



James Ellis  
Head of Legal and Democratic  
Services

**MEETING** : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
**DATE** : WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022  
**TIME** : 7.00 PM

**PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

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

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

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- 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.

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## **AGENDA**

1. Appointment of Vice-Chairman for 2022/23

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Minutes - 15 February 2022 (Pages 7 - 18)

To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022

4. Chairman's Announcements

5. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.

6. Health and Safety Committee Minutes - 22 February 2022  
(Pages 19 - 28)

To receive the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 22 February 2022

7. Health and Safety Quarterly Review - Quarter 4, Incorporating the Annual Review (Pages 29 - 50)

8. Human Resources Management Quarterly Statistics Report - Quarter 4 2021/22 (Pages 51 - 60)

9. Annual Turnover Report 2021/22 (Pages 61 - 72)

10. Annual Learning and Development Review 2021/22 (Pages 73 - 84)
11. Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2021/22 (Pages 85 - 110)
12. Human Resources and Organisational Development Annual Plan 2022/23 (Pages 111 - 126)
13. Human Resources and Payroll Team Update (Pages 127 - 146)
14. 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 TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY  
2022, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor Rosemary Bolton (Chairman)  
Councillors R Buckmaster, S Bull, J Dumont,  
M McMullen and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
Peter Dickinson	- Health and Safety Officer
Jane Mackie	- Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

339 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Alder and Newton. It was noted that Councillor R Buckmaster was substituting for

Councillor Alder.

340 MINUTES - 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillor Ruffles explained that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021 contained a typing error at Minute 256, under the heading of Human Resources Management Statistics For Quarter 2 ( July – September 2021). The error consisted of the words 'long term' appearing twice in paragraph two. It was suggested that the words 'long term' should be removed before the word 'elaboration' in this paragraph. Members supported this amendment.

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Dumont, that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021 as amended, 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 24 November 2021, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

341 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Councillors Ruffles, Bull and Buckmaster declared non – pecuniary interests in that they were members of Town and Parish Councils which had procured services from East Herts Councils' Human Resources Department.

342 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Jane Mackie, the new Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager to the meeting.

343 HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTERLY STATISTICS (Q3)

The Chairman asked if Members had any questions regarding the report, and asked if The Health and Safety Officer had anything else to add.

Councillor Ruffles extended his thanks to the Health and Safety Officer for the extra support which he had given to the Hertford Theatre Team in relation to their Christmas productions at Southern Maltings in Ware.

Councillor Bull asked if there was any reason for Grange Paddocks leading the table of accident statistics. The Health and Safety Officer said that this was due to the larger size of this facility and therefore its higher footfall. He said that the statistics were also affected by the swimming pool facilities at Hartham Leisure Centre currently being closed to the public due to refurbishment. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that the higher footfall at Grange Paddocks was the clear link. He said that contractors would be asked to provide accident statistics from similar sized facilities to enable more meaningful comparisons going forward.

The Chairman referred to page 30, item 8 of the report, and asked how the new lone working programme implementation was progressing. The Health and Safety Officer said that uploaded forms were being

received from service teams. These forms were being passed to People Safe, who would then change the administration portal, and issue new upgraded devices. He explained that these new upgraded devices would be phase issued to staff with training, that each team would have its own group administrator, and that he himself would have contract management oversight, enabling the production of user reports.

The Chairman asked if there would be a time when both of the lone working services would be working simultaneously as they phased over. The Health and Safety Officer said that there would be an overlap, and that this would maintain continuity of service ensuring that staff continued to have protection.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q3) – October 2021 to December 2021 be received.

#### 344 GENDER PAY GAP ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report on behalf of its author Claire Kirby. He said that the pay gap had slightly widened, but was essentially the same as it was in other years. This was due to the overpopulation of women across the organisation, with a heavier distribution of women in lower paid jobs. He explained

that those attracted to the flexibility of lower paid jobs were those with childcare responsibilities, which were traditionally women. He said that many male dominated job roles had also been outsourced including jobs in Waste, IT, Parks and Leisure and Maintenance.

Councillor McMullen said that the report gave the impression that all was going well, and that all balanced out. He said that he was impressed, and gave his congratulations to officers for their work.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 36 of the report regarding e- learning courses which included unconscious bias training. He welcomed the inclusion of such training and said that the Council's demographic mirrored the population, and so the organisation was in a good place already.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that nobody wanted to use 'industry excuses' but the Council does have a female domination in part due to the flexibility which it offers.

Councillor Ruffles expressed his concern about creating a bias for customer service and asked if customer facing roles were a good male career path. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that customer service roles did not have a high turnover and welcomed those with childcare responsibilities. He added that there were two men in Customer Services, and that men had been employed in entry roles positions in other areas, for example in Planning.

Councillor Ruffles said it was important to appoint the best person to the job. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that this was what was being done, and that the case studies within the report showed this. He added that the latest apprentice appointed to Customer Service was male, but reiterated that the council could not recruit on the basis of gender.

The Chairman referred to page 39 of the report and asked for any comments on the action plan.

It was moved by Councillor McMullen and seconded by Councillor Buckmaster 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 Gender Pay Gap Report be noted.

(B) that the action plan 22/23 be agreed.

#### 345 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022 - 23

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. He said that the policy remained the same as last year as the pay award is yet to be awarded. He added that there are no other proposed changes to the policy.

The Chairman asked if Members had any comments.

It was moved by The Chairman and seconded by Councillor Ruffles that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting

and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - that the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be recommended for approval by Council.

346 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STATISTICS -  
QUARTER 3 REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report which set out Human Resources statistics for Quarter 3 to include vacancy, recruitment and sickness data alongside turnover and equality. He said that turnover was down. He added that trends showed that the first eighteen months of the pandemic held people back from changing careers, but then later pushed them to retire or to make change. He said that the Council had seen a number of retirements, several within Revenues and Benefits which was a hard department to recruit to. The Head of HR and Organisational Development said that all vacancies were being looked at carefully in line with the requirement for savings. He continued by saying that there had been an increase in sickness, both in an overhang of long term cases and in short term cases due to the pandemic and the side effects of the vaccine.

Councillor Dumont asked The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development if he thought the level of short term sickness would increase now that people were returning to the office post pandemic. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that they had seen staff continue to work through sickness by working

from home, but then frustrations at the length of the pandemic had negated this.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager said she agreed with The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in that people struggled through sickness. She said there had been a drop off in the sickness of those with long term conditions, who could now better manage their conditions by working from home. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development added that there had been blended working offers based on such scenarios.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it was important that if staff were ill they should not be working from home. He said that most staff had taken well to working from home 50% of the time, but there were some who did not want to return to the office at all. He said that this was being kept in check and that the blended working offers would be reviewed in November/December 2022. He said that having people in the office was good for both creativity and innovation and for staff mental health and wellbeing. Councillor Dumont said that it was complex and that people may have many reasons as to why they are seeking a certain life/work balance. He said it was very important that people spend some of their working life in the office, for wellbeing and creativity and to feel a sense of belonging.

Councillor Ruffles asked what qualifications/characteristics were required by candidates to fill the vacancies which existed within

the Revenues and Benefits Department. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that generally they required people with experience, as training comes from on the job. He said that discussions were taking place with regard to the Revenues and Benefits Department expanding to support other districts. This would involve Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) to obtain the experienced staff required, and would also make the Council an option for employees. He finished by saying that a new experienced Benefits Manager had been recruited, and that as a department Revenues and Benefits had seen the biggest number of recent retirements.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 3 (October - December 2021) be received.

#### 347 HR AND PAYROLL TEAM UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. He drew Members attention to page 83, point 2.4 regarding the regrouping of the Human Resources Team. He said that the post of Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager had been given more responsibility and successfully recruited in to. He added that the HR apprentice/ trainee was now a permanent member of staff, becoming a full time

Human Resources Officer from January 2022. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development continued by saying that the post recently vacated by retirement within the department would be reviewed before being replaced.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that a rollout of staff briefing programmes relating to the new Personal Development Review (PDR) forms would soon start. He said that 360 degree PDR feedback would commence initially for managers only, as per Unison's suggestion. He continued by saying that booklets on the new Core Competencies had been produced, and that these would be circulated to Members when finalised. He said that the move towards using the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) continued. External services were still being provided by the department to Town Councils, and that approaches for services had been received from two Parishes. He finished by saying that the Wellbeing Programme continued, with some activities being effected due to the pandemic, and that the Payroll system development had another new Account Manager.

Councillor Dumont referred to page 88, point 4.2 and asked if Indeed were being used to advertise posts, and if the Council had any capacity to carry out proactive recruitment through the accessing of CV databases and the receiving of CV alerts. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that Indeed were being used as part of a multi-product, and not a sole contract. He said that the cost of access to such databases had increased and there was an issue with having the capacity to enable

dedication into the searching of these. He continued by saying that a proactive approach had been taken with executive search, as with the Section 151 Officer and that in future part one of the Council's application form would be replaced by candidates uploading their CV's.

The Chairman said that it was good to hear about the Trainee Human Resources Officer who had attended the last committee meeting in the absence of The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development. She referred to page 91, point 7.4 and asked if the word 'Trainee' was a typing error. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that this was an error, an overhang as the Officer was no longer a Trainee.

The Chairman asked if it was expected that attendance at wellbeing events would increase as staff returned to the office. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said he hoped this would be the case. He said that take up to the wellbeing offer had been low, with no real reasons as to why. Events had been arranged at different times of the day, including during work hours with people being encouraged attend. It was felt that staff prioritised their work over participating in events and looked after their wellbeing themselves.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be considered and received.

348 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....

## **Minutes of Safety Committee** **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022, Hybrid on Zoom**

**Present:** Simon O’Hear (SOH), Peter Dickinson (PD), Rowan Perrin (RP), Geoff Hayden (GH), Kevin Fry (KF), Dominique Kingsbury (DK), Graham Mully (GM), Paul Thomas-Jones (PTJ), Tamara Jarvis (TJ), Chloe Hipwood-Norton (C H-N), Jackie Bruce (JB) (Unison)

**1.0 Apologies:** Steve Whinnett (SW), Jennifer Francis (JF) (Unison), Kate Collins (KC), Robert Mayo (RM), Ian Sharratt (IS)

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

The Minutes of the meeting held 02 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **3.0 Matters Arising from the minutes**

None

### **4.0 Coronavirus Update**

SOH updated the Committee that Leadership Team had received an update on the number of cases in the district and there has been a reduction in tests being carried out./ He further advised Committee that isolation rules were to be relaxed and further testing scaled back.

EHC are still asking staff to self-test and if they test positive for Covid and are well enough to do to work from home and not come into the office. Staff absence levels have increased but and this is not unexpected due to Covid.

Further key dates to note are:

- The need for covid risk assessments will cease from the 01<sup>st</sup> April 2022
- PTJ advised that Covid Marshals will be discontinued on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

S O'H advised Committee that the office covid protocols will be reviewed and updated in line with current government guidelines and will be monitored by the Health and Safety Officer, Head of HR and Leadership Team.

**Action:** PD to contact HCC regarding Lateral Flow Test Kits.

## **5.0 Regulatory and Legislative Changes (Verbal Report)**

The UK government has begun the process of dismantling the main legal framework for the mandated coronavirus restrictions in England, including the legal requirement for people who test positive for COVID-19 to isolate at home.

The powers previously enabled by the coronavirus act will now revert back to Local authority oversight.

PD and PJT had nothing further to report in regard to health and safety legislation.

## **6.0 Health and Safety Inspections and Compliance**

PD has now diarised inspection and visit dates for 2022.

## **7.0 Capital Project Updates /Contractor Health & Safety Compliance**

TJ provided an update for the Committee on the following capital projects.

### **7.1 Grange Paddocks – 3G Pitch**

Approval has been given for the go-ahead of the installation of the 3G pitch at Grange Paddocks. Further archaeological work will be undertaken and a geophysical survey has identified some 70 roman remains on site.

### **7.2 Hartham Pool**

The Health and Safety Officer received an update from Rob Allwood, Project Manager that work continues.

RA reported that drainage works are underway and good progress is being made. A secondary drainage pipe has been discovered and Thames Water will be undertaking surveys to determine the source of the pipe.

The site is being prepared for the demolition of the existing structure and Cadman are carrying out soft demolition work (removal of fixtures and fittings) prior to main demolition commencing.

The relining of the pool tank is proceeding and will be ready for the application of the new coating in due course.

### **7.3 Hertford Theatre – Growth and Legacy**

TJ reported that tenders have now been received for the next phase of the project and a contractor will be appointed March 2021.

GH arranged for the Covid Marshals to occupy the Theatre to provide supporting security arrangements, this will cease on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March when Covid Marshalling concludes.

**Action Update:** GH to feedback to Committee concerning liaison between the Project Team and Property Services on ongoing projects and developments.

### **8.0 Northgate End**

Completion works in progress and TJ reported that the MSCP was on course with no operational issues.

There have been no health and safety incidents to report.

### **8.1 Old River Lane**

TJ reported that this is on hold waiting for Masterplan Process Planning to take place. Nothing further to report.

### **9.0 Contract Health and Safety Compliance**

#### **9.1 Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas**

RP informed Committee that in response to storms Dudley and Eunice he made arrangements with Glendale to cease all works in wooded areas and switch to storm response to manage any issues concerning damaged or downed trees, further

arrangements were made with other contractors to provide larger equipment if needed. RP reported that due to the high level of tree inspection work undertaken only 7 trees were lost during the storms but and no incidents were reported involving Glendale or members of the public. PD thanked RP and Glendale for their swift response and safety plan.

RP reported that there had been one accident at a play area that was being investigated.

**Reminder:** RP asked for the following addition to be recorded in the minutes. Glendale's next external Audit is 24<sup>th</sup> November

**Action:** None

## 9.2 Shared Waste Service

C H-N reported that site re-lining remains an issue, newly laid MMA has already degraded (MMA has an estimated lifespan of 10 years on road surfaces).

PD, GM and Head of Finance Steve Linnett carried out a visit to the depot on the 02<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, the speed roundels had degraded and the MMA was lifting off the surface, closer inspection showed heavy salt deposits on the material.

There are a number of factors that can cause MMA to degrade

Previous Contamination can affect the bond of the resinous flooring and must be removed. Types of contamination are:

- Oil, grease, or food fats
- Present Condition of the surface material

Curing compounds, sealers, and other laitance are best removed mechanically with:

- a. vacuum shot-blasting
- b. scarifying
- c. sand blasting

Debris and surface contamination can usually be burned off with a flame gun or removed with a commercial degreasing compound or solvent. An Oil Stop Primer is an important tool in dealing with petroleum oil contaminated concrete.

C H-N also reported that a surplus of bins is causing issues due to the lack of available storage space.

It was reported that an external contractor collecting damaged bins sustained a non-reportable injury after slipping on surface debris. The incident occurred on a Saturday when the depot is not in use. It is not uncommon for contractors to attend the site out of hours when carrying out essential repairs and maintenance. The matter is being looked at by the Depot User Group.

### **9.3 APCOA**

DK advised committee that there were staffing issues with APCOA no other health and safety related incidents to report.

## **10. Property – Premises Maintenance and Repairs**

Nothing to report

## **11. Facilities Management**

GH reported no facilities management issues.

PD and GH have reviewed the meeting rooms and GH and the Caretakers undertook an extensive piece of work to bring the rooms back into use and utilise furniture from Charringtons House to improve the rooms.

**Action:** PD and GH to review occupancy capacity of existing meeting rooms in order to produce room infographics and guidance.

## **12. List of Issues**

### **12.1 UNISON**

JB asked if consideration was being given to those employees who worked at an adapted workstation as part of the modern workplace programme. S O'H advised Committee that this would be fully considered and that an inspection was planned to review desks and equipment requirements to ensure the needs of the workforce were being met. S O'H welcomed UNISONS participation.

PD advised Committee that the DSE and Workstation self-assessment questionnaire had been reviewed and updated to allow home workers to record the equipment, furniture and peripherals they currently have in use. This has been amended to include a question about Council issued dongles as these need to be updated and checked by IT and HP thin client boxes.

