 4 below shows that, based on long term absences for the year so far (i.e. as at the end of June 2021), it is estimated that long term sickness absence for the annual period 2021/22 will be **3.5 days per FTE**. This is above the council’s long term target of 2 days and higher than the projected annual level for the same period last year (1 day per FTE in Quarter 1 in 2020/21). Of note however is that there is a downward trajectory during the Quarter with projected annual absences falling each month (4.8 days in April, 3.9 days in May and 3.5 days in June).

Figure 4 Projected annual LONG TERM absence for 2021/22



3.4 Learning and Development

3.4.1 In Quarter 1, four in-house corporate learning and development events were held over twelve sessions and ninety-six employees participated. Please note these figures do not include the in-house e-learning courses delivered through the Skills Build platform. These will be included in the Annual Learning and Development report.

3.4.2 The roll out of the in-house Corporate Sustainability and Climate Change Training continued. David Thorogood, Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator, led the presentations supported by the OD & HR Co-Ordinator. In Quarter 1, nine sessions were delivered virtually through Zoom and seventy seven employees attended the events.

3.4.3 Nick Phipps, Service Manager for Community Wellbeing and Partnerships, delivered a Safeguarding event to nine participants. This was the first of four face-to-face/virtual sessions. A further three events will be delivered in September 2021, November 2021 and March 2022. The roll out of the training continues to ensure staff are aware of the revised policy and the changes whilst ensuring good practice.

3.4.4 One Corporate Induction took place in June 2021. The event was delivered virtually through Zoom and included revised and updated content and new presenters as the OD & HR Co-Ordinator continues to refresh the content for each event.

3.4.5 The employment Policy Training for Managers pilot event took place in June. The training will be delivered to managers in bitesize virtual sessions advising them of the policy changes they need to be aware of to ensure the policies are implemented consistently across the council.

3.4.6 Employees continue to complete the annual mandatory training programme through SkillsBuild, the council's e-learning platform. The following courses are still available for employees to complete:

- 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)

3.4.7 The Data Protection course has been revised to include all the appropriate updates and changes made by the new Information Governance and Data Protection Manager. The new Data Protection e-learning course went live in June.

3.4.8 The OD & HR Officer supported the Elections Team in delivering training for the May 2021 Elections. In partnership with Luton Council and CLS (the council's e-learning platform provider) a new e-learning course was designed and implemented for the Poll Clerks. 223 people participated in the on-line training and this approach was deemed a success. The e-learning was delivered via the Council's e-learning platform SkillsBuild.

3.4.9 The OD and HR Officer delivered virtual sessions via Zoom to 114 Presiding Officers and Inspectors. These events received positive feedback from the delegates and the blended approach will be replicated at the next election.

3.4.10 The following learning and development events are planned to be delivered in Quarter 2:

- Menopause Training
- Employment Policy Training for Managers
- Time Management
- Study Skills (Apprentices and Trainees)

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

3.4.12 The following is a summary of the learning and development events that were held in Quarter 1:

Event/Course	No of participants	Number of sessions held
Corporate Sustainability and Climate Change Training	77	9
Safeguarding	9	1
Corporate Induction	8	1
Employment Policy Training	2	1
Total	96	12

3.5 Equalities Monitoring Indicators

3.5.1 The table below shows a summary of employee equalities data at the end of Quarter 1 (i.e. 30 June 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	4.1%
Ethnicity		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	10%
Employees from BAME groups	4.5% CENSUS 2011	7.6%

Gender		
Leadership Team members who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	40%
Employees who are female	51% NOMIS 2019	73.9%
Sexual Orientation		
Leadership Team	2.1% ONS 2018	20%
Employees	2.1% ONS 2018	1.6%

The Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and all 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: 15 September 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Annual Equalities Report 2020/21

Ward(s) affected: None

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- (a) The Annual Equalities Report 2020/21 be noted.
- (b) The recommendations set out in the 2021/22 action plan are considered and approved.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Equalities Report 2020/21.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Human Resources produce an annual equalities report which provides a detailed analysis of the council's workforce and external applicants applying for jobs, by the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 The Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil

partnership.

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

2.4 Feedback from Leadership Team requested the HR team review a sample of two posts to see whether any bias had occurred in the shortlisting process. This review was undertaken and it found that those candidates who were shortlisted for interview had addressed the person specification more closely in their application forms than those BAME candidates who weren't shortlisted indicating that no bias had occurred and progression had been made on merit in line with criteria set out.

3.0 Report

3.1 Please see Appendix A for the full report.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

As detailed in the report

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

As detailed in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A – Annual Equalities Report 2020/21.

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Staff Annual Equalities Report

2020/21



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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

This report provides a detailed analysis of the available monitoring data for 2020/21.

It covers five areas:

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

Executive Summary

Employee Profile

The council's employee profile as at the end of March 2021 is broadly reflective of the profile of the working population in East Hertfordshire and the East of England in terms of ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability and sexual orientation.

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

The council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to East Herts residents. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. In recent years the council has introduced more apprenticeships and trainee posts which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers. The council also has a significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile. The percentage of employees under the age of 20 (0.3%) is lower than East Herts residents in this age group (5.9%) however it must be noted that it is compulsory to remain in full time education or training until the age of 18.

Recruitment

The report identifies an issue with the recruitment data for 20/21 in that equalities data for approximately 50% of applicants is unknown as they either did not complete the equalities monitoring form (this the main reason) or chose not to disclose their equalities data. This is most likely to be due to the fact that the council previously had an online application form which took candidates straight to the equalities form after completing the application form. This was no longer supported by IT and they had no replacement available so we moved to a Microsoft Word application form and separate equalities monitoring form which many candidates now either choose not to complete or miss (despite prompting to complete). In the 2019/20 report in some

equality areas the percentage of 'Unknowns' was as high as 29% but in 2020/21 it is as high as 55% in some areas. This makes the data analysis much less reliable and not statistically significant. We are in the process of procuring an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) which will allow us to include the equalities form as an automatic (mandatory) next step on from the application form to improve recruitment equalities data.

From the data that we do have however, in 2020/21 the council was successful in attracting a diverse range of external applicants in terms of most of the protected characteristics. The council was particularly successful in attracting applicants from the 20-29 age group, from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and applicants who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, when compared with the overall East Herts population.

At the shortlisting stage, the conversion from application to shortlist is closely aligned for females (31% to 36%) but reduces for males (24% to 16%). There is an increase in the percentage of white applicants from application to shortlisting (32.8% to 40.7%) but for applicants from BAME groups, there is a drop from application to shortlisting (13.8% to 7%). For the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups the percentages of those applying to those shortlisted dropped. For all other age groups the percentage of applicants increases at the shortlisting stage. This is most likely due to older applicants having more experience than younger applicants, however as previously mentioned the very high level of 'Unknowns' makes data analysis unreliable. In 2020/21, there were 14 applicants (2.9%) who stated that they have a disability. Of these, 6 met the essential criteria and were shortlisted for interview. 2.5% of applicants were lesbian, gay or bisexual and 3.5% were shortlisted.

At the interview stage, there is an increase in 5 percentage points between the number of females being shortlisted to appointed and a reduction of 5 percentage points between the number of males being shortlisted to appointed. For white applicants the conversion from shortlisting to appointment stays almost the same (40.7% to 40.9%) whereas there is a drop for BAME applicants from 7% to 4.5%. In terms of age, from the shortlisting to appointment stage the percentages are fairly closely aligned for most age groups. Of the 6 disabled applicants who met the essential criteria and were shortlisted for interview, unfortunately none were appointed. The percentage of lesbian, gay or bisexual applicants increases from 3.5% at shortlist to 4.5% at interview stage. It is also worth noting that in the Staff Survey run in December 2020 that 97% of responses agreed that the council welcomes and supports equality and diversity and addresses inequality/unfair practice and discrimination against staff.

Discipline & Grievance and Training

There were no disciplinary or grievance cases in 2020/21.

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

Leavers

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

There was however a disproportionate percentage of male leavers (46%) when compared to the percentage of male employees (28%). HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any gender related points. It is worth noting that the council in part has more female employees due to the flexible working arrangements offered and whilst this can also benefit men it does tend to mean female employees stay longer whereas men in predominately full-time roles are more able to move on to similar full-time roles in various sectors.

There was five times the percentage of leavers in the 65-75 age group and twice the percentage of leavers in the 60-64 age group than employees in this age range but this is due to employees in this age group taking retirement. The percentage of leavers in the 20-29 age group (11.5%) was slightly higher than the percentage of employees in this age range (9%). This is most likely to be for career progression and due to the small teams at the council employees may have to seek this progression outside of the council.

Action plan

All actions in the 20/21 action plan have either been progressed or rolled forward into the 21/22 action plan.

Achievements against July 2020 – June 21 staff & employment equality action plan

Action	Progress
Employee Profile	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2020.	This was published in March 2021
Develop guidance on supporting employees who are changing gender so that best practice is available to both staff and managers where required. This will be supported by the HCC Equalities Officer.	This has not been progressed due to other work priorities and also the Equality Officer's availability. This will be carried forward to the action plan for 21/22.
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have fuller rather than partial data (especially religion, sexual orientation and disability) reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	This was carried out in February 2021 ahead of the report being run.
Review the exit questionnaire with the intention of including equalities based questions going forward.	The new exit questionnaire, which includes equalities based questions, has been in place since April 2021.
Review the questions in the next staff survey to include a range of equalities questions and analyse these in future equalities reports as data becomes available.	The staff survey was sent out to staff in December 2020 and included equalities based questions. The survey was run in-house to support further analysis and follow up.
Recruitment	
Continue to require managers to return all recruitment paperwork before an offer letter can be sent out to ensure HR	This has been in place since October 2019 and has improved the shortlisting data. However despite data now being

<p>have full shortlisting data to be able to report on</p>	<p>consistently collected from shortlisting panels, a significant number of candidates are still choosing not to complete the equalities form or choosing 'Prefer not to say'. We previously had an online application form which took candidates straight to the equalities form after completing the application form. This was no longer supported by IT and they had no replacement available so we moved to a Microsoft Word application form and separate equalities monitoring form which many candidates now choose not to complete or miss. However, we are now in the process of procuring an ATS which will allow us to include the equalities form as an automatic next step on from the application form to improve recruitment equalities data.</p>
<p>Investigate whether a link can be added to the new Application form that takes candidates straight to the Equalities Monitoring Form. If this is not possible look at setting up an auto reply on the HR inbox reminding candidates to submit their Equalities Monitoring Form if they have not already done so.</p> <p>HR will ensure that new recruitment (ATS) system spec will include an online form that can automate the separation of the equalities form to increase completion rates as well</p>	<p>It was not possible to add a link taking candidates straight to the equalities form. An auto reply was set up on the HR inbox reminding candidates to submit their Equalities Monitoring Form if they have not already done so but completion rates are still every low. However, we are now in the process of procuring an ATS which will allow us to include the equalities form as an automatic next step on from the application form.</p>
<p>Arrange for all recruiting staff to complete further mandatory unconscious bias training, this will be a joint task for the OD&HR Co-ordinator and the new Equalities Officer and will build upon the guidance already provided and the elements already covered by the current recruitment training. EHC will either source a suitable provider or develop a suitable in-house course which will</p>	<p>The annual equalities e-learning that all staff do has been developed to include unconscious bias training and this has been completed by staff this year. The equalities work continues to be developed across the authority. Equality Impact Assessment bitesize training will be delivered in September by the New Equalities Officer.</p>

be made mandatory for recruiters.	
Each interview panel chair to give consideration to the diversity of the interview panel and where possible try to ensure the panel is as diverse. Where this is not possible try to ensure that other elements of the panel show staff diversity, for example 'meet the team' sessions to demonstrate the diversity at East Herts and to appear as welcoming as possible to applicants of all backgrounds.	The HR team have been encouraging managers to try to ensure that interview panels are as diverse as possible and some 'meet the team' sessions have taken place virtually (due to the pandemic) as part of recruitment processes in the past year. Ultimately some teams are limited in terms of how diverse they are so it is not always possible to demonstrate a full range of diversity in every recruitment process.
Continue to develop links with Disability Advisors at the Jobcentre to make them aware of our vacancies. Promote agile working practices where relevant.	This has been difficult to progress as all contact with the Jobcentres has been directed through the website (possibly due to the pandemic) and so making direct contact and building links with Disability Advisors has not been possible. However initial discussions have taken place with Shaw Trust (Disability Organisation) about advertising our vacancies with them instead to encourage more disabled applicants.
Work with Communications to build a set of varied staff case studies that demonstrate diversity in our workforce and use them as part of our recruitment literature.	This is in progress but has taken longer than planned due to the Communications team being unable to assist HR with the process. Of the 6 members of staff initially approached, 5 agreed to be involved. 3 of them have returned their responses so far and the others have asked for more time. This will be carried into the 21/22 action plan to finalise.
HR have secured a refund for the recruitment module of the HR system and hope to invest this money into an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that will include an electronic application form and enable name blind recruitment	We are currently in a joint procurement process with Stevenage Borough Council to purchase an ATS.
Discipline and Grievance	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinaries and grievances. Extend this to include formal probationary cases.	This data has been collected and is contained within this report.

