



**MEETING** : HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
**DATE** : WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE 2025  
**TIME** : 7.00 PM

**PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE**

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<https://www.youtube.com/user/EastHertsDistrict>

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Councillor Rachel Carter (Chair)

Councillors M Butcher, M Connolly, T Deffley, A Holt, M Swainston and D Willcocks

**Substitutes**

Conservative Group: Councillor R Buckmaster  
Green Group: Councillors J Dunlop and G Hill  
Labour Group: Councillor D Jacobs  
Liberal Democrat Group: Councillor S Marlow

*(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;
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## **AGENDA**

1. Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2025/26

2. Apologies

*To receive apologies for absence.*

3. Minutes - 5 February 2025 (Pages 5 - 13)

To receive the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2025.

4. Chairman's Announcements

5. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member's Declaration of Interest.

6. Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25 (Pages 14 - 26)

7. Policy Updates (Pages 27 - 96)

8. Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2024/25 (Pages 97 - 112)

9. Learning and Development Report 24 - 25 (Pages 113 - 124)

10. Annual Turnover Report 24 - 25 (Pages 125 - 138)

11. HR Quarter 4 stats 23/24 (Pages 139 - 157)

12. Urgent Business

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

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025, AT 7.00  
PM

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PRESENT: Councillor Rachel Carter (Chair)  
Councillors M Connolly, M Swainston and  
D Willcocks

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor E Buckmaster

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Alex Wanless	- Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development)

315 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Deffley and Hollebon. It was noted that Councillor R Buckmaster was substituting for Councillor Hollebon.

316 MINUTES - 20 NOVEMBER 2024

It was moved by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Willcocks that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 20 November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED. It was noted that Councillors R Buckmaster and Connolly abstained from the vote.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Committee held on 20 November 2024, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

317 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and reminded participants to use their microphones so that they could be heard. She thanked officers for their reports and their work over the past quarter to keep things on track.

318 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

319 HUMAN RESOURCES Q3 STATISTICS

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, highlighting the key areas to Members. He said that staff sickness levels had reduced in Quarter 3 compared to Quarter 2, with short-term sickness due to minor illnesses such as viruses. He said that long term sickness was actively managed by Human Resources with help from Occupational Health and that mental health training was being introduced to prevent work related absences.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that difficult to fill vacancies remained in Planning and Environmental Health, which as previously discussed, was a national problem for local authorities. He said that a review of the market forces supplements for Planning and Legal Services was planned to ensure that these remained attractive, with a new applicant tracking system (ATS) launching to improve recruitment.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there were currently 44 roles

unfilled within the council, for reasons including the DMA review, budget related holds, service reviews, and both pending and active recruitments.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that there were new management training initiatives planned in development such as a manager's essentials bootcamp and a train the trainer programme.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that reporting had improved with regards to health and safety accidents and incidents, with 3 minor workplace accident and 4 near misses recorded for the quarter 3 period. He said that workplace safety audits and contractor performance monitoring would continue and that a mental first aid refresher was scheduled for Quarter 4.

The Chair thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager for his report.

Councillor Swainston thanked officers for their work and asked again if comparisons could be included within the report. She said that her own research which compared East Herts data with that of the Office for National Statistics suggested the council was performing well in certain areas but not in others.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that that statistics from the Office from National Statistics were always higher, but the council was now able to provide data via the Local Government Association portal. He said that this would allow the comparison of data with authorities of a similar makeup to that of East Herts, (on the proviso that such similar authorities also provided their data) which could be included in the next report. He said that time would also be spent to ensure that managers reported staff sickness correctly, so data was not skewed.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the vacancies within the council and asked how many were within the Planning Department.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that recruiting to the Planning Department remained a challenge. He said that he would respond with the required information via email.

The Chair said that it was good to see that BEAM was now a member of the Safety Committee, and that issues at Buntingford Depot had now been resolved.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager agreed and said that BEAM had attend the Health and Safety Committee which had taken place earlier in the day. He said that the issues at Buntingford Depot involved issues around cleaning, which had now been rectified and the cleaning contractor had apologised.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the issue of battery ignition and asked if a communication campaign could be undertaken to advise the public of safe disposal methods/sites. She suggested that this could include Facebook etc.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that he would raise this with the Health and Safety Officer.

The Chair said that she would support such a campaign and said that she was under the impression that anywhere which sold batteries was obliged to have a disposal facility.

Councillor Swainston asked if the same obligation extended to disposable vapes.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that he would also pass Councillor Swainston's comments on to the Health and Safety



Officer, and that this may involve the Operations Department.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Human Resources Management Report for Quarter 3 (October – December 2024) be considered and any comments be provided to the HR Officer / Head of HR and OD regarding the content or formatting of the report.

### 320 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2024

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report, explaining that it was a statutory requirement for the council to produce. He said that it was a positive report, with the mean gender pay gap down 3% to 13% and the median gender pay gap down to 9% from 19%.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the reasons for these decreases was due to more men in lower quartiles and a slight increase in the number of women in higher pay quartiles than last year. He said that a gender imbalance remained in lower pay quartiles – with administrative and customer service roles dominating.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that attracting men into lower paid roles remained difficult with the outsourcing (such as waste and grounds maintenance) skewing the gender balance.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that equality, diversity, and inclusion training was mandatory across the workforce,

with blind CV's being implemented alongside diversity in interview panels to reduce bias in recruitment. He said that the gender representation across pay quartiles was monitored to ensure balance.

The Chair thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager for his report.

Councillor Buckmaster said that blind CV's had been spoken about by the Committee approximately 2 years ago, and asked why they had not been implemented already.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the old Applicant Tracking System (ATS) had promised a blind function but could not deliver. He said the new ATS was modern with new coding, which officers were keen to try.

Councillor Swainston welcomed the report and said that it could be seen that the council was travelling in the right direction. She said that it would be helpful for the report to have explanations of terminology set out at the outset, and for diagrams (as seen at page 40) to include quantities as well as percentages.

Councillor Willcocks also sought clarification regarding the statistics within the report.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that such numbers could be included in the next report. He said that within local authorities pay grades and scales existed, meaning that new starters were generally paid at the bottom of a pay grade (except for exceptional candidates who had verifiable skills and or experience). He said that this stopped bias.

Councillor Connelly agreed with Councillor Swainston's request for numbers to be included as well as

percentages within the report. She asked if the statistics could cause a problem that was not there – with a danger that women could be kept out of administrative and part time jobs.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that this was the reason for comment to be included within the report, and that there would never be a perfect 50% balance. He said that the world was changing and that it was important to ensure that all genders could progress fairly and equitably.

Councillor Swainston referred to the Hay job evaluation method and asked if this process ironed out any skewed statistics.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the Hay method looked at all elements of a role. He said that the Strategic Human Resources/Organisational Development Lead would provide a further detailed explanation of the Hay method, which would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Carter said that it would be interesting to see comparable statistics for other local authorities.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the council did have some benchmarking, but as some services were contracted out or were a shared service he would need to research further.

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

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the Gender Pay Gap Report 202 be noted; and

(B) the action plan 25/26 be considered and further

suggestions added where appropriate.

321 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/26

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report and explained that it was a statutory requirement to for the council to post the pay policy statement on their website annually. He asked that the Committee consider the statement and give comments prior to it going before Council for approval.

Councillor Swainston said that the statement was very clear and well set out. She said that it was helpful that the number of employees on each grade was also included.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the date 2024/2025 on the statement and asked if this should read 2025/2026.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the text should read 2025/2026 and that this error would be corrected.

Councillor Willcocks referred paragraph 5.9 of the report and asked for clarification of the asterisks which appeared next to certain job roles.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Manager said that the asterisks indicated that the post holder had specifics within their contracts.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 be recommended for approval by Council.

322 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Chairman .....
Date .....

# Agenda Item 6

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by: Strategic HR and Organisational Development Lead**

**Report title: Annual Health and Safety Report 2024 / 25 EHC Employees**

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

### **Summary**

#### **Recommendations for Human Resources Committee:**

- (a) To consider the Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25 – and provide any comments/amendments to the Service Manager of HR & OD and the Health and Safety Adviser.**

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

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Health and Safety Report 2024 to 2025 EHC Employees. Section 3.0 provides an executive summary of the report.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Adviser provides a Health and Safety report to the Leadership Team and then HR Committee after each quarter and provides an annual report after year end. This report will also be provided to the Safety Committee after it has been considered by the Leadership Team, who review the report before it is submitted to the HR Committee.

#### **3.0 Executive Summary (for the year) April 2024 – March 2025**

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

Accidents involving EHC employees.

There have been no serious non reportable accidents for the year 2024 / 25 involving employees requiring detailed investigation and not resulting from a failure of process and procedure or equipment. These are accidents that are not reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.

There have been no accidents reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations.

### **3.2 Contract compliance and monitoring**

Following advice and guidance from Protector, the Councils Insurer, Safety Committee have supported a recommendation. to undertake a root and branch review of contract management, inspection regimes and compliance monitoring for:

- Outsourced contract management
  - Shared Waste Services
  - Leisure Management
  - Grounds Maintenance
- Capital Projects
  - Large scale developments that may impact on the public domain e.g., land redevelopment projects.
  - New build or refurbishment projects

The review would look at the following areas:

- Ensuring background checks are undertaken before appointing contractors.
- Inspection and compliance regimes.

The former Chair of Safety Committee and the Health and Safety Adviser have developed new inspection regimes using online digital tools available on MS Forms on the Councils software platform. These will be tested by services to determine if they are fit for purpose for the service's needs.

### **3.3 Capital Projects**

There are currently no capital projects in progress to report on.

### **3.4 Premises and Sites**

There have been no serious accidents requiring further investigation to report at the Councils Office premises, Wallfields, Navigation House, Buntingford Deport, Hillcrest and Rectory Hall Homeless Hostels. Inspections are currently undertaken with the Property Team and Unison.

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

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

### **3.6 Display Screen Equipment**

The Health and Safety Adviser would like to report that the new Display Screen Equipment and Workstation self-assessment questionnaire is now being used for both office-based work and home working. The first roll out was issued to Housing and Health colleagues and will be followed by Planning.

It can be reported that with the replacement of the old, defective, and damaged chairs, smarter desk layouts and the provision of accessories has reduced the number of requests for additional back rests and supports, the new form also provides additional information on good practice and good health when using the computer.

## **4.0 Safety Committee**

4.1 Safety Committee met on Wednesday 05 February 2025. These minutes will be shared with the HR Committee.



4.2 Contract Managers and Project Managers are invited to attend Safety Committee to provide feedback on the main and capital projects.

## 5.0 Work and Non-Work-Related Accident Statistics

For the purposes of the report:

I.P refers to Injured Person

Non-Reportable Accidents do not need to be reported under RIDDOR 2013 and may include minor cuts, contact injuries etc.

It was agreed at HR Committee that accident totals in regard to the sites managed by Sport and Leisure Management (SLM) are no longer included in the report on the basis that this is a report on the operational safety management of East Herts Council.

### 5.1 Quarter 4 (January 2025 to March 2025)

5.1.1 There were no reportable accidents under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) for the Q4 period January 2025 to March 2025.

5.1.2 One non-reportable work-related accident was recorded for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025; the low trend is due to staff working from home or away from the office and due to the low risk working environment and good practice.

#### Q4 table of accident totals

<b>EHC Employees</b>	<b>January 2025</b>	<b>February 2025</b>	<b>March 2025</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>COMBINED TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

#### Q3 table for comparison

### Q3 Non-Reportable Accidents – Oct, Nov, Dec 2024

<b>EHC Employees</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>COMBINED TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

## 5.2 Annual Accident Statistics (2023-2024 and 2024-2025) EHC Employees

5.2.1 There were no reportable accidents under the Reporting of Incidents Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR) for either annual period.

5.2.2 The following table shows the total number of accidents for the annual periods 2023 / 2024 and 2024 / 2025.

Factors that explain the fluctuations in figures include:

Closure and redevelopment of Hertford Theatre

- (accidents are in employee category or members of the public category when they are recorded).

	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
<b>EHC Employees</b>	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>COMBINED ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
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5.2.3 An analysis of the accident numbers and types have not shown any abnormal trends or patterns over the course of the two years.

- 5.2.4 The Health and Safety Adviser would like to advise members of the Committee that work has been undertaken to encourage colleagues to report incidents and near miss events in order to identify patterns and themes that allow the organisation to implement measures and controls to protect employee health and wellbeing. A new table has been introduced to report the number of Incident and Near Miss events occurring.
- 5.2.5 An incident is a broader term for any event, planned or unplanned, positive, or negative, that may or may not result in harm, damage, or injury. In essence, an accident is a specific type of incident that leads to a negative outcome.

Examples of incidents include, but are not limited to the effects of abusive, threatening behaviours, receiving obscene, aggressive, or threatening phone calls, correspondence, effects on the health of an individual arising from illness, health exacerbated by environmental factors e.g. excessive heat, air quality, extremes of temperature.

The Council also has the Employee Assistance scheme that offers confidential counselling, advice and support for any person affected by an incident, accident or near miss event.

Further support will also be available through the re-launched Mental Health First Aid provision following the successful participation in a 13-week Mental Health skills bootcamp.

## **6.0 Annual Contract Management and Compliance**

- 6.1 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 Adviser 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:

## **6.2 Buntingford Service Centre**

6.2.1 Veolia have now taken responsibility for all operational aspects of Buntingford Depot, significant work has been and continues to be carried out to re-organise and clean the site. Glendale have relocated to Rapier House; Bishops Stortford and the Property Services Manager has overseen considerable improvements to the new depot at Amwell End for Glendale.

Veolia will now have sole charge of the site and will be making considerable alterations to the facility in order to meet the increase in waste streams.

The Health and Safety Adviser would like to provide an update in response to a question raised at the last Committee meeting in respect to the disposal of Vapes and Batteries ranging primary cells or non - rechargeable to secondary cells or rechargeable types.

A question was raised about what information is giving to residents about the safe disposal of these materials. The Health and Safety Adviser consulted the Shared Waste Services Manager who advised the following:

- There have been postings, advice and guidance posted across the Councils social media platforms.

- Information is also provided on the Waste and Recycling pages of the Councils internet.
- Further campaigns are planned once the new waste services and recycling contract is underway to highlight the dangers of disposing spent batteries and vapes in household rubbish bins.

## **7.0 Capital Projects (annual update)**

7.2 The Health and Safety Adviser and Property Services Manager completed a number of safety related matters and supported the team at BEAM Hertford. Both have assisted in the provision of first aid and emergency evacuation arrangements, fire risk assessments and fire safety management plans. In addition, Property Services assisted with security arrangements once the main contractor had left the site.

The Health and Safety Adviser will continue to work with the team and will be supporting the development and implementation of procedures required under 'Martyn's Law' officially the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, that received Royal Assent on Thursday 3 April. It is designed to improve protective security and preparedness for terrorist attacks in public premises and events. It mandates that those responsible for certain venues and events consider how they would respond to a terrorist attack and, in some cases, take steps to reduce vulnerability.

The Government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the Act comes into force. This period will enable us to draw up new procedures and deliver training.

## **8.0 Parking Enforcement Contract (annual update)**

For the purposes of the report the Councils Parking Contract Provision is delivered by APCOA - APCOA's name originates from the former US parent company and is an abbreviation for Airport Parking Corporation of America. The abbreviation MSCP refers to Mult-Storey Car Park.

8.1 The Health and Safety Adviser receives monthly site inspections from the Service Development Officer and Parking Contract Manager on the overall performance of the Parking Enforcement contract (with APCOA).

8.2 The Health and Safety Adviser is supporting the Parking Service Development Officer through improved inspections of the Councils parking provision across the district.

## **9.0 Parks and Open Spaces Management Contract (annual update)**

9.1 There have been no incidents or accidents reported for this period and no incidents involving the Councils Grounds Maintenance Contractor, Glendale.

## **10.0 Lone Worker Contract Annual Update**

10.1 Devices and training ongoing and risk assessments have been updated by teams. Each team has a dedicated portal management administrator who can access and manage team details.

10.7 The Health and Safety Adviser has overall contract management for East Herts Councils service.

10.8 Supporting the Planning Service by assisting with the issue of new lone working devices and service risk assessments.

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

- 11.1 The Health and Safety Adviser continues to liaise with the Leisure and Parks Development Officer (Leisure) on the progress of the improvement programmes.
- 11.2 The Health and Safety Adviser can advise the committee that there have been no on-site accidents or matters of safety concern in relation to BEAM.

## **12.0 Transformation Programme**

- 12.1 The Health and Safety Adviser is now working as part of the transformation team to deliver the planned management and delivery of the transformation programme.
- 12.2 The Health and Safety Adviser ensured that an Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to commencement. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is an evidence-based tool, which enables us to consider the likely impact of work on different groups of people. Completion of equality impact assessments is a legal requirement under race, disability and gender equality legislation and must be undertaken for any changes in the working environment, organisational policies, services to ensure we do not adversely discriminate against any person under the protected characteristics and promote equality of opportunity.
- 12.3 The Health and Safety Adviser has been working with the Corporate Property Services Manager to ensure the old building was ready for High Oak to occupy.  
  
Further work will be undertaken in 24/25 as the transformation programme develops.
- 12.4 The Health and Safety Adviser has been supporting the Housing Team by assisting with modifications to office accommodation at the two hostels and enhance CCTV coverage at Hillcrest. In addition, the Health and Safety Adviser has supported the Housing Team after procuring five flats by assisting with health and safety guidance and advice.

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

- 13.1 The Health and Safety Adviser will be discussing training and development options with the Service Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development in conjunction with UNISON.

This will focus on the Mental Health First Aid provision to ensure we obtain the right level of support and training.

Additional training on plan will be fire safety for clearance volunteers and first aid at work refresher training.

### **Options**

NA

### **Risks**

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

### **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. Failure to implement and support mitigating controls expose the public to risk and may harm the reputation of the Council

#### **Data Protection**

No

#### **Equalities**

No patterns or links in the data for 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**

Yes – Through failure to ensure mitigating measures and controls are implemented and undertaken to protect the Council from financial liability and litigation.