**Action:** None.

### **12.2. Management**

Additional Assembly Point signs have been installed to highlight the locations and direction on leaving the building; these have been positioned in the following locations:

- Opposite the staff entrance/exit, direction left on exiting the building
- At the corner of the west wing of the building, rear fire exit directing to assembly point parking bay F
- Opposite the old building 'main door' parallel to the bowls green pointing left toward the pedestrian crossing and assembly point 1
- Adjacent to the barrier to the staff car park, direction right, pointing toward assembly point 1.

The signs are 450mm x 600mm and are large enough to see so there should be no mistakes during the next fire drill.

### **13. Quarterly Health & Safety Report – Quarter 3**

PD took Committee through the Q3 report for the period July 2021  
September 2021

#### **14.0 Work and Non Work related accidents**

PD confirmed the following:

##### **November 2021**

There were no non-reportable or reportable accidents recorded for EHC employees or members of the public.

There were 5 non-reportable accidents across the five swimming pools. H&S can report that none were as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure.

## **December 2021**

There were no non-reportable or reportable accidents recorded for EHC employees or members of the public.

There were 3 non-reportable accidents across the five swimming pools. H&S can report that none were as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure.

## **January 2022**

There were no non-reportable or reportable accidents recorded for EHC employees or members of the public.

There were 6 non-reportable accidents across the five swimming pools. H&S can report that none were as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure.

There were 3 SLM employee accidents as a result of a process error using knives in the food preparation area. SLM have undertaken retraining for all food preparation staff.

## **February 2022**

There were no non-reportable or reportable accidents recorded for EHC employees or members of the public.

There were 6 non-reportable accidents across the five swimming pools. H&S can report that one was a result of an uneven access ramp resulting in a trip, EHC Project Manager undertook investigation and SLM and Contractor have rectified the cause of the accident. The remaining 5 were as a result of user execution error and were not as a result of any procedural or equipment related failure.

## **15.0. Lone Worker Contract**

PD updated committee and advised that the roll out of new devices will commence shortly once all the information on current users has been updated.

## **16.0. Learning and Development**

PD advised Committee that Leadership Team participated in a one day IOSH Managing Safely for Executives and Directors course in January 2021.

## **17.0 A.O.B**

The matter that it is unclear if there are of out of hours arrangements for Hillcrest Hostel and Rectory Hall / Cedar Cottage Hostel was raised for the Committee's attention.

**Action:** Item to be brought to the attention of the Head of Housing and Health.

**17.0 Date of Next Meeting:** 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2022  
13:30pm  
Zoom / Hybrid – Room 1.15

## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q4) – January 2022 to March 2022 incorporating the Annual Review

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

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### Summary

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR (LT/Human Resources Committee):**

**To consider the Health and Safety Quarterly Review (Q4) –**

**January 2022 to March 2022 and Annual Report and provide**

**comments to the Head of HR & OD 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 4 (January 2022 to March 2022) Incorporating the Annual Report and includes a summary of;

#### **Non-Reportable and Reportable Accidents**

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

There have been no serious reportable accidents this

quarter.

### **Contract compliance and monitoring**

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 there have been no recorded on-site accidents or incidents recorded for this period.

### **Premises and Sites**

Office premises inspections are now being undertaken with the Property Team and Unison.

### **Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas.**

There have been no reported incidents or accidents in respect to the parks, open spaces and play areas.

### **Lone Working Contract**

Roll out of new devices to commence January/February 2022.

### **Covid-19 / Blended Working**

The Health and Safety Officer, HR Colleagues, and Head of HR and OD are continuing to review and update information in line with Government guidance.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Officer reports to the HR Committee each quarter. This report will be submitted to Safety Committee and has been considered by the Leadership Team and Executive Members, who review the report before it is submitted to the HR Committee

## **3.0 Safety Committee**

- 3.1 Safety Committee met on Tuesday 03 May 2022. This DRAFT report will be shared with the Committee.
- 3.2 Contract Managers and Contract Project Managers are invited to attend Safety Committee 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 January 2022 to March 2022.
- 4.2 One non reportable work related accident was recorded for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022; the continuing low trend is due to staff working from home or away from the office.
- 4.3 Swimming Pools and Open Spaces. There were 23 minor non reportable accidents reported across the 5 swimming pools and gyms between January 2022 and March 2022 in respect to users and 4 accidents concerning SLM employees. None of the reported accidents were the result of any procedural or equipment related failure and a sample of the nature of the type of accident recorded is included below:

- IP slipped when entering changing rooms from poolside
- IP strained neck putting on swim cap
- IP hit head on open locker door when bending down to put shoes on
- IP got into difficulty during swim lesson, assisted by poolside life-guard. IP panicked but did not sustain any injury or require further medical assistance
- IP jumped into pool suffering impact injury to foot, no serious damage or further medical assistance required. Skill execution error.
- Unsupervised minor IP ran into entrance and tripped entering the facility, no injury or further assistance required.
- IP dropped weight plate on foot when returning weight to rack, no serious injury sustained. Skill execution error
- Member of Staff suffered minor puncture wound from projecting staple when disposing of cardboard box.

Skill execution errors arise as a result of individual action and not as a result of any equipment or procedural failure.

#### Q4 Non Reportable Accidents – Jan, Feb, March 2022

Swimming Pool & Gym	January	February	March	TOTAL
Hartham	1	0	0	1
Grange Paddocks	2	2	8	12
Leventhorpe	0	1	0	1
Ward Freman	1	1	0	2
Fanshawe	2	2	3	7
Employees (SLM)	3	0	1	4
Contractors	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>

Parks, Open Spaces, Members of the Public	January	February	March	TOTAL
Play Area	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>EHC Employees</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>COMBINED TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>28</b>
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### Q3 Table for Comparison

#### Q3 Non Reportable Accidents - Oct, Nov, December 2021

<b>Swimming Pool &amp; Gym</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Hartham	2	0	0	2
Grange Paddocks	4	3	2	9
Leventhorpe	2	0	0	2
Ward Freman	1	0	0	1
Fanshawe	2	2	1	5
Employees (SLM)	0	0	0	0
Contractors	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>Parks, Open Spaces, Members of the Public</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Play Area	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>EHC Employees</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>COMBINED TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>
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An analysis of the accident numbers and types have not shown any abnormal trends or patterns over the course of the year. The increase in figures reflect the increase in usage as a result of the easing of Covid restrictions.

The Health and Safety Officer has discussed benchmarking options with the Contract Manager for SLM with a view to being able to benchmark the 5 East Herts Swimming Pools and Gym with comparable facilities managed by SLM.

The Contract Manager does not have direct access to provide a month by month review of the accident per 10K visit for other sites not under his management control. The Contract Manager can provide something which will look at quarterly benchmarking using information in the wider Everyone Active group, South East and East Herts.

The Contract Manager will ask for comparable sites to be built in to a comparison so we have like for like site's for the dual use with gym (Fanshawe and Leventhorpe , dual use pool only (Ward Freman), Large pool and gym site with no sport hall (Grange Paddocks) and a Medium site pool/ gym and no sport hall (Hartham). The Contract Manager is discussing this option with the Everyone Active Regional H&S Quality manager.

**4.4 Grange Paddocks**

- 4.4.1 Demolition of the old building has now been completed. Rubble and debris is being crushed on site and used to infill the old pool tank. Scrap metal is being extracted and sold and non-recyclable waste is being removed from the site.
- 4.4.2 Work on the new service yard will commence February 2022 on completion of the demolition work.
- 4.4.3 Aftercare and post completion meetings have taken place with the Project Manager, SLM and Wilmott Dixon and final snagging has taken place.

Milestones:

Milestone	Anticipated completion
-----------	------------------------

	<u>date</u>
Completion of the foul chamber pump works	May 2022

#### 4.5 **3G pitch**

##### Progress Update

4.5.1 Archaeological work has continued on site with the recent discovery of a religious shrine.

4.5.2 Over 700 people attended guided tours at Grange Paddocks on Saturday 23 April for a rare opportunity to see artefacts that date back to Roman times, uncovered as part of the archaeological excavations undertaken for the footprint of the new 3G football pitch. Around a further 300 people dropped by to view the findings on display.

4.5.3 Once the archaeological work is complete, the 3G pitch can be installed and is set to open in August and made ready for the football season in September.

#### 4.6 **Hartham Leisure Centre (HLC)**

##### Progress Update

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Programmed delivery</b>	<b>Work Activity</b>
1	Mid May – end of September 2021	Pool Hall and pool changing village refurbishment
2	Late August to late October 2021	Refurbishment of the downstairs dry changing rooms
1	End of August 2021 – mid September 2022	Demolition and building of the new extension

2	End of August 2022 - December 2022	Converting the old gym into upstairs changing room and spin studio
3		

The following milestones are planned for the next quarter:

<u>Milestone</u>
Phase 2: Ground floor fitness changing room refurbishment completed and returned to SLM for use.
Phase 3: Started - Hoarding has been erected in readiness for the demolition of the old front and creation of the new extension.
Thames Water have confirmed that the old brick sewer pip is redundant and blocked at both ends. This can be removed and progress made on the remainder of the ground work.

#### 4.7 Summary

4.7.1 The Project Manager has reported that pool tank lining has been successfully applied and the pool filled. Two small leaks were detected in some of the existing pipe work and the lead contractor is rectifying this. Despite earlier issues and delays the project is on course to be completed by Summer 2020 thanks to the hard work and perseverance of the team.

4.7.2 The project manager overseeing the work has maintained a high standard of inspections and the Health and Safety Officer has observed exceptional levels of health and safety practice demonstrated throughout.

### 5.0 Contract Management and Compliance

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

place. The Health and Safety Officer works with the service contract managers to improve the information reporting processes and to ensure pertinent information is being monitored/reported and relevant action is being taken (when required) to Safety Committee, Leadership Team and Human Resources Committee.

The following updates should be noted:

## **5.2 Buntingford Service Centre**

- 5.2.1 Approval has been given for the Property Team to install speed control humps and digital speed deterrent signs in the depot yard to enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety . The Health and Safety Officer, Property Services Manager and Surveyor met with Urbaser to discuss the issues of the surface lining and Urbaser agreed that the enhancements would be more beneficial.

The Health and Safety Officer can report that there has been a significant improvement to the site housekeeping and a number of repairs are scheduled to be carried out including;

- Replacing the heating n the vehicle workshop
- Yard safety enhancements
- Refurbishment of external WC's
- New barrier installed at the front car park
- Installation of a new defibrillator with user training

- 5.2.2 The Health and Safety Officer can report that the Buntingford User Group Meeting took place on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March. There have been no on-site incidents or accidents to report.

5.2.3 Urbaser have reported that they are planning to introduce an onsite scheme to use spare parts from damaged bins to replace missing components and extending the life of current bins, significant progress has been made to reduce the number of surplus bins on site.

The Health and Safety Officer will continue to support the contractor and contract management team who are looking at solutions to the problem.

## **6.0 Capital Projects**

The Health and Safety Officer has been supporting the Head of Operations ahead of the planned opening of Northgate End Multi Storey Car Park. The Health and Safety Officer and the Property Team will be installing a Premises Information Box at the site along the same lines as those installed at Buntingford, Hillcrest and Rectory Hall Hostels and Wallfields.

The Health and Safety Officer has supported the recommendations for the closure of the top deck of Northgate End due to lighting restrictions in the Planning Consent.

## **7.0 Parking Enforcement Contract**

7.1 The Health and Safety Officer receives monthly site inspections from the Service Development Manager and Parking Contract Manager on the overall performance of the Parking Enforcement contract (with APCOA) and it can be reported that that there have been no accidents in regard to car parks or Multi Story Car Parks (MSCP's) during this quarter.

## **8.0 Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract**

- 8.1 There have been no incidents or accidents reported for this period and no incidents involving the Councils Grounds Maintenance Contractor, Glendale.
- 8.2 The Health and Safety Officer can advise the Committee that two events are planned for the Love Parks Week, one event will be held at Southern Country Park on Tuesday the 26<sup>th</sup> July and Pishiobury Park on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July. The Health and Safety Officer will be working with the Operations Team on risk assessment and event safety.

## **9.0 Lone Worker Contract Update**

- 9.1 The Health and Safety Officer would like to advise the Committee that the new lone working service provision implementation has now commenced. This will be a phased programme and comprises the following:
- New devices are currently being set up and linked to user profiles;
  - Recall old Microguard devices currently in use.
  - New devices to be sent, linked and ready for use
  - On-line user training and training for team administrators.

## **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 will be supporting the Theatre Team for the delivery of Christmas events at Ware's Drill Hall in December 2022.

- 10.3 Work is due to commence on the next phase of Hertford Theatres Growth and Legacy Project.
- 10.4 The Health and Safety Officer can advise the committee that there have been no on-site accidents or covid related incidents.

## **11.0 Blended Working Programme/COVID Protocols**

- 11.1 The Health and Safety Officer and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development have significantly re-worked the Protocols now that the majority of Covi-19 restrictions have been lifted. The new 'Office Housekeeping and Safety Protocols' are aimed at reinforcing and maintaining the good hygiene practices implemented for Covid control and to encourage decluttering of the workspace. Unison have actively participated and supported the revised protocols. Please see Appendix A for the new Protocols.
- 11.2 The Health and Safety Officer, Head of HR and Leadership Team are monitoring guidance and messaging from Government in order to respond proactively to any substantive changes.
- 11.3 The Health and Safety Officer has been working with the Corporate Property Services Manager on updating the furniture and layout of the meeting rooms at Wallfields to create greater flexibility. Room layout guides and capacities will be developed and calculated so people will be able to make informed choices for events and meetings.
- 11.4 The Health and Safety Officer has been working with the modern workspace transformation team on the changes being implemented in Wallfields to create new working

space and meeting rooms.

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

- 12.1 The Health and Safety Officer is exploring options for a personal safety awareness course.
- 12.2 With the new lone working contract now in place a series of training sessions are to be planned and implemented as part of the roll out.
- 12.3 The Health and Safety Officer will be considering options for First Aid refresher skills training in line with the blended working programme to ensure that consistent first aid cover is maintained,

## **13.0 Annual Review Summary**

The Health and Safety Officer has provided a summary of the significant progress made in Health and Safety for the year and the projects and developments the Health and Safety Officer has worked with colleagues on.

### **13.1 Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas.**

The installation and opening of the Wild Play area at Hartham Common.

Supporting the Operations Team who were assisting the swimming club with access issues.

The Health and Safety Officer attended the new play area at Trinity Way, Bishops Stortford which had undergone a significant redevelopment with enhanced planting,

landscaping and new play equipment.

### **13.2 Lone Worker Contract**

The Health and Safety Officer took on the management of the Lone Working contract, undertook an audit of hardware and data and prepared a new contract specification document and took the lead in a joint service provider procurement exercise with Stevenage Borough Council including the provision of training.

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

The Health and Safety Officer has supported and advised project Managers on the following capital projects and development projects;

- The delivery of Christmas events at Southern Maltings, Kibes Lane, Ware.
- The development of the new Grange Paddocks facility and upgrade of Hartham Swimming Pool.
- Safety enhancements at Buntingford Depot

### **13.4 Coronavirus-19 (Covid-19)**

Covid-19 caused significant problems and issues as the pandemic spread, impacting on East Herts Councils service delivery. Throughout the pandemic the Health and Safety Officer has supported all services across the Council and has played a key role in ensuring the safety and health of all colleagues. The Health and Safety Officer supported the teams by;

- Supporting the Head of HR and OD on the development of Covid workplace safety protocols, displaying signage and guidance.

- Setting up Covid secure interview rooms and meeting rooms
- Establishing controls to allow for the phased return to work of colleagues in a safe and secure manner.
- Working with teams to deliver services to internal and external customers such as re-opening of parks and open spaces and the offices.

Whilst Covid has changed the way many of us now work the Health and Safety Officer advises that vigilance and building on the positive outcomes be maintained to ensure that East Herts remains a positive, vibrant and dynamic organisation.

The Health and Safety Officer will look to pull together an annual set of statistics and seek benchmarks again to share with the committee at the next meeting. Unfortunately it continues to be hard to get benchmark data but as discussed contractor info will also be requested to benchmark against.

## **14.0 Options**

N/A

## **15.0 Risks**

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

## **16.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

As covered by the report the measures or controls put in place will impact positively on community safety e.g. re parks and open spaces or reception re-opening to the public.