Training	
Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory e-learning training programme. Offer further equalities based training as identified by annual training needs analysis undertaken by the OD and HR Co-ordinator.	The mandatory training was revised in December 2020 and now includes unconscious bias and is currently being reviewed with support from the Equalities Officer.
Continue to ensure that managers are briefed in the PDR process and that effective and appropriate personal development plans are put in place for all employees, including those rated as 'exceeding expectations' and above.	Managers are provided with guidance on the PDR process and HR Officers provide a briefing to new managers in the service areas they support. PDR training for all managers has been delivered. The OD and HR Co-ordinator reviews PDRs to inform the annual training plan. PDRs for 20/21 have been recorded and the training plan is in development.
Continue to develop both wellbeing programmes/guidance and maintain sufficient Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues.	The Live Well Work Well Programme for 2021-22 includes support for staff in relation to mental health. Training and refresher training will be delivered in September 2021 for new and existing Mental Health First Aiders.

Employee profile

Introduction

This section provides information on employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2021. Casual employees, agency workers and contractors are not included. The total number of employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2021 was a headcount of 333. This has decreased from 339 in the previous year.

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

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

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

Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 3 employees took maternity leave in 2020/21 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

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

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

Where possible, comparisons have been made at the most local level (i.e. with East Herts residents) and using the most recent data available. However where this data has been unavailable at this level, comparisons have been made with East of England residents. Most of the comparison data has been taken from either the Nomis or Office for National Statistics (ONS) websites. It is noted that the Census data is now almost 10 years out of date but we have been unable to source more up to date data for religious belief, ethnic origin and disability. It is hoped that some provisional data will be available from the 2021 Census for the next report although the finalised data will not be published until 2023.

Sex (Gender)

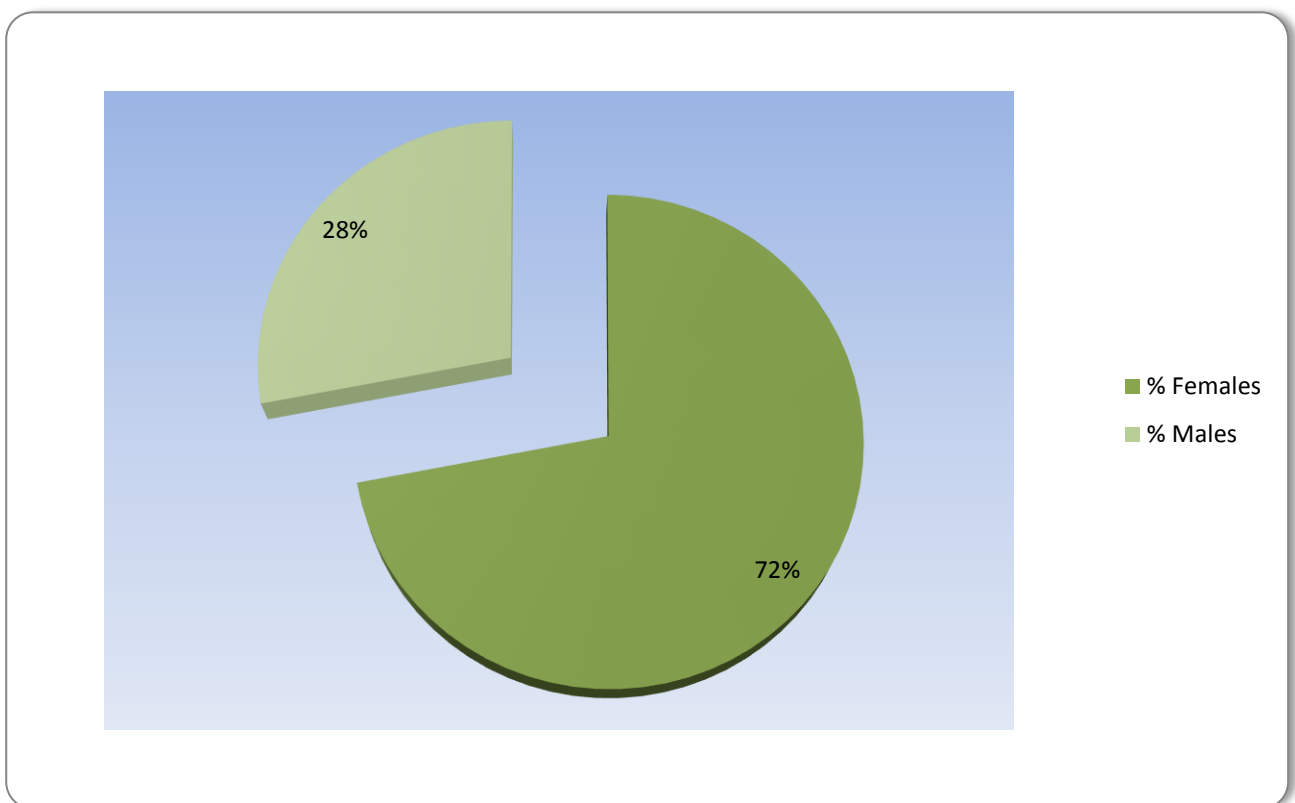


Figure 1.0 Employee profile by sex

Figure 1.0 shows the sex profile of employees at the council. The profile does not closely reflect that of the East Herts working population. The council has a considerably lower percentage of male employees (28%) compared to the overall male working population in East Herts (49%) (Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics (East Herts residents 2020)).

A high female to male workforce ratio is common in public sector with 68% being female and 32% being male (ONS: Public sector employment by gender (2015)). In addition, the council has contracted out many of the more traditionally male dominated areas of work such as refuse, grounds maintenance and IT which has affected the male to female ratio further. The percentage of males working at the council has remained the same since 2019/20.

Ethnic origin

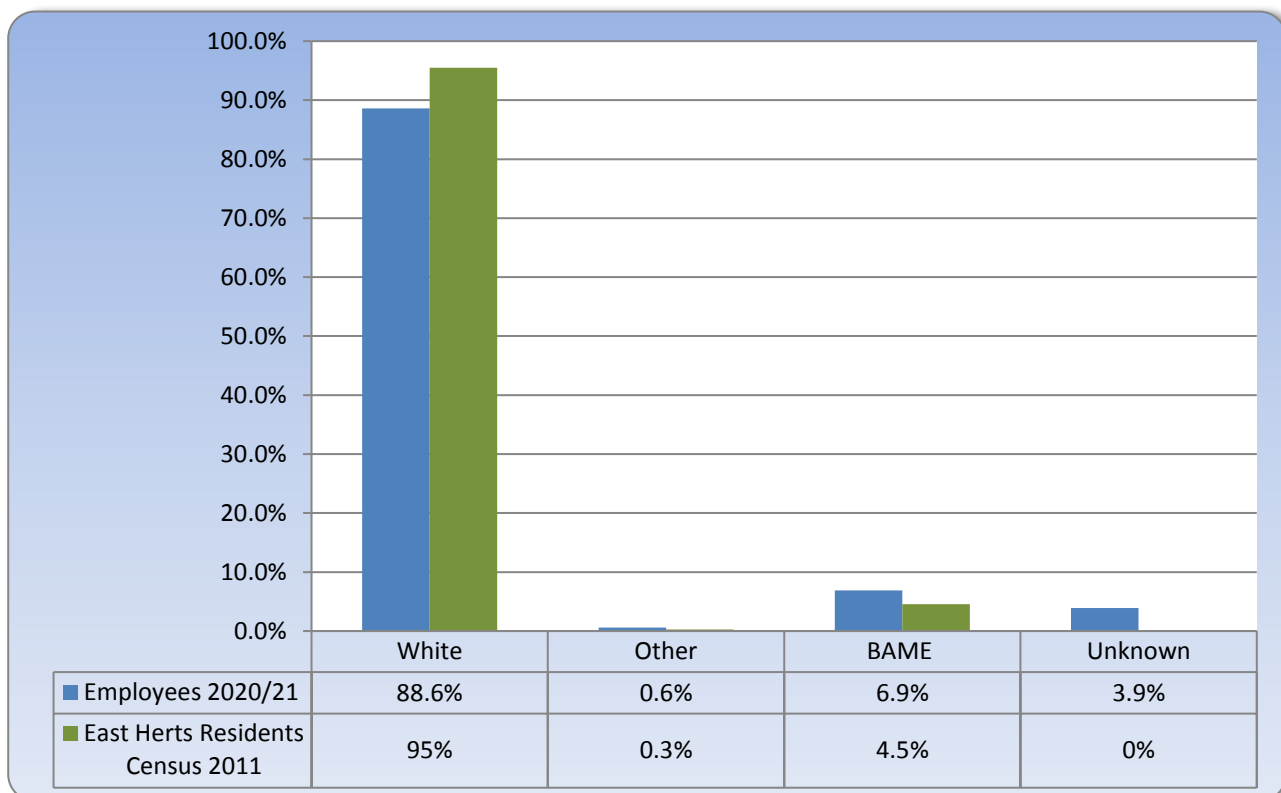


Figure 2.0 Employee profile by ethnic origin

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Ethnic Group by Measures

Figure 2.0 shows that the percentage of black and minority ethnic employees is slightly above that of East Herts residents as at the Census in 2011. The EHC White origin compared to the census is 6 percentage points down, 3.9% of staff are unknown, unfortunately this has not improved since last year despite asking staff to refresh their equalities data in February 2021. There is no more recent data available from ONS for East Herts, Hertfordshire or the East of England for comparison purposes. The census has been re-run in 2021 and it is hoped that some provisional data might be available from that when the next report is run. The total percentage of BAME employees increased from 6.4% in 2018/19 to 7.1% in 2019/20 but has dropped

slightly to 6.9% in 2020/21 however this relates to just 1 employee. The figure is still higher than the BAME residents in East Herts (4.5%). It is positive to see that the council is attracting and retaining a wider diversity of staff in terms of ethnicity.