### **Health and Safety**

Yes – As described in the report

### **Human Resources**

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

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

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

### **Specific Wards**

No

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

NA

### **Contact Officer**

Elly Starling

Head of Human Resources and Organisation  
Development

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**Report Author**

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## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by:** Emily Cordwell, HR Officer

**Report title:** Policy Updates 2025

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

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

- a)** To approve the revised Sickness Absence Management Policy (Appendix 1),
- b)** To approve the revised Grievance Policy (Appendix 2),
- c)** To approve the revised Expenses Policy (Appendix 3),
- d)** To approve the revised Appeals Policy (Appendix 4)

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

1.1. The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. Four HR policies have been updated in line with legislation and best practice, ensuring consistency with layout and language.

1.2. The appeals process is currently incorporated at the end of all policies, with exception to the redundancy policy. We are proposing to reinstate the appeals policy as the appeals process is largely the same for all.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 The HR Policies have not been updated since 2021, the full suite of HR policies needs to be updated to incorporate best practice. HR have updated the first tranche of policies and consulted with unison to ensure they are fit for purpose and user friendly.

2.2 HR have included an executive summary at the beginning of each policy, along with a paragraph outlining 'when to use this policy' to provide greater clarity for staff regarding the content of each.

### **3.0 Summary of changes to policies**

#### 3.1 Sickness Absence Management Policy

- Clearer language distinguishing between employee/manager
- Discounting recovery period from triggers. (e.g. 4-week sickness absence recovery following a planned operation)
- Colour coded for sickness absence stages- easier to distinguish and find the relevant forms/flow charts
- Updated flow charts and stress risk assessment
- Section added on medical/dental appointments.

#### 3.2 Grievance Policy

- Greater clarity on when to use the informal vs formal process
- More information on grievance investigations
- New section on dealing with collective grievances
- Updated flowchart
- Appeals process moved into Appeals Policy

#### 3.3 Appeals Policy

- Incorporated the appeals process back in to one policy
- Updated flowchart

#### 3.4 Expenses Policy

- Subsistence rates have been updated.

### **Implications/Consultations**

#### **Community Safety**

No

#### **Data Protection**

No

## **Equalities**

The policies have been updated in line with equalities legislation. An Equality impact assessment has been carried out for all.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

No

## **Financial**

No

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

HR to maintain policy review.

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

The policies have been updated in line with employment legislation.

## **Specific Wards**

No

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

7.1 The updated policies are attached as appendices 1 – 4.

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# Sickness Absence Management Policy

## Executive Summary

### This policy sets out:

- The procedure for absence reporting
- How attendance will be managed
- Sick pay
- Recording sickness and return to work interviews.
- Mental Health and stress
- Short term and long-term absence procedures

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## **1.0 When to use this policy**

1.1 This policy should be referenced when:

- Staff are reporting sickness absence,
- Staff have a planned procedure resulting in a recovery period,
- Absence coincides with booked annual leave,
- Absence is related to mental health or stress and a stress risk assessment is required,
- Occupational health referral is needed,
- To pro rata absence triggers,
- Staff hit trigger points and a formal meeting is required.

## **2.0 Introduction**

2.1 While the Council understands that there will inevitably be some sickness absence among employees, it must also pay due regard to its operational needs. If an employee is persistently absent from work, this can damage efficiency and productivity and place an additional burden on the employee's colleagues. By implementing this policy, the organisation aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its operational needs and the genuine need of employees to take time off work because of ill health.

2.2 The policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

## **3.0 Scope**

3.1 This policy applies to council employees. It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants, or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

3.2 The following procedure covers incidences of absence due to sickness, injury, a medical/health related condition, or disability including the following:

- frequent short-term illness,
- long-term medically certificated illness,
- absence for recovery following a planned procedure and
- Inability to perform requirements of a job owing to a medical condition or disability.

3.3 This policy applies to all employees except for chief officer level or any other nominated statutory posts. Reference should be made to the separate

nationally agreed terms and conditions.

3.4 Members of Leadership Team (LT) (excluding the statutory post holders and the chief officers) will be managed through this procedure with the manager role allocated by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In order to ensure that the CEO is available to consider any appeal the following roles will be allocated at stages 1 to 3:

- Stage one – the CEO will allocate the manager role to a statutory post holder, either the Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer as appropriate.
- Stage two – the manager role would remain with the statutory officer designated by the CEO.
- Stage three – the statutory officer would remain in the manager role with the director (with Deputy Chief Executive responsibilities) hearing the matter at stage 3.
- Appeal – should the matter reach the appeal stage this would be heard by the CEO.

## **4.0 Definitions of absence**

4.1 Short term absence

Short term absence is defined as any period of time where an employee is not at work due to sickness for a period of up to four weeks in duration, from the first day of absence (including half days).

4.2 Long term absence

Long term absence is defined as a period of time where an employee is absent from work due to sickness for a continuous period of greater than 28 calendar days.

4.3 Unauthorised absence

If an employee fails to attend work without permission, or you do not comply with the sickness absence reporting procedure or the evidential requirements set out in this policy, this will be treated as unpaid and a potential disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure.

## **5.0 Responsibilities**

5.1 The guidelines below for managers and employees provide a high-level overview of the council's expectations and processes. You should always refer to more detailed sections of the policy when managing absence (either yours or your team's).

### 5.2 *Guidelines for line managers*

As line managers, you are responsible for ensuring that you:

- manage attendance and absence in accordance with this policy,
- maintain a proper record of sickness absences by ensuring the sickness is logged on My View,
- require the employee to complete a self-certification eform for sickness of seven calendar days or less and to provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days,
- conduct a return-to-work meeting each time the employee returns from a period of sickness absence,
- be alert to patterns of absence, for example frequent absences on Fridays or Mondays, or immediately before or after bank or public holidays,
- seek medical advice through the council's occupational health service<sup>i</sup>, if appropriate, to determine whether or not there is any underlying medical cause for the employee's frequent absences,
- be particularly sensitive when absences are caused by personal or family problems,
- check whether the employee's absences are in any way work related, for example as a result of workplace stress<sup>ii</sup>,
- be aware of the potential for discrimination when managing absence, particularly where the employee's ill health is related to protected characteristics such as pregnancy or disability and
- keep in mind the council's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when managing absence.

### 5.3 *Guidelines for employees*

As an employee, you are responsible for ensuring that:

- if you are unable to attend work because of ill health, you notify your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable, but no later than 10am that day,(if your line manager is not available you should notify a colleague and ask them to notify the appropriate people)
- you give your line manager a clear reason (i.e. the nature of the illness or injury) why you cannot attend work, and if possible an estimate of how long you think the absence will last,
- you continue to notify and keep in touch with your line manager while unable to attend work as agreed between you and your manager. You must complete the MyView self-certification eform for periods of sickness of seven calendar days or less and provide medical evidence such as a 'fit note' for sickness of more than seven calendar days,

- you attend a return-to-work meeting with your line manager each time you return from a period of sickness absence,
- be open with your line manager about the reasons for your absence, to give your line manager the opportunity to provide support where possible,
- tell your line manager of any extenuating circumstances, for example personal or family problems or an unmanageable workload,
- you bear in mind that the council may seek a medical report, for example from your doctor or occupational health advisers and
- you cooperate with the council in regard to the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, particularly those suggested by a healthcare professional.

## **6.0 Reporting sickness absence**

- 6.1 On the first day of sickness absence, you must inform your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable that you will not be working because of illness or injury.
- 6.2 You must notify your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable, but no later than 10am that day,(if your line manager is not available you should notify a colleague and ask them to notify the appropriate people)
- 6.3 You should provide a clear reason (ie the nature of the illness or injury) why you cannot attend work, and estimate how long you think the absence will last. You should also be prepared to discuss briefly any consequences of your absence, for example if customer appointments need to be cancelled or any essential work needs to be covered.
- 6.4 Notification of sickness absence must be via telephone, rather than text message, email or social media. In exceptional circumstances where you are unable to telephone (for example, because of hospitalisation), another person such as a friend or relative can contact the organisation on your behalf.
- 6.5 If you come to work, but need to leave during the day because of ill health, you should inform your line manager before leaving work. If your manager is unavailable, you should inform the next most appropriate person within the department.
- 6.6 Sickness absence that begins part way through the day will count as one full day's sickness absence if you leave before completing 50% of your working day. Where sickness absence begins after you have completed 50% of your working day, this will be recorded as half a day's absence.

## **7.0 Evidence of sickness absence**

### 7.1 Self-certification

If you are absent for seven calendar days or less, you must complete and sign a self-certification form within My View, setting out the dates of your absence and the nature of your illness or injury.

### 7.2 Statement of fitness for work (fit note)

If you are absent for eight consecutive days or more (including weekends), you must provide your line manager with a fit note (statement of fitness for work) as soon as possible. If your absence persists beyond the end of the first fit note, you must continue to submit further fit notes to cover the whole period of your absence. It is your responsibility to keep the Council informed about your progress and your likely date of return to work.

Fit notes can be issued by doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists as long as they have conducted an assessment of your fitness for work.

A fit note may state that:

- you are "not fit for work", in which case you should remain off work or
- you "may be fit for work", if the healthcare professional's recommendations are followed (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations).

While there is no legal obligation to follow the recommendations in the fit note, your line manager will take the recommendations seriously and give fair consideration, in consultation with you and the HR team, as to whether any of the changes recommended can be accommodated. The manager may also need to refer your case to the council's occupational health advisor for further guidance.

## **8.0 Keeping in touch**

8.1 It is important that we maintain regular contact with you while you are absent to:

- see how you are progressing in terms of your health,
- support you and actively maintain your engagement with us,
- provide information to you so that you may make informed decisions (for example, in relation to health-related benefits),
- provide practical support from our occupational health advisers,
- facilitate a phased return to work if required, by making appropriate temporary or permanent adjustments and
- ensure that you are kept up to date about events in the workplace.

8.2 You and your line manager are both jointly responsible for maintaining contact with each other. Once you are absent on sick leave for 28

continuous days, your line manager will contact you to agree the method and frequency of contact. Contact will be on a regular basis, most likely weekly/fortnightly.

## **9.0 Return-to-work meeting**

- 9.1 On your first day back at work after any period of sickness absence, or as soon as reasonably practicable, your line manager will arrange to meet with you to conduct a return-to-work meeting. The purpose of the return-to-work meeting is to provide you with an opportunity to discuss the reason for your absence and whether you need any particular support.
- 9.2 At the meeting, your line manager will inform you if they have any concerns about your absence record and if the need for formal action under the organisation's absence management procedure has been triggered.
- 9.3 All discussions between you and your line manager will be treated sensitively and in confidence. Following this discussion, your manager will complete the return to work eform on My View which will be sent to HR and saved on your personnel file.

## **10.0 Special cases**

### **10.1 Pregnancy-related absences**

If you are pregnant and are absent from work for a pregnancy-related illness, your sickness absence will not be included when checking to see if the sickness absence management procedure has been triggered.

### **10.2 Disability**

If you have a disability, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let the council know so that we can support you, for example by making reasonable adjustments to our premises, aspects of your role, our working practices, and/or our sickness absence management procedure.

If your sickness absence is due to a disability, please contact your line manager/HR to discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may help you return to work or support you after you have returned to work. We may need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser or occupational health to help us get the right support in place.

### **10.3 Recovery time**

Absence will be discounted towards triggers if you have a doctor's certificate following an operation or procedure outlining recovery time is needed before

returning to work.

#### 10.4 Part-time workers

If you are a part-time worker, the trigger points in the sickness absence management procedure will be pro-rata based on your Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

For example, the trigger of ten days absence within a rolling 12 month will be adjusted for part-time workers to:

- 8 days in 12 months if you work 30 hours per week;
- 6 days in 12 months if you work 22.5 hours per week;
- 5 days in 12 months if you work 18.5 hours per week

### **11.0 Sick pay**

11.1 We operate a contractual sick pay scheme that is more generous than statutory sick pay (SSP). Your entitlement to contractual sick pay is set out in your contract of employment.

11.2 We reserve the right to withhold or suspend sick pay under our contractual sick pay scheme at our discretion. Circumstances in which contractual sick pay may be withheld include where:

- you have failed to comply with the organisation's sickness absence notification and evidence requirements,
- you refuse to attend a medical examination at the reasonable request of the organisation,
- you make or produce a misleading or untrue statement or document concerning your fitness to work,

11.3 You will normally be entitled to receive SSP when contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended, although we can withhold or suspend SSP if we are not satisfied that you are ill, and no evidence of sickness is provided.

11.4 You will be given written notice if your SSP or contractual sick pay is being withheld or suspended.

### **12.0 Medical and dental appointments**

12.1 You should endeavour to arrange medical and dental appointments in your own time. However, we recognise that it may not always be possible or practical to arrange medical and dental appointments outside working hours, and that you may from time-to-time need time off work for such



appointments. This should be managed using annual leave or flexi.

- 12.2 To make a request for time off to attend a routine medical or dental appointment, you should contact your line manager. You should give as much notice as possible of when you need the time off and, wherever possible, arrange your appointments outside your core hours/as near to the start or end of the working day.
- 12.3 If you are given a specific date and time to attend a hospital appointment and fertility treatments, you are entitled to use paid absence. Your manager may ask you to provide proof of the date and time of your appointment. hospital appoint for surgery would be paid absence, but the following days in hospital or recovering at home will be sick pay.
- 12.4 Medical or dental emergencies requiring urgent, unforeseen medical or dental attention and cases where you are admitted to hospital for emergency surgery will be treated as sickness absence in accordance with this policy.

## **13.0 Sickness absence and annual leave**

### **13.1 Sickness during holiday**

If you fall sick or are injured while on holiday, you may choose to take your holiday as sick leave subject to the following conditions:

- the total period of sickness must be fully certificated by a qualified medical practitioner,
- you must contact your line manager (by telephone if possible) as soon as you know that there will be a period of sickness during your holiday,
- you must submit a written request to your line manager after returning to work, setting out how much of your holiday was affected by sickness and
- if you are overseas when you fall ill or are injured, the total period of sickness absence must still be evidenced by way of a medical certificate.

If you fall sick or are injured before the start of a period of planned holiday, and as a consequence you are unable to take your holiday, you may postpone your holiday dates to another mutually agreed time.

### **13.2 Holiday during sick leave**

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during any period of sick leave.

If you are unable to take your full holiday entitlement due to sickness absence, or if you are still absent at the end of the holiday year, you may carry over any unused holiday to the next holiday year.

Any holiday that is carried over under this provision must be taken within 18 months of the end of the holiday year in which it was accrued.

Alternatively, you may book a period of holiday while on sick leave to receive holiday pay for that period, provided that you give your manager as much notice as possible.

## **14.0 Stress and Mental Health**

- 14.1 There is often a link between stress and mental health. Managers can support employees affected by mental health problems by:
- exploring whether their mental health problem is impacted by problems at work and if so, trying to find a resolution to their concerns,
  - encouraging employees to raise and discuss issues concerning their mental health confidentially,
  - keeping in touch with employees who are off sick; managers should not pressurise employees but should encourage them to keep them informed,
  - offering employees returning to work from a period of mental health sickness absence a gradual return to work,
  - encouraging employees to look after their mental health; ensuring employees take lunch breaks and have a good work-life balance and
  - reminding employees of the support and advice available to them through the Employee Assistance Programme and/or the Mental Health First Aiders.
- 14.2 Managers should respond to work related concerns that are having an impact on the employee's stress levels and undertake reasonable measures to eliminate or control these.
- 14.3 Where an employee has cited job related stressors within their service areas, managers must conduct a stress risk assessment as soon as reasonably practicable (see Appendix 14 for template).

## **15.0 Medical reports**

- 15.1 At various stages of managing your sickness absence, we may need to obtain a medical report on you to:
- determine your fitness for carrying out your role,
  - determine whether you are fit to return to work after a period of sickness absence, or when you might return to work,
  - determine your entitlement to health-related benefits (e.g. sick pay),
  - assess the need to make reasonable adjustments to your working environment and/or
  - comply with other legal obligations.

- 15.2 Depending on the circumstances, we might instruct your own doctor/consultant, occupational health, and/or an independent medical adviser. When deciding which medical practitioner to instruct, we will consider the purpose of the report and factors such as the need for objectivity, specialist expertise, and knowledge about your medical history and the requirements of your role.
- 15.3 If we decide that a medical report is necessary, we will write to you confirming why we intend to obtain a medical report and from whom the medical report will be obtained. In addition, you will be fully informed of your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 15.4 Where we decide to obtain a medical report directly from your own doctor/consultant, the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 applies. Therefore, when we write to you, we will also ask you to confirm whether you provide your consent for us to approach your doctor/consultant. You will be notified of all your rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, including the right to see the medical report before it is supplied to us.
- 15.5 Once we have received the report, we will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the contents and identify the appropriate next steps.
- 15.6 You should be aware that if you refuse to attend a medical examination, or you withhold your consent to a medical report being disclosed to us, we may need to make decisions affecting your employment without the benefit of medical input, which could be to your detriment.

## **16.0 Sickness absence management procedure**

We will work to ensure that we handle any issues concerning poor attendance promptly and fairly. However, where our attempts at encouraging good attendance have been unsuccessful, we will follow a formal sickness absence management procedure. The procedure will be triggered when an employee reaches a certain level of absence. When applying the trigger points for each stage of the procedure, the special rules that apply to pregnancy and disability will be taken into account.

### **16.1 Short term absence level 1**

#### Level 1 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a 'Level 1' formal absence meeting is there have been:

- 10 days or more of absence over the previous 12 months, or
- three or more periods of absence in any three-month period.

If you reach a 'Level 1' trigger point, you will be invited in writing to a 'Level 1' absence meeting.

## Conducting a Level 1 absence meeting

The Level 1 absence meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager. Where it is considered appropriate, a member of the HR department may also be present.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the employee's level of attendance, establish if there are any underlying health problems and whether there is anything that we can do to facilitate an improvement in their attendance levels. A review period will be set, and they will be advised of possible outcomes if expectations are not met.

At the meeting, the employee will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified by their line manager as amounting to unsatisfactory attendance.

The outcome of the meeting will include:

- setting a 4-month review period and
- setting out the levels of absence that would trigger a level 2 meeting. For full time staff this will be 3.5 days or more and/or 3 spells of absence in 3 months (this will be pro-rated for part time staff).