## **Data Protection**

No

## **Equalities**

No patterns or links in the data that accidents are related to any protected characteristics. In terms of developments reasonable adjustments are made to support disabilities and ensure disabled access.

## **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

## **17.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

Appendix A – Office Housekeeping and Safety Protocols, Updated April 2022

### **Contact Officer**

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**Report Author**

Peter Dickinson – Health and Safety Officer  
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# Office Housekeeping and Safety Protocols

Update: April 2022

All staff working in the office should comply with these protocols to ensure good office housekeeping and safety for each other.

On 01/04/2022 the Government removed the remaining domestic COVID restrictions in England including the need to have COVID specific risk assessments. However, there are still steps we can all take to reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19, and East Herts will continue to support individuals through individual risk assessments in relation to specific health issues, along with occupational health advice and support, as we have always done.

To reflect this, these protocols have been revised, in line with the latest government guidelines regarding COVID 19, to provide guidance on good housekeeping, promote good hygiene and office safety to minimise infections: In terms of COVID and infection control the key message is:

- **Get vaccinated**
- **Let fresh air in if meeting indoors, or meet outside**
- **Consider wearing a face covering in crowded, enclosed spaces**
- **And maintain good hygiene practices.**

These guidelines will be kept under review by both management and UNISON (our recognised trade union) and adjusted further if appropriate.

[Please refer to the current government guidance for further information\(link is external\)](#)

The main focus of government guidance regarding working in shared offices emphasises the following:

- Ensure you open windows to **allow ventilation** in accordance with instructions and guidance below:
  - Fresh air and ventilation are key control measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and other respiratory infections in the workplace. Keep

vents open and regularly open windows especially in spaces that are shared with other people. Opening windows (and sometimes doors as well) intermittently, for example for 10 minutes every hour, can be effective at reducing the risk from virus in the air.

(Windows have been signed to remind you to routinely open windows.)

- **Wash your hands and sanitise regularly:**
  - By maintaining good hand hygiene this removes the need to wipe shared equipment e.g. in the kitchen providing you wash your hands or sanitise hands first. You should wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds regularly throughout the day and also make use of the hand sanitiser available if appropriate.
- Also use **hard surface wipes to clean down surfaces** and the workstation you are using before and after use.

It is everyone's responsibility to adhere to these protocols, if you see somebody not following the protocols please remind them of how to follow these protocols. Remember we are one team and should support our colleagues. If you have ongoing concerns regarding adherence to these protocols, please raise these with your line manager or the employee's line manager and/or inform [@Geoff Hayden](#) (as the constant officer on site each day) so that further action can be considered.

### Testing:

The requirement to undertake regular Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) has been removed, track and trace has ceased and testing kits are no longer being provided freely by Government (except to some people in vulnerable categories – see Government guidance for more details).

The revised guidance advises that an individual can choose to take a test when they have symptoms to confirm these as COVID, but this is no longer a statutory requirement.

Therefore, in-line with Government guidance, East Herts do not require staff to test twice a week.

H&S and HR maintain a small supply of LFT kits and these will only be given out, on a limited basis, to select staff to confirm them as negative before visiting vulnerable people in their homes (face masks are also still encouraged in these circumstances).

### Reporting Absence:

The main point to remember is that if you are unwell you should report in as sick and discuss working arrangements in your absence with your Manager – as per the Absence Management Policy Section 9: *Employees must contact their manager by telephone before 9.00am if they are absent from work due to sickness, injury or any other health problem on every day of absence for the first 7 days of absence (employees should not text in or e-mail so they can discuss their absence and arrangements required in their absence).*

If you are unwell but feel well enough to work from home (or if working from home will prevent further spreading of any infection and your manager can

support this), then this can be agreed as a temporary measure. However, it must be kept to minimum and only be an ad hoc arrangement.

Staff are encouraged to rest and recover as appropriate - you can return to work and your normal routine if your symptoms have gone, or if the only symptoms you have are a cough or anosmia (loss of smell), which can last for several weeks. You are expected to maintain your home and office split arrangements as agreed in your individual Blended Working Offer.

## **Access to the office:**

**This will continue to be based on the desk booking system to allow hot desking but in line with guidance the current desk spacing will return to normal.**

- When you come into the office you must book a desk beforehand using the Skedda Desk Booking System.
- You should not come into the office if you have not booked a desk.
- The Skedda booking system will be used to routinely monitor that those employees in the building have booked a desk.
- Please park in your normal parking zone in line with your rota.
- Staff can choose to wear a face mask in the building or in meeting rooms if they wish to.
- Remember to clean your workstation before and after use.

Social distancing guidance no longer applies and the council will be repurposing desks to create a more flexible workspace and allow the potential for tenants to be taken on to support required savings. You should continue using the Skedda Desk Booking System as outlined above. A workstation must only be used by the individual who has booked it in advance using the Skedda desk booking system. You may use different workstations on different days.

If a workstation needs to be shared due to specialist equipment or a program attached to that computer, the workstation should be wiped by the user before and after use.

## **Shared Office Equipment e.g. printers, scanners and stationery:**

- By maintaining good hand hygiene, you do not need to wipe down shared equipment but wipes will continue to be provided so employees can use them.
- Try to only use the equipment in your own work areas to reduce cross use.
- If you require more wipes or sanitiser please email the FM Helpdesk who will arrange for the Caretakers to supply them.

## **Meetings:**

- Keep meeting rooms well ventilated and remember to close the windows after the meeting
- Please maintain good hygiene standards - wash or sanitise hands before meetings and wipe down any shared equipment before and after use.

- Staff can choose to wear a face mask if they wish to - supplies of masks have been provided in meeting rooms.
- Do not share pens or other objects during meetings to avoid preventable cross contamination.
- Please wipe down the room after you have used it, including IT equipment and door / window handles.
- Officers organising meetings in the office are reminded that hybrid meetings can be arranged in meeting rooms with IT / video conferencing equipment.
- Officers attending Zoom/MS Teams meeting in the office may need to use a meeting room with video conferencing facilities to minimise disruption to neighbouring colleagues or because they do not have IT kit otherwise to conduct a virtual meeting.
- Officers are encouraged to use their personal/work mobile phones or tablets (please use the EHC Wifi) at their desks to attend virtual meetings where possible (as long as this does not interfere with colleagues) and to use the smaller meeting/ interview rooms to avoid single occupancy of the larger meeting rooms.

### **General office cleanliness:**

We all want to work in a nice environment so please be considerate and remember to:

- Clean and tidy your workstation at the end of the day
- Close any open windows at the end of the day
- Clean up after using the kitchen – use the dishwashers and don't leave things in the sinks
- Leave the toilets as you would like to find them
- Report any issues to the FM Helpdesk

## East Herts Council Report

### HR Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January - March 2022)

**Ward(s) affected:** None

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### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HR Committee:

- (a) To consider the Human Resources Management Statistics for Quarter 4 (January - March 2022) 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 4 (January – March 2022).

### 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 27 vacancies at the end of Quarter 4 (31 March 2022).

3.1.2 Two of the 27 posts have been appointed and recruitment has progressed<sup>1</sup> for 7 out of the remaining 25 vacancies (28%).

3.1.4 Eighteen of the 27 posts (67%) are being held due to reviews of the service structure as part of the transformation project, are yet to commence recruitment and are being covered by agency staff where required. 1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy, 3 in Strategic Finance and Property, 4 in Housing and Health, 1 in Legal and Democratic services, 8 in planning, 1 in HR.

### 3.2 Employee Turnover

3.2.1 There were 15 leavers in Quarter 4 (January – March 2022) giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 4.6%. Based on the numbers from all four quarters, the annual period 2021/22 is **14.4%**. This has increased by 1.8% since quarter 3 (21/22) and is now slightly higher than the local government average (14% for 2018/19 for Local Authority districts in the UK).

**Figure 1 - Leavers and Turnover throughout 2020/21**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of Leavers 2020/21	4	6	5	13
Turnover rate 2020/21	1.2%	1.8%	1.5%	3.9%
Number of Leavers 2021/22	12	11	9	15
Turnover rate 2021/22	3.6%	3.4%	2.8%	4.6%

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

3.1.1 Reasons for leaving in Quarter 4 included 4 staff leaving to personal reasons, 4 to retirement, 3 for promotion, 2 for new career opportunities and 2 due to end of fixed term contracts.

### **3.3 Sickness Absence**

#### **ALL absence**

#### **ALL Absence – Quarter 4**

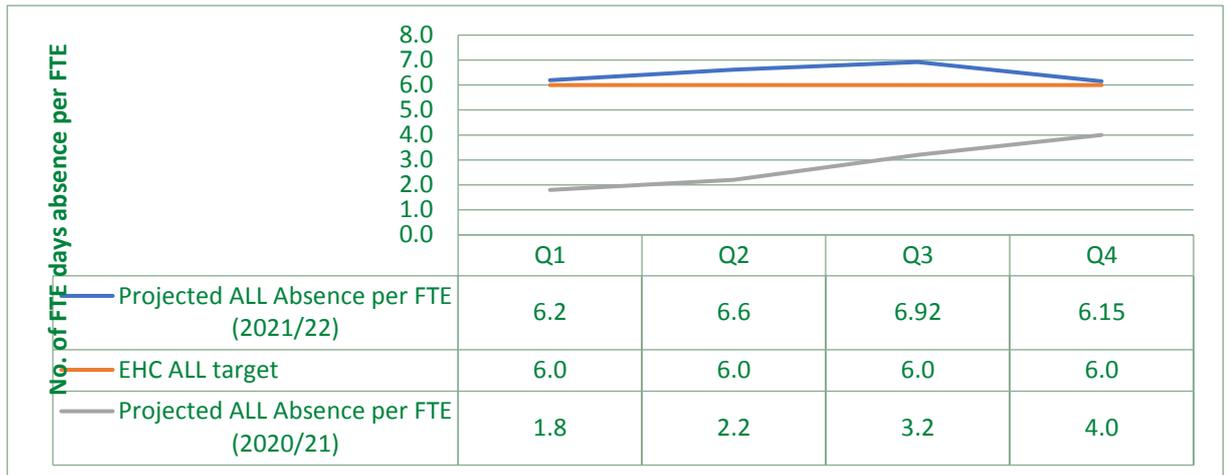
3.3.1 At the end of Quarter 4, the total number of sickness days taken was 263.47 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 244.01 FTE days (92%) were due to short term sickness and 19.46 FTE days (8%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 1.3% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 0.1% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 1.4%.

3.3.2 At the end of Quarter 4, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 6.15 days.

#### **ALL Absence - Annual period 2021/22**

3.3.3 Sickness absence for the whole year 2021/22 is 6.15 days per FTE. This is slightly above the council's annual target of 6 days. Figure 2 below shows the comparison of 2020/21 and 2021/22. Mental health and COVID related absences have impacted sickness levels this quarter. Other councils also reported increased sickness absences for similar reasons.

**Figure 2 – 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 4**

3.3.5 Seventy Six employees (23.6% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Quarter 4 totalling 244.01 FTE days. This represents a percentage lost time rate of 1.3%.

3.3.6 At the end of Quarter 4, the number of short term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 2.91 days.

**Short term absence - Annual period 2021/22**

3.3.7 Figure 3 below shows the short term sickness absence per FTE to be 3.79 for the annual period 2021/22. This is below the council's short term target of 4 days.

**Figure 3 – 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 4**

3.3.9 One employee (0.3% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Quarter 4 totalling 19.46 FTE days. This represents a percentage time lost rate of 0.3%.

3.3.10 The employee was offered support through the Employee Assistance Programme and a referral to Occupational Health. The reason for long term absence was due to stress but the employee has now returned to work.

3.3.11 At the end of Quarter 4, the number of long term FTE days absent per FTE was 2.36 days.

### **LONG TERM absence - Annual period 2021/22**

3.3.12 Figure 4 below shows long term absences for the annual year 2021/22 is **2.36 days per FTE**. This is slightly above the council’s long term target of 2 days.

However, there has been a reduction of Long-term sickness cases from 8 in quarter 3 down to 1 in quarter 4, which was well managed through the absence procedures.

**Figure 4 Annual LONG TERM absence for 2021/22**



### 3.4 Learning and Development

3.4.1 In Quarter 4, eight in-house corporate learning and development events were held over twelve sessions and two hundred and thirty 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 Jane Mackie, the HR & OD Manager, along with Simon O’Hear, Head of HR&OD delivered PDR training to both staff and managers. The sessions went over the new and updated form which included competencies and 360 feedback forms. In quarter 4, six sessions were delivered virtually through zoom and two hundred and fifty five employees attended.

3.4.3 The Information Governance and Data Protection Manager, Tyron Suddes delivered training to employees on Data breach. Three sessions were held in quarter 4, and eighty nine employees attended.

3.4.4 Our Corporate Induction took place in January 2022. The event was delivered virtually through Zoom by Emily Cordwell, HR Officer and included revised and updated content. Seven employees attended.

3.4.5 In Quarter 4, training was delivered on an introduction to procurement, how to manage the tender process and understanding contract management. This was delivered by the Corporate Procurement Manager and 19 employees attended.

3.4.6 Accessibility Training was delivered by the Digital Content Manager to ensure we comply with new government legislation. 40 employees attended over 3 sessions.

3.4.7 Employees continue to complete the annual mandatory training programme through SkillsBuild, the council's e-learning platform. The following courses went live from December 2021 for all employees to complete, in line with their PDR:

- Safeguarding 2021/22
- Fire safety 2021/22
- Email Etiquette and email management
- Data Protection 2021/22
- Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace 2021/22

3.4.8 A fire safety course has been developed in response to the blended working. The course is designed to remind all employees of their duties and responsibilities to familiarise themselves with the fire evacuation procedures, routes of escape, assembly points and general fire safety.

3.4.9 The email etiquette course has now been launched on skills build. This course has been devised to help manage and use emails more effectively.

3.4.13 The following is a summary of the learning and development events that were held in Quarter 4:

<b>Event/Course</b>	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Number of sessions held</b>
PDR Training	255	6
Corporate Induction	7	1
Managing the tender process	19	2
Data Breach Training	89	3
Accessibility Training	40	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>15</b>

### **3.4 Equalities Monitoring Indicators**

3.4.1 The table below shows a summary of employee equalities data at the end of Quarter 4 (i.e. 31 March 2022).

	<b>Comparison to population data</b>	<b>EHC Percentage</b>
<b>Disability</b>		
Leadership Team with a disability	5% <small>CENSUS 2011</small>	0%
Employees with a disability	5% <small>CENSUS 2011</small>	4.3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Leadership Team members from BAME groups	4.5%	10%

	CENSUS 2011	
Employees from BAME groups	4.5%	12.8%
	CENSUS 2011	
<b>Gender</b>		
Leadership Team members who are female	51%	40%
	NOMIS 2019	
Employees who are female	51%	74%
	NOMIS 2019	
<b>Sexual Orientation (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual)</b>		
Leadership Team	2.1%	20%
	ONS 2018	
Employees	2.1%	2.3%
	ONS 2018	

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:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Annual Turnover Report 2021/2022

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

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### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) **To consider the Annual Turnover Report 2021/2022 including the actions (in section 11.0) planned for 2022/23 and provide any comments to the Head of HR and OD.**

#### 1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Turnover Report 2021/2022.

#### 2.0 Background

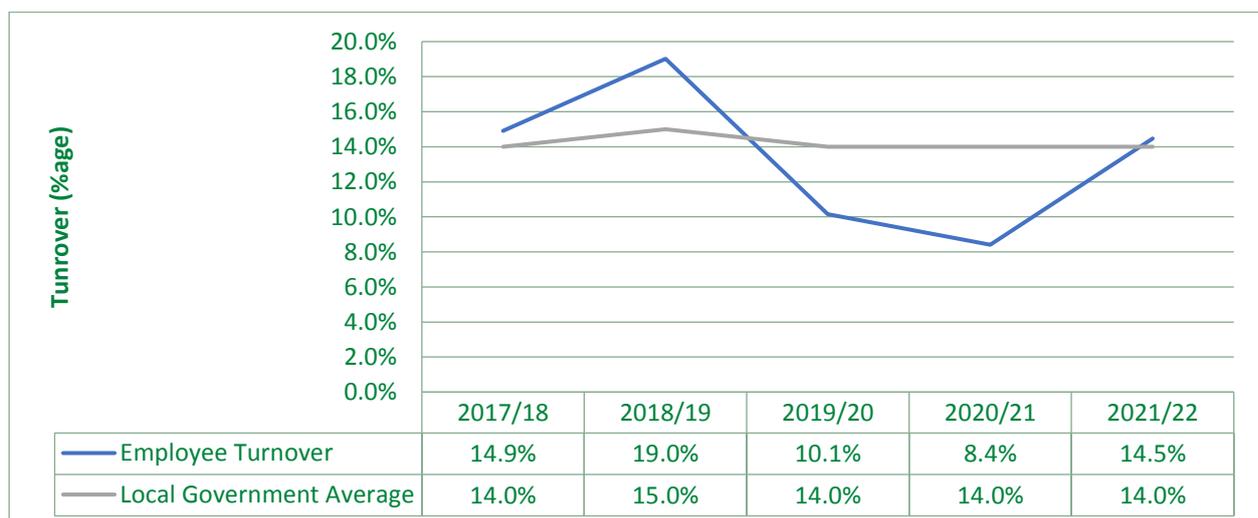
- 2.1 The council recognises that having a certain level of employee turnover is healthy. It can help maintain high levels of motivation and ensure fresh blood is injected to generate new ideas and working practices which will, in turn, help the council to grow and develop.