Age

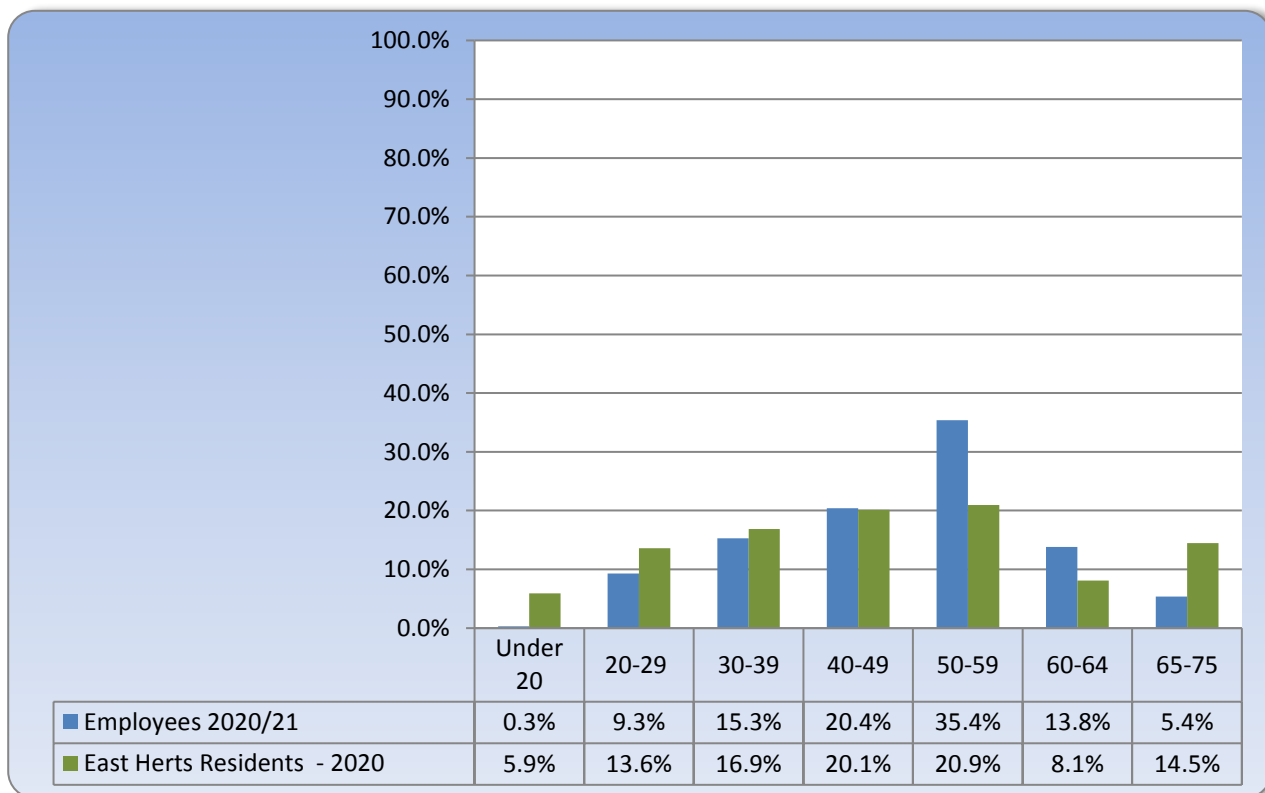


Figure 3.0 Employee profile by age

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics – Population Estimates in East Herts (2020)

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

Figure 3.0 shows that the council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to East Herts residents. 49% of employees are in the 50-59 and 60-64 age groups compared to 29% of East Herts residents in these age groups. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. The council has introduced more apprenticeships and trainee posts (in recent years) which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers with appointment based on merit. The council also has a

significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile.

The percentage of employees under the age of 20 is lower than East Herts residents in this age group (5.9%) however this is likely to be due to it being compulsory to remain in full time education or training until the age of 18. The percentages of staff in the different age groups has not substantially changed from 2019/20.

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

Religion and Belief

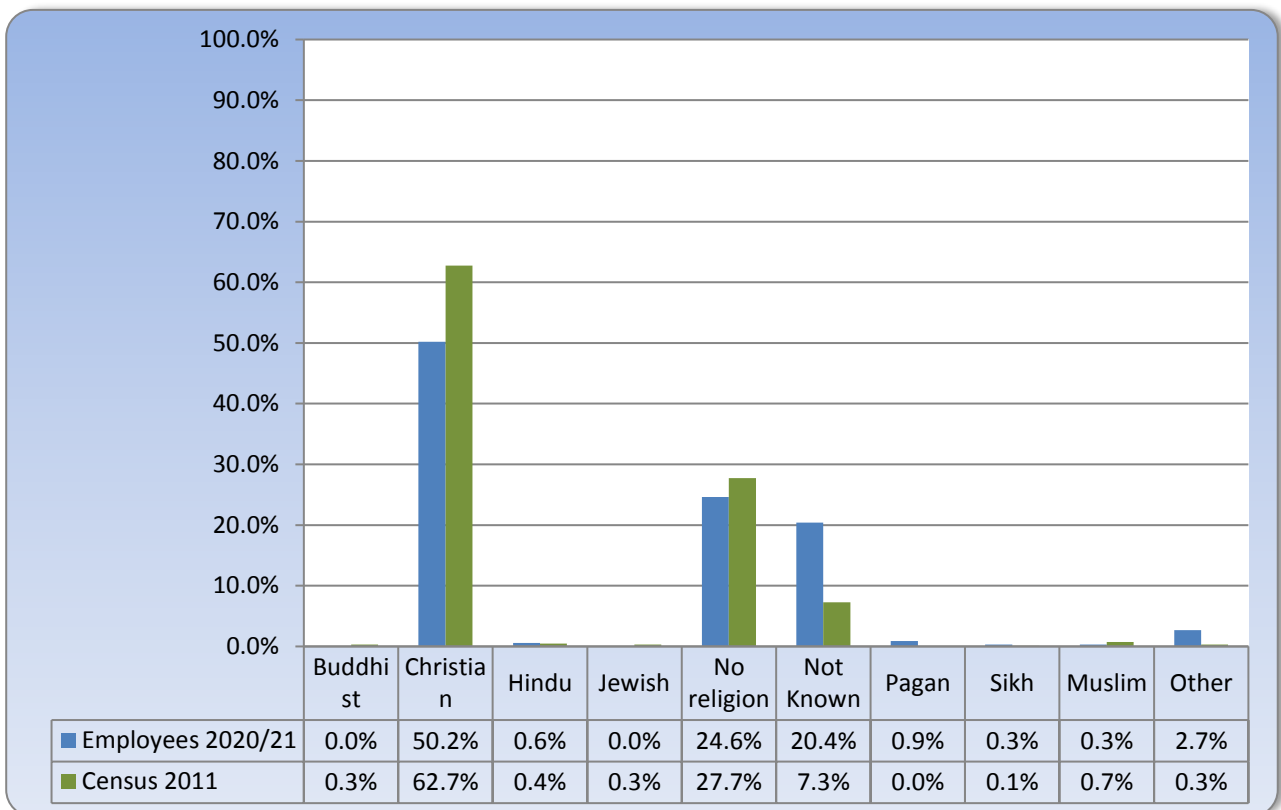


Figure 4.0 Employee profile by religion and belief

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Religion

Figure 4.0 shows that the religions and beliefs of employees are generally reflective of East Herts residents and therefore there are no suggested concerns in this area, although it should be noted that the census data is somewhat out of date. As is common with employment data on Religion (staff often do not wish to state) a significant amount of staff (20.42%) have not stated or have indicated they do not

wish to. The percentages of staff under each religion remain similar to the past two years. 1 Buddhist and 1 Jewish member of staff have left the council, bringing down the percentage from 0.3% in 2019/20 to 0% in 2020/21.

Disability

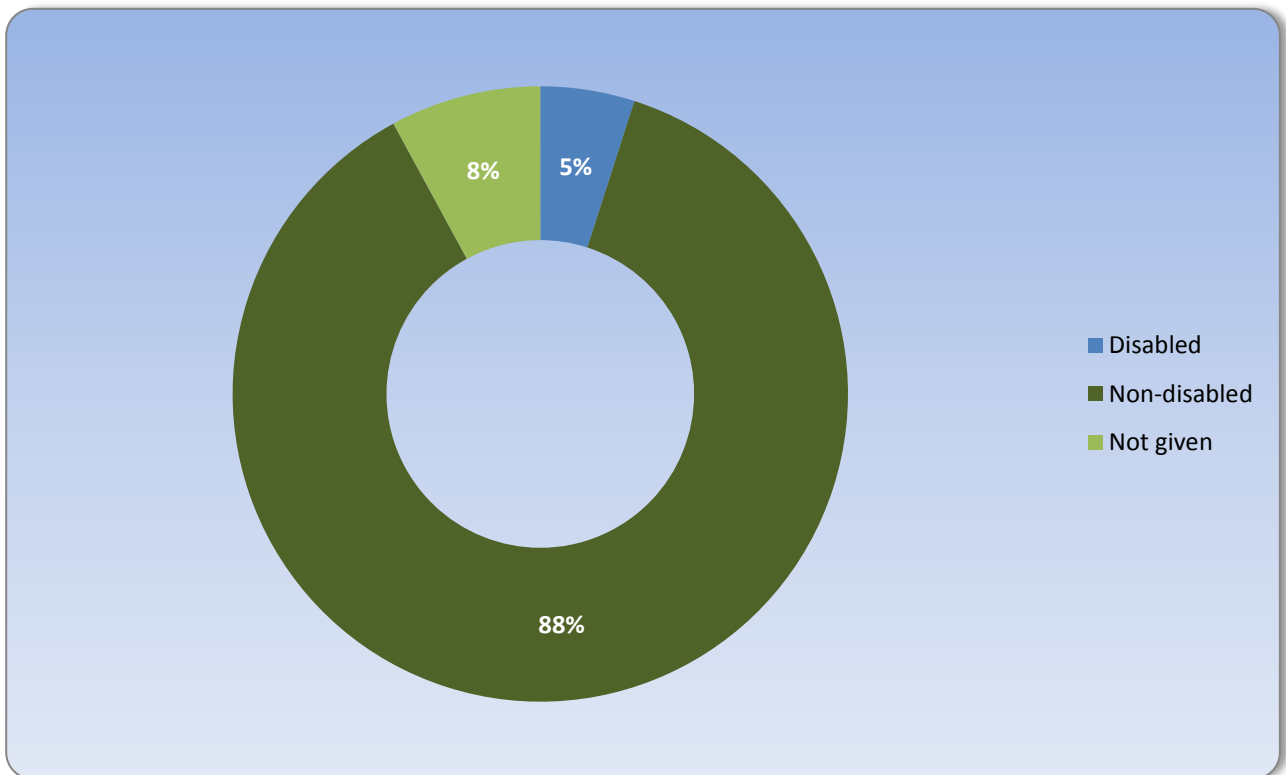


Figure 5.0 Employee profile by disability status

Figure 5.0 shows that as at 31 March 2021, 5% of employees had a disability, which is one percentage point higher than 2019/20 and 2018/19. This is the same as the East Herts residents with a disability (5%) (ONS Census 2011 - Long Term Health Problem or Disability). It is worth noting however that the 2011 Census data was household based (not individual) and in addition people with a long term health problem may be unfit to work.