**Please see Level 1 meeting form at Appendix 6, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

## Level 1 – Follow up review meeting.

If at the end of the review period the attendance expectations have been met, the manager will advise you that:

- no further action is necessary,
- if trigger points for investigation are reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, the procedure will continue from the beginning of Level 2 and
- if trigger points are not reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, but are reached again after that time the procedure will normally start from Level 1.

Where there has been some improvement, but expectations have not been met completely, the line manager may extend the level 1 review period or if the triggers have been met, move to Level 2.

**Please see Level 1 *review* meeting form at Appendix 7, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

## 16.2 Short term absence Level 2

### Level 2 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a stage 2 formal absence meeting is:

- if absence continues beyond the agreed Level 1 review period or
- where the employee's absence hits trigger points within 12 months of a Level 1 review meeting.

The employee may be referred to Occupational Health at this stage and or medical reports obtained from the GP or medical practitioner.

If the employee reaches a Level 2 trigger point, they will be invited in writing to a Level 2 formal absence meeting. The employee will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow them to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany them.

Employees will be entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative if they are a member of UNISON. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with the employee.

#### Conducting a Level 2 absence meeting

The Level 2 formal review meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager. Where it is considered appropriate, a member of the HR department may also be present.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the employee's level of attendance, establish if there are any underlying health problems and whether there is anything that we can do to facilitate an improvement in their attendance levels.

At the meeting, the employee will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified by their line manager as amounting to unsatisfactory attendance.

The outcome of the meeting may include:

- where it's clear there is no improvement to sickness, the manager may refer the case to a member of LT for consideration in line with level 3 or
- setting a further review period of no more than five days absence in six months or three occasions in three months.

When considering setting a further review period:

- if the employee has previously been through the Level 2 or Level 3 process on more than one occasion, the review period should be 12 months,
- if there is no improvement the matter must be referred to Level 3 and
- where it's considered to be a disciplinary rather than a sickness matter, your manager may refer to the Disciplinary Policy.

**Please see Level 2 meeting form at Appendix 8, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

## Level 2 – Follow up review meeting.

If at the end of the review period the attendance expectations have been met, the manager should advise the employee that:

- no further action is necessary,
- if trigger points for investigation are reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, the procedure will continue from the beginning of Level 2 and
- if trigger points are not reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, but are reached again after that time the procedure will normally start from Level 1.

**Please see Level 2 *review* meeting form at Appendix 9, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

## 16.3 Long Term absence Level 1

If an employee has been absent for four weeks or more continuously, they should normally be referred to Occupational Health. If they are too ill to attend, they must be asked to give consent to obtain relevant medical information.

On receiving advice from Occupational Health, the employee will be invited in writing to a Level 1 formal review meeting. They will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow them to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany them.

If you return to work prior to the Level 1 meeting, the meeting will take place in accordance with the short-term absence procedure.

The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative if they are a member of UNISON. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with the employee.

### Conducting a Level 1 absence meeting

The Level 1 absence meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager. Where it is considered appropriate, a member of the HR department may also be present.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the employee's absence so far, confirm the reason for absence and the likelihood of returning to work in the near future.

The outcome of the meeting will include:

- setting a reasonable date for review,
- considering measures to assist the employee in returning to work and
- outlining the possible range of outcomes.

**Please see Level 1 long term absence meeting form at Appendix 10, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

Level 1 – Follow up review meeting.

If at the end of the review period the attendance expectations have been met, the manager will advise the employee that:

- no further action is necessary,
- if trigger points for investigation are reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, the procedure will continue from the beginning of Level 2 either the Long Term or Short Term procedure, as appropriate and
- if trigger points are not reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, but are reached again after that time the procedure will normally start from Level 1.

**Please see Level 1 *review* meeting form at Appendix 11, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

#### 16.4 Long term absence level 2

Level 2 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a Level 2 formal review meeting is:

- if absence continues beyond the agreed Level 1 review period or
- where the employee's absence hits long term trigger points within 12 months of a Level 1 review meeting. E.g. another absence of four weeks or more.

The employee may be referred to Occupational Health at this stage and or medical reports obtained from the GP or medical practitioner.

If the employee reaches a Level 2 trigger point, they will be invited in writing to a Level 2 formal absence meeting. The employee will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow them to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany them.

The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative if they are a member of UNISON. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with the employee.

Conducting a Level 2 absence meeting

The Level 2 formal review meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager. Where it is considered appropriate, a member of the HR department may also be present.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the employee's level of attendance, establish if there are any underlying health problems and whether there is anything that we can do to facilitate an improvement in their attendance levels.

At the meeting, the employee will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified by their line manager as amounting to unsatisfactory attendance.

Depending on the outcome of the medical advice, the manager may decide on any of the following courses of action:

- where it's clear there is no improvement to sickness, the manager may refer the case to a member of LT for consideration in line with Level 3,
- set a further review period or
- if no improvement the matter will be referred to Level 3 and consideration may be given to the employee's continued employment.

**Please see Level 2 Long Term Absence form at Appendix 12, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

Level 2 – Follow up review meeting.

If at the end of the review period the attendance expectations have been met, the manager should advise the employee that:

- no further action is necessary,
- if trigger points for investigation are reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, the procedure will continue from the beginning of Level 2 of either Long Term or Short Term procedure, as appropriate and
- if trigger points are not reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, but are reached again after that time the procedure will normally start from Level 1.

**Please see Level 2 *review* meeting form at Appendix 13, the completed form should be sent to HR.**

**16.5 Level 3- Sickness and attendance hearing  
(Capability Review hearing)**

Level 3 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a Level 3 formal review meeting is where:

- attendance expectations not being met during a Level 2 review period or
- w the matter has been directly referred to Level 3.



The employee will be referred to Occupational Health for an up to date medical opinion and/or medical reports obtained from the employee's GP or medical practitioner. The employee's line manager will prepare a report including:

- a summary of your employment record: length of service, job description and performance record,
- attendance record during your employment,
- actions taking so far (including notes of previous meetings),
- factual medical information, underlying health conditions,
- reasonable adjustments that can be made or why proposed adjustments are not reasonable,
- the effects on the service and financial impact on the council and
- any other relevant information.

The employee will be invited in writing to a Level 3 formal review meeting by a member of Leadership Team. The employee will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow them to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany them.

The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative if they are a member of UNISON. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with the employee.

We will give the employee a copy of all documents relevant to their case in advance of the formal review meeting, and they will be invited to submit any further evidence that they consider to be relevant.

#### Conducting a Level 3 absence meeting

The Level 3 formal review meeting will be conducted by a member of Leadership Team, accompanied by a HR Officer.

The meeting is to discuss the employee's future employment with the council. Depending on the medical advice received, the LT member may decide on any of the following courses of action:

- **Additional review period in current role:**  
*If attendance expectations are not met within review period, your employment may be terminated.*
- **Redeployment with a review period**  
*Part-time work on a temporary or permanent basis with a pro-rata reduction in salary and/or*  
*Transfer to a less demanding post if available (four weeks' trial, salary protection not included)*
- **Dismissal on grounds of ill health retirement**
- **Dismissal on the grounds of:**  
-Non-attendance at work is unacceptably high and is not reasonable for the

council to continue to employ them.

-No long-term improvement can be expected within a reasonable time period.

At the meeting, the employee will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified by their line manager as amounting to unsatisfactory attendance.

### *Level 3 - The outcome*

The outcome will be confirmed to the employee in writing as soon as possible and usually within seven working days after the formal review meeting.

If performance and attendance expectations have been met, the employee will be advised:

- no further action is necessary and
- if trigger points for investigation are reached again within 12 months of the review meeting, the procedure will continue from the beginning of Level 3.

If there has been some improvement, but expectations have not been met completely, the review period may be extended.

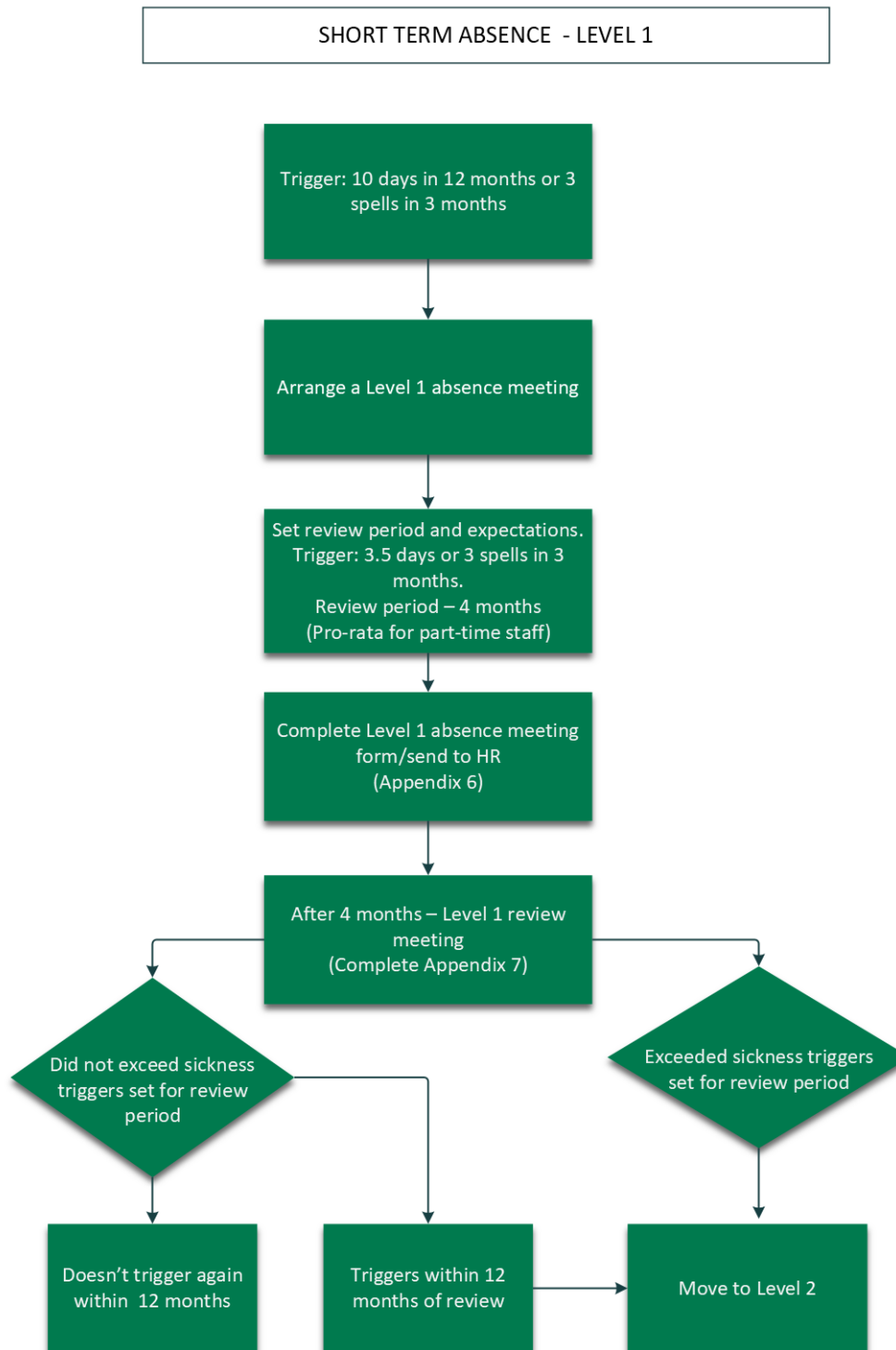
If expectations have not been met, dismissal will be considered. The decision to dismiss together with the reasons for dismissal will be set out in writing and sent to the employee.

## **17.0 Appeal**

The employee has a right of appeal against a sanction issued under Levels 1, 2 or 3 of this policy. This will be dealt with in line with the council's Appeals policy.