- 2.2 The council monitors and reports on turnover on a quarterly basis in the HR Quarterly Statistics report which is also considered at Leadership Team and HR Committee.
- 2.3 The Annual Turnover report provides a more in-depth analysis of turnover data for the year. This report considers the period April 2021 to March 2022. It explores the reasons employees are leaving and whether there are any improvements the council could make.
- 2.4 The report includes benchmarking data against previous years and from other local authorities across England.

### 3.0 Summary

- 3.1 There were a total of 47 leavers in 2021/22: Forty of those were voluntary leavers and seven were involuntary leavers, two whose temporary contract had come to an end, one was dismissed and three were made redundant.
- 3.2 Figure 1 below shows the council's turnover rate (for all leavers) over the last 5 years compared with the local government average. Global Turnover (both voluntary and involuntary) in the council in 2021/22 (14.5%) is slightly higher than the local government average (14% in 2018/19\*).

**Figure 1 – Annual Turnover trends**

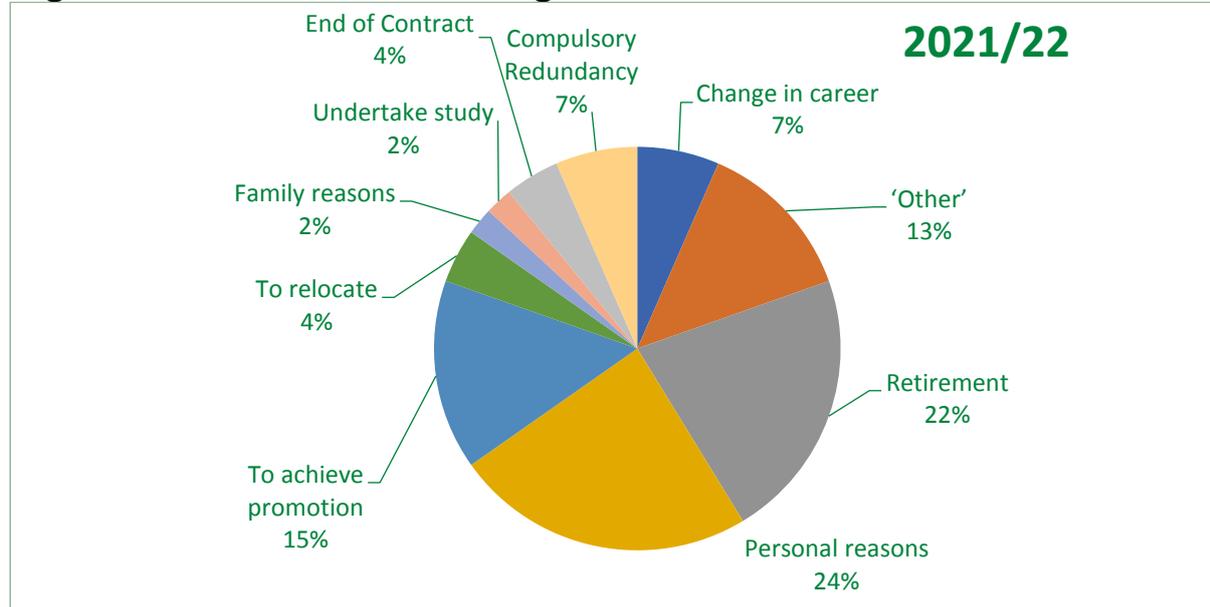


\* The Local Government Average is the mean for all local authorities in England and is taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking -Workforce Metrics 2018/19' (the latest annual turnover data available at the time of writing the report)

## 4.0 Reasons for Leaving

4.1 The reasons employees gave for leaving the council in 2021/22 can be found in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2 – Reasons for leaving**



4.2 The most common reason for leaving in 2021/22 was personal reasons (23%, 11 employees). This seems to have been following the impact of the pandemic which had led to changes in the employment market with many changing careers or retiring.

4.3 The second most common reason for employees leaving in 2021/22 was retirement (21%, 10 employees). Retirement is very much a personal decision made by an employee and is largely outside the influence of the council. Employees are auto-enrolled in the Local Government Pension Scheme which is a much-valued scheme. The council has an older workforce and therefore retirement is likely to continue to be a common reason for leaving. The council has a flexible

retirement policy which gives employees the potential option of reducing their hours whilst drawing their pension.

- 4.5 6 employees (13%) stated 'other' as the reason for leaving. The reasons include permanent homeworking, ill health retirement, better remuneration and sadly, death in service.

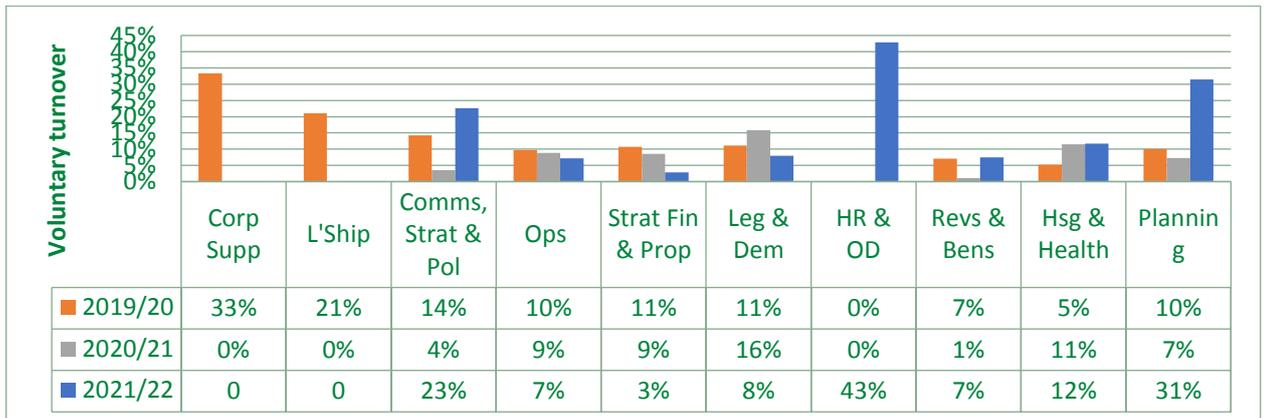
## **5.0 Stability Rate**

- 5.1 The council reports its stability rate to understand whether it is retaining employees in their first year of service.
- 5.2 The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of leavers with 1 or more years' service by the total number of voluntary leavers (multiplied by 100 to express as a percentage).
- 5.3 In 2021/22 the council's stability rate was 95% which is higher than the target of 90%. This means that 5% of voluntary leavers (2 employees) had less than 1 years' service. 1 employee left for personal reasons (e.g. family responsibilities, to travel) and the other left for a change in career.

## **6.0 Voluntary turnover in each service area**

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

**Figure 3 – Turnover in each service**



**Average headcount in 2021/22:** Corp Supp – 2; L'Ship – 10; Comms, Strat & Pol – 31; Ops – 28; Strat Fin & Prop – 35; Leg & Dem – 25, HR & OD – 7; Revs & Bens – 94.5; Hsg & Health – 60; Planning – 35.

6.2 Turnover in 2021/22 has increased in 4 out of the 10 services since the previous year (Human resources, Communication, Strategy and Policy, Revenue and Benefits and Planning)

6.3 Human Resources & Organisational Development had the highest turnover rate of 43% (based 3 employees, one of which included retirement, the other was to grow on business and the remaining wished to change career).

## 7.0 Exit Questionnaire analysis

7.1 All voluntary leavers are asked to complete an exit questionnaire to help the council identify any improvements it could make e.g. to its policies and practices. The questionnaires are returned to HR however leavers are asked whether their feedback can be shared with their manager.

7.2 Just over half of voluntary leavers (55%, 22 out of 40 leavers) completed an exit questionnaire (this is a slight reduction on last year where 57% completed a questionnaire).

7.3 The key highlights from the exit questionnaires are as follows:

- 64% (14 employees) said that they would rate the council 7 or higher out of 10 as an employer (only 1 employee rated the council less than 5 out of 10);
- 82% (18 employees) said they 'mostly' or 'completely' enjoyed working at the council;
- 82% (18 employees) would recommend the council to others as a good place to work
- 68% (15 employees) said that pay was 'good' or 'very good'.
- 68% (15 employees) said they agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that their pay and benefits were reasonable for the work and responsibility undertaken.
- 75% (12 employees) said that prospects for promotion/advancement were 'good'.
- 100% (22 employees) said their relationship with their colleagues were either 'good' or 'excellent'.
- 82% (18 employees) said their relationships with their manager was either 'good' or 'excellent';
- 64% (14 employees) agreed 'completely' or 'partially' that they had received adequate training/coaching;
- 78% (17 employees) said that flexible working options at the council were either 'good' or 'very good' (2 employee, 9% did not answer the question).

## **8.0 Vacancy rate**

- 8.1 The council monitors its vacancy rate as this can have an impact on employee turnover e.g. employees may feel under additional pressure to cover the work of any vacant posts.
- 8.2 The vacancy rate in 2021/22 was 8% which is lower than in 2020/21 (8.8%) and significantly lower than the local government average (the mean for all English authorities was 15% in 2018/19).
- 8.3 As at 31 March 2021, there were 27 vacant posts across the council. Eighteen (18) posts were on hold (e.g. pending job or structure reviews), advertising has commenced for 7 vacancies. Three in Revenue and Benefits and four in Planning.
- 8.4 Of the 18 posts on hold, 8 posts were in Planning, 3 in Strategic Finance and Property, 1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy, 4 in Housing and Health, 1 in HR and 1 in Legal and Democratic services. The posts are being held due to reviews of the service structure and potential savings and are being covered by agency staff where required.
- 8.5 The council has focussed on upskilling employees through introducing career graded posts and funding professional study as well as employing apprentices. Career graded posts allow the recruitment of candidates with more transferable skills which can then be developed.

## **9.0 Recruitment Costs**

- 9.1 Recruitment costs have fallen in 2021/22 (£26,406 compared to £26,963 in 2020/21). Recruitment costs include external advertising costs, agency and search fees.

- 9.2 The cost per hire in 2021/22 is £539. This is significantly lower than the UK average cost per hire of £1000 (CIPD Survey 2017).
- 9.3 The council has aimed to keep recruitment costs as low as possible by using social media platforms (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter), university job boards and advertising with the leading generalist job board 'Indeed' for an annual provision of job adverts (60 jobs across the year).

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

### **10.1 Recruitment processes were reviewed**

- 10.1.1 The 'Working for Us' page on the council's website was updated to include a range of employee case studies demonstrating diversity in the workforce.
- 10.1.2 In August 2021 the council purchased a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) from 'Webrecruit'. This will allow name blind recruitment, fully online applications, online shortlisting, self-service interview booking and then support pre-employment checking/onboarding. This will improve the candidate and new starter experience as well as making the process easier for managers. We are in the final stages of implementation and should be live by the end of May/early June. Unfortunately there have been some delays caused by IT to fully install.
- 10.1.3 As part of the new ATS the council has purchased advertising credits for a range of online job boards such as Monster and Total Jobs. This will replace the advertising package we currently have with Indeed as we have not found this to be very successful. Indeed are however one of the online job boards with the ATS package so we will not stop using them altogether.

### **10.3 Promotion of the council's health and wellbeing programme**

10.4.1 The council has continued to promote its employee health and wellbeing programme, Live Well, Work Well. The programme has included NHS Health checks, Flu jab voucher campaign, Time to Talk Day promotion, and lunchtime health walks. A full list of events can be found in the Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2021/22. Positive feedback has been received from employees on the wellbeing programme being offered.

### **10.5 Staff Recognition Scheme**

10.5.1 The council's Staff Recognition Scheme, which was launched in February 2019, has continued to reward employees throughout 2021/22 for excellent work or exceptional modelling of the council's values and behaviours. The scheme is being reviewed by East Herts together to increase both engagement and recognition throughout the year. The new scheme will include the new competencies and is to be launched in June 2022.

## **11.0 Actions planned for 2022/23 to improve recruitment and retention**

11.1 East Herts Together Group will review the staff recognition scheme with LT and HR seeking to add annual awards and spread recognition further through categories. This will be more celebrated and also shared with candidates.

11.2 Fully implement the ATS (from Webrecruit) to manage online recruitment and on-boarding and achieve name blind recruitment.

11.3 As part of the East Herts Together programme, core competencies have now been implemented to allow more transferable skills to be recognised in the selection process and to help develop staff further.

11.4 HR will continue to support career graded posts being developed where recruitment is more difficult e.g. in Planning or in Revs and Bens as with have done elsewhere and within other grades.

11.5 HR will work with Webrecruit on advert copy which is included in the ATS service to ensure our jobs are well known and attractive as well as improving the work with us pages e.g. by sharing awards and maintaining staff case studies.

## **12.0 Options**

N/A

## **13.0 Risks**

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

## **14.0 Implications/Consultations**

N/A

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

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

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

**Financial**

No

**Health and Safety**

No

**Human Resources**

As covered in the report

**Human Rights**

No

**Legal**

No

**Specific Wards**

No

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

None

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## East Herts Council Report

### HR Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Learning and Development Review 2020/21

**Ward(s) affected:** None

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### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR:

- (a) For the committee to consider the Learning and Development Review for 2021/2022 and provide any comments.**

#### 1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The committee is asked to consider the learning and development undertaken in 2021/22 and provide comments to the Head of HR and OD.

#### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The 2021/22 learning and development programme focussed on delivering a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate and individual needs in the most cost effective way.
- 2.2 The development needs were identified corporately, through individual PDR's and corporate projects.

2.3 Development opportunities were delivered by a hybrid of virtual facilitated events, virtual mentoring, virtual coaching, webinars, e-learning and face to face meetings.

### 3.0 Report

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

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

	<b>Budget 2021/22</b>	<b>Spend 2020/21</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23</b>
Central/Corporate	£ 20,000	£22,282	£20,000
Service Training & Development	£ 22,480	£31,608	£22,480
Professional Training	£ 20,000	£6,884	£20,000
Health & Safety	£ 3,000	£2,710	£3,000
<b>Total L &amp; D Budget</b>	<b>£65,480</b>	<b>£45,484</b>	<b>£65,480</b>

The total spend for learning and development corporately in 2021/22 was £45,484 an underspend of £19,996 which was clearly affected by restrictions in the pandemic and more free or low cost online training being available.

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

- Booked Face to Face events were initially cancelled to comply with the COVID restrictions.
- Training opportunities were initially limited as training providers adapted and changed their training delivery to virtual, e-learning or webinars.
- Practical (hands on) training was put on hold due to social distancing restrictions.
- More internal courses were designed and delivered virtually through Zoom reducing the cost to the council.