Sexual Orientation

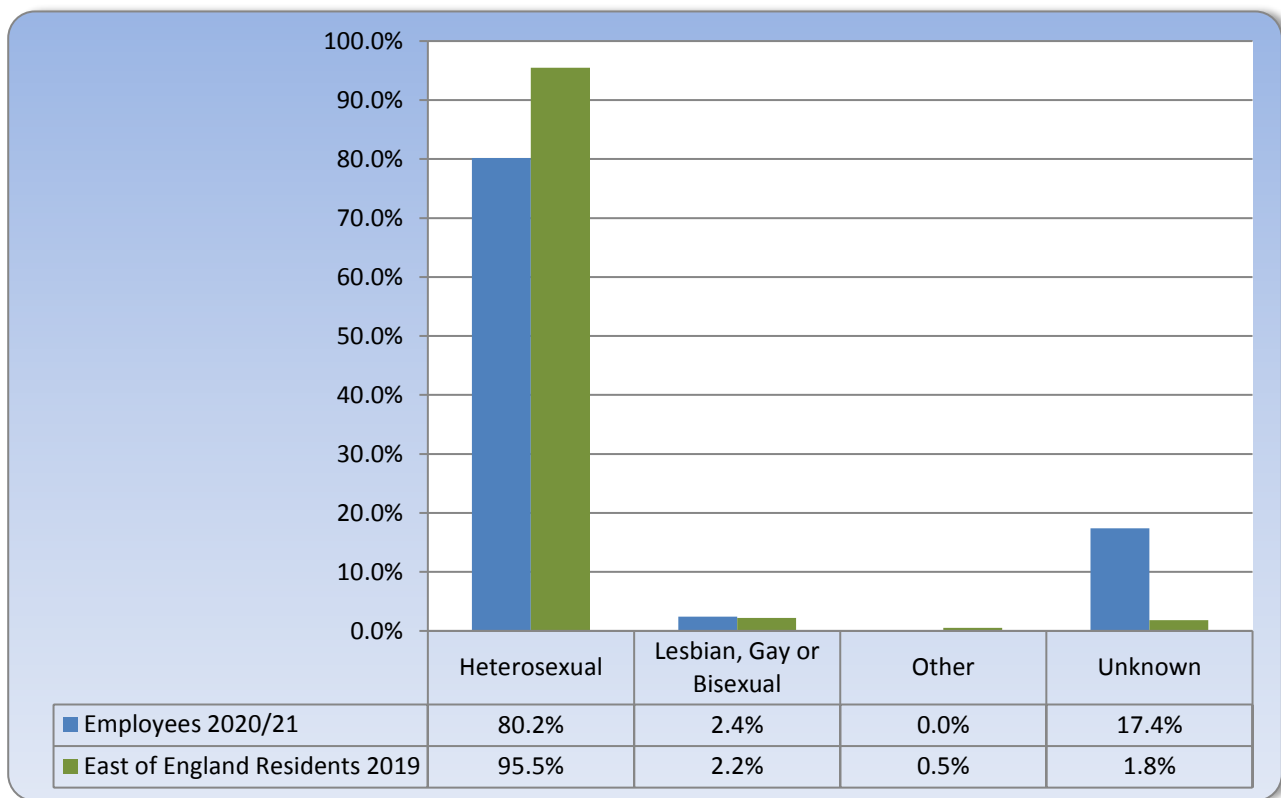


Figure 6.0 Employee profile by sexual orientation

Source: ONS – Sexual Identity by Region (East of England) – 2019

Figure 6.0 shows that there are no indicated concerns with regard to the council’s employee profile in terms of sexual orientation when compared to much more recent 2018 data. The council has less heterosexuals in terms of percentage but has a higher unknown percentage which would mostly close the gap. There is close alignment with lesbian, gay and bisexual employees where EHC had a very slightly higher percentage of 2.4% compared to residents in the East of England in 2018 (2.1%). The percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees has remained the same since 2019/20.

Recruitment

Introduction

This section provides information on external applicants who applied for jobs at the council between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. Data has been collected at the application, shortlist and appointment stages. There were 29 external recruitment campaigns between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. A total of 478 external applicants applied for jobs with the council.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Definitions of Ethnic Groups taken from the 2011 Census)

The data has been collected from the Equalities Monitoring Forms which are part of the application form and are detached before sending to managers. In the 2019/20 report equalities data for candidates that were appointed was taken from their new starter forms to ensure we had a full data set for those who were appointed. However this distorted the data when looking at the conversion of applicants from application through to interview and then appointment, so has not been done this year, particularly because the number of 'Unknowns' has increased significantly this year. We previously had an online application form which took candidates straight to the equalities form after completing the application form. This was no longer supported by IT and they had no replacement available so we moved to a Microsoft Word application form and separate equalities monitoring form which many candidates now either choose not to complete or miss. In the 2019/20 report in some equality areas the percentage of 'Unknowns' was as high as 29% but in 2020/21 it is as high as 55% in some areas. This makes the data analysis much less reliable and not statistically significant. We are in the process of procuring an ATS which will allow us to include the equalities form as an automatic next step on from the application form to improve recruitment equalities data.

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

The equalities data of applicants reaching the shortlisting and appointment stages has been compared to the data of all applicants to understand whether certain groups are being potentially disadvantaged and at what stage of the recruitment process. At the

application stage applicants will drop out of the process where they do not meet the required criteria and at this stage in the process the recruiting manager does not have any equalities information regarding the applicants. Therefore it is particularly important to note the shortlisting to appointment data as it is at this point that there is more opportunity for bias to occur once the recruiting manager has met the applicants.

Sex (Gender)

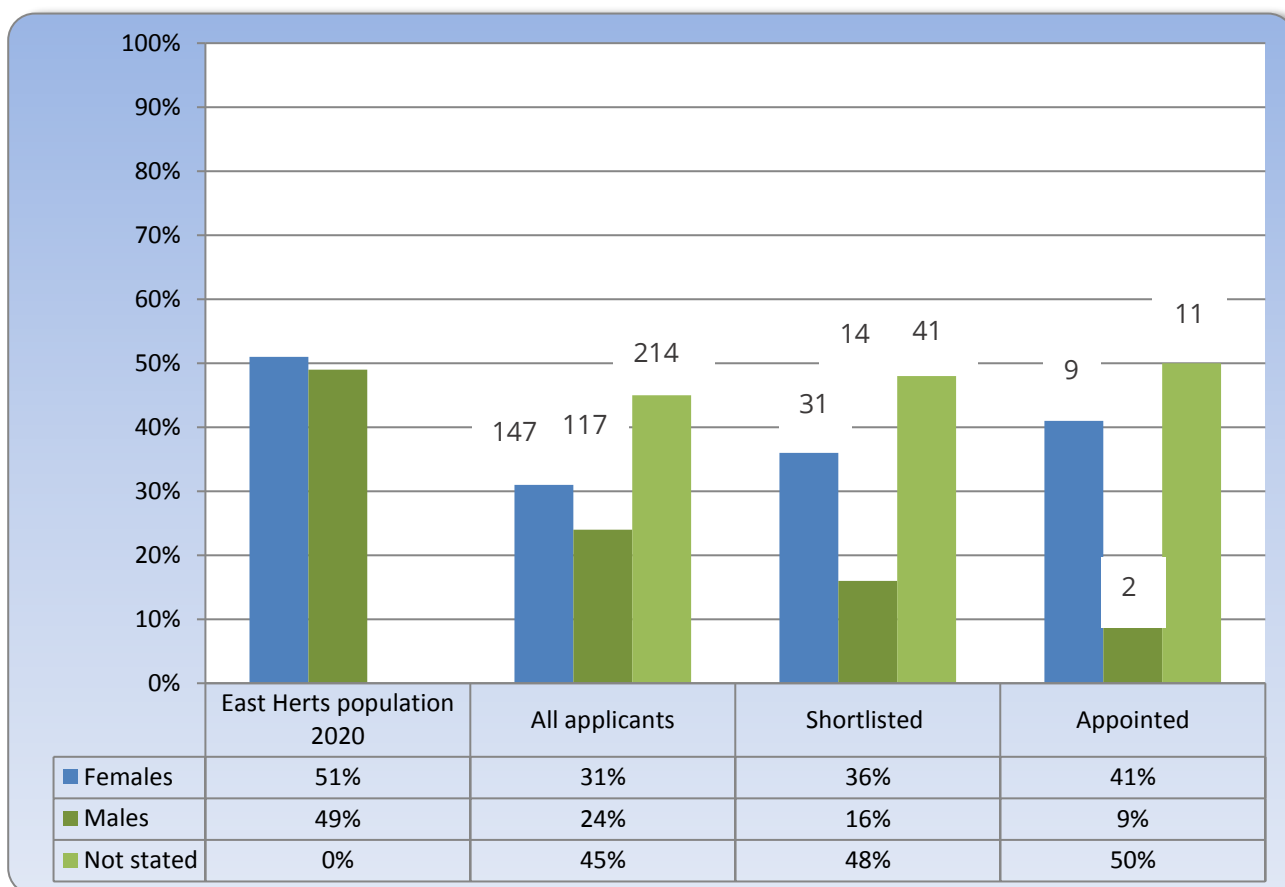


Figure 7.0 Applicant profile by sex compared to the population of East Herts

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics (East Herts residents aged 16-64 (2020))

Figure 7.0 shows that in 2020/21, of those that completed the equalities monitoring form, there was a higher proportion of female applicants than male applicants: 31% (147) of applicants were female and 24% (117) were male compared to the profile of the working population of East Herts (51% and 49% respectively). This is a change from 2019/20 where 58% of applicants were female and 35% were male. However, as can be seen from the data, 45% of applicants either did not complete the equalities

form or did not disclose their data. As this is almost half of the applicants, this makes the data analysis and comparison to 2019/20 data very unreliable.

Figure 7.0 also shows that of the 86 applicants shortlisted for interview, 31 (36%) were female and 14 (16%) were male, with 41 (48%) unknown. Figure 7.0 shows that of the 22 applicants appointed, 9 (41%) were female and 2 (9%) were male. However with such a high percentage of 'Unknowns' it is quite likely that the percentage gap between male and female appointees will be smaller in reality.

The conversion from application to shortlist are closely aligned for females (31% to 36%) but reduces for males (24% to 16%). There is an increase in 5 percentage points between the number of females being shortlisted to appointed and a reduction of 5 percentage points between the number of males being shortlisted to appointed. This may indicate some potential bias, however the change is based on just 22 appointments and the gender of 50% of the appointees is unknown. As discussed in the 'Introduction' section above, although equalities data is mostly known for appointees we have chosen not to populate the data with this known data on our HR system for appointees and have used the original equalities monitoring forms for applicants. By adding data in for appointees this can distort the data when looking at the conversion of applicants from application through to interview and then appointment, so has not been done this year, particularly because the number of 'Unknowns' has increased significantly this year.