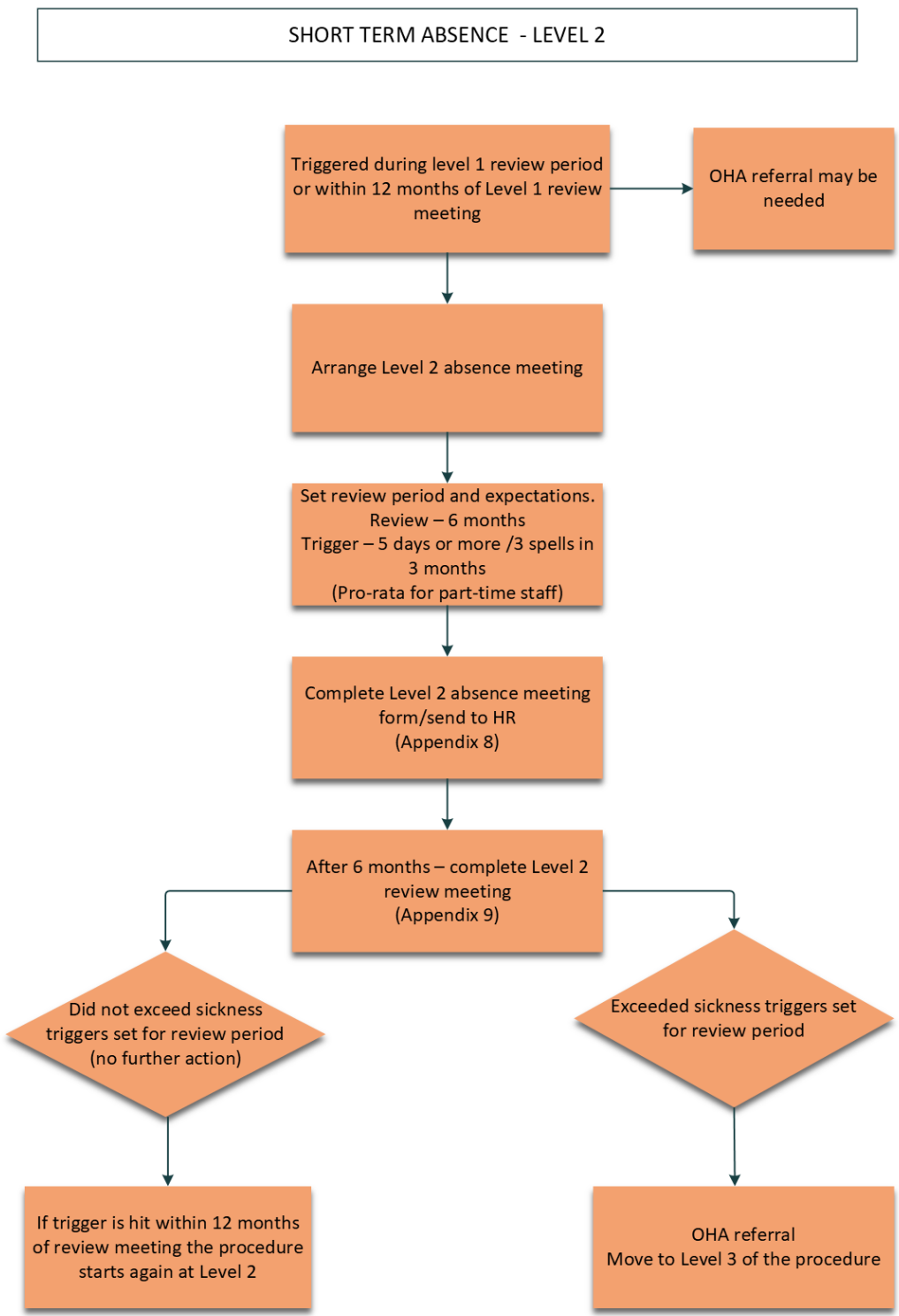
## Appendix 1

### Short Term Absence Flowchart Level 1



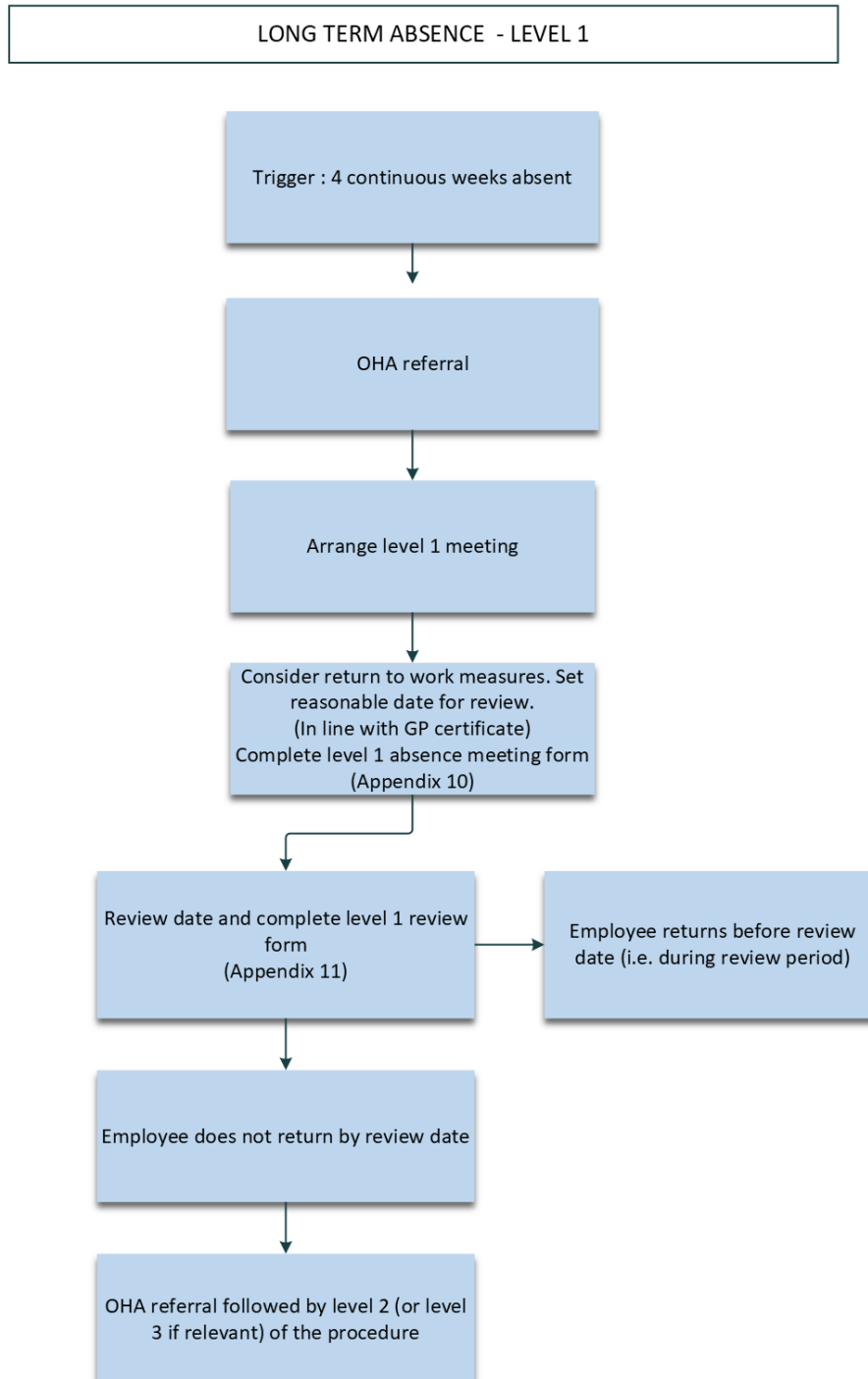
## Appendix 2

# Short Term Absence Flowchart Level 2



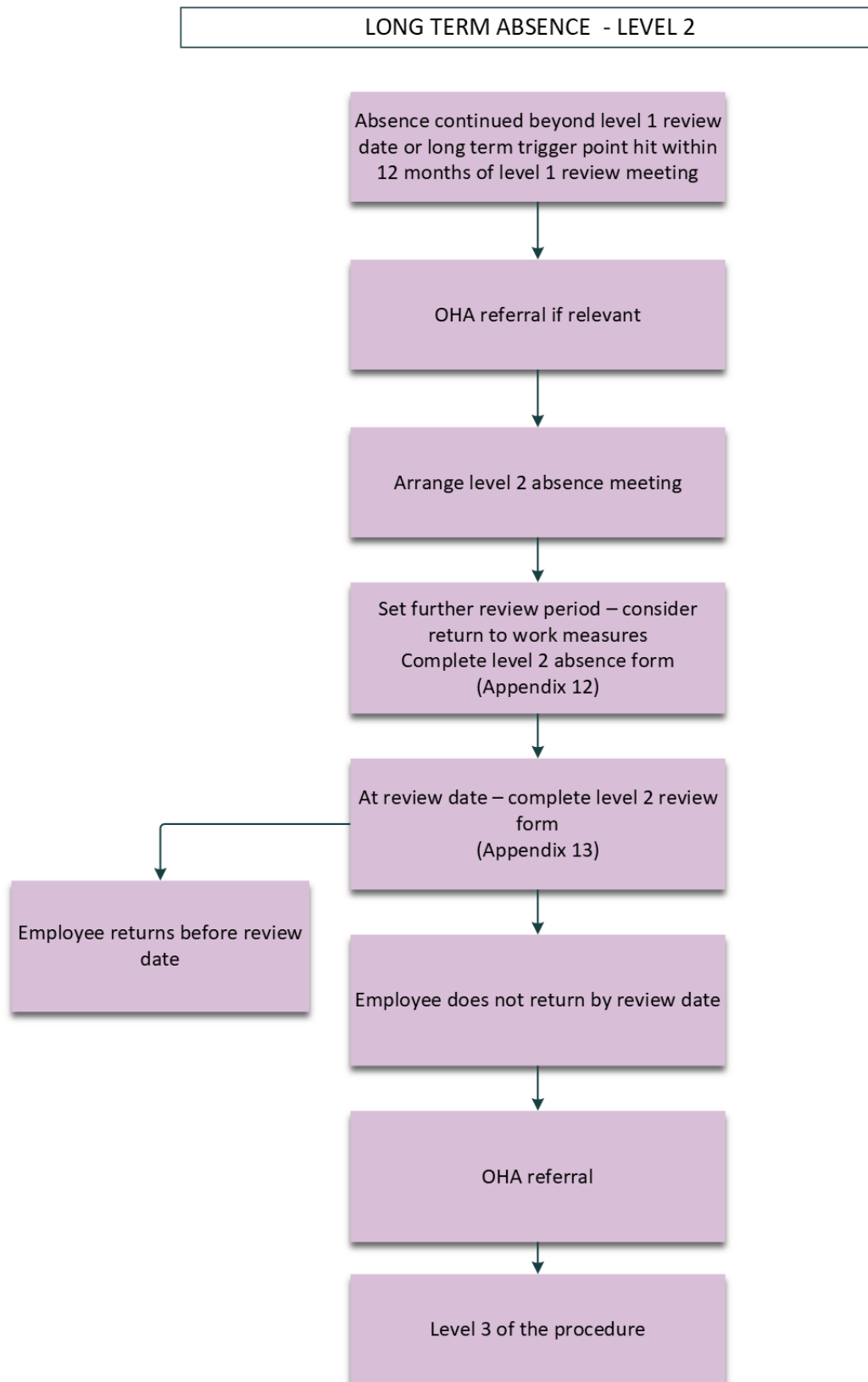
## Appendix 3

### Long Term Absence Flowchart Level 1



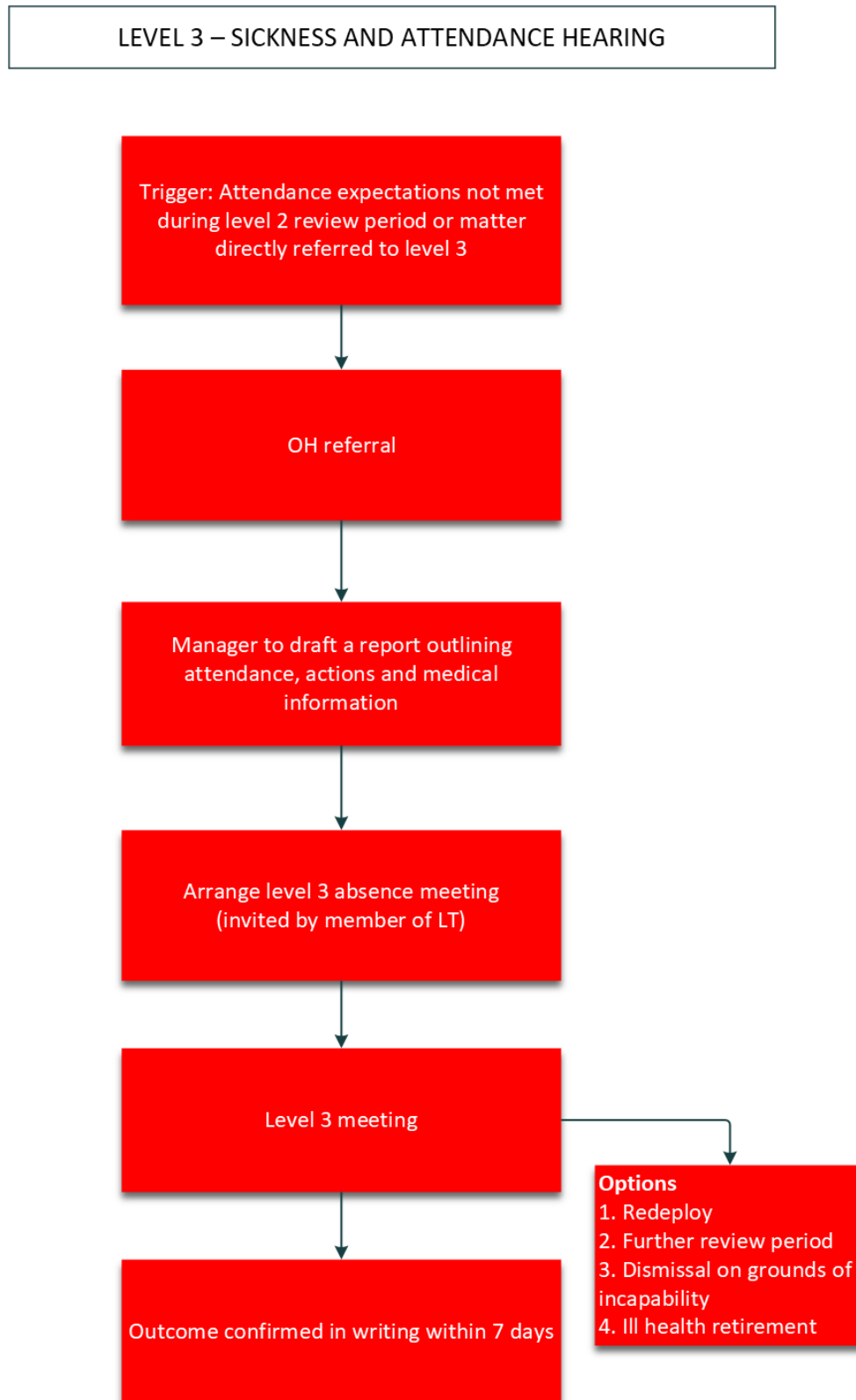
## Appendix 4

### Long Term Absence Flowchart Level 2



## Appendix 5

### Level 3- Capability Hearing flowchart



## Appendix 6

### Short Term Level 1 sickness meeting form (*initial meeting*)

Employee Name:

Service:

Line Manager Name:

Meeting Date:

Action required	Response
Explain reason for meeting: ( <i>Outline what triggers have been met &amp; confirm absence dates</i> )	
Request explanation for absences. ( <i>check details are correct</i> )	
Is there a pattern of absence/link between sickness bouts:	
Have any health issues been discussed with employees own doctor:	
Any work or personal factors exacerbating absence:	
Level 1 Sickness Meeting Review Date:	
Level 1 Review Period Triggers:	
Explain that Level 2 can be triggered by normal annual triggers which follow in 12 months from review period.	

Employee Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 7

### Short Term Level 1 sickness review meeting form

Employee Name:

Line Manager Name:

Date of Review Meeting:

Date of L1 Sickness Meeting:

Action required	Response
Outline any absence due to sickness during the review period:	
Have the targets/expectations been met with reference to the council policy?	
If absence is borderline re targets/expectations, is an extension of the review period necessary? <i>State extension period &amp; date as necessary.</i>	
Date sickness review expires if triggers are not met within 12 months.	
Should absence exceed council policy within the next 12-months, state next level of sickness process:	

Employee Signature:

Line Manager Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 8

### Short Term Level 2 sickness meeting form *(initial meeting)*

Employee Name:

Service:

Line Manager Name:

Meeting Date:

Action required	Response
Explain reason for meeting: <i>(Outline how triggers have been met &amp; confirm absence dates)</i>	
Request explanation for absences. <i>(check details are correct)</i>	
Is there a pattern of absence/link between sickness bouts:	
Any underlying health issues:	
Have health issues been discussed with employees own doctor:  What action is the employee taking to improve health / ability to attend?  What support/guidance has been given by GP or medical services.	
Review advice from Occupational Health and any action required	
Any work or personal factors exacerbating absence:  What support is required from work?	
Return to work, agreed support and phased return plan if relevant.	
Level 2 Sickness Meeting Review Date:	
Level 2 Review Period Triggers:	5 days in 6 months or 3 spells in 3 months

Level 2 Sickness Meeting Review Date:	
Explain that Level 2 can be re-triggered by normal annual triggers which follow in 12 months from review period.	

Employee Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 9

### Short Term Absence Level 2 sickness review meeting form

Employee Name:

Line Manager Name:

Date of Review Meeting:

Date of L2 Sickness Meeting:

Action required	Response
Outline any absence due to sickness during the review period:	
Have the targets/expectations been met with reference to the council policy?	
If absence is borderline re targets/expectations, is an extension of the review period necessary? <i>State extension period &amp; date as necessary</i>	
Date sickness review expires if triggers are not met within 12 months.	
Should absence exceed council policy within the next 12-months, state next level of sickness process:	

Employee Signature:

Line Manager Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 10

### Long Term Absence Level 1 Sickness Meeting form (initial meeting)

Employee Name:

Service:

Line Manager Name:

Meeting Date:

Action required	Response
Explain reason for meeting: (Outline what triggers have been met & confirm dates)	
Request explanation for absences	
Is the recent long-term absence part of any pattern:	
Any underlying health issues:	
Have health issues been discussed with employees own doctor:  What action is the employee taking to improve health / ability to attend?  What support/guidance has been given by GP or medical services.	
Review advice from Occupational Health and any action required	
Any work or personal factors exacerbating absence:  What support is required from work?	
Return to work, agreed support and phased return plan if relevant.	

Actions required	Response
Level 1 Sickness Review Date:	
Level 1 Review Period Triggers:	

<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Response</b>
Explain that Level 2 can be triggered by normal annual triggers which follow in 12 months from review.	

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 11

### Long Term Absence Level 1 sickness review meeting form

Employee Name:

Line Manager Name:

Date of Review Meeting:

Date of L1 Sickness Meeting:

Action required	Response
Outline any absence due to sickness during the review period:	
Have the targets/expectations been met with reference to the council policy?	
If absence is borderline re targets/expectations, is an extension of the review period necessary? <i>State extension period &amp; date as necessary.</i>	
Date sickness review expires if triggers are not met within 12 months.	
Should absence exceed council policy within the next 12-months, state next level of sickness process:	

Employee Signature:

Line Manager Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 12

### Long Term Absence Level 2 sickness meeting form *(initial meeting)*

Employee Name:

Service:

Line Manager Name:

Meeting Date:

Action required	Response
Explain reason for meeting: <i>(Outline how triggers have been met &amp; confirm absence dates)</i>	
Request explanation for absences. <i>(check details are correct)</i>	
Is there a pattern of absence/link between sickness bouts:	
Any underlying health issues:	
Have health issues been discussed with employees own doctor:  What action is the employee taking to improve health / ability to attend?  What support/guidance has been given by GP or medical services.	
Review advice from Occupational Health and any action required	
Any work or personal factors exacerbating absence:  What support is required from work?	
Return to work, agreed support and phased return plan if relevant.	
Level 2 Sickness Meeting Review Date:	
Level 2 Review Period Triggers:	5 days in 6 months or 3 spells in 3 months



Level 2 Sickness Meeting Review Date:	
Explain that Level 2 can be re-triggered by normal annual triggers which follow in 12 months from review period.	

Employee Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 13

### Long Term Absence Level 2 sickness review meeting form

Employee Name:

Line Manager Name:

Date of Review Meeting:

Date of L2 Sickness Meeting:

Action required	Response
Outline any absence due to sickness during the review period:	
Have the targets/expectations been met with reference to the council policy?	
If absence is borderline re targets/expectations, is an extension of the review period necessary? <i>State extension period &amp; date as necessary</i>	
Date sickness review expires if triggers are not met within 12 months.	
Should absence exceed council policy within the next 12-months, state next level of sickness process:	

Employee Signature:

Line Manager Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 14

### East Herts Council Stress Risk Assessment Form

The HSE Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work, this form prompts discussion on each source so that action can be informed.

**Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

**Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

**Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

**Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

**Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

**Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

### STRESS ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

**Service:**

**Team:**

**Employee Date of assessment:**

**Review date:**

**Manager's signature:**

**HR's signature:**

**Employee signature:**

<b>RISK LEVEL</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>		
	High probability of long term sickness due to work related stress	Medium probability of sickness due to work related stress	Low probability of work-related stress		
	Immediate action required	Action required	Exposure to hazard - rare.		
Potential work-related stressors identified	Risk Rating	Individual concerns	Reasonable adjustments	Target date for implementation and person(s) responsible	Review date
<b>Demands</b>					
What causes you to feel under unnecessary pressure?					
Are priorities clarified?					
Are deadlines realistic and agreed?					
Do you have appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake the tasks?					
Do you have sufficient resources?					
Do you feel the work is boring/repetitive?					
<b>Control</b>					
Is there clarity of who does what in the team?					
Do you have control over the way you carry out tasks?					
Do you have a say in your work speed?					
<b>Support</b>					

Can you rely on your manager to help you with a work problem?					
Does your line manager encourage you at work?					
Are you given supportive feedback on the work you do?					
Do you get help and support from colleagues and staff?					
Do you receive the respects at work you deserve from your colleagues/staff?					
<b>Relationships</b>					
Is there friction or anger between colleagues?					
Are you subject to bullying at work?					
Are relationships at work strained?					
<b>Role</b>					
Do you understand the key aspects of your role?					
Are the standards expected clearly outlined?					
Are there demands placed upon you that are not in line with the role?					

Is there a clear reporting structure?					
<b>Change</b>					
Have you been given the opportunity to comment on change at work?					
Have you been consulted about change at work?					
Have you been supported through change by the team?					
<b>Other stressors</b>					
Do you have any other issues that's affecting your work?					

## **Appendix 15**

Change Log:  
2025 Policy issued.

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# Appeals policy

**June 2025**

## Executive Summary

This policy provides a clear and structured appeals process for employees who wish to challenge employment-related decisions. It ensures fairness, compliance with UK employment law, and adherence to ACAS guidelines. Key provisions include eligibility criteria, acceptable grounds for appeal, procedural steps, and timeframes for submission and resolution.

This policy takes precedence over any appeals processes detailed in existing policies.

Employees who wish to challenge employment-related decisions. It ensures fairness, compliance with UK employment law, and adherence to ACAS guidelines. Key provisions include eligibility criteria, acceptable grounds for appeal, procedural steps, and timeframes for submission and resolution.

This policy takes precedence over any appeals processes detailed in existing policies.

Employees who wish to challenge employment-related decisions. It ensures fairness, compliance with UK employment law, and adherence to ACAS guidelines. Key provisions include eligibility criteria, acceptable grounds for appeal, procedural steps, and timeframes for submission and resolution.





## **1.0 When would I use this policy?**

1.1 This policy should be used when an employee wishes to appeal against a formal decision made under an employment policy listed in section 3.2. Appeals may relate to:

- disciplinary matters,
- grievances,
- performance management,
- absence management,
- redundancy and suitable alternative decisions,
- flexible working decisions,
- harassment and bullying cases,
- whistleblowing or
- discrimination claims.

1.2 This policy takes precedence over any appeals processes detailed in existing policies.

1.3 The appeals process for collective grievances is covered in the council's Grievance Policy.

## **2.0 Introduction**

2.1 This policy provides a structured process for employees to appeal decisions made under various employment policies, ensuring fairness, compliance with UK employment law, and adherence to ACAS guidelines

## **3.0 Scope**

3.1 This policy applies to all East Herts Council employees, excluding Chief Officers, who are subject to alternative procedures listed in the constitution.