The professional budget was underspent; five trainee professional qualifications were funded through the apprenticeship levy instead of being funded from the central professional budget. The total Apprenticeship Levy spend in 2021/22 was £17,088 which funded apprenticeship and trainee qualifications.

The average development cost per employee in 2021/22 was £137 (excluding apprentices) based on the headcount of 328 in April 2021.

### 3.2 Central Training Budget

The HR Officer and HR & OD Manager continue to review any spending costs associated with the central training budget. The officers negotiate with training providers and contractors to improve the costs being charged for all events. They consult with other local council's to arrange shared training to minimise costs, share learning and build relationships. The OD & HR Co-ordinator and then Trainee HR Officer worked with the Heads of Services and Senior Manager, designing and delivering internal events when appropriate and applicable. These events can be face to face, virtual or e-learning.

The 2021/22 Learning and Development programme was delivered by external facilitators, internal presenters, webinars and e-learning. These events are funded from the corporate training budget.

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

In 2021/22 864 delegates attended or participated in some form of face to face corporate or health and safety training (detail of the Health and Safety Training is included in the Health and Safety Report).

The table below shows the breakdown of the 44 events:

<b>Event/Course</b>	<b>No of participants</b>	<b>Type/ Number of sessions held</b>
Sustainability Training	46	4
Safeguarding Training	9	1
Talking Menopause	26	3
Time Management	10	1
Policy Training for Managers	41	5
Equality Impact Assessments	59	3
Mental Health First Aid	17	1
Corporate Induction	30	4
Lean Processes	100	1
Coping with Change	67	3
First Aid at Work	5	1

Data Protection Policy Training	37	1
RIPA	6	1
CPIA	8	1
Managing the Tender Process	19	2
Data Breach Training	89	3
Accessibility Training	40	3
PDR Training	255	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>44</b>

The revised 2021/22 mandatory training programme commenced in December 2021 and it was delivered through SkillsBuild the Council's e-learning platform. All employees, agency staff and new starters were asked to complete the e-learning courses. In total 2102 'completed' training episodes were recorded between March 2021 and April 2022.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Display screen equipment (DSE)	New starters
Micollab	New starters
Diversity and inclusion in the workplace 21/22	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Data Protection Briefing	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Email Etiquette	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Fire Safety	New starters and all

	employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Safeguarding 2021/22	New starters and all employees as part of the annual mandatory programme
Lone Working 2020/21	For lone working officers
Working arrangements – Protecting you and others from coronavirus	Available to all employees

The HR Officer and HR&OD Manager works with the Leadership Team, Senior Officers and East Herts Together to develop the e-learning programme to ensure the programme continues to grow and is fit for purpose. The e-learning platform is funded from the central training budget.

### 3.3 Service Training and Development

The total service training and development budget for 2021/2022 was £22,480, which was divided amongst the services for additional training and development. This budget is predominantly used for service specific training, one day conferences, seminars, training and team building events.

The budget breaks down to £67 per employee based on the employee head count on 1 April 2021 (332). The training and development budgets were managed centrally by the HR & OD Service. This enables the training needs to be recorded and analysed to ensure all training needs and budgets costs are being met in the most appropriate way with sufficient spread for

employees and the council.

### 3.4 Professional Training

The professional training budget was set at £20,000 for 2021/22 and was underspent by £13,116. The total budget was not spent as three trainee qualifications were eligible for funding through the Apprenticeship Levy, redirecting the costs.

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

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

In addition to the corporate professional development budget the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services continued to sponsor two Officers towards gaining their IRRV qualification. The qualifications were funded in 2019/20 and exams, costing £150, were funded in 2020/21. The exams were delayed due to the pandemic and were held in June 2021. The IRRV qualification and exam fees were funded from the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services' professional budget.

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

The professional training budget for 2022/23 remains at £20,000.

### 3.5 Apprentices

The Council sponsored three apprenticeships and three trainees in 2021/22 from the Apprenticeship Levy:

- 1 x Town Planning – Level 3
- 1 x Customer Service Level 2
- 1 X Associate Project Manager- Level 4
- 1 x Accountancy – Level 3 & 5
- 1 x Chartered Town Planner Degree – Level 7
- 1 x HR Consultant/Partner – Level 5

The HR & OD Service will continue to work with managers and training providers to develop the Council's Apprenticeship Programme and make good use of our levy provision. From 22/23 there is no longer a separate Apprenticeship budget due to savings required instead service budgets will be used to fund the employment cost where this is viable.

## **4.0 An overview of Learning and Development 2021/22**

4.1 The learning and development needs for this year are being collated from the PDR's (the period has been extended until June to allow completion following the new system being implemented) and the HR & OD Manager will work with members of the Leadership Team to ensure the learning meets the needs of the council to deliver its priorities.

4.2 The HR & OD Manager will continue to support corporate projects such as sustainability, safeguarding, and East Herts Together by designing and delivering training and presentations to help embed the projects throughout the Council, ensuring the best use of project

budgets and resources.

- 4.3 The courses available on the e-learning platform will continue to be developed ensuring they are up to date and further courses will be designed and developed for Officers and Members to help implement policies and projects.

The HR & OD Manager with support from the HR Officer designs, creates and uploads the e-learning courses so each course is bespoke.

- 4.4 The HR & OD Manager continues to work with all our training providers to review the way learning is delivered in line with our blended working to ensure employees have a variety of development opportunities available to them.

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

- 4.6 In 2022/23 the organisational development intra-net pages will be reviewed to provide further information on the opportunities available to all employees.

- 4.7 The Council's Apprenticeship Programme will continue to be developed and reviewed. The HR & OD Manager will support the apprentices and managers during their apprenticeship and will work with the Leadership Team to review the programme.

- 4.8 The HR & OD Manager with support from the HR Officer (EC) will continue to review and revise the Corporate Induction programme to ensure it reflects the council and the services provided. The course was moved to a

virtual environment during 2020/21 and received positive feedback from the participants.

- 4.9 The HR & OD Manager will continue explore options to share and develop learning with the Town and Parish Council's and other organisations where appropriate.

## **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 None

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 None

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

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

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes, the learning and development provision supports the sustainability project

### **Financial**

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

## **Health and Safety**

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

## **Human Resources**

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

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

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

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 None

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**Report Author**      **Emily Cordwell, HR Officer**  
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## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2021/22

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

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### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Human Resources Committee:

- (a) **To consider the annual Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2021/22 including the actions (in section 8.0) planned for 2022/23 and provide any comments to the Head of HR and OD.**

#### 1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 HR Committee Members are invited to consider the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2021/22.

#### 2.0 Background

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

#### 3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 The Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2021/22 considers sickness absence levels across the council and

compares them with previous years and benchmarking data. It also considers what the council can do to support employee health and wellbeing.

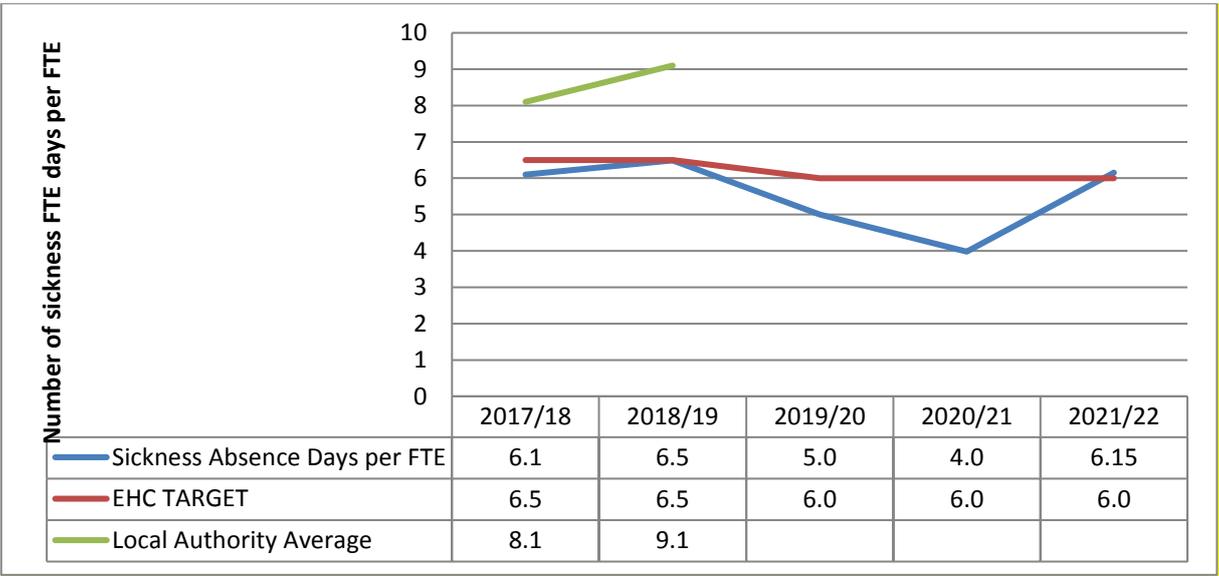
- 3.2 The council measures sickness absence in two ways: the number of full time equivalent (FTE) days absence per FTE employee and the percentage time lost due to absence.
- 3.3 The number of FTE days absence per FTE employee is calculated by dividing the number of FTE days sickness absence by the total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

## 4.0 Sickness Absence Levels

### 4.1 ALL Absences

4.1.1 In 2021/22, the number of sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 6.15 days which is slightly above the council’s target of 6 days and higher than in 2020/21 (4 days). It is also lower than the local government average in 2018/19 (9.1 days). Please see Figure 1 below.

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



The council's absence target was reduced from 6.5 days to 6 days in April 2019. The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

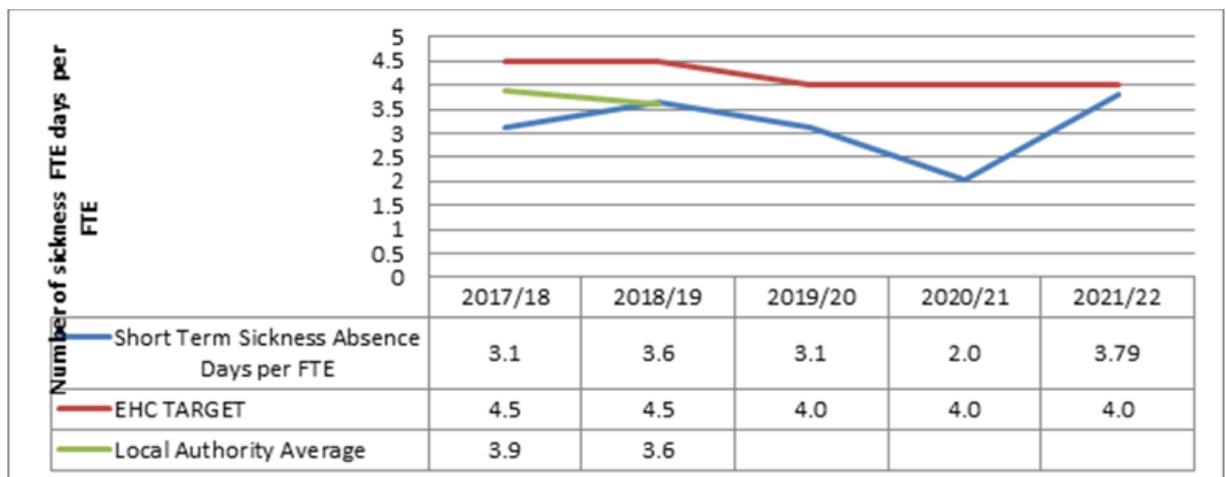
4.1.2 The total number of days taken as sickness absence in 2021/22 was 1710.39 FTE days. 61% (1042.69 FTE days) of these were due to short term absence and 39% (667.7 FTE days) were due to long term absence. The total percentage time lost in 2021/22 due to all absences was 2.38%. This is lower than the local government average (4.9%).

## 4.2 Short Term absence

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

4.2.2 In 2021/22, the number of short term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 3.79 days which is below the council's target of 4 days but is higher than in 2020/21 (2 days). It is slightly higher than the local government average (3.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2 – Short Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE**



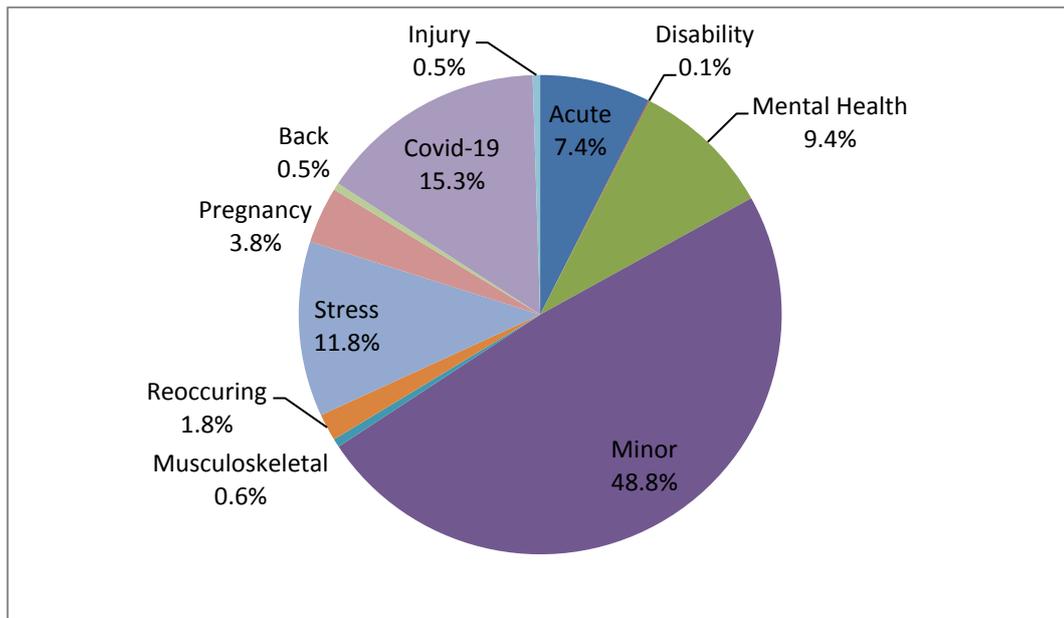
The council's short term absence target was reduced from 4.5 days to 4 days in April 2019.

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

4.2.3 The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness in 2021/22 was 1.42% which is lower than the local government average (2.6% in 2018/19).

4.2.4 Figure 3 below shows the causes of short term absence in 2021/22.

**Figure 3 – Causes of Short Term absence in 2021/22**



**KEY:**

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

4.2.5 The most common cause of short term absence in 2021/22 was minor illnesses, such as colds/flu, headaches/migraines, stomach upsets, and minor operations, accounting for 48.8% (147 employees) of all short term absences. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey April 2021' 88% of organisations responding to their survey reported that minor illnesses were in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.2.6 The second most common cause of short term absence was Covid-19, which accounted for 15.3% of all short term absences (42 employees). According to the CIPD Survey 39% of organisations responding to their survey reported that Covid-19 (including confirmed cases, self-isolation,

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

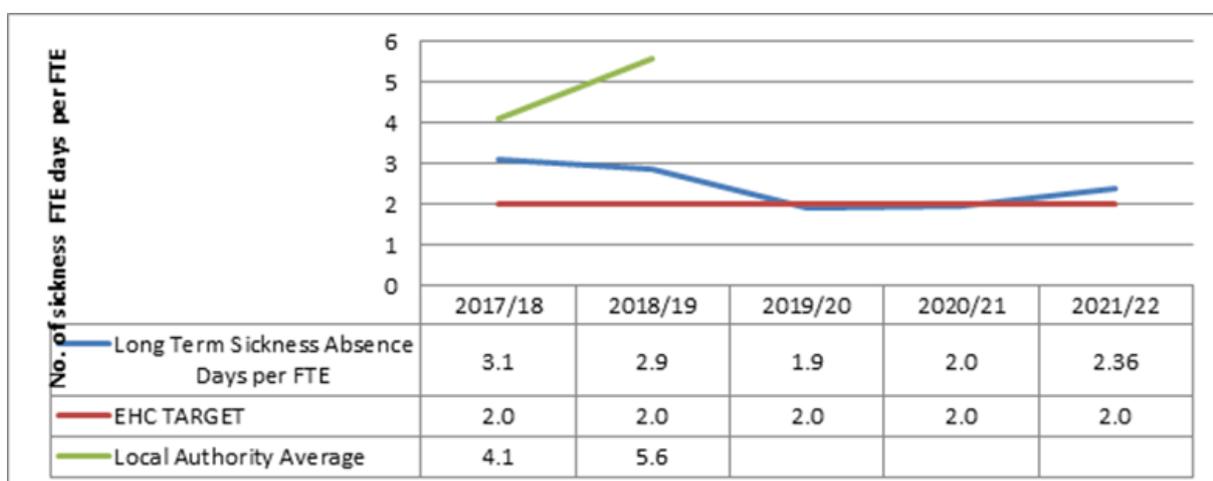
4.2.7 Stress was the third most common cause of short term absence accounting for 11.8% of all short term absences (9 employees). The CIPD Survey reported that 33% of organisations said that stress was in their top three causes of short term absence.