Ethnic origin

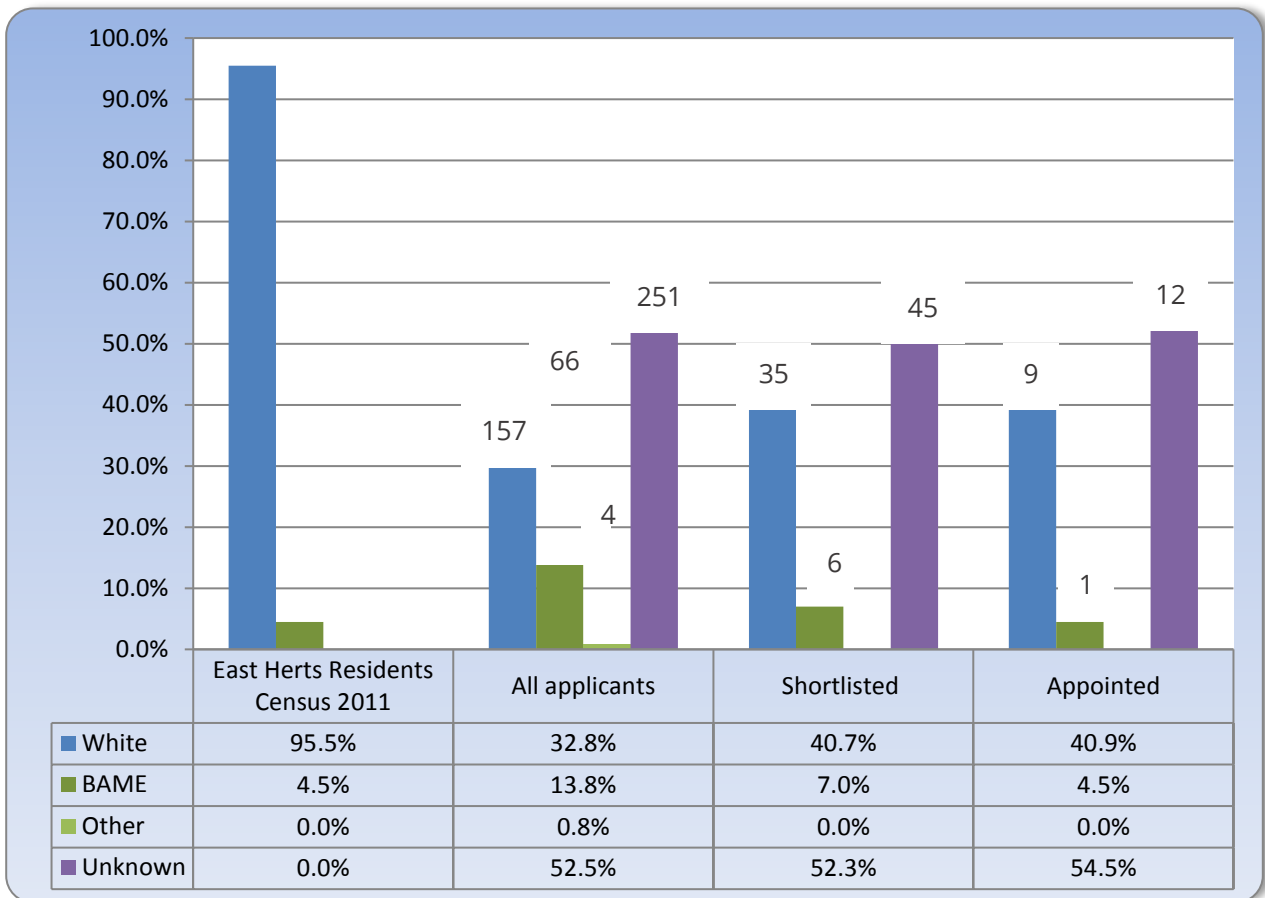


Figure 8.0 Applicant profile by ethnic origin compared to the population of East Herts

Source: ONS Census 2011 - Ethnic Group by Measures

Figure 8.0 shows that in 2020/21 the council attracted applicants from a diverse range of ethnic origins reflective of those of East Herts residents; 66 applicants (13.8%) were from BAME groups which is significantly higher than the percentage of East Herts residents in these groups (4.5%). However the figure is slightly lower than 2019/20 where 18.3% applicants were from BAME groups. However, the number of 'Unknowns' has significantly increased to over 50% of applicants which makes data analysis and comparison to 2019/20 data very unreliable.

There is an increase in the percentage of white applicants from application to shortlisting (32.8% to 40.7%) but between shortlisting and appointment it stays almost the same (40.7% to 40.9%). For applicants from BAME groups, there is a drop from application to shortlisting (13.8% to 7%) and a further drop at appointment stage (4.5%). This does indicate some bias, particularly as the number of 'Unknowns'

remains stable from application right through to appointment. As reported, equality data is removed from applications, names are shared as the HR system cannot 'blind' these, managers are trained in equality and avoiding bias so there are sufficient measures in place.

It should also be noted that East Herts has not had challenge from a candidate suggesting any bias or discrimination over a shortlisting decision. The shortlisting process involves a panel scoring candidates against the job person specification criteria and these forms are collected by HR to evidence the merit based scoring undertaken.

A further exercise has been undertaken to look at a sample of two recruitment campaigns chosen at random during the period August 2020 – March 2021 (application forms prior to August had been destroyed after 12 months has lapsed in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)). The application forms of those BAME candidates who were not shortlisted for interview were compared with the application forms of those candidates' who were shortlisted. The exercise found that those candidates who were shortlisted for interview had addressed the person specification more closely than those BAME candidates who weren't shortlisted. Also of note is that in one of the samples, one of the shortlisted candidates who had not completed the equalities monitoring form at the time and was therefore recorded as 'unknown' in the report was an existing employee who, on checking his employee records, is from the BAME group. In the other sample, three of the eight candidates shortlisted had applied under the Disability Confident Scheme which guarantees them an interview if they meet the minimum criteria in the person specification.

Age

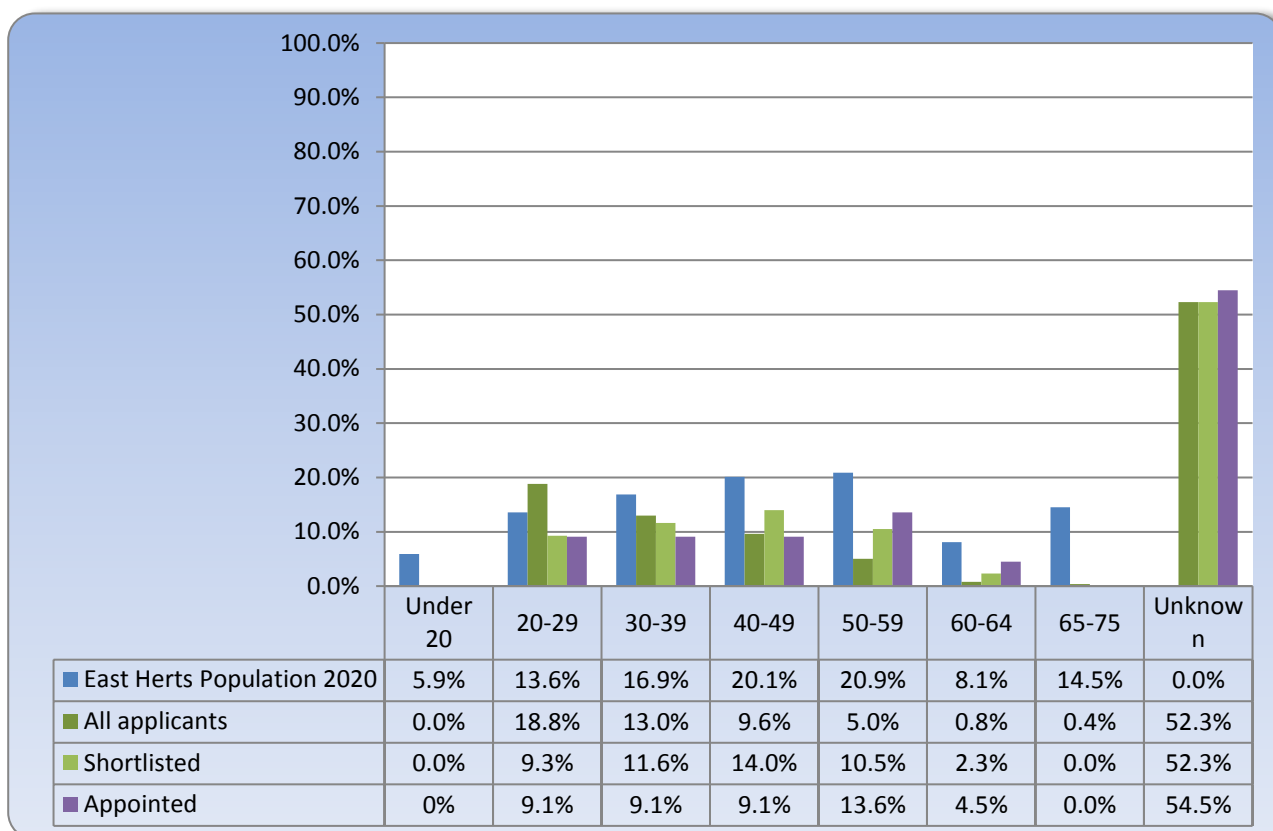


Figure 9.0 Applicant profile by age compared to the working population of East Herts

Source: Nomis Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2020).

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

Figure 9.0 shows that the council attracted applicants from a wide range of age groups broadly reflective of those of East Herts residents in the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups. Percentages of applicants in the other age groups are lower than that of East Herts residents, however the age of over 50% of applicants was unknown as they either did not complete the equalities form or did not disclose their data. This makes the data analysis very unreliable and it is likely that if the full data was known, the percentage of applicants in those underrepresented age groups would be higher. In the older age groups it is likely to be due to people taking retirement. There were no applicants under the age of 20 compared to East Herts residents in that age group (5.9%), however this is likely to be due to it being compulsory to remain in full time education or training up to the age of 18.

There is some variation in the percentages of applicants at the various age groups and the percentage of those shortlisted. For the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups the percentages of those applying to those shortlisted dropped. For all other age groups the percentage of applicants increases at the shortlisting stage. This is most likely due to older applicants having more experience than younger applicants, however as previously mentioned the very high level of 'Unknowns' makes data analysis unreliable. The number of 'Unknowns' remains closely aligned from application to shortlist.

From the shortlisting to appointment stage the percentages are much more closely aligned for most age groups. Again, the number of 'Unknowns' remains closely aligned from shortlist to appointment. Despite the slight variation at the different stages there are no obvious areas for concern.

Disability status

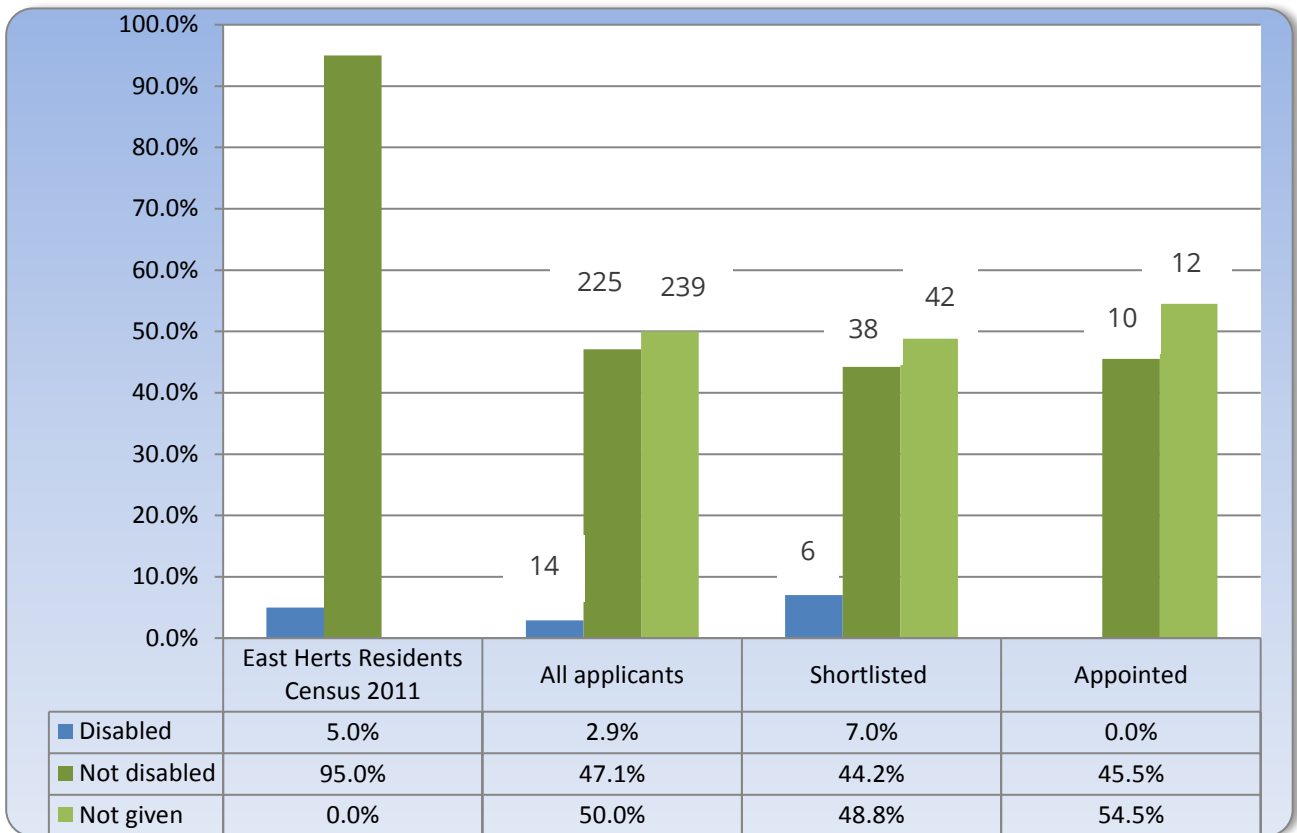


Figure 10.0 Applicant profile by disability compared to the working population of East Herts (Disability status)

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

Figure 10.0 shows that, of those that completed the equalities monitoring form, 2.9% of applicants had a disability in 2020/21 which is lower than East Herts residents with a disability (5%) but is a slight increase from the 2018/19 of 2.7%. It is also worth noting the figure for East Herts residents includes those with a long term health problem which may mean they are unfit to work and is based on households rather than individuals. In addition, the disability status of 50% was unknown.