3.2 This policy covers appeals related to the following:

- Disciplinary Policy,
- Grievance Policy,
- Managing Performance Policy,
- Absence Management Policy,
- Redundancy Policy (excluding voluntary redundancy),
- Flexible Working Scheme,
- Ending of Fixed Term Employment Policy and procedure,
- Harassment and Bullying Policy,
- Process for dismissal for some other substantial reason (SOSR) and

- whistleblowing and discrimination appeals.

3.3 Any formal appeal not covered by the policies listed above will follow the procedure in section 5.

#### **4.0 Time limits and submission**

4.1 Appeals must be submitted in writing within ten working days of the written decision.

4.2 Late appeals will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.

4.3 Appeals must be submitted using the Appeal Submission Form (Appendix A) and sent to the HR Officer.

#### **5.0 Grounds for appeal**

5.1 Employees may appeal on the following grounds:

- **Procedural unfairness** A breach of the correct procedure.
- **Unreasonable decision:** A decision that no reasonable person would have made.
- **Disproportionate sanction:** A penalty too harsh for the offence.
- **New evidence:** Significant evidence unavailable during the initial decision.
- **Discrimination:** A decision that breaches the Equality Act 2010.
- **Whistleblowing retaliation:** An appeal related to unfair treatment following whistleblowing.

#### **6.0 Appeals Procedure**

6.1 Appeals will be heard by a senior manager not previously involved in the case. Dismissal appeals will be heard by a Director or the Chief Executive.

6.2 Employees have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative if they are a member of UNISON.

6.3 **Remote hearings** will be permitted where appropriate.

6.4 Witnesses may be called only to present new, relevant evidence.

## **7.0 Appeal meeting process**

### **7.1 Appeals overview**

Appeals are typically heard by senior management, such as a Service Manager or Director, who has not previously been involved. Appeals against dismissal are heard by the Director or Chief Executive.

### **7.2 Against Chief Officers**

For appeals concerning the Chief Executive or Chief Officer follow the Constitution for appeals.

### **7.3 Step 1 - Written notification**

- Human Resources will notify the employee of the appeal meeting at least five working days in advance, including their right to be accompanied.
- Meetings should occur within 10 working days of receiving the appeal submission.
- Employees must submit new evidence or notify HR of witnesses five working days before the meeting.
- The senior manager or director must present a detailed response, including all relevant documents, before the meeting.

### **7.4 Step 2 - Appeal meeting**

The appeal meeting will focus on the grounds of appeal, allowing any new and relevant evidence.

#### Role of Human Resources

An HR Officer will accompany the senior manager or director to advise on procedures and take notes. An additional note taker may be appointed where appropriate.

#### Witnesses

- Original witnesses are not required unless new evidence related to the appeal's grounds is introduced.
- Employees must notify HR five working days prior to the meeting if they wish to call a witness.

#### Meeting process

1. The senior manager or director ensures all parties understand the grounds of appeal.
2. The employee presents their case and evidence, followed by questioning.

3. The senior manager or director responds and is also subject to questioning.
4. The employee has the right to sum up their case.
5. The meeting closes for consideration.

7.5 Step 3 - Written notification of outcome

- The employee will receive the decision in writing within five working days.
  - The decision is final, and the council's grievance procedure cannot be used for further challenges.
  - An appeal will not result in an increased penalty, and if a dismissal appeal is successful, the employee will be reinstated with full back pay.
-

Appendix 1: Appeal Submission Form:

Employee Name:

Service:

Job title:

Date of Appeal submission:

**Policy Under Which Appeal is Being Made:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Decision Being Appealed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grounds for Appeal (tick as appropriate):**

- Procedural unfairness
- Unreasonable decision
- Disproportionate sanction
- New evidence
- Discrimination
- Whistleblowing retaliation

**Details of Appeal:**

(Provide an explanation of why you are appealing and attach any supporting evidence)

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**Desired Outcome:**

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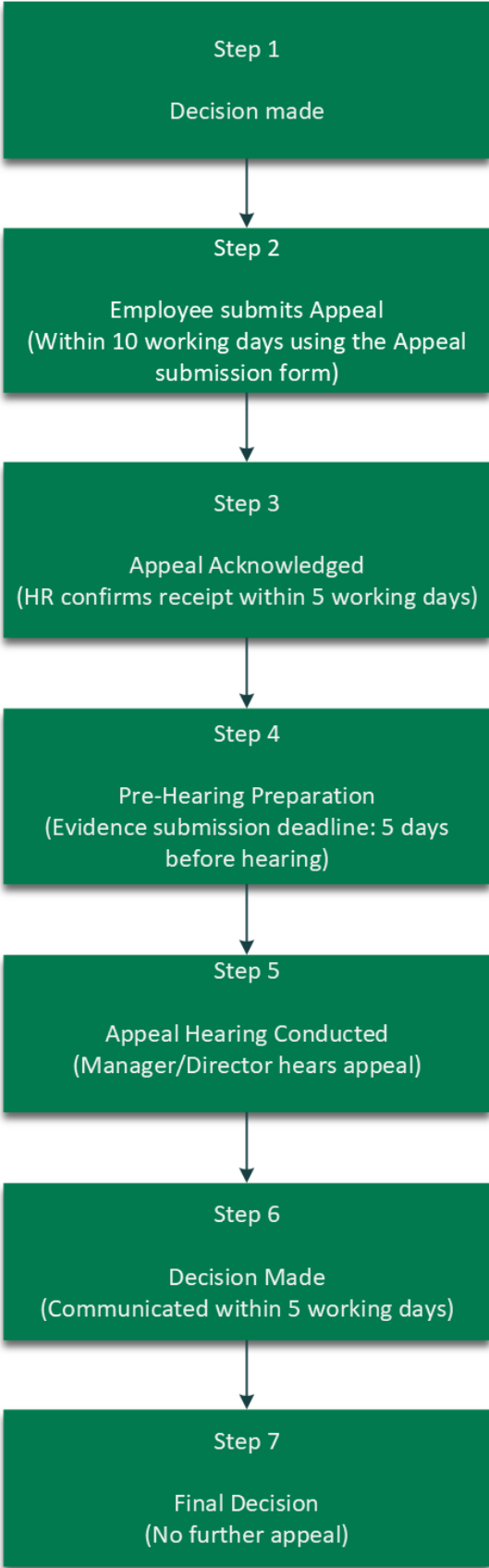
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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Submit to: HR Officer within **10 working days** of the decision.

APPENDIX 2 – APPEAL PROCESS



Appendix 3: Change log  
2025 Policy issued.

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# Grievance policy

**June 2025**

## Executive Summary

The council fosters a culture in which any workplace problems, complaints or concerns can be raised within a supportive framework, and we will ensure that all genuine grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly. Most grievances can be resolved informally. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, the formal grievance process can be followed. This policy sets out the council's approach to resolving both informal and formal grievances. The policy outlines the grievance process, the roles of those involved and support available.





## When would I use this policy?

This policy should be referenced when:

- You have a concern, problem or complaint at work, for example:
  - things you are being asked to do as part of your job
  - terms and conditions of your employment
  - the way you're being treated at work
  - discrimination at work
- You are a manager and one of your team has raised an informal or formal grievance.
- You have been asked by HR to hear a formal grievance as a Hearing Manager.

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We foster a culture in which you can raise any workplace problems, complaints or concerns in a supportive framework, and we will ensure that all genuine grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly.
- 1.2 Most grievances can be resolved informally. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, you may choose to raise a formal grievance.
- 1.3 This policy outlines the grievance process, the roles of those involved and support that is available to you.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.
- 1.5 This policy has been developed in accordance with the ACAS Code of Practice on Grievances and in consultation with Unison.

### 2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees except for Chief Officer level or any other nominated statutory posts. For these postholders, the principle will apply, however reference should be made to the separate nationally agreed terms and conditions of employment for policy and procedural guidelines. This policy does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.
- 2.2 If your complaint relates to bullying or harassment, you should raise it under the separate Bullying and Harassment policy.

- 2.3 Issues that are the subject of collective negotiation or consultation with the trade union will not be considered under this policy.
- 2.4 If you have a grievance that relates to ongoing disciplinary proceedings against you, you should raise this during the disciplinary procedure (for example during the disciplinary meeting or appeal stage).
- 2.5 If you raise a grievance during disciplinary proceedings that is unrelated to those proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance procedure will normally run independently in parallel.
- 2.6 This procedure cannot be used as a way to appeal an outcome from another policy; in those cases the appeal process should be followed.
- 2.7 Grievances raised about the same issue by two or more employees (or by a union representative on their behalf) will follow this policy but will usually be dealt with collectively. See section 9 for more details.
- 2.8 Wherever possible a grievance should be dealt with before an employee leaves the council's employment. Grievances raised after employment ends will not be dealt with in line with the council's formal grievance policy.
- 2.9 Where an employee raises a concern as a 'protected disclosure' in compliance with the public interest disclosure provisions of the 1998 Act, the matter will normally be dealt with under the council's Whistleblowing policy.
- 2.10 The Council recognises the right of employees to raise grievances relating to their employment. However, if an employee continues to raise grievances which appear to be repetitive and unfounded, this may be regarded as vexatious and could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.
- 2.11 A flowchart outlining the informal and formal grievance process can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.0 General Principles**

- 3.1 At any stage of the procedure, where specified people are designated to hear the grievance, appropriate substitutes may be used in cases of non-availability or where otherwise considered appropriate.
- 3.2 Where timescales are specified in the procedure, these may be varied on account of unavoidable circumstances – for example the need of the manager hearing the grievance to carry out further investigations - or by mutual consent.
- 3.3 At any stage of the procedure, the manager hearing the grievance will have the right to determine who they require to be present in order to gather the

information they need to make a decision. The aggrieved employee will be notified in advance who will be in attendance and in what capacity.

- 3.4 Where an employee has a disability, concern or a specific support need which makes any part of procedure more difficult the HR Officer should be advised so that additional support may be considered.
- 3.5 If it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that all those participating have access to the necessary technology. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.
- 3.6 A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made, either by the person holding the meeting or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes. We may use electronic support to support the note taker, for example using Teams to transcribe the meeting or recording the meeting for the note taker's reference. Where we intend to record meetings, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.
- 3.7 The aggrieved employee or any person acting on their behalf, are not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting held under the grievance procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal. In certain limited circumstances, we may permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording. Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

## **4.0 Mediation**

- 4.1 Depending on the nature of your grievance, we may suggest mediation as a means of trying to resolve it. This involves the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss your grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. We will use mediation only where you, and the other parties involved in your grievance, agree to do so.

## **5.0 Fairness and respect**

- 5.1 We recognise that a grievance procedure can be stressful and upsetting. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect. We will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in a grievance procedure and will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under our disciplinary procedure.

## **6.0 Confidentiality**

- 6.1 All parties involved in a grievance must respect confidentiality, this includes any witnesses interviewed as part of the investigation. Any records will be kept securely and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **7.0 Support**

- 7.1 Support for all parties involved in a grievance is available through the employee assistance programme (EAP). Further details can be found on the [intranet](#).

## **8.0 Raising an informal grievance**

- 8.1 In the first instance, you should raise any grievance that you may have informally with your line manager. If your grievance is about your line manager, you should raise this with your Senior Manager/Director or the HR & OD Service Manager.
- 8.2 The relevant manager will meet with you to give you the opportunity to explain your grievance and seek to identify whether the issue can be resolved informally. Many concerns can be resolved informally. It is advisable for managers to keep a written note on the nature of the grievance, what was decided/actions taken and the reasons for the actions.
- 8.3 While we encourage the informal resolution of complaints, we recognise that this is not always possible or appropriate, for example if your grievance relates to an issue such as discrimination. Therefore, if the informal process does not resolve matters or is not appropriate, you should raise a formal grievance under this procedure. If it is decided after initial investigation that a grievance has been incorrectly raised as a formal grievance when it could be resolved informally, the HR team reserves the right to ask you to try and resolve it informally in the first instance.

## **9.0 Raising a formal grievance**

- 9.1 Where your grievance has not been resolved informally, or if your grievance is serious in nature, you should raise the matter formally in writing.
- 9.2 It is important that you set out clearly the nature of your grievance and indicate the outcome that you are seeking. If your grievance is unclear, we may ask you to clarify your complaint before we hold a grievance meeting.
- 9.3 You should complete the grievance form found on the [intranet](#) and send it to your HR Officer.
- 9.4 **Stage 1 – Investigation**

- 9.4.1 HR will allocate an appropriate manager (the Hearing Manager) who has not been involved in the case so far and has the appropriate skills and knowledge to hear your grievance.
- 9.4.2 Your grievance will be kept confidential as far as possible. However, before proceeding to a grievance meeting, we may have to carry out an investigation. This will usually be conducted by the same manager who will hear your grievance. The relevant manager will write to you confirming that they are conducting the investigation and the timescale for completion.
- 9.4.3 You will be given a copy of any evidence collated during the investigation in advance of the grievance meeting. However, in some cases, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, we will provide you with an appropriate summary of the evidence.

## 9.5 **Stage 2 - Hearing your grievance**

- 9.5.1 The grievance meeting will be held within 10 working days of receiving your written complaint. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay and provided with a revised estimated timeline.
- 9.5.2 You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative.
- 9.5.3 HR will provide support and guidance at the meeting to ensure the process is followed appropriately.
- 9.5.4 At least 3 working days prior to the meeting, all documents/ evidence and names of witnesses should be exchanged. The Hearing Manager will determine whether it is appropriate for witnesses to be called.
- 9.5.5 The purpose of the meeting is for you to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel should be taken to resolve the matter. If more information comes to light, it may be necessary to adjourn the grievance meeting to conduct a further investigation and reconvene the meeting when this has been done.
- 9.5.6 If you are unable to attend the grievance meeting because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the manager conducting the meeting as soon as possible. If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the grievance meeting may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other documentation available.
- 9.5.7 If your chosen companion is not be available at the time proposed, we will postpone the hearing to a time proposed by you, provided that the alternative

time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

9.5.8 Following the meeting, the Hearing Manager will inform you in writing, usually within 5 working days after the meeting, of the outcome and any action that will be taken as a result of your complaint. Any other parties involved in the grievance will also be appropriately informed of the outcome.

9.5.9 The Hearing Manager may consider postponing the decision to give more time for deliberation/clarifications however this must be done without unreasonable delay. An estimated timescale for resolution should be communicated to all parties. If it is necessary to clarify any of the evidence presented, including recalling witnesses, all parties will be recalled, even if the point of clarification only concerns one party.

## 9.6 **Stage 3 – Appeal**

9.6.1 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your grievance, you may submit a formal appeal.

9.6.2 The appeal should be submitted to the HR & OD Service Manager using the Appeal Submission form, stating your grounds of appeal and the resolution sought. The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.

9.6.3 The appeal will be held in accordance with the Council's Appeals Policy.

## 10.0 **Collective grievances**

10.1 If you and another employee (or more than two of you) have identical grievances and you all wish to have it addressed in one grievance process, you can raise a collective grievance.

10.2 If you are raising a collective grievance, the requirements set out in this policy are varied as follows:

### 10.3 **Raising a formal grievance**

10.3.1 You must make it clear on the grievance form that it is a collective grievance. The complaint must be submitted on one form and must clearly identify each employee raising the collective grievance. You and your colleagues will need to nominate one of you to act on behalf of all of you throughout the grievance process. Your grievance form must identify whom you have appointed to be the nominated representative.

10.3.2 If you and your colleagues are all members of the same trade union, your trade union representative may raise the collective grievance on your behalf.

## **10.4 Stage 2 - Hearing your grievance**

10.4.1 If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative. Following the meeting, there will be one identical outcome. Your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing and any action that will be taken as a result of your collective complaint.

## **10.5 Stage 3 – Appeal**

10.5.1 If you, or any of your colleagues, are not satisfied with the outcome of your collective grievance, you may submit a formal appeal. The appeal should be submitted to the HR & OD Service Manager using the Appeal Submission form, stating your grounds of appeal and the resolution sought. The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.

10.5.2 Your appeal must be submitted in one document and must clearly identify those withdrawing from the process and those wishing to appeal. You must also identify whom you have appointed to be the nominated representative throughout the appeal stage.