### 4.3 Long Term Absence

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

4.3.2 In 2021/22, the number of long term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 2.36 days which is slightly above the council’s target of 2 days and an increase on 2020/21. It does however remain lower than the local government average (5.6 days in 2018/19). Please see Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 – Long Term Sickness absence FTE days per FTE**

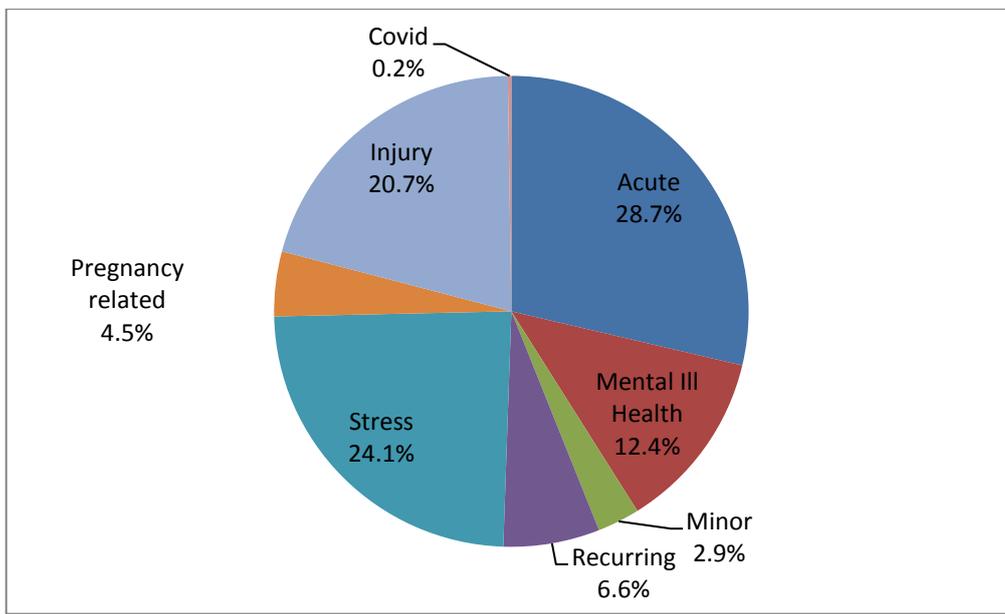


The local authority average is the mean of all English local authorities taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking Metrics report 2018/19' (the latest report available at the time of writing).

4.3.3 The percentage of time lost due to long term sickness in 2021/22 was 0.96% which is lower than the local government average (2.3% in 2018/19).

4.3.4 Figure 5 below shows the causes of long term absence in 2021/22.

**Figure 5 – Causes of Long Term absence in 2021/22**



**KEY:**

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

4.3.5 The most common cause of long term absence was for acute reasons (e.g. stroke, heart attack and cancer). All employees have been supported by Line Management, HR and Occupational Health. According to the CIPD Survey, 45% of organisations reported that acute reasons were in their top three causes of long term absence.

4.3.7 The second most common cause of long term absence was stress, which accounted for 24.1% of all long term

absence (7 employees). According to the CIPD Survey, 48% of organisations reported that stress was in their top three causes of long term absence, clearly the pandemic has also increased causes of stress.

4.3.8 The third most common cause of long term absence was injury which accounted for 20.7% (3 employees) of all long term absence.

## **5.0 How is the council addressing employee absence**

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

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

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

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

5.4 Absences due to mental health have increased in 2021/22 (9.4% of all short term absences and 24.1% of all long term absences), the council recognises that there may be under-reporting in this area previously due to the perceived stigma of having mental health issues. The council has continued to take action to support employee mental health in 2021/22 and especially in relation to the Pandemic:

- Promotion of the support available from the council's trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs),
- Promotion of mental health awareness through events such as Time to Talk and mental health awareness week,
- Arranging lunchtime bitesize wellbeing sessions on topics such as mindfulness,
- Arranging Mental health awareness training for all managers (some sessions have been delayed due to Covid-19),
- Delivering Coping with Change Training.
- Undertaking Wellbeing surveys and following up with support sessions and Line Manager Follow up.
- Implementing a Resilience Training Programme from April 2022.
- Promotion of the mental health services available via Able Futures, the council's partner, which provides up to 9 months free mental health support for employees.

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

## **6.0 Ongoing support for employee health and wellbeing**

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.1.4 The programme is refreshed each year taking into account:

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

## **6.2 Wellbeing Hub**

6.2.1 The council has a wellbeing hub on its intranet which provides a one stop place where employees can access wellbeing support. It is where employees are signposted to sources of support e.g. how to contact a Mental Health First Aider,

access to support from the Samaritans, how to contact the employee assistance programme. It will also include upcoming events in the LWWW programme.

### **6.3 Wellbeing Centre on the MyRewards website**

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

### **6.4 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

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

### **6.5 Mental Health Support from Able Futures**

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

6.5.2 Employees (and family members provided they are in employment) who wish to access the service can receive 9 months of mental health support from a qualified professional called a Vocational

Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC). The service is 100% confidential and employees can self-refer which means that they don't need to go through their manager or HR to access it.

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

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

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Financial Management
- Bereavement

## **6.6 Resilience and Wellbeing Programme for Staff and Managers from Art of the Brilliant**

### Resilience Workshops

In true Art of Brill style, there'll be no big words or fancy jargon, just MASSIVE action. Our wellbeing workout is an 8-week online programme that gives you an opportunity to enjoy 8 of our favourite modules, focusing on your strengths, goals, resilience, self-esteem, confidence and overall wellbeing.

The programme is backed by 20 years of research

into the science of positive psychology; cutting-edge content, delivered by a team of world class trainers.

## **6.7 HR Officers continue to support managers in consistently and proactively managing sickness absence**

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

## **7.0 Actions taken in 2021/22 to improve employee health and wellbeing**

2021/22 was a difficult year due to the Coronavirus pandemic and therefore some of the scheduled wellbeing events were unable to take place face to face. Where possible, events were held virtually and where that wasn't possible they were cancelled or postponed. In addition to the ongoing support already mentioned in Sections 5 and 6 above, the council has achieved the following in 2021/22 to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees:

### **7.1 Promotion and delivery of the 2021/22 Live Well, Work Well Wellbeing programme.**

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

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

Awareness.

- 7.1.3 Events included Everyone Active delivering a pilates taster session, Living Streets leading a guided health walk, and lunchtime bitesize sessions were held on different days on Introduction to Wellbeing, Sleeping Soundly and Mindfulness.

## **7.2 Promotion of Mental Health Awareness Week**

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

Day 1: Introducing the theme of Kindness and how Able Futures can help support employee mental health;

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

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

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

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

### **7.3 Development of an Employee Wellbeing Framework in 20/21 continued in 21/22**

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

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

7.3.3 The aims of the Employee Wellbeing Framework are:

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

### **7.4 To pledge publicly to support employee mental health**

7.4.1 In 2019 the council had planned to sign the Time to Change Pledge however this has now been superseded by the Mental Health at Work commitment. The Commitment is based upon the

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

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

## **7.5 Promotion campaign to support employees' financial wellbeing**

- 7.5.1 In the lead up to Christmas 2021, several articles on financial wellbeing were written and appeared each week in Connect including:

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

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

Article 3: Promotion of the various shopping

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

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

## **7.6 The council's Sickness Absence Management Policy has been reviewed**

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

- It ensures greater consistency and a clearer framework which allows matters to move from short-term to long-term and vice-versa. HR will be rolling out management training on the new policy shortly.
- Short-term absence triggers have been changed from 7 days sickness absence within any twelve-month period and 3 separate periods of sickness absence in a 6 month period to 3 spells or more in any 3-month period, and/or where an employee has been absent for 10 days or more over the previous 12 months.
- Stress management guidance (which was an appendix in the previous policy) has been incorporated into the policy itself with addition of the stress risk assessment form to ensure transparency.

- An addition of 4-weekly face-to-face catch up (on top of weekly telephone calls) for long term sickness cases to ensure employees are supported appropriately.
- Makes it clear that employees should be referred to Occupational Health at the 4 week point for long-term sickness. The old policy was not as prescriptive to use Occupational Health but the medical opinion is best sought at this stage to inform reviews so is sought up front ( this was a possible outcome at the informal stage if considered appropriate previously).

7.6.2 Managers have been trained on the new Sickness Absence Management Policy and this will be further supported by the 5 day Management Development Programme.

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

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

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

## Payroll Update Report.

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

7.9.4 The wellbeing survey is being re-run later this month (May 2022).

### **8.0 Actions planned in 2022/23 to improve employee health and wellbeing, to:**

- Deliver the Live Well, Work Well programme, seeking feedback from employees and input from the Wellbeing Champions
- Deliver the Resilience Programme over 8 months (8 modules) and ensure staff who cannot attend can access recordings. In addition to the 8 modules for staff there are also two face to face workshops for Managers to be scheduled:

#### 1. The Art of Being Brilliant: Your Wellbeing Launchpad

Based on the science of positive psychology, this session is evidence-based but with the big words surgically removed and replaced with common sense, doable principles and great fun. The challenge is quite straight-forward; it's about raising your 'new normal' to world class.

## 2. Rising Stronger: From Mental Health to Mental WEALTH

Rising Stronger is about showing up to work as your best self. Lose the doubt, let go of any negativity and come back fully charged. This session is about unmuting yourself in real life.

## 3. The Why-Factor: (Re)Discovering Your Purpose

Finding your purpose is like motivational rocket fuel. The Why-Factor will jog some memories by going back to basics and daring to ask a fundamental question... why do you do what you do? Beware. Contains life-changing content.

## 4. Self-Care: It's All About YOU!

With your work routine shot to pieces it's vital to stay physically and mentally healthy. Self-care is about looking after #1. If you're getting the basics right, everything else is a lot easier to cope with.

## 5. Mindfulness: It's All About NOW!

Taking a little time to pay attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgement' gives us an immediate calming effect, by re-oxygenating our blood and brain. But the real magic happens over time. With repeated practice, mindfulness helps to quieten the stress centres of our brain so we become less reactive to stressful situations and more able to deal with everyday challenges with calm rationality.

## 6. Brilliant Strengths: Getting in the Zone

Research suggests that playing to your strengths is the smallest change that can have the biggest impact on employee engagement. This session is designed to be a journey of strength-self-discovery. In our signature fun and interactive way, we will re-ignite inherent strengths - and uncover new ones. The result is revitalised and re-energised individuals who are able to operate as a high-performance team.

### 7. The Wow-Factor: How to Create Raving Fans

We've all heard of paranoia; the whispering behind your back. But what about the opposite - paranoia - when people are saying wonderful things about you behind your back? Customer paranoia is a magical thing. Raving fans are the key to organisational growth. The starting point is to create staff with the WOW-FACTOR. This session provides the 'how?'

### 8. Bouncebackability: Rolling With Life's Punches

Change has always happened, but recently it's got a whole lot faster and when life is rattling along at this speed, we need to be more psychologically resilient and adaptive than ever. Whilst a lucky few seem hardwired to bounce back and grow in the face of adversity and setbacks, it doesn't come automatically to most of us. The brilliant news is that BOUNCEBACKABILITY is a learned behaviour. We can all cultivate personal skills and resources which help us not just cope better with stress and adversity, but embrace change and use challenges as opportunities to grow.

- Conduct another Wellbeing Survey c. May 2022 to ensure employees continue to be supported during the pandemic

- Seek more volunteers to become Employee Wellbeing Champions
- Roll out management training including on Sickness Absence Management policy.
- Review the council's Occupational Health Provider to find a more proactive provider in helping advise on complex cases and supporting employees back to work.
- Sign the Mental Health at Work Commitment and work towards demonstrating the actions within it
- Organise a further financial wellbeing promotion campaign in the lead up to Christmas 2022
- Promote Mental Health Awareness Week

### **9.0 Reason(s)**

N/A

### **10.0 Options**

N/A

### **11.0 Risks**

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

## **12.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

No

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

### **Financial**

No

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

As covered by the report

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

No

### **Specific Wards**

No

## **13.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

None

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## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

**Report title:** Human Resources and Organisational Development Annual Plan for 2022/2023

**Ward(s) affected:** None

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### Summary

The new HR and OD Strategy for 2021 to 2025 has been approved by both Leadership Team and the HR Committee and in order to support this delivery an Annual Plan has been drafted for 22/23 to respond to current needs and further develop East Herts Council as excellent employer which supports and develops staff. A key element to the new HR and OD strategy was the development of Staff and Management Competencies which have been developed and implemented as part of the new PDR process as previously reported.

This annual plan will be considered by Leadership Team on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 and any further developments will be shared at the meeting. Once agreed by HRC the plan will also be shared with East Herts Together in June. The plan has been developed based on the strategy and also to support the corporate priorities, the East Herts Together group as well as the Transformation programme which is clearly a core focus in 22/23.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- a) The Human Resources Committee provides any comments and recommendations on the draft East Herts HR and OD Annual Plan for the financial year 2022 /2023.**

**b) The Human Resources Committee approves the HR and OD Annual Plan for the financial year 2022 /2023 subject to and changes agreed at the committee.**

**1.0 Proposal(s)**

- 1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. The HR and OD Strategy was consulted upon with staff to shape it and to support the desired culture and to continue to develop East Herts Council as a sound employer and an employer of choice. The Annual Plan for 22/23 is the first annual plan that sets out the delivery of this strategy in the first full financial year.
- 1.2 The East Herts Together group and the staff consultation set out for the following to be addressed in the Strategy and this has also been considered in the plan but with core competency work completed:
- Reflects the Council's Staff Values, (embedding and fostering a value based culture)
  - Supports corporate SEED priorities
  - Supports creativity, innovation and efficiencies
  - Supports effective performance management and development
  - Promotes wellbeing
  - Celebrates employee success
  - Supports change regarding blended working and new working practices
  - Reflects current ways of working and flexibility
- 1.3 Along with the Corporate SEED Priorities and the transformation programme these have been considered and the new HR and OD Annual Plan has been set out to support these aims and priorities.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Upon starting at East Herts Council the new Head of HR and OD identified the need to update the full suite of HR policies and in particular, the key formal policies to incorporate further best practice and improve these key management tools. A new HR and OD strategy was also required with clear staff and management competencies which underpin our values. This work was then delayed in order to establish the East Herts Together (E.H.T) Group who have worked with HR, LT and Unison to develop the policies and serve as a further cross service group to engage with and consult with to ensure the policies and employment practice are fit for purpose and user friendly. The HR and OD Strategy has now received HRC approval following EHT development and LT approval.
- 2.2 The new four year strategy sought to build upon existing themes and take East Herts Council further towards achieving these themes as well as seeking further improvement and supporting more flexible ways of working.

## **3.0 Summary of Annual Plan for 2022/2023**

### **3.1 Key HR objectives with actions for 2022/2023**

There are nine objective areas and each has a number of actions to deliver where we will review, maintain and develop as appropriate:

#### **3.1.1 Organisation and Work Design**

To encourage and adopt appropriate management and staffing structures and ways of organising work, which achieve the Council's objectives and make the best use of

employees' skills and interests while maximising career development opportunities.

### 3.1.2 Employee Resourcing

Recruit, motivate and retain the highest quality staff with the skills and competences required to deliver the Council's strategic and service area objectives.