The council would like to attract more applications from disabled people. A move towards blended working as a result of the pandemic may help to attract more disabled people. The council guarantees that disabled applicants under the Disability Confident Scheme will be invited for an interview if they meet the minimum essential criteria for the role (the Symbol is displayed on our recruitment messages and our website to help attract disabled candidates). In 2020/21, there were 14 applicants (2.9%) who stated that they have a disability. Of these, 6 met the essential criteria and

were shortlisted for interview but unfortunately no disabled people were appointed. As previously mentioned, the disability status of over 50% of applicants was unknown as they either did not complete the equalities form or did not disclose their data which makes the data analysis unreliable.

Sexual orientation

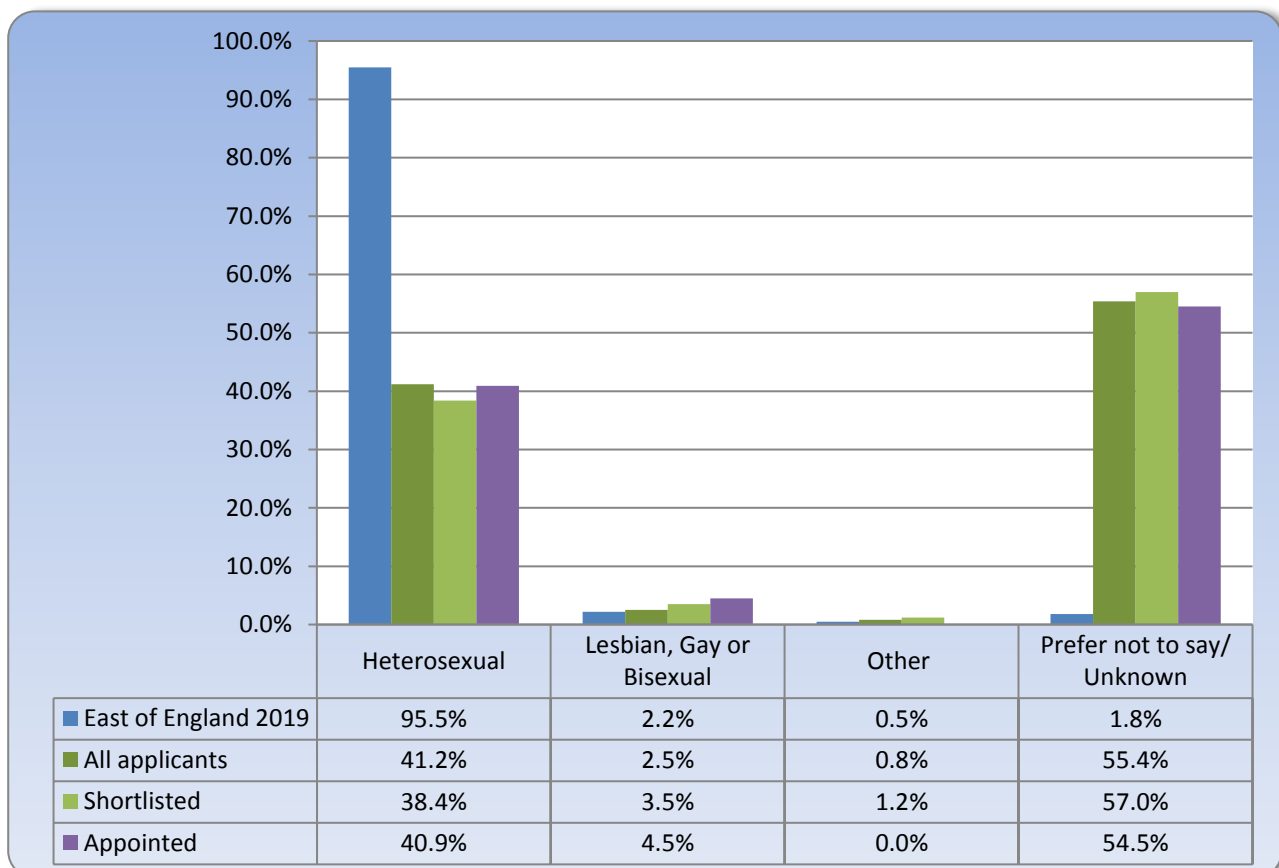


Figure 11.0 Applicant profile by sexual orientation compared to the East of England

Source: ONS – Sexual Identity by Region (East of England) – 2019.

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

Figure 11.0 shows that 2.5% of applicants in 2020/21 were lesbian, gay or bisexual, This is slightly higher than the percentage for the East of England population (2.2%) and is higher than 2019/20 (2.2%). It is positive to see that this rises to 3.5% at shortlisting and 4.5% at interview stage. This is an improvement on 2019/20 where of the 2.2% lesbian, gay or bisexual applicants, 0.8% were shortlisted and none were appointed.

Disciplinary, Grievance and Probation

(Grievance includes Bullying & Harassment complaints)

There were no formal disciplinary, grievance or probation cases in 2020/21.

Training

The 2020/21 Learning and Development Programme offered a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate, service and individual needs. Development needs were identified corporately and through individual PDRs. The delivery of development opportunities available for staff was adjusted to comply with the COVID restrictions. Training was delivered via facilitated virtual events, virtual coaching, webinars and e-learning. All employees were trained in equality and diversity, safeguarding, health and safety and data protection as part of the council's annual mandatory training programme.

Corporate training events are advertised to all staff via email bulletins or employees are contacted directly for specific events. Attendance is subject to manager approval and places are offered on a first come first served basis. Requests for funded professional and vocational training are approved by Leadership Team. No formal requests for professional or vocational training were refused in 2020/21.

We are satisfied that the training and development opportunities at the council are made available on a fair and equal basis cross the council which enables all employees to take advantage of the opportunities.

Leavers

Introduction

This section provides information on employees who have left the council (both voluntarily and involuntarily) between the period 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The figures exclude casual employees who have left the council and those who are on a career break.

The total number of leavers during the period is 26. Of these, 22 left voluntarily and 4 left involuntarily. The involuntary leavers include those temporary contract had come to an end or redundancy. Please refer to the Annual Turnover Report for 2020/21 (Human Resources Committee May 2021) for full details in terms of reasons for leaving, leavers by length of service, leavers by service area etc. This section looks at leavers in terms of equalities and protected characteristics but does not going in the same details as the Turnover Report.

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

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

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

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

Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 3 employees took maternity leave in 2019/20 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

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

Sex (Gender)

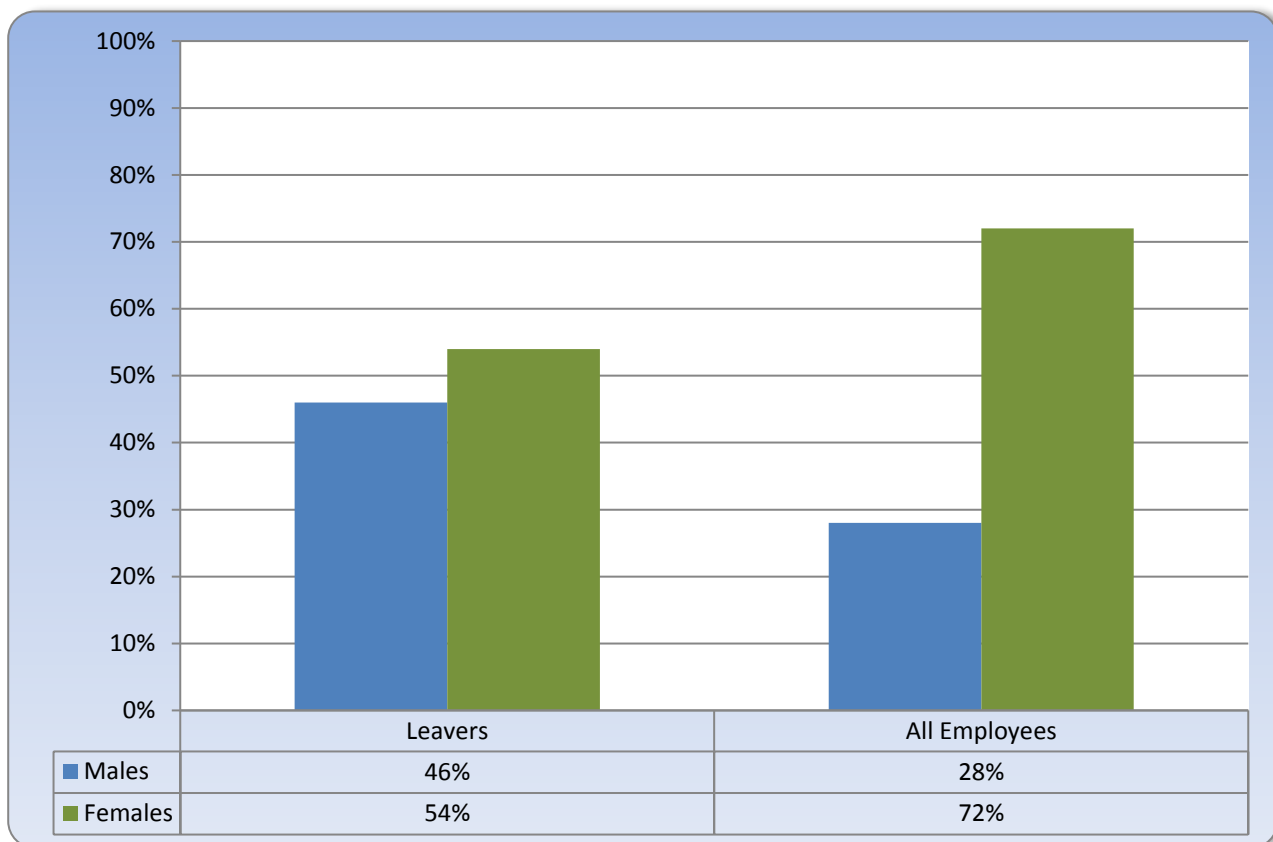


Figure 12.0 Leavers by sex

Figure 12.0 shows that there was a higher percentage of male leavers when compared to the percentage of male employees; 46% of leavers were male and 54% were female which is not reflective of the current employee profile (28% and 72% respectively). The percentage of male leavers has increased slightly since 2019/20, where 39% of leavers were male.