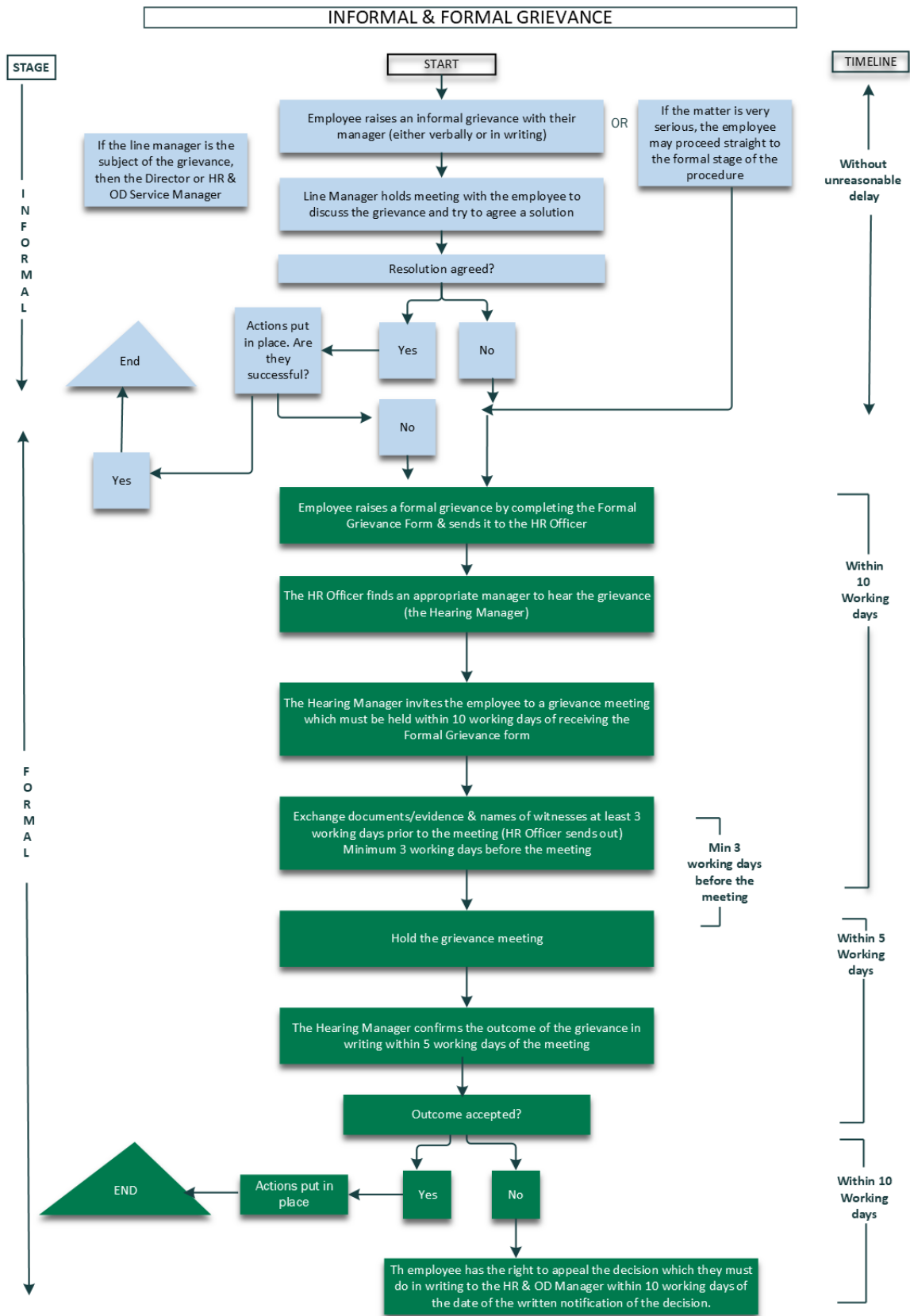
10.5.3 If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance appeal meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union representative. Following the appeal meeting, there will be one identical outcome. Your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing. The outcome of the collective appeal is final.

10.5.4 If only one employee wishes to appeal, the normal appeals process will apply.

## **10.6 Dealing with your grievances individually**

10.6.1 We reserve the right to hear your grievances individually if you do not all voluntarily agree to the collective grievance process, if your grievances are not identical, or there are exceptional circumstances.

# Appendix 1: Grievance process flowchart





## **Appendix 2: Change log**

2025 Policy issued.

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# Expenses policy

**June 2025**

## Executive Summary

This policy sets out the council’s approach to reimbursing travel and subsistence expenses incurred by employees while conducting official council business. It ensures that expense claims are handled fairly, consistently, and transparently while aligning with the council’s green travel policy. Employees are expected to minimise travel costs by prioritising public transport, car-sharing, and virtual meetings where possible.

The policy outlines the types of expenses that can be claimed, including mileage reimbursement at HMRC-approved rates, public transport costs, car parking fees, subsistence allowances, and accommodation expenses. It also sets clear guidelines for receipt submission, the approval process, and the responsibilities of employees, directors, and service managers in managing and approving claims.

The reimbursement process is designed to cover legitimate, ‘out-of-pocket’ expenses incurred for business purposes, excluding ordinary commuting costs. Claims must be submitted via MyView with appropriate documentation and will be reviewed for accuracy and compliance.



## **1.0 When to use this Policy**

1.1 This policy should be referenced when:

- an employee needs to claim reimbursement for business travel expenses, including mileage and public transport costs,
- a claim for subsistence allowances is required due to additional meal expenses incurred during work-related travel,
- accommodation needs to be booked for business-related overnight stays, ensuring compliance with the approval process,
- employees and managers need guidance on required documentation, such as VAT receipts and proof of business-use insurance,
- directors and service managers review and approve travel and subsistence expense claims, ensuring compliance with council's guidelines,
- the CEO's expenses require independent review by the Leader of the Council and
- there is a need to ensure compliance with the annual review process for travel and expense claims.

## **2.0 Introduction**

2.1 The council will ensure that the reimbursement of expenses is carried out in a fair and consistent manner across the council, supporting the council's green travel policy and based on business need.

2.2 The council reserves the right to reject or delay payment for any expense/mileage claims that do not meet the requirements outlined in this policy.

## **3.0 Travel Expenses**

3.1 All employees who are required to travel for business purposes must adhere to the ethos of the green travel plan; for example, use public transport, car share, and hold virtual meetings where possible.

<b>Mileage</b>	<b>HMRC Rates</b>
Car/van (petrol or diesel) (first 10,000 business miles per annum)	45p per business mile
Car/van (after 10,000 business miles per annum)	25p per business mile

Car/van (electric)	45p per business mile
Car/van electric (after 10,000 business miles per annum)	25p per business mile
Motorcycle	24p per business mile
Bicycle	20p per business mile
Passenger (employee/member)	5p per passenger per mile

Passenger allowance:

This is to be claimed only when you are taking another employee or elected member with you on your journey. Passengers should not claim mileage separately.

#### **4.0 Public Transport**

4.1 Claims can be reimbursed for standard class train fares, London Underground and bus fares. Taxi fares can only be claimed for in exceptional circumstances where no other form of travel is reasonably available.

#### **5.0 Car Parking charges**

5.1 Car parking charges incurred on council business will be reimbursed only where East Herts Council car parking is not provided. You will receive instructions on where applicable car parks are when issued with a pass from the Facilities team.

#### **6.0 Subsistence**

6.1 Employees can claim reimbursement only for the additional expense incurred for meals taken on council business away from their normal base. This does not include alcohol but may include soft drinks.

The maximum claim for meals is as follows:

Breakfast	Before 7am	£7.95
Lunch	Between 12 noon & 2.30pm	£10.97

Evening meal	After 7pm	£16.76
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In exceptional circumstances subsistence allowances can be varied by a director or the Chief Executive. Rates will be increased in line with annual salary awards. Last increase, see Appendix 1.

## **7.0 Accommodation**

7.1 Accommodation must be selected that is appropriate and normally no more than a 4 star level. Approval before booking is required by your director.

## **8.0 Individual's Responsibilities**

8.1 Members of staff who have to travel by car must hold a full current driving licence and insurance covering business use at all times. These will be regularly checked by the employee's line manager as part of the annual PDR process.

8.2 Employees should submit expense or mileage claims via MyView.

8.3 If approved by the 6th of the month, all approved claims will be paid in the same month. Claims exceeding three calendar months will not be authorised to be paid.

### **Receipt submission:**

All expense claims must be accompanied by a valid VAT receipt at the time of submission.

### **Missing receipts:**

If a receipt is unavailable, provide an explanation detailing the reason for the missing receipt.

## **9.0 Director and Manager Responsibilities**

9.1 The HR Officers will provide guidance to them in meeting their obligations listed below.

Director and Manager will be responsible for:

- Review all official travel and agree that it is necessary for the employee to carry out their duties effectively.
- Checking documents for employees using their own vehicle for any journey on Council business to ensure that their insurance covers them for business use and that they have a valid driving licence, insurance certificate and MOT certificate (if applicable) as part of the induction process. Documents must be checked on joining and then carried out on the annually in their PDR.
- Authorising expense/mileage claims submitted via MyView that are in accordance with this policy. The authoriser should confirm that the receipt

matches the details of the claimed expense and that the expense falls within the Council's allowable expense categories.

- Documenting the reason provided by the employee for any missing receipt. Mileage claims should be verified against available records/logs. For any other expenses, the plausibility of the claim should be assessed while checking for any available supporting evidence.

## **10.0 Claiming expenses/mileage**

10.1 Employees can claim for business journeys made in the performance of their duties but NOT journeys which are ordinary commuting or private travel. This also applies to home workers; for further guidance see the Home Working Policy. Ordinary commuting or private travel does not include callouts on a non-working day or a requirement for a repeat journey on a work day.

10.2 Mileage to a temporary workplace can be claimed LESS ordinary home to workplace mileage. If the journey is less than the normal home to the permanent workplace, then no claim is permitted.

10.3 As a general rule, reimbursement should only be for 'out of pocket' expenses.

## **11.0 Reviewing and approving CEO expenses**

- The CEO must submit all expense claims with appropriate receipts and documentation in accordance with the general expenses policy.
- The CEO's expense claims will be reviewed by The Leader of the Council, ensuring an independent review process.
- The reviewer will assess the claims for compliance with the council's expense policy, ensuring all expenses are legitimate, adequately documented and fall within allowable categories.

Appendix 1: Subsistence increments

	Pay award % per year	pay increase multiplier	Breakfast	Lunch	Evening meal
2020			£7.21	£9.95	£15.20
2021	1.75	1.0175	£7.34	£10.12	£15.47
2022	1.75	1.0175	£7.46	£10.30	£15.74
2023	3.88	1.0388	£7.75	£10.70	£16.35
2024	2.5	1.025	£7.95	£10.97	£16.76

## Appendix 2: Change log

2018 Policy issued.

2021: Policy reviewed.

2025: The policy was reviewed. Subsistence allowances were included, and formatting was improved. Clarity on the claims process and receipts was required.



## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by: Strategic HR Lead**

**Report title: Employee Health and Wellbeing report 2024/25**

**Ward(s) affected: None**

### **Summary**

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

- a) To consider the annual Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2024/25 including the actions (in section 8.0) planned for 2025/26 and provide any comments to the Strategic HR Lead.**

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

- 1.1 HR Committee Members are invited to consider the Employee Health and Wellbeing Report 2024/25.

#### **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 2024/25 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 Infinistats Human Capital Metrics report 2023/24 (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 2023' (also the latest report available) has also been used to make comparisons with other organisations.

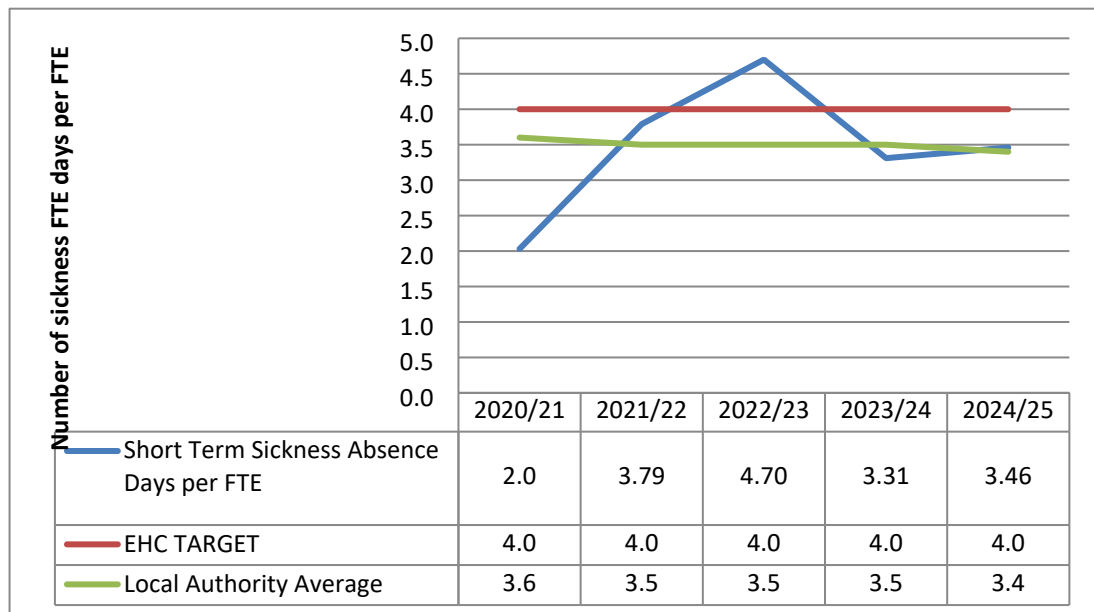
## **4.0 Sickness Absence Levels**

### **4.1 Short Term absence**

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

4.1.2 In 2024/25, the number of short term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 3.46 days which is below the council's target of 4 days. It is the same as the East of England local government average (3.4 days in 2023/24). Please see Figure 2 below.

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

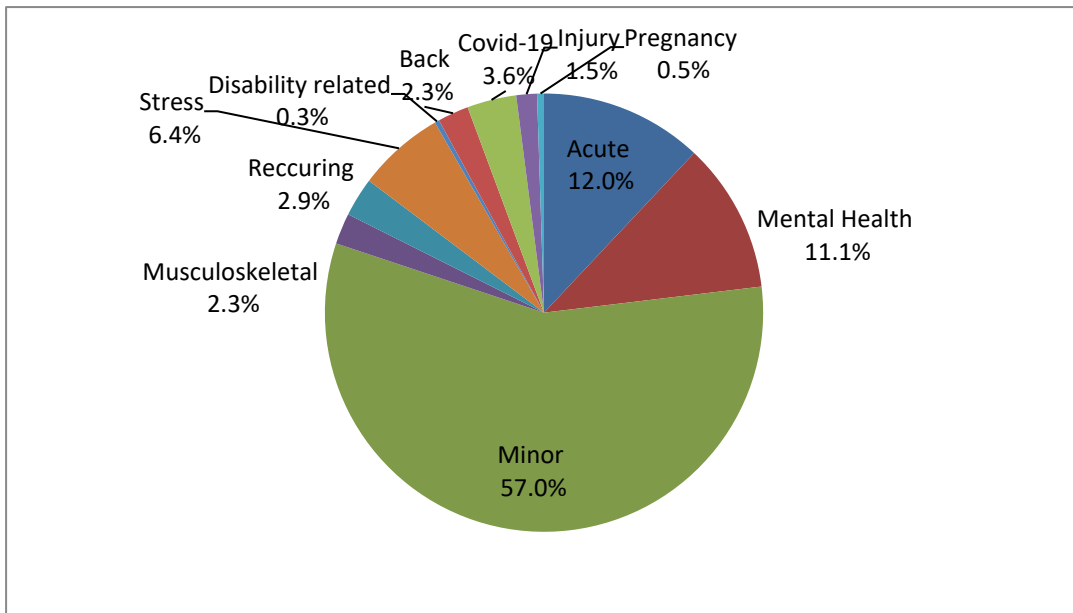


The council's short term absence target was reduced from 4.5 days to 4 days in April 2019. The local authority average is the mean of the East of England local authorities who are subscribed to the Infinistats benchmarking system and is taken from the 'Human Capital Metrics report'. The 2023/24 report is the latest report available at the time of writing. Due to COVID no data was recorded 20/21 so we have carried over the 18/19 data for that year.

4.1.3 The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness in 2024/25 was 2.95%.

4.1.4 Figure 3 below shows the causes of short term absence in 2024/25.

**Figure 3 – Causes of Short Term absence in 2024/25**



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)*

4.1.5 The most common cause of short term absence in 2024/25 was minor illnesses, such as colds/flu, headaches/migraines, stomach upsets, and minor operations, accounting for 57% (140 employees) of all short term absences. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey April 2023' 94% of organisations responding to their survey reported that minor illnesses were in their top three causes of short term absence.

4.1.6 The second most common cause of short term absence was acute medical conditions (e.g., surgery, long term health conditions, accidents) which accounted for 12% of all short term absences (16 employees).

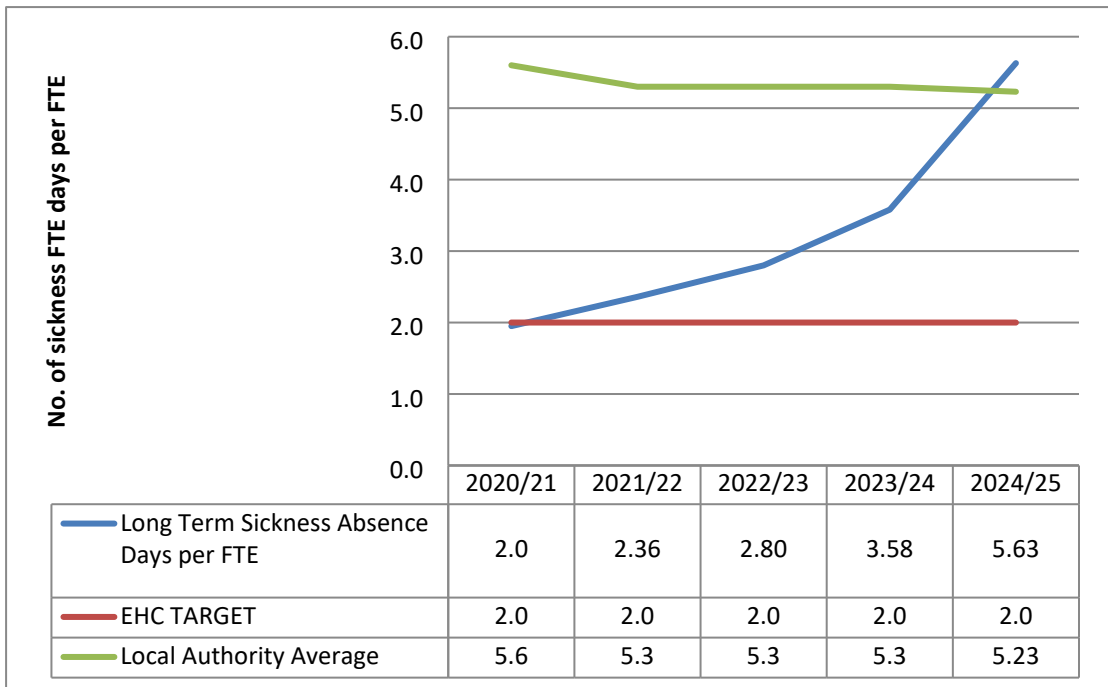
4.1.7 Mental health was the third most common cause of short term absence accounting for 8% of all short term absences (7 employees). The CIPD Survey reported that 39% of organisations said that mental health was in their top three causes of short term absence.

## **4.2 Long Term Absence**

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

4.2.2 In 2024/25, the number of long term sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 5.63 days which is significantly above the council's target of 2 days and an increase on 2023/24 (3.58 days). It is also slightly higher than the East of England local government average (5.23 days in 2023/25). Please see Figure 4 below.

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



The local authority average is the mean of the East of England local authorities who are subscribed to the Infinistats benchmarking system and is taken from the 'Human Capital Metrics report'. The 2023/24 report is the latest report available at the time of writing. Due to COVID no data was recorded 20/21 so we have carried over the 18/19 data for that year.