### 3.1.3 Pay, Benefits and Reward Management

Pay and broader rewards system which is relevant to the Council's needs, affordable, transparent and perceived to be fair.

### 3.2.4 Performance Management

Actively and consistently manage performance to deliver quality services and achieve the Council's planned outcomes

### 3.2.5 Learning & Development

Develop a learning organisation which provides the support and resources for staff to perform to high standards and realise their full potential.

### 3.2.6 Employee Engagement

Encourage staff ownership of, and pride in, the Council's goals and achievements. Ensure staff are clear on where they fit in the golden thread and engage them to improve the way services are delivered and ensure that they engage with residents/clients to achieve this.

### 3.2.7 Diversity

Create and maintain a workplace where every individual feels valued and respected for what they can offer, and where the diversity of the people we serve is reflected in our staff group.

### 3.2.8 Wellbeing, Health & Welfare

Actively support and promote the health and well-being of staff.

### 3.2.9 Employment Administration

Comply with law and best practice in the employment of staff and avoidance of destructive workplace conflict.

## 3.2 Measuring the effectiveness of HR Strategy

The HR Team will measure effectiveness through the following measures which will be used on the annual action plans as appropriate. HRC members are welcome to express further measures or KPIs that would like:

- Produce for LT and HRC approval a HR Strategy Annual Action Plan which sets out key actions for the year and how we will measure annual progress.
- Regularly collect quantitative and qualitative data to measure the impact and effectiveness of our HR strategy and practices and the return on our investment in Human Resources staffing and other resources.
- Seek to demonstrate the link between HR indicators of success and achievement of corporate goals and outcomes.

- Use cost-effective means to collect benchmarking data with which to measure performance against comparative organisations and obtain best practice ideas for improving our Human Resources processes.
- Strive for awards and publicity as opportunities to accredit and promote achievements.
- Periodically review the kind of information that the Leadership Team and HRC, LJP, Full Council and Executive require to measure the impact of our HR strategy on organisational performance.
- Continue to maintain an effective working relationship with the recognised Trade Union Unison.

## **4.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

The Strategy have been updated in line with equalities legislation and with consideration to the Council's Equality Strategy. The Strategy includes supporting and developing equalities/diversity.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Not specifically but blended working will support this further

### **Financial**

No, existing budgets will be used

## **Health and Safety**

H&S join up is covered re wellbeing

## **Human Resources**

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

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No, however LT have approved and this includes the Head of Legal.

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

5.1 The developed HR and OD Strategy for 2021 to 2025 is attached as Appendix A.

### **Contact Officer**

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## East Herts Council - Human Resources Annual Plan 2022-2023

Head of HR and OD: Simon O'Hear (SO'H)

HR and OD Manager: Jane Mackie (JM)

Q1 = by end of June 2022

Q2 = by end of September 2022

Q3 = by end of December 2022

Q4 = by end of March 2023

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
<b>Organisation &amp; Work Design</b>	To encourage and adopt appropriate management and staffing structures and ways of organising work, which achieve the Council's objectives and make the best use of employees' skills and interests while maximising career development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide HR support to service managers in terms of vacant posts and consider grading and career grading as well as potential redesign – this is supported by a new Recruitment request LT sub-Panel (CEO, DCEO, S151 and Head of HR&amp;OD) which is required to agree all vacancies to ensure scrutiny and opportunity for re-organisation and savings maximised.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structures will be developed following the service review process as well other developments in the transformation programme and within current funding and priorities – Ensure Equality Impact Assessment completed on restructures before being proposed or finalised</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review Blended working arrangements – after one year of offer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing by LT Sub Team and ongoing by HR Officers and HR &amp; OD Manager</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SO'H/ JM/CK/EC with LT members and Service managers in line with budget setting or as required – ongoing from Q1</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HR to gather views lead by SO'H and LT to consider - Q3</li> </ul>
<b>Employee Resourcing, Recruitment and Selection</b>	Recruit, motivate and retain the highest quality staff with the skills and competences required to deliver the Council's strategic and service area objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to utilise online recruitment and other external sources to maximise return on investment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to develop online application process, recruitment tool (ATS) and pre-employment process / on-boarding to improve efficiency, attraction, administration and cost of recruitment process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing – aim must be that system is fully developed for advertising by end of Q1 and that by end of Q2 on-boarding is implemented and joins made to ResourceLink.</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Develop References Policy and then ensure that references are checked in line with a newly developed reference policy and – where there are concerns the offer should be withdrawn.</li>   <li>□ Maintain a computerised Human Resources system (which includes direct manager and staff access and automated workflows and forms) to enable effective use of staff and management time and to ensure the HR Section maintain and monitor appropriate HR records and provide management information.</li> </ul> <p>Consider developing workflows and generate specific reports through BAM and improved reporting system in the HR and Payroll system to support HR and Mgrs to be aware of and complete appropriate HR/Payroll tasks. Workflows / Reports to consider include -:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Automated e-mails re Pay and allowances changes</li> <li>▪ Emergency contacts or own (telephone) contacts changed</li> <li>▪ Annual leave usage reports/prompts</li> <li>▪ Create better system generated HR reports through potentially business objects e.g. equality data, pension data, absence data and turnover data etc.</li> </ul> <p>Improve system flow between core HR and Payroll and improve efficiency of other processes by making better use of mail merge and self service (employee input), workflow etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ JM and SO'H Q3</li>   <li>□ JM/EC with support from SO'H and HR and Payroll Team and potentially Phase 3 consulting instead of Zellis – Q3-Q4</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pay, Benefits and Reward Management</b></p>	<p>Pay and broader rewards system which is relevant to the Council's needs, affordable, transparent and perceived to be fair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Continue to implement NJC pay awards and support Pay Negotiations. Update and Develop Pay Policy Statement for 23/24</li>   <li>□ Audit pay to analyse pay differentials across gender and consider race equality streams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ SO'H/GC with LT support and HR and Payroll Admin Support</li> <li>□ SO'H for HRC and Full Council approval by mid Q4</li>   <li>□ CK/JM- Q3 for Jan/Feb HRC</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="891 236 1677 373">☐ Evaluate pay and benefits to ensure appropriateness to East Herts Funding and strategic and staff needs. MyRewards to cease in Q2 (October) – free version of discounts to be added to intranet.</li> <li data-bbox="891 427 1435 456">☐ End Long Term Service Awards in 22/23</li> <li data-bbox="891 651 1653 750">☐ Develop benefit package where affordable, maintain Childcare support, Bike Loans outside of MyRewards and continue to provide Flu Vaccinations.</li> <li data-bbox="891 810 1659 909">☐ Review Flexi time scheme, Overtime, Toil, Honorariums to ensure fairness, consistency of application and most importantly that they are fit for purpose</li> <li data-bbox="891 970 1659 1069">☐ Re-develop and review the Employee Recognition scheme in terms of delivery of non-financial reward and recognition for employee contribution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1704 236 2136 335">☐ SO'H/HR/GC – ongoing and ensure offer updated when MyRewards ceases for savings</li> <li data-bbox="1704 443 2181 616">☐ SO'H to communicate to staff that this has ended from Q1 for savings and will be replaced with improved recognition scheme – email staff by end of May.</li> <li data-bbox="1704 676 2168 775">☐ SO'H – ongoing but actions in Q2 re Flu Vacs rolled out and replacements made</li> <li data-bbox="1704 836 2152 896">☐ SO'H – from Q2 and then in line with Unison/LJP and HRC</li> <li data-bbox="1704 957 2163 986">☐ EC with EHT and LT support – Q1</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="107 1142 282 1209"><b>Performance Management</b></p>	<p data-bbox="389 1142 808 1273">Actively and consistently manage performance to deliver quality services and achieve the Council's planned outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="891 1142 1599 1171">☐ All staff have an annual competency based appraisal</li> <li data-bbox="891 1232 1659 1471">☐ Roll out of developed Competences for both Staff and Managers which underpin the Corporate Values was completed in January 2022 and then revised and more in-depth PDR process implemented including wider 360 feedback for LMs this year – period extended until end of Q1 to allow completion following training and year end tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1704 1142 1989 1171">☐ SO'H, LT, LMs – Q1</li> <li data-bbox="1704 1232 1899 1260">☐ Completed</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review revised PDR process following first use.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evidence is sought by managers to measure performance – including 360 degree feedback forms for all LM appraisals unless no feedback sources applicable/appropriate.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All staff have a clear and up to date set of annual objectives and competencies that they are working to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM - All staff, LMs, SMs, LT – review led by JM in Q2</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> LM's from Q1</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> LM's during Q1</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning and Development</b></p>	<p>Develop a learning organisation which provides the support and resources for staff to perform to high standards and realise their full potential.</p> <p><u>This area will be led by JM with overview provided by SO'H</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop Annual Training Needs Analysis based on PDR data, service feedback and HR&amp;OD meetings with services.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Deliver agreed annual Programme including Resilience Programme which began in April 2022 until December 2022</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop 5 day management development Programme which uses the revised and improved employment policies – develop and deliver internally: 5 Days Line Manager training with EHC Tools:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and Selection (1 day)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Performance Management, Staff Development and Managing Change (2 days)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing difficult behaviour and discipline (1 day)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing Attendance (1 day)</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop Finance training (including procurement) for Managers and other key areas to build on 5 day core</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM – in Q2 and then in line with LT/HRC timeframes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM – From Q1 and new programme in Q2/Q3</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SO'H/JM – Q2 developed with courses starting in September 2022</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> S151 Officer with JM support –</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
		<p>programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop commercial training and deliver</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to develop E-learning platform with mandatory courses ensure refreshers rolled out by November 2022 to both staff and members</li> </ul>	<p>Q3/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Led by S151 with JM support – Q2 after Strategy Approved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM/EC – Q2 begin development and roll out in Q3.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee Engagement</b>	Encourage staff ownership of, and pride in, the Council's goals and achievements. Ensure staff are clear on where they fit in the golden thread and engage them to improve the way services are delivered and ensure that they engage with residents/clients to achieve this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a staff charter or 'Deal' which sets out to staff what they can expect as a member of staff and what the council expects back (this will complement and work alongside both the Officer Code of Conduct and Core Competencies)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carry out Staff Wellbeing Survey at end of May (post COVID restrictions being lifted) and incorporate actions for improvement and/or to maintain satisfaction based on feedback provided.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to maximise engagement through intranet surveys/ emails/ feedback as well as EHT, and other meetings i.e. staff briefing, service manager away sessions etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM/SO'H for LT/HRC – Q2</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SO'H/JM/LT/SMs – Q1 – Report to LT in late June and then July HRC</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing – HR Team/LT</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity</b>	Create and maintain a workplace where every individual feels valued and respected for what they can offer, and where the diversity of the people we serve is reflected in our staff group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming and Supporting Diversity embedded into staff and management competencies (Personal Effectiveness and People Mgt)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Publish Staff Equality Data in line with annual deadline under Equality Act to meet specific public sector duty,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SO'H/ JM – completed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CK with JM/SO'H support – Q2</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
		<p>consider race pay gap as well as gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to ensure all staff are trained to understand equality and diversity, and can welcome and support –</li> </ul> <p>Continue development of Equality e-learning package for both staff and members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All vacancies to be sent to created links with diversity groups to try to create more diverse applications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Disability Confident maintained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> EC/JM – ongoing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing new starters and annual refresher training.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HR (EC, CK, JM) – All job advertised with Disability Advisors at Job Centre plus other networks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CK - ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Welfare</b>	Actively support and promote the health and well-being of staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to deliver Equality and Diversity training to all staff which include emphasis on personal bias and non-tolerance of harassment – this has been enhanced by e-learning product</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement a revised HR Intranet including well-being section on to support all staff appropriately.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effectively manage, and periodically review, our Health and Safety service to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Policies, procedures and guidance notes are updated in light of changing law and best practice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Annual risk-assessment reviews</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compliance monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accident monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effective induction and training programmes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM/EC – Ongoing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> JM/EC – Q2, then ongoing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PD/SO'H – Ongoing – Annual risk assessment review from Q3</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	Comply with law and best practice in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Migrate HR over to 365, make use of one drive, cloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HR Team with IT support - Q1</li> </ul>

KEY AREA	KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	WORKPLAN TASKS FOR 2022-23	LEAD PERSON AND TIMETABLE
<b>Administration</b>	the employment of staff and avoidance of destructive workplace conflict.	further.  <input type="checkbox"/> Keep up to date with and take relevant action to, ensure the Council meets its legal responsibilities as an employer with reference to new and forthcoming legislation and changing case law.  <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure a corporate and consistent approach to employment policy, staff welfare and terms and conditions of service through effective consultation and mutual co-operation with the trade union and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> HR and Payroll Teams – Ongoing  <input type="checkbox"/> Full HR & OD service team as led by SO'H, JM and GC

### Key to Initials

CK – Claire Kirby (HR Officer)

EC – Emily Cordwell (HR Officer)

GC – Gill Coleman (Payroll Manager)

JM – Jane Mackie (HR and OD Manager)

LT – Leadership Team

PD – Peter Dickinson (H&S Officer)

SH – Samantha Howes (HR and Payroll Administrator)

SM – Service Managers / LM – Line Managers

SO'H – Simon O'Hear (Head of HR and OD)

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## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 25 May 2022

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

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

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

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### Summary

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

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

#### **1.0 Proposal**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on during Quarter 4 of 2021/22 (January to March 2022).

#### **2.0 Payroll Service and Staffing Update for HR&OD 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 The Payroll Manager attended the Annual 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.
- 2.3 The Payroll Manager supported the external finance

audit. This year the SIAS audit of payroll was an assurance mapping focused process, partly due to the previous strong results not justifying a more extensive 10 day audit. Please see Appendix A for the draft audit report and draft management response. The report is still to be finalised. The key result is that the audit assurance level has been determined as 'Reasonable' when it has always previously been 'Significant' this is partly due to the timing of the audit in terms of staffing but also because unlike previous audits SIAS are now requesting an independent check as well stronger back-up notes etc. The Head of HR and OD will perform this check on a monthly basis from the June Payroll (as the post holder is not involved in processing Payroll and was always willing to perform this check having previously raised this in the past.

HR & Payroll are confident that we will return to 'Significant' in the next audit and wish to remind Member that no issues were found in terms of payroll and payroll accuracy.

#### 2.4 Staffing Changes in the HR & OD Service

Update on staff changes previously reported in terms of the part-time 3 day per week Payroll and HR Administrator. Carmela Bavaro retired as our 3 day per week HR & Payroll Administrator. Carmela left on 31 January after 8 years service. The Payroll Manager (who manages the role) has been reviewing the role with the Head and HR&OD Manager especially in relation to on-boarding changes coming in and current admin processes before seeking a replacement. However, the volume of year end payroll work needed supporting including the new pension return, Carmela Bavaro was in discussion with the payroll manager and agreed to return on a 3 month basis to assist with the year end work and allow further time to recruit a replacement. Carmela therefore returned on 26/4/2022 and will

complete a 3 month fixed term contract to assist the team which we are very grateful for. The goal is still to try to attract a suitable Payroll Administrator that can be developed and can fulfil more Administration duties to support both service managers.

### **3.0 Learning and Development**

- 3.1 The HR Quarterly Management Statistics Report provides the data and details regarding the learning and development events from January to March 2022.
- 3.2 Employees continue to complete the revised mandatory e-learning courses that went live in December 2021:
  - Data Protection Briefing 2021/22
  - Fire Safety 2021/22
  - Email Etiquette 2021/22
  - Safeguarding 2021/22
  - Diversity and inclusion in the workplace 2021/22
  - Lone Working (for selected officers identified as lone workers)
- 3.3 Jane Mackie, the HR & OD Manager, along with Simon O'Hear, Head of HR&OD delivered PDR training to both staff and managers. The sessions went over the new and updated form which included competencies and 360 feedback forms. In quarter 4, six sessions were delivered virtually through zoom and two hundred and fifty five employees attended.
- 3.4 The Information Governance and Data Protection Manager, Tyron Suddes delivered training to employees on Data breach. Three sessions were held in quarter 4, and eighty nine employees attended.