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

Ethnic Origin

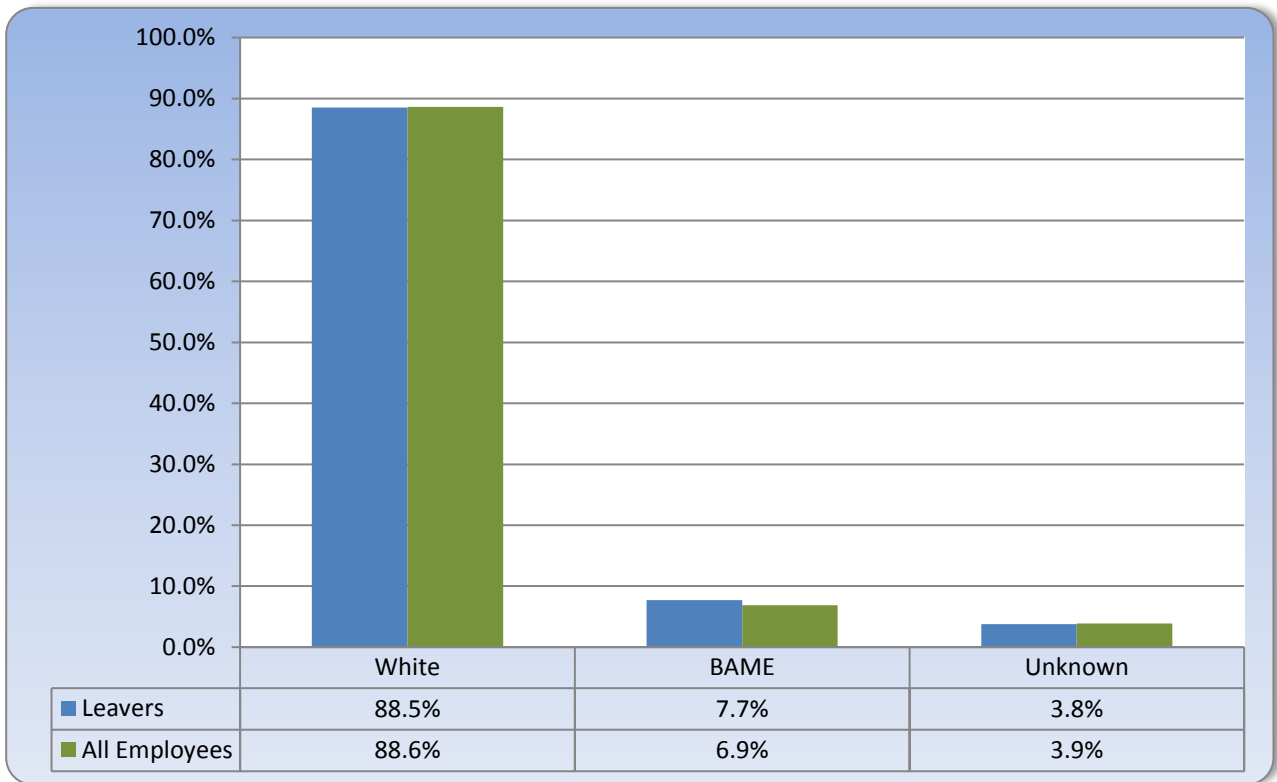


Figure 13.0 Leavers by ethnic origin

Figure 13.0 shows that there was a close alignment in the percentage of white and BAME leavers to the percentage of white and BAME employees; 7.7% of leavers were from BAME groups and 88.5% were white compared to the employee profile of 88.6% white and 6.9% BAME. This is positive when compared to the 2019/20 when 18.2% of leavers were from BAME groups and 69.7% were white. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has also not indicated any concerns regarding ethnic origin. It is also worth noting that in the Staff Survey run in December 2020 that 97% of responses agreed that the council welcomes and supports equality and diversity and addresses inequality/unfair practice and discrimination against staff.

Age

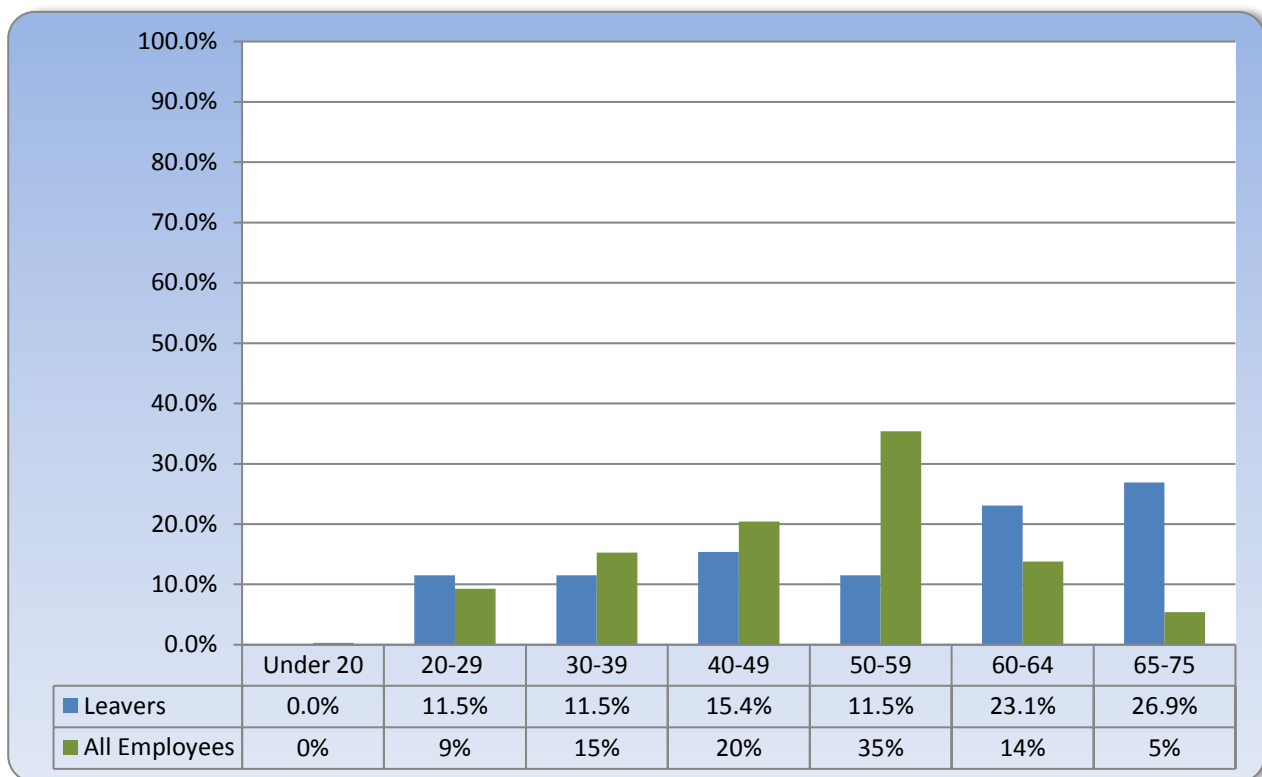


Figure 14.0 Leavers by age

Figure 14.0 shows that there was five times the percentage of leavers in the 65-75 age group and twice the percentage of leavers in the 60-64 age group than employees in this age range but this is due to employees in this age group taking retirement.

The percentage of leavers in the 20-29 age group (11.5%) was slightly higher than the percentage of employees in this age range (9%). This is most likely to be for career progression and due to the small teams at the council employees may have to seek this progression outside of the council. This is an area the council continually tries to address but is ultimately limited by the overall size and structure.

Religion or Belief

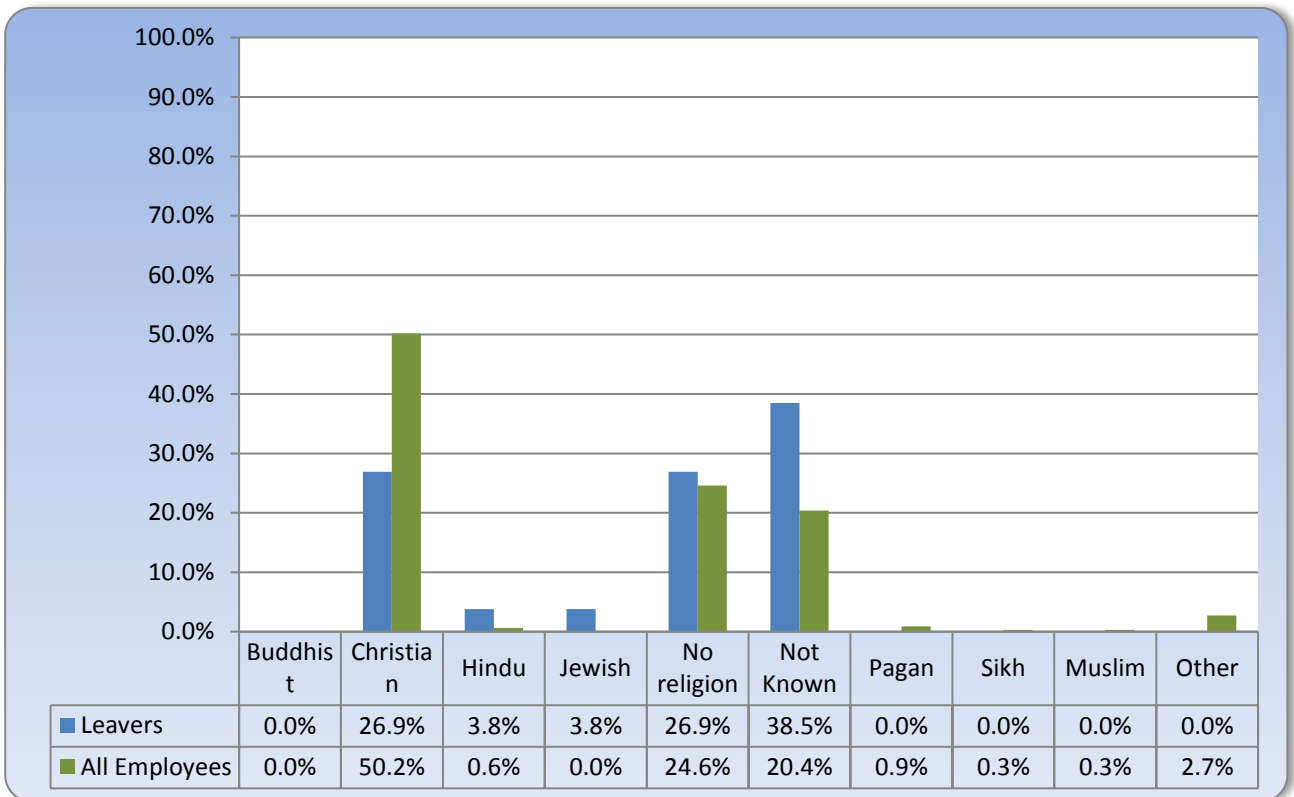


Figure 15.0 Leavers by religion

There are no concerns in this area, the religious belief of leavers in 2020/21 were generally reflective of the overall employee profile given the small numbers involved.