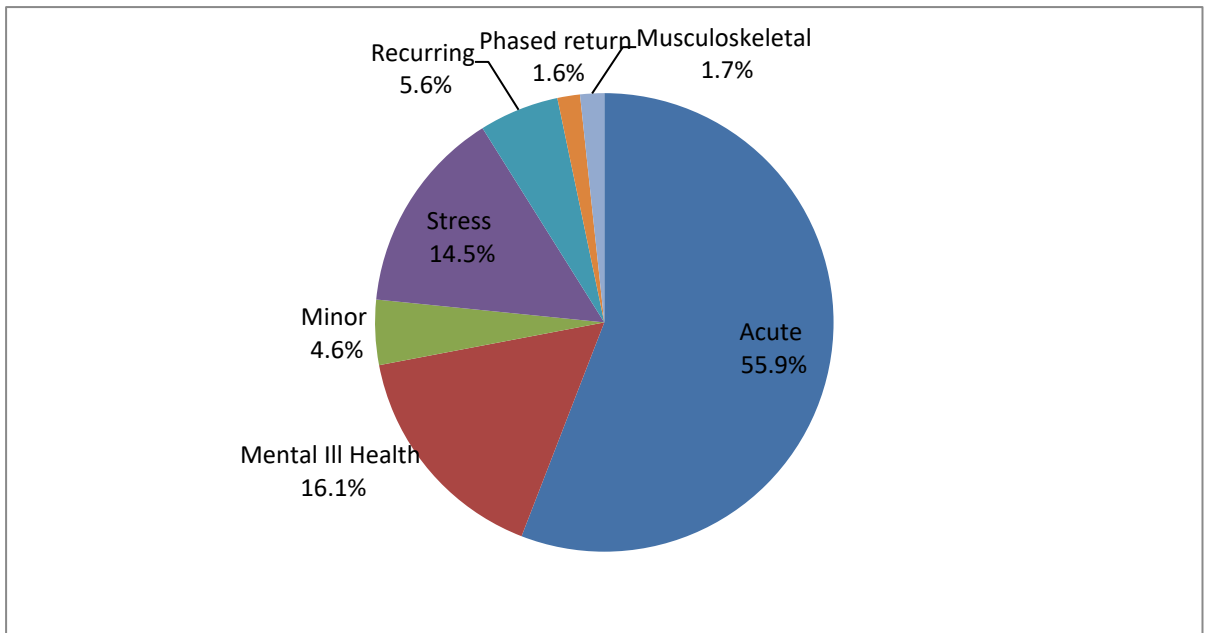
4.2.3 The percentage of time lost due to long term sickness in 2024/25 was 4.48%. This is an increase from last year (1.49% in 2023/24).

4.2.4 There was an increase in sickness absences for acute reasons such as cancer which understandably led to lengthy sickness absences.

4.2.5 It is also worth noting that 47% of employees at the council are in the 50-64 age group and serious illnesses tend to become more frequent in later life.

4.2.6 Figure 5 below shows the causes of long term absence in 2024/25.

**Figure 5 – Causes of Long Term absence in 2024/25**



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)*

4.2.7 The most common cause of long term absence was for acute reasons (e.g. stroke, heart attack and cancer), which accounted for 55.9% of all long term absence (17 employees). All employees have been supported by Line Management, HR and Occupational Health. According to the CIPD Survey, 46% of organisations reported that acute reasons were in their top three causes of long term absence.

4.2.8 The second most common cause of long term absence was mental ill health, which accounted for 16.1% of all long term absence (5 employees). All employees have been supported by Line Management, HR and Occupational Health. According to the CIPD Survey, 63% of organisations reported that mental ill health was in their top three causes of long term absence.

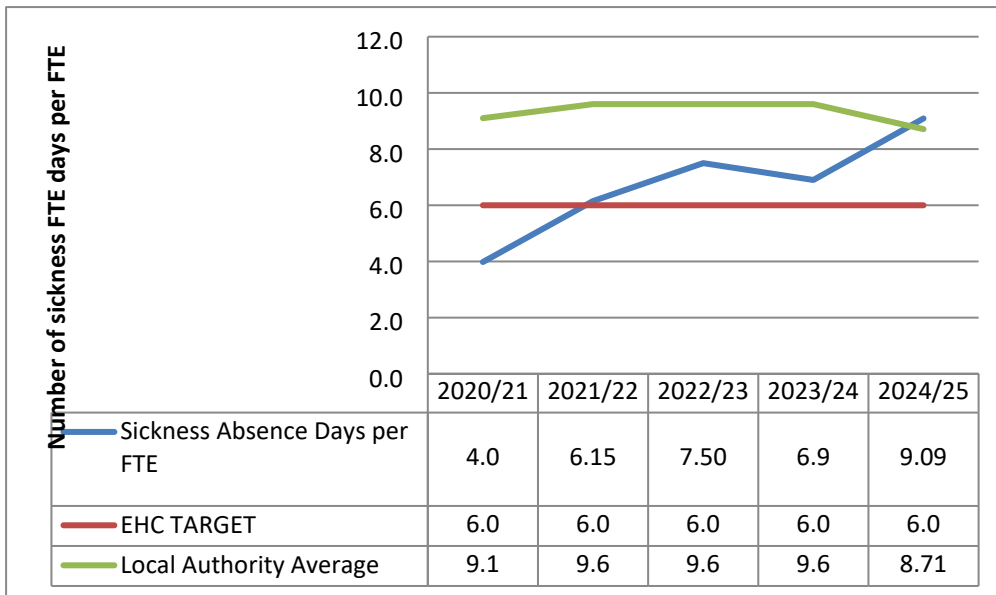
4.2.9 The third most common cause of long term absence was for stress which accounted for 14.5% (7 employees). All employees have been supported by Line Management, HR and Occupational Health. According to the CIPD Survey, 37% of organisations reported that mental ill health was in their top five causes of long term absence.

### **4.3 Total absence**

4.3.1 In 2024/25, the number of sickness absence FTE days per FTE employee was 9.09 days which is above the council's target of 6 days and has increased from 6.9 days in 2023/24. It is also slightly higher than the East of England local government average (8.71 days). The CIPD report the average in the public sector as being 10.6 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 the East of England local authorities who are subscribed to the Infinistats benchmarking system and is taken from the 'Human Capital Metrics report'. The 2023/24 report is the latest report available at the time of writing. Due to COVID no data was recorded 20/21 so we have carried over the 18/19 data for that year.

4.3.2 The total number of days taken as sickness absence in 2024/25 was 2674.25 FTE days. 39% (1062.31 FTE days) of these were due to short term absence and 61% (1611.94 FTE days) were due to long term absence. The total percentage time lost in 2024/25 due to all absences was 7.43%.

## 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 are carefully monitored by HR and a special Covid-19 reason code was set up on the HR system to enable this. We continue to advise employees to work from home if they get a positive Covid test (and are well enough to work) to avoid the potential spread of the virus to other employees.
- 5.5 Short term absences due to mental health have increased from 7.6% of all short term absences in 2023/24 to 11.1% in 2024/25. Long term absences due to mental health have decreased from 20.9% of all long term absences in 2023/24 to 16.3% in 2024/25.
- 5.6 Short term absences due to stress have decreased from 8% of all short term absences in 2023/24 to 6.4% in 2024/25. Long term absences have increased from 7.4% of all long term absences in 2023/24 to 10.5% in 2024/25.
- 5.7 The council has continued to take action to support

employee mental health in 2024/25, please see sections 6 and 7 for details.

5.8 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, including:

### **6.1 Employee wellbeing activities and campaigns**

6.1.1 The council aims to provide a variety of activities and training to support employees' physical and mental health and wellbeing. The HR and Communications teams also promote various national campaigns such as Mental Health awareness Day/week.

### **6.2 Employee support**

6.2.1 The council has a support section on its intranet where employees are signposted to sources of wellbeing support e.g. how to contact a Mental Health First Aider, access to support from UNISON, how to contact the employee assistance programme etc.

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

6.3.1 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 HR Officers continue to support managers in consistently and proactively managing sickness absence.**

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

## **7.0 Actions taken in 2024/25 to improve employee health and wellbeing**

In addition to the ongoing support already mentioned in Sections 5 and 6 above, the council has achieved the following in 2024/25 to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees:

### **7.1 Wellbeing activities and campaigns**

7.1.1 A variety of campaigns were supported and events held each month to support employee mental, physical and social wellbeing such as International Women's Day (virtual staff event), promotion of dementia action week, employee awards, bring and

share Eid event in the kitchen hub, and monthly 'payday' drinks organised on the Friday closest to payday in Hertford.

## **7.5 Mental Health First Aiders**

7.5.1 4 of our Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) took part in a 13 week Mental Health in the Workplace Bootcamp, comprising of online and face to face training sessions, followed by a final assessment. The course covered a wide range of matters from workplace culture, understanding the role of a MHFA, and listening and support techniques. All current Mental Health First Aiders also received refresher training in 2024/25.

## **7.6 Mental Health First Aiders**

7.6.1 'Managing Change' training was organised for managers as part of the Blueprint programme to support the delivery of the transformation programme.

## **8.0 Actions planned in 2025/26 to improve employee health and wellbeing, to:**

- Develop a combined blended working, flexi time, overtime and TOIL policy. Ensure expectations of blended working are clear and that flexibility works effectively for both employees and services and communication is well maintained. Ensure the flexi-time scheme works effectively with blended working and gives consideration

to core contact hours.

- Continue to support national wellbeing campaigns with the support of the Communications team to promote and offer wellbeing activities to employees.
- Relaunch the Mental Health First Aiders programme by seeking new volunteers and working on improving the information on the intranet. The East Herts Together group are looking at Equality, Diversion and Inclusion as wider topic and the MHFA programme will come under this as well as better promotion of mental health awareness.
- A recent access audit commissioned by the Health & Safety Officer identified a need to consider neurodiversity both in the physical office space as well how we display and present information. We are also investigating whether we can source an e-learning module on neurodiversity.
- Seek volunteers to be part of an Equalities Group. Volunteers would represent different areas of equality and diversity as the council is too small to have individual staff groups for all of the different diversity strands.
- Finalise the procurement (already underway) of a new Occupational Health Provider who will be more proactive in helping advise on complex cases and supporting employees back to work.

## **9.0 Risks**

- 9.1 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.

## **10.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

Wellbeing support is aimed at supporting employee's health both physical and mental health. Mental health is potentially a disability depending on its impact and therefore it is important to make reasonable adjustments and provide support.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

### **Financial**

No

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

As covered in the report.

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

No

### **Specific Wards**

No

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

11.1 None

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### **Report Author**

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## East Herts Council Report

### Human Resources Committee

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by:** Emily Cordwell, HR Officer

**Report title:** Learning and Development Report 24 - 25

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HR Committee

**(a) For the committee to consider the Learning and Development Report for 2024/2025 and provide any comments.**

#### 1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Members to consider the learning and development undertaken in 2024/25 and provide comments to the Strategic HR Lead.

#### 2.0 Background

2.1 The 2024/25 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 training.

## **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.

### **Human Resources**

Yes as set out in this report.

## **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 Attached report

## **Contact Member**

Executive Member for Corporate Services

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## **Contact Officer**

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## **Report Author**

Emily Cordwell, Human Resources Officer

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## Learning and Development Report 24/25

### 1.0 Training budgets and delegates

1.1 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 2024/25</b>
Central/Corporate	£20,000
Service Training & Development	£22,480
Professional Training	£20,000
Health & Safety	£3,000
<b>Total L &amp; D Budget</b>	<b>£65,480</b>

1.2 The 2024/25 Learning and Development programme was delivered by external facilitators, internal presenters, webinars and e-learning. These events are funded from the corporate training budget.

1.3 Employees are informed of training opportunities via email/intranet updates via teams. Individuals are also approached directly when they have requested specific training in their PDR or there is training specific to their roles.

1.4 In 2024/25 209 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 27 events:

<b>Event/Course</b>	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Type/Number of Sessions held</b>
Next Steps cohort	11	1
Corporate Induction	24	2
First Aid at work refresher	3	1
Emergency First aid	3	1
Personal Safety and Lone Working	58	4
Evacuation Chair-Train the trainer	6	1
Understanding Mental Health in the workplace	4	3
Managing difficult conversations – Planning and Monitoring Work	11	1
Tribepad Manager Training	28	3

Writing for business – Report Writing	8	1
Enhancing decision-making skills	15	1
Mental Health first aid	4	2 day course
Successful Meetings	9	1
Coaching and mentoring	4	1
Managing Change	10	2
Service Manager – East Herts	11	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>27</b>

- 1.5 The mandatory training programme launched in March 2023 and delivered through Skillgate. Employees receive annual reminders when renewal is due when they are no longer compliant. All employees, agency staff and new starters were asked to complete the e-learning courses. In total 1632 'completed' training episodes were recorded in March 2025.

Course	Participants
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The Importance of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion	260
Data Protection: Compliance following GDPR	262
Office Etiquette and Email Management <i>(To be re-registered every 3 years.)</i>	313
Fire Safety	260
Understanding the Safeguarding of Children, Young people, and Adults at risk.	259
Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	278

- 1.6 The HR Officer 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.

## **2.0 Service Training and Development**

- 2.1 The total service training and development budget for

2024/2025 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.

- 2.2 The budget breaks down to £72 per employee based on the employee head count on 1 April 2024 (312). 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.

### **3.0 Professional Training**

- 3.1 The professional training budget was set at £20,000 for 2024/25. All employees funded for professional qualifications sign training agreements in line with the 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.
- 3.2 This budget has supported the planning team to upskill their staff, with 1 officer in 24/25 committed to achieving a masters in Town and Country planning. 2 officers in Environmental Health are committed to achieving level 5 and level 6 in food premises inspections. We continue to ensure there's a fair process in funding professional development in 25/26.
- 3.3 The professional training budget for 2025/26 has been reduced to £10,000.

### **4.0 Apprentices**

4.1 The Council continued to sponsor four apprenticeships in 2024/25 from the Apprenticeship Levy:

- 1 x Accountancy – Level 7
- 1 x Payroll administrator – Level 3
- 2 x Chartered Town Planner Degree – Level 7

4.2 The HR & OD Service will continue to work with managers and training providers to develop the Council's Apprenticeship Programme. The Leadership Team are committed to make better use of our levy provision and professional training budget as a critical part of workforce planning.

## **5.0 Learning and Development priorities 2025/26**

5.1 The learning and development needs for this year are being collated from the PDR's. The HR & OD Service Manager will work with members of the Leadership Team to ensure the learning meets the needs of the council to deliver its priorities.

5.2 Using completed appraisals, HR will identify needs analysis scope a learning and development training cycle. We will ensure our employees are supported through change and will identify where there are skill shortages as part of our succession planning.

5.3 The HR & OD service Manager will continue to support corporate projects such as sustainability, safeguarding and transformation by designing and delivering training and presentations to help embed the projects throughout the Council, ensuring the best use of project budgets and resources.

5.4 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. As part of our environmentally focused corporate priority, we will be launching a training course on climate change and how to reduce carbon emissions.

- 5.5 HR 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.
- 5.6 East Herts is committed to developing its staff and has adopted a grow your own approach to management and leadership. We have developed a new aspirant leaders and managers programme called First step. The first cohort Launched in April 2023 with the second cohort planned for 2025.
- 5.7 The HR Officer will review and revise the Corporate Induction programme to ensure it reflects the council and the services provided. Consideration of video content from key areas is being made to allow new starters to access some core elements earlier.

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by:** Emily Cordwell, HR Officer

**Report title:** Annual Turnover Report 24 - 25

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

### **Summary –**

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

- a) To consider the Annual Turnover Report 2024/2025 including the actions (in section 11.0) planned for 2025/26 and provide any comments to the Strategic HR Lead.**

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

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Annual Turnover Report 2024/2025.

#### **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 2024 to March 2025. 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 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 managed but it remains a challenging area especially as the council has a number of hard to fill posts which have led to the use of market supplements.

### **4.0 Implications/Consultations**

#### **Community Safety**

No

#### **Data Protection**

No

#### **Equalities**

The annual equalities report will be provided to the next meeting where equality data will be analysed including for current employees, candidates/new starters and leavers with appropriate actions set out.

#### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

#### **Financial**

No

#### **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

As covered in the report.

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No

## **Specific Wards**

No

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

5.1 Annual Turnover Report 24/25

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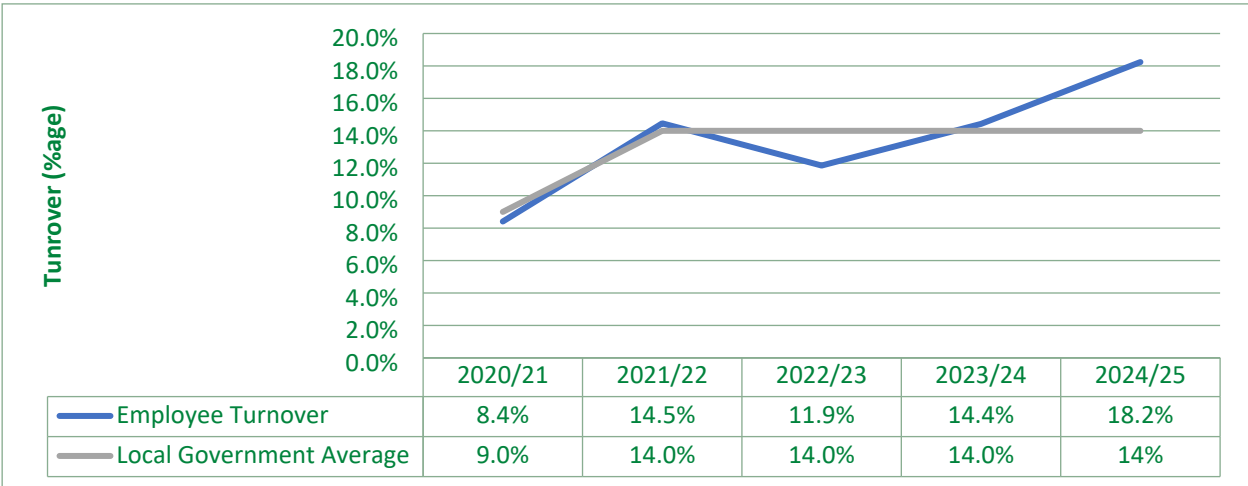
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# Annual Turnover Report 24/25

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 There were a total of 58 leavers in 2024/25: Fifty of those were voluntary leavers and eight were involuntary leavers.
- 1.2 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 2024/25 was 18.2% which is higher than the last local government East of England average (14% in 2023/24\*).