- 3.5 Our Corporate Induction took place in January 2022. The event was delivered virtually through Zoom by Emily Cordwell, HR Officer and included revised and updated content. Seven employees attended.
- 3.6 In Quarter 4, training was delivered on an introduction to procurement, how to manage the tender process and understanding contract management. This was delivered by the Corporate Procurement Manager and 19 employees attended.
- 3.7 Accessibility Training was delivered by the Digital Content Manager to ensure we comply with new government legislation. 40 employees attended over 3 sessions.

## **4.0 Human Resources Update**

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

The East Herts Together Group has continued to meet on Zoom due to differing work patterns of group members in terms of home/office days.

- 4.1.1 The HR Strategy has been approved and the associated action plan is coming to this meeting for approval (please see separate report).
- 4.1.2 The Core Staff & Management Competencies and redesigned PDR process including the competencies and 360 feedback (for managers only) has been rolled out ready for the 22/23 PDR cycle. Guidance documents have been published on the intranet and training has been given to staff and managers. The appraisal period has been extended until the end of June 2022 to allow the new process to be implemented and for year end processes to be completed.
- 4.1.3 The one page plan has been updated for 22/23.

4.1.4 A sub-group of the EHT group are looking at the council's recognition scheme with the intention of moving towards quarterly awards (currently monthly) with more categories that will be announced at staff briefings as well as an annual awards ceremony sponsored by the council's larger contractors.

4.1.5 The corporate style guide has been updated by Communications to be more user friendly with easy to use templates and instructions as well as guidelines on accessibility. This was shared with EHT for feedback before it progressed to LT for approval.

## 4.2 Recruitment

### 4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

EHC continue 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 are continuing to implement the ATS system with Webrecruit which will provide name blind recruitment. The timeline has been slightly delayed due to an IT issue obtaining a certificate which enables the ATS to use the eastherts.gov.uk URL. This has now been resolved and it is hoped that the careers site through which applicants can view our vacancies and apply via the ATS will be live by the end of May/early June with training rolled out to all managers at the same time. We are using Webrecruit's advertising credits for the online job boards despite the system not being live yet.

#### 4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

The HR team continue to provide HR support to Hertford and Ware Town Councils. The team are currently supporting Ware Town Council with some complex casework.

Hertford Town Council have quarterly manager surgeries and are being supported under the revised offer. The HR team have supported HTC with a variety of queries.

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. Two Parish Councils have expressed interest and this has been followed up (as yet no take up).

Pricing has been reviewed and significantly increased in time to take on a new customer: Borough of Broxbourne Council (District Council) who have asked to receive pay as you go HR services from the team and Payroll advice following the resignation of their HR Manager.

#### 4.4 COVID Update

See Health and Safety Q4 report for the revised Office Protocols.

### **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**

6.1 See Employee Health and Wellbeing report for 21/22 which has been provided to this HRC meeting.

## **7.0 HR and Payroll System Development**

7.1 The HR Officer is still finalising sickness absence on the system to ensure it is recorded and managed in hours rather than days. There have been delays with this going live due to sickness absence with the Zellis support required in ensuring the sickness absence report works efficiently.

7.2 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.

7.3 The latest upgrade, has been placed onto the system to improve efficiency and resolve system errors, this was followed by testing of each module to ensure they are working as required.

7.4 The HR Officer began working with the provider on developing the overtime module on My View to allow employees to submit claims through the online portal which will cease the paper process. This did not unfortunately progress as hoped so has been paused until further updates can be provided and also as LT want to review Overtime as covered in the Annual HR & OD Plan.

## **8.0 Options**

N/A

## **9.0 Risks**

N/A

## **10.0 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

## **11.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

Appendix A – Draft Internal Audit report – Payroll (Assurance Mapping) 2021/22.

### **Contact Officer**

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### **Report Author**

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## Appendix A

# Draft Internal Audit Report

# East Herts Council – Payroll (Assurance Mapping) 2021/22

March 2022

<b>Issued to:</b>	Simon O’Hear – Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development Gill Coleman – Payroll Manager
<b>Final Copied to:</b>	Steven Linnett – Head of Strategic Finance & Property Members of the Audit and Governance Committee Executive Member for Financial Sustainability
<b>Report Status:</b>	Draft
<b>Reference:</b>	E4414/21/046
<b>Overall Assurance:</b>	Reasonable
<b>Recommendations:</b>	2 Medium, 3 Low

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

- 1.1 Internal Audit provides East Herts Council with an independent and objective opinion on the organisation's governance arrangements, encompassing internal control and risk management, by completing an annual risk-based work programme. This audit forms part of the approved 2021/22 Internal Audit work programme.
- 1.2 The assurance opinion provided has been informed by the production of an Assurance Map. The Map has been developed based upon our key lines of enquiry and allows other sources of assurance to be identified and relied upon for internal audit purposes. This approach accommodates the Council's preference for minimising audit duplication and work that may overlap. Once produced the Map can be reviewed and updated in subsequent years, and in line with service developments or emerging risks. It also sits alongside Internal Audit's conventional assurance work agreed with management and will be used to help inform overall annual assurance opinions.
- 1.3 The Assurance Map has been based upon an established model which places known sources of assurance into one of three categories. This builds a picture of the applicable control framework and highlights any potential gaps. The three categories are:
  - a) First line of assurance – operational management arrangements in place
  - b) Second line of assurance – oversight functions and systems
  - c) Third line of assurance – internal and external assurance provided
- 1.4 The resulting Assurance Map produced a visual summary of the current sources of assurance and rates how well these sources managed risk. This type of work also identifies any gaps in the control framework, which are outlined in the Assurance Map. As a result of the assurance map, recommendations have been made for improvements to the control environment.

### Overall Audit Opinion

- 1.5 Based on the work performed during this audit, we can provide overall **reasonable assurance** that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of risk covered by this review. The control enablers are detailed in the Control Enablers Reviewed Table in section 2 below. For definitions of our assurance levels, please see Appendix B.
- 1.6 The payroll assurance mapping work concluded that there are adequate arrangements in place to provide assurance over payroll processing at the Council. The first line of assurance (operational management) has a clear checklist in place to outline the work required and that amendment requests are received and actioned by the Payroll Manager. They are aware of their responsibilities and have effective processes in place to complete the payroll on a monthly basis. However, the processing notes in place by the payroll team require formalising to ensure business continuity in an instance of key staff absence and they have an opportunity to explore the full use of

their payroll system to automate all possible processes and increase available officer time.

- 1.7 The second line of assurance includes clear policies and procedures in place that govern payroll processes; these are created, monitored, and reviewed by HR and include the expenses policy, pay policy statement, family friendly policy, redundancy policy, and the standby and out of hours policy. There is appropriate segregation of duties between creation and implementation of the policies. While the Council do have access to information made available by HMRC (webinars and training material), they do not have a standardised system for training in place. While they do complete on the job training and are currently considering the requirements of induction of new staff members to ensure this adequately reflects tasks required, these are not formally recorded. Given the nature of the small payroll team, there is an inherent business continuity risk for the Council should the Payroll Manager be out of the office, and the Council do not have a formal business continuity plan in place should this occur. In addition, the payroll is processed without independent review by a senior manager, although the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development does authorise BACS payments before they are made.
- 1.8 The third line of assurance is currently completed by both internal and external audit; the Council facilitates independent assurance across a variety of topics relating to payroll. The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) have completed payroll audits at least annually since the 2011/12 financial year, with additional topics being covered (such as Payroll Self Service – Annual Leave) when required. Regular topics of review have included payroll processing (e.g. payroll runs, BACS processing, starters and leavers, and statutory payments), reconciliations, systems access controls, and policies and procedures. Additionally, external audit complete work to provide an opinion relating to the Council's statement of accounts. While this does not specifically review the payroll function for the Council, it does include a review of financial policies, procedures and practices, and comments on the employee benefits provided by the Council. Substantial assurance has been provided in this area because the Council has facilitated third line assurance.
- 1.9 Please see the attached assurance map for further information regarding the assurance provision for each of the control enablers reviewed.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

- 1.10 We have made five recommendations; three recommendations are classified as medium priority and two as low priority as part of the assurance mapping process. These recommendations relate to:
- Payroll Sign Off (Leadership and Management) – Medium Priority
  - Business Continuity (Resources) – Medium Priority
  - Training (People and Knowledge) – Low Priority
  - Guidance / Processing Notes (Strategy and Policy) – Low Priority
  - Automating Processes (Processes) – Low Priority
- 1.11 Please see Management Action Plan at Appendix A for further detail.

### **Annual Governance Statement**

1.12 This report provides reasonable levels of assurance to support the Annual Governance Statement.

## **2. CONTROL ENABLERS REVIEWED**

2.1 Our specific objectives in undertaking this work, as per the Terms of Reference, were to create an Assurance Map for Payroll that focusses on the control categories:

- a) **Leadership & Management:** organisational leaders have oversight of payroll
- b) **Strategy & Policy:** there are clear strategies & policies in relation to payroll
- c) **People & Knowledge:** people are equipped and supported to manage payroll processing
- d) **Resources:** there is capacity and capability to effectively manage payroll
- e) **Partnerships:** risk profile and control environment reflect working collaboratively
- f) **Processes:** there are effective processes to support payroll processing
- g) **Outcomes & Delivery:** payroll contributes to overall performance & specific outcomes

2.2 The assessments of assurance provided have been included in the attached assurance map. Please see definitions for the assurance levels at Appendix B.

No.	Finding / Associated Risk	Priority	Recommendation	Management Response	Target Date
42	Associated Risks				
1.	<p><b>Payroll Sign Off (Leadership and Management)</b></p> <p>While the Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development does sign off the BACS payments prior to processing, and the Finance team review the payroll as part of their costings process after it has been processed, there is no independent check at the first line of assurance to sign off the payroll prior to processing, these checks are only completed within the payroll team. Therefore, there is no segregation of duties between those who run payroll and those who approve payroll to be processed. This could mean that any errors in payroll processing could potentially only be identified after the payroll has been run.</p> <p><b>Associated Risk</b></p> <p>The Council do not have an independent sign off of the payroll report (by an officer who is not involved in the processing of payroll), which means an independent party cannot verify the accuracy and completeness of the payroll processing. This could lead to inaccuracies in the pay run not being picked up until after it has been processed.</p>	Medium	We recommend that the Council have an independent senior officer review and sign off the payroll report prior to processing. This would ensure that an independent review occurs to identify any potential errors in payroll before it is paid. The reports provided for sign off should be sufficient to ensure that the reviewer has sufficient information to sign off the payroll.	<p><b>Responsible Officer:</b></p> <p>Head of HR and OD</p> <p><b>Action to be Taken:</b></p> <p>Monthly sign off using full variance report with Head of HR&amp;OD and PM</p>	June 22
2.	<p><b>Business Continuity (Resources)</b></p> <p>Due to the size of the payroll team, there is an</p>	Medium	We recommend that the	<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	

No.	Finding / Associated Risk	Priority	Recommendation	Management Response	Target Date
	<p>inherent business continuity risk to the Council. While this has been considered by the Council, there are currently not formal business continuity plans in place, and processing notes require formalising to provide stronger support should key staff members be absent.</p> <p><b>Associated Risk</b></p> <p>The Council do not have effective business continuity arrangements in place to outline resilience arrangements in the case of key staff absence. Therefore, the Council might not be fully prepared in the case of key officer absence, and the payroll could not be completed effectively. This could lead to reputational damage for the Council.</p>		<p>Council create formal business continuity plans for running payroll in the instance that key officers are unavailable to run payroll. This could include formally training other colleagues to complete the payroll and documenting who should complete the pay run in the event of key staff absences.</p>	<p>Payroll Manager</p> <p><b>Action to be Taken:</b></p> <p>Hand written notes to made electronic and training provided to new recruit</p>	<p>July/Aug 2022</p>
3.	<p><b>Training (People and Knowledge)</b></p> <p>While the Payroll Manager has access to training and webinars published by HMRC, there are no formal training processes in place to govern a systematic training of payroll. While we recognise that any formal or systematic training programme would need to be proportionate to the small payroll team, and could involve the documenting of ongoing internal training that occurs, there is currently no process for regular training in place.</p> <p><b>Associated Risk</b></p>	Low	<p>We recommend that the Council develop a training plan for the payroll team (Payroll Manager and the HR Payroll Administrator). This should then be utilised and followed by the payroll team to ensure that key training has been undertaken by all staff members. This</p>	<p><b>Responsible Officer:</b></p> <p>Payroll Manager</p> <p><b>Action to be Taken:</b></p> <p>New recruit will be trained on the job by PM and with previous postholder will attend key updates from HMRC and Pensions</p>	<p>In line with recruitment expected July/August</p>

No.	Finding / Associated Risk	Priority	Recommendation	Management Response	Target Date
44	The Council do not have sufficient or regular training scheduled relating to payroll processing. Therefore, individuals may not be well equipped to complete their role effectively. This could result in payroll processing not being run accurately or on time and this could cause reputational damage to the Council.		should be proportionate to the size of the payroll team, and could involve on-the-job training where appropriate.		
4.	<p><b>Guidance / Processing Notes (Strategy and Policy)</b></p> <p>While the payroll team have documented their processes in processing notes, these are currently disparate for the different elements of payroll processing, and they are not in a standard or easily accessible format. Therefore, while these could be used to complete aspects of payroll processing if required, there is an opportunity to formalise these notes to provide stronger business continuity for the Council.</p> <p><b>Associated Risk</b></p> <p>The Council do not have formalised processing notes in place to outline the key activities completed by the payroll team to process payroll. Therefore, in the absence of key staff members, there may not be effective instructions in an easily accessible format for the payroll to be completed in their absence. This could lead to key individuals and companies not being paid on time if key staff members are absent and reputational loss for the Council.</p>	Low	We recommend that the payroll team formalise the payroll processing notes that are in place	<p><b>Responsible Officer:</b> Payroll Manager</p> <p><b>Action to be Taken:</b></p> <p>See action re 2. Above notes will be written into online format and shared with both Head of HR&amp;OD and new Administrator</p>	

No.	Finding / Associated Risk	Priority	Recommendation	Management Response	Target Date
Associated Opportunity					
5.	<p><b>Automating Processes (Processes)</b></p> <p>While the Council currently utilise some of the automated processes including mileage and expenses claims linked to MyView, the Council have an opportunity to further extend this to include currently manual workflows. Discussions with the Payroll Manager indicated that this is something that the Council is already considering but would need further resources and consideration to implement. The risks associated with payroll processing are currently well controlled, but the Council have the opportunity to further improve efficiency in processing.</p> <p><b>Associated Opportunity</b></p> <p>The Council have an opportunity to automate all payroll processes to reduce human intervention in the payroll process. This would reduce the opportunity for error in inputting manual information and increase officer efficiency and time to review payroll transactions rather than inputting data.</p>	Low	<p>We recommend that the Council obtain a list of all of the processes that could have fully automated workflows that are part of the package procured and used by the Council. They should then make an assessment as to which of these are appropriate and viable for the Council and create implementation plans where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Officer:</b></p> <p>Payroll Manager and Head of HR&amp;OD and HR Officer (system development)</p> <p><b>Action to be Taken:</b></p> <p>This is an ongoing action and is subject to both internal IT support and funds re system development. Also we need to ensure that automation provides the same level of checks and balances which is not currently fully satisfactory.</p>	<p>TBC in line availability and other priorities.</p>

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Assurance Level	Definition
<b>Substantial</b>	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exist, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>Reasonable</b>	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>Limited</b>	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>No</b>	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Priority Level		Definition
Corporate	<b>Critical</b>	 Audit findings which, in the present state, represent a serious risk to the organisation as a whole, i.e. reputation, financial resources and / or compliance with regulations. Management action to implement the appropriate controls is required immediately.
Service	<b>High</b>	 Audit findings indicate a serious weakness or breakdown in control environment, which, if untreated by management intervention, is highly likely to put achievement of core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required urgently.
	<b>Medium</b>	 Audit findings which, if not treated by appropriate management action, are likely to put achievement of some of the core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required in a timely manner.
	<b>Low</b>	 Audit findings indicate opportunities to implement good or best practice, which, if adopted, will enhance the control environment. The appropriate solution should be implemented as soon as is practically possible.