Disability

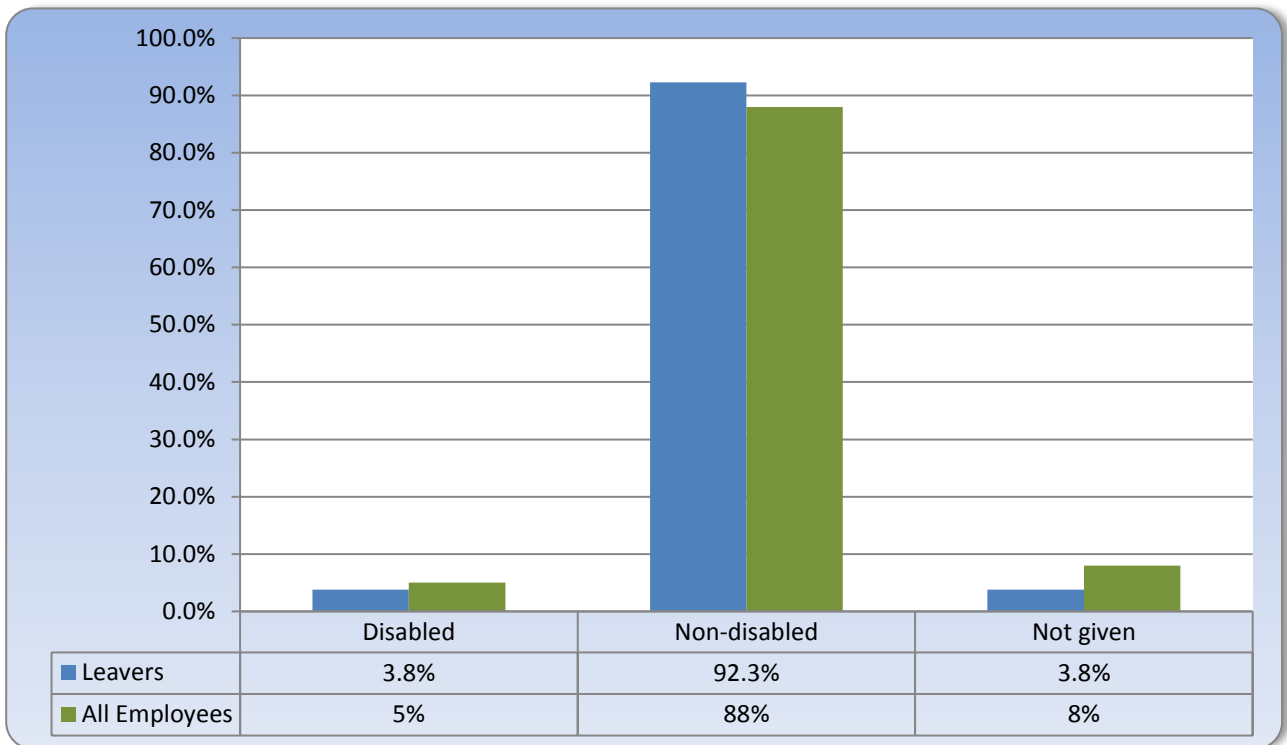


Figure 16.0 Leavers by disability

Figure 16.0 shows the percentage of leavers with a disability (3.8%) was slightly lower than the percentage of employees with a disability (5%). Therefore there are no indicated concerns in this area.

Staff and Employment Equality Action plan 1 July 21 – 31 June 22

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

Action	Timescale
Employee Profile	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2021.	Published by March 2022
Develop guidance on supporting employees who are changing gender so that best practice is available to both staff and managers where required. This will be supported by the HCC Equalities Officer.	January 2022
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have fuller rather than partial data (especially religion, sexual orientation and disability) reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	February 2022
Recruitment	
Continue to require managers to return all recruitment paperwork before an offer letter can be sent out to ensure HR have full shortlisting data to be able to report on	Ongoing.
Each interview panel chair to give consideration to the diversity of the interview panel and where possible try	Ongoing

to ensure the panel is as diverse. Where this is not possible try to ensure that other elements of the panel show staff diversity, for example 'meet the team' sessions to demonstrate the diversity at East Herts and to appear as welcoming as possible to applicants of all backgrounds.	
Work with Shaw Trust to advertise our jobs with them to attract more disabled applicants.	November 2021
Finalise staff case studies that demonstrate diversity in our workforce and use them as part of our recruitment literature	November 2021
Implement an ATS that will include an electronic application form which automatically directs applicants to the equalities monitoring form and also enables name blind recruitment	October/November 2021
Discipline, Grievance and Probation	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinary, grievance and formal probationary cases.	Ongoing
Training	
Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory e-learning training programme. Offer further equalities based training as identified by annual training needs analysis undertaken by the OD and HR Co-ordinator.	Ongoing
Continue to ensure that managers are briefed in the PDR process and that effective and appropriate personal development plans are put in place for all employees, including those rated as 'exceeding expectations' and above.	Ongoing

Continue to develop both wellbeing programmes/guidance and maintain sufficient Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues.

Ongoing

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East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 15 September 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report

Ward(s) affected: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

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

1.0 Proposal

1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on since Quarter 1 of 2021/22 (April to June 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.

The final furlough payments were made in July to 31st July 21, this being the end of contract for the casual staff employed at Hertford Theatre due to the Theatre closure. All have been processed as Leavers on the HR/Payroll system.

Payroll processed the separate election payroll in relation to the County Council & Police & Crime Commissioner election held on 6 May 21, successfully processing individual payments to 438 people on 24 June 21, this being a much larger payroll than previous due to more people being required to comply with Covid 19 protocols. This payroll requires a lot of checking to ensure the status of the people already on the system are still valid especially bank accounts and income tax liability.

- 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.

- 2.8 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 April to June 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)

The licence for the Data Protection Briefing course expired in May. A new Data Protection Course was developed in partnership with the Information Governance and Data Protection Manager which went live in June 2021.

The OD & HR Co-Ordinator is currently working with Hertfordshire County Council to give East Herts employee's access to Prevent Training which will be available to complete through SkillsBuild from August 2021.

An e-learning course is in development to support the email etiquette guidance which was developed as part of the East Herts Together group.

3.3 The corporate induction programme continues to be delivered virtually via Zoom. The course was refreshed in June to ensure it continues to deliver the most relevant information for the new starters. The new content and a new support presenter has improved the flow of the course. Following the staff briefings in July the course will be revised again to include the revised corporate plan.

3.4 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator continued to support the Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator in the delivery of the Bitesize Climate and Carbon Training. 101 employees attended

the events delivered in March, April and May. Further sessions are being delivered in September, October and November. The training objective remains to roll out the events to all employees of the council.

3.5 The OD & HR Co-ordinator supported the elections team to deliver training to the Poll Clerks, Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors for the May elections. 337 people participated in the various training events. 223 Poll Clerks completed the new e-learning training and 114 participated in the Presiding Officers and Inspectors virtual events. The service received positive feedback on the new training approach; this blended approach will be considered for the elections going forward.

3.6 In June and July 41 managers received bitesize policy update training delivered by the OD & HR Co-Ordinator. The events updated managers on the fundamental changing for the following policies:

- Absence Management Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Grievance Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Probation Policy

3.7 The 6 July was Talking Menopause Day at East Herts. An external provider 'Talking Menopause' initially asked staff to complete a menopause questionnaire to gain an understanding of what menopause meant at the council. 87 officers engaged in the questionnaire 27% of staff. The results of the questionnaire were fed back to the Leadership Team at a morning briefing, this was followed by a management training session, a drop in for staff and a women's information session

in the afternoon.

27 managers and staff attended the face to face events. A remote manager's session is being considered to enable more managers to attend after the positive feedback from the July event.

- 3.8 The HR & OD Co-ordinator Helen Farrell who currently works 3 days per week and co-ordinates Organisational Development and the Apprentices as well as being a HR Officer has unfortunately resigned to fully pursue their other Career as a self-employed Counsellor and they leave in mid-September (and will provide a handover a later date). The Head of HR and OD would like to thank the OD & HR Co-ordinator for their 23.5 years of service and the contributions they have made to EHC. The Head of HR and OD is seeking to replace the post with a HR & OD Manager who will manage operational HR and OD to strengthen the team, increase resilience and help deliver both internal HR and external HR to our customers.

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 In particular the HR Strategy and Core Staff & Management Competencies has been delayed to allow work to be progressed on a Blended Working Policy first. Unfortunately, the Head of HR and OD had an unexpected sickness absence for over 3 weeks which combined with leave for childcare has delayed work. The LJP in July was cancelled for this reason. The aim is to bring all 3 to the HRC in November, with the Blended/Flexible Work Policy being developed as working draft by 30 September

before being agreed at LJP and then HRC. The new HR Strategy will be drafted for LT and HRC approval and the revised PDR and Competences will be agreed by LT and then reported to HRC.

4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- A discussion has been held with Unison to start exploring agile/blended working which will also need to consider TOIL, overtime, flexi, working hours and home working allowances. Leadership Team have determined not use Agile but Blended instead as this fits better with EHC in terms of blending home, office and on-site working, EHC recognise that some work is not suitable for home and we want to have a blend where to ensure both opportunities are maximised.
- The re-organisation, redundancy and redeployment policy is being developed alongside a draft blended policy. The draft agile policy will be informed by the agile working trial currently underway.
- A Staff Privacy Notice has been finalised and agreed.
- The Corporate Values and images have been refreshed
- A follow up Wellbeing Survey has been drafted however it is being reviewed in line of the recent lifting of restrictions on 19 July and is likely to be re-run once the blended work policy is finalised.

4.1.4 The development of staff/management competencies has also had to be revised; work will now take place in the in September/October with work being reported to the November 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 continued to use Indeed to advertise posts however we will move to advertising on multiple online job boards using the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) (see below) once it is implemented.

4.2.2 Improved Job Application Form/Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

HR have purchased an ATS system with Stevenage through a company called Webrecruit and are currently in the implementation process. We have ensured a very competitive price with the system being provided without charge providing we spend a minimum amount on advertising (which is also competitively priced) and the product also includes on-boarding which we will link to the main HR system which will reduce new starter admin and allow notifications. The on-boarding system will allow an electronic signature for contracts which will incur a fee of £2.50 per contract but will allow this to be done electronically.

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 manager surgeries and are being supported under the revised offer. HR are currently supporting HTC with a restructure process.

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 further 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 continue to include twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing with resources in place. Phase 3 of the agile working trial begun on 19 July 2021 and staff continue to be 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 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 April – June 2021:

- First NHS Health Check session by Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service held at Wallfields in June. Due to popular demand, a further three sessions have been arranged in the next quarter. It is a health check-up for adults in England aged 40 to 74. It's designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. Must have no pre-existing condition and have not had one in the last 5 years.
- Diabetes Awareness Week
- Sleeping Soundly Sessions
- Lunchtime Wellbeing Walks every Wednesday from Wallfields
- Mental Health Awareness Week – Explore the natural world was promoted 10-14 May – encouraging staff to celebrate the positive benefits of nature and the outdoors please find here a range of activities at your local East Herts park - [click here](#) for details
- **Dementia Awareness Training**
- **Introduction to Mindfulness**, a proven way to promote mental health and reduce anxiety
- Mind in Mid Herts held daily 30 minute Mindfulness sessions on Zoom;

LWWW events are now promoted more prominently at the top of the page of Team Update, the monthly Staff e-newsletter, and includes a summary of activities and a link to a full list of activities on the Wellbeing Hub on the staff intranet.

Wellbeing Champions

We have commenced recruiting Wellbeing Champions, including asking current Mental Health First Aiders whether they wish to take on this complimentary role so that have a dual role.

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

- 8.1 The Trainee HR officer has rolled out My View to all members to allow them to submit expenses and mileage claims via the online portal 'My View' and has offered support where required. We are working with the provider Zellis to build asset management within the system which provides a log against each employee of which IT and equipment they have been assigned which both IT and facilities will have access to. We are also working on building an overtime module within my view, which similarly to mileage allows employees to claim online through the portal rather than the manual paper process.
- 8.2 IT have been liaising with Zellis on installing BAM (Business alert manager) which allows for date triggered notifications and emails which will improve efficiency and stop the need for manual processes.
- 8.3 The Head of HR has also secured refunds on H&S and L&D modules which were not fit for purpose. The Head has also negotiated 5 days of consultancy (without charge) to provide a license and portal for data to be taken out of the ATS and put into Resource Link re new starters, this will also this to self-service in terms of some of the set up.
- 8.4 The Head of HR & OD along with HR and Payroll team have reviewed sick pay on the system and have begun making improvements for the system to manage this automatically and ensure all absences as well as leave are managed in hours to ensure it is correctly pro-rated.

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

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