**Figure 1 – Annual Turnover trends**

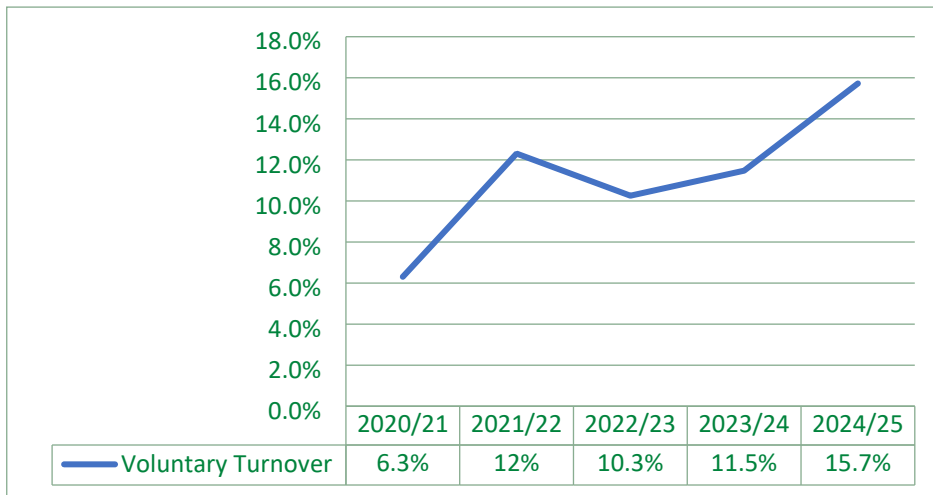


\* The Local Government Average is the mean for all English authorities and is taken from the 'LG Inform Benchmarking - Workforce Metrics'.

- 1.3 Figure 2 below shows the council’s voluntary turnover rate (for all voluntary leavers) over the last 5 years. It is important to note this separately from Global turnover (which includes both voluntary and involuntary leavers). The council’s voluntary turnover rate has increased to 15.7% in 2024/25. This increase was mainly due to people making lifestyle changes e.g. retirement, career changes.

**Figure 2 – Voluntary Turnover rate over last 5 years**

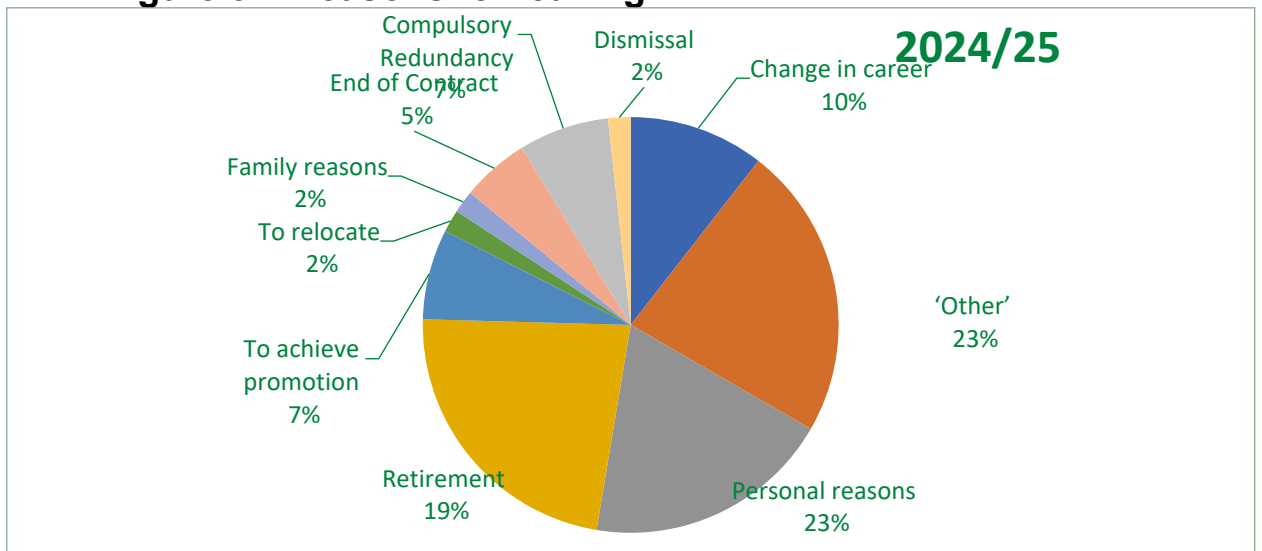




## 2.0 Reasons for Leaving

2.1 The reasons employees gave for leaving the council in 2024/25 can be found in Figure 3

**Figure 3 – Reasons for leaving**



2.2 The most common reason for leaving in 2024/25 was personal reasons (23%) and other (23%). Other consists of ill health retirement, death in service and work challenges.

2.3 The second most common reason for employees leaving in 2024/25 was retirement (19%) 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. to achieve promotion (19%) The third most common is for personal reasons (12%)

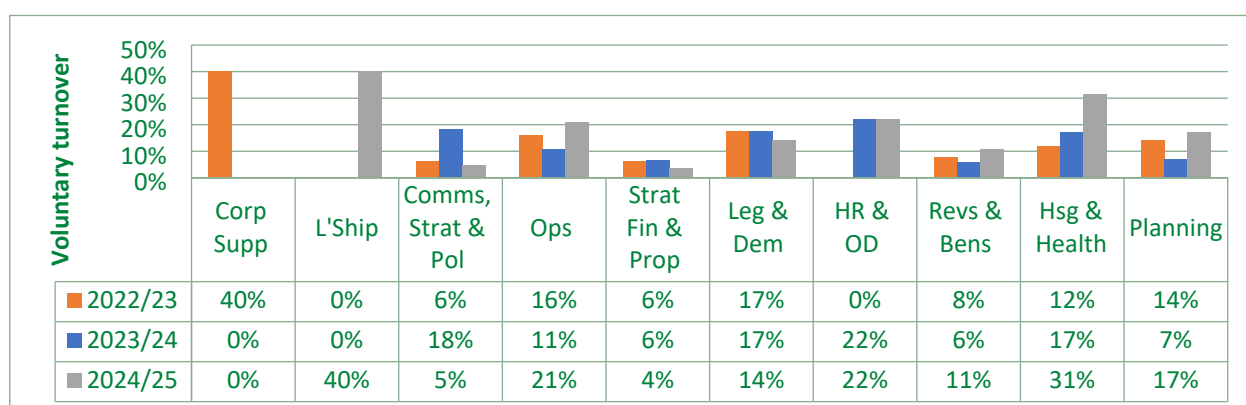
### 3.0 Stability Rate

- 3.1 The council reports its stability rate to understand whether it is retaining employees in their first year of service.
- 3.2 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).
- 3.3 In 2024/25 the council's stability rate was 88%. This is an increase of 5% from 23/24. This means that 13% of voluntary leavers (6 employees) had less than 1 years' service. 2 employees left for a promotion, 2 left for personal reasons and the other two employees did not comment.

### 4.0 Voluntary turnover in each service area

- 4.1 The voluntary turnover rate in each service area for 2024/25, including comparisons with the previous 2 years, can be found in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 – Turnover in each service**



**Average headcount in 2022/23:** Corp Supp – 1; L'Ship – 5; Comms, Strat & Pol – 43; Ops – 38; Strat Fin & Prop – 28; Leg & Dem – 21, HR & OD – 9; Revs & Bens – 84; Hsg & Health – 51; Planning – 41.

- 4.2 Turnover in 2024/25 has increased in 4 out of the 10 services since the previous year (Revenue and Benefits, Operations, Planning and Housing and Health) This is mainly due to promotions and retirements.
- 4.3 Leadership Team had the highest turnover rate of 40% (based on 2 employees). Housing and Health had the second highest turnover rate of 31% (based on 16 employees)

## **5.0 Exit Questionnaire analysis**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 More than half of voluntary leavers (58%, 29 out of 50 leavers) completed an exit questionnaire.
- 5.3 The key highlights from the exit questionnaires are as follows:
  - 86% (25 employees) would recommend others to join the council.
  - 78% (19 employees) said that they would rate the council 7 or higher out of 10 as an employer (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)
  - 93% (27 employees) said they 'mostly' or 'completely' enjoyed their time at the council;
  - 100% (29 employees) said their relationship with their colleagues were either 'excellent' or 'good'.
  - 97% (28 employees) said their relationships with their manager was either 'excellent' or 'good'.

- 95% (27 employees) said that flexible working options at the council were either 'very good' or 'good' (2 employees, 12% did not answer the question).
- 79% (23 employees) agreed 'completely' or 'mostly' that they had received an effective induction;
- 72% (21 employees) agreed 'completely' or 'mostly' that they had received adequate training/coaching;
- 66% (19 employees) said that prospects for promotion/advancement were either 'excellent' or 'good'. 28% (8 employees) felt they were poor in the main due to size of the council and some specialist teams being small/limited in terms of levels at the council and in the sector. (2 employees, 6% did not answer the question).

## **6.0 Vacancy rate**

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The vacancy rate in 2024/25 was 16.7% which is lower than the local government average (the mean for all English authorities was 17% in 2021/22).
- 6.3 As at 31 March 2025, there were 53 vacant posts across the council. Ten of these posts are in Revenue and Benefits and are on hold pending an external service review. There may be some potential savings, posts are being covered by agency staff or fixed term temporary staff where required.

Advertising/recruitment has commenced for 9 of the 44 vacancies, 2 are being reviewed before being advertised.

11 of the vacancies are to be deleted as cost savings.

3 posts have now been filled i.e. an offer has been made and accepted, the candidates are being pre-employment checked or have agreed a start date following checks.

14 vacancies are in Planning, some of which are yet to go out to advert following resignations. The team will be going back out to hard to recruit positions.

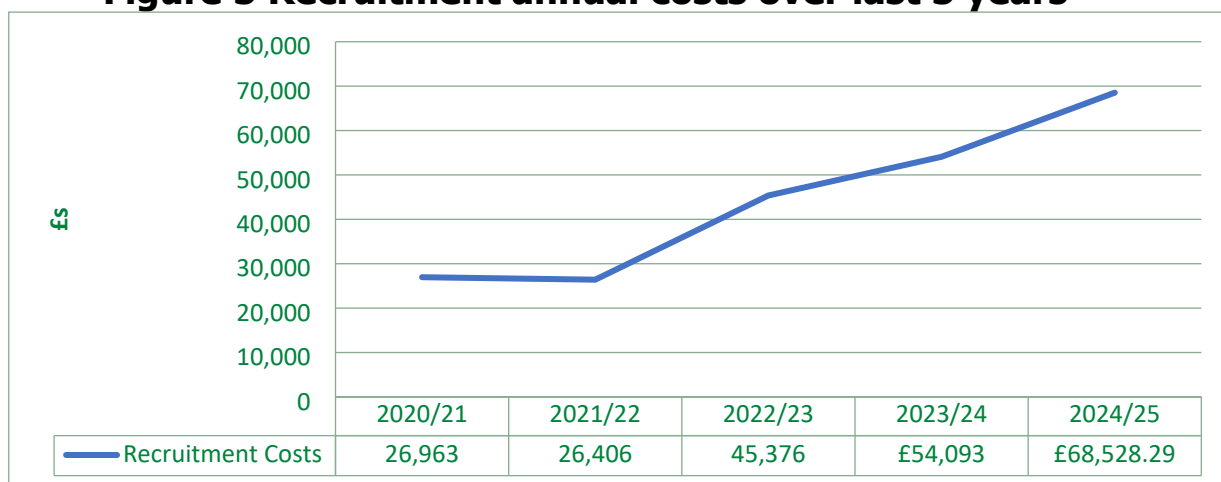
The remainder of the vacancies are on hold pending the outcome of the change to the council’s target operating model.

6.4 The council has focussed on upskilling employees through introducing career graded posts (most posts in Planning are career graded) and funding professional study. Career graded posts allow the recruitment of candidates with more transferable skills which can then be developed.

## 7.0 Recruitment Costs

7.1 Recruitment costs have risen in 2024/25 (£68,528 compared to £54,093 in 2023/24). Recruitment costs include external advertising costs, job boards and search fees. Figure 5 below shows the councils recruitment costs over the last 5 years.

**Figure 5 Recruitment annual costs over last 5 years**



7.2 In 2024/25 there were 68 advertisements and 6 readvertisements, 74 campaigns in total. The increase in the annual cost is partly due increased recruitment compared to 2023/24 (59 campaigns) and also due to a significant spend on recruitment campaigns for Planning (including headhunting) in 24/25 (£17,927) and Housing and Health (£22,354) which continues to be hard to recruit area both locally and nationally. We also recruited to the S151 Officer post in 24/5 which largely

contributed to the increased costs. Market supplements have been introduced for some hard to fill planning roles (which has become common practice in sector) to increase attraction and retention as opposed to welcome payments. Due to the difficulty to recruit, the council has had to invest in more significant advertising in trade press, video campaigns and use agency searches where advertising has been unsuccessful.

7.3 The cost per hire in 2024/25 is £926 based on 74 vacancies during the period. This remains lower than the UK average cost per hire of £1500 (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Resourcing and Talent Planning Report 2022). Figure 6 below shows East Herts average cost per hire compared to the CIPD UK average.

**Figure 6 Average cost per hire for East Herts over last 5 years compared CIPD average**



7.4 Other key findings from the 2024 CIPD report are that 64% of organisations experienced difficulties attracting candidates. Recruiting for senior and skilled roles was most challenging, particularly in the public sector (52%), although 19% also had difficulties attracting low-skilled candidates. Many organisations are experiencing increasing retention challenges (56%), so are introducing entry-level or career-returner programmes to access and grow the skills they need. 51% currently offer apprenticeships, 44% graduate programmes, 35% intern schemes, 34% post-A-level entry routes and 34% career-returner programmes.

- 7.5 The council has aimed to keep recruitment costs as low as possible, we have an arrangement with LinkedIn 'Recruiter' which enable us to target/promote five jobs at one time.
- 7.6 The A package was agreed with Web Recruit the council's old Applicant Tracking System (ATS) of £265 per job for multi-site online advertising. The multi-site package advertises roles across range of leading generalist job boards (Totaljobs, Jobsite, Monster, CV Library, Fish4Jobs, Indeed and Find a Job(.Gov)).
- 7.7 Where deemed appropriate additional advertising has been used both online and in the trade/sector press which tend to be more expensive. As stated, it has become more difficult to attract candidates as supply is not meeting demand.

## **8.0 Actions taken in 2024/25 to improve recruitment and retention**

### **8.1 Applicant Tracking System: Tribepad**

- 8.1.1 A new applicant tracking system- Tribepad has been launched to streamline and improve the onboarding experience for candidates. Our ultimate goal is to provide a welcoming experience for new hires and support our managers in this process.
- 8.1.2 A new careers site has been developed with an enhanced Planning section with multiple videos from staff and the leader of the council to encourage more applications and promote East Herts and the Planning service.

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

- 8.2.1 A variety of campaigns were supported and events held each month to support employee mental, physical and social wellbeing such as International Women's Day (virtual staff event), promotion of dementia action week, employee

awards, bring and share Eid event in the kitchen hub, and monthly 'payday' drinks organised on the Friday closest to payday in Hertford. We also had a lunchtime celebration of the end of Ramadan, Eid. This was attended by a large number of staff to hear about Ramadan and sample some delicious food. We aim to plan more events like this as we continue to value and celebrate all of our staff equally so that everyone feels they belong.

- 8.2.2 A variety of campaigns were supported and events held each month to support employee mental, physical and social wellbeing 4 of our Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) took part in a 13 week Mental Health in the Workplace Bootcamp, comprising of online and face to face training sessions, followed by a final assessment. The course covered a wide range of matters from workplace culture, understanding the role of a MHFA, and listening and support techniques. All current Mental Health First Aiders also received refresher training in 2024/25.

### **8.3 Employee Awards**

- 8.3.1 The council's employee award scheme has changed from quarterly to biannually. The scheme is connected to our core behaviours and values and rewards employees for excellent work or exceptional modelling of the council's values and behaviours. Details of the scheme will be added to the 'work with us' section so it can support recruitment as well as retention. The two award ceremonies will be linked with a summer and Christmas event to encourage staff participation

### **8.4 Market Forces Supplement**

- 8.4.1 The council introduced market forces supplements in hard to recruit areas such as Planning and Legal services. The aim is to aid both recruitment and retention. The supplement will continue to be reviewed annually taking in to account salary survey data and whether there is still a need for the supplement.

### **8.5 East Herts Together**



- 8.5.1 We have re-established the East Herts Together staffing group, which is supported by the Transformation Board. Through this initiative, we aim to listen to our staff's feedback and incorporate their views and opinions in shaping our approach to supporting them. Our objective is to ensure staff feel valued, heard, and appreciated. This group will help us develop plans based on the feedback from the staff engagement survey which closed on 30 April 2025.

## **9.0 Actions planned for 2025/26 to improve recruitment and retention**

- 9.1 To continue enhancing our ATS with the introduction of name blind recruitment to be trialled.
- 9.2 We have implemented a management development programme. The program aims to provide our staff with the necessary skills and expertise to support individual growth and development. Following cohort 1 we are reviewing the First Steps programme, and our leadership development activities, which targets aspirant, in-role and senior leadership staff. These initiatives seek to address the need to grow and develop our team members and leaders.
- 9.3 We have simplified the PDR process to concentrate more on meaningful conversations rather than filling in lots of forms. We believe that this will enhance staff engagement and better facilitate training needs analysis to allow for the delivery of training interventions throughout the year that positively develop staff which leads to improved organisational performance.
- 9.4 As part of our approach to retaining staff we will be introducing a new offer to staff that allows them to have a private conversation outside of their service area to talk through why they thinking of leaving and where possible help them find a 'path' that will help them stay and get further support if needed.
- 9.5 We will be targeting jobs that are hard to recruit by reviewing and redesigning job roles where necessary to ensure they remain attractive and fit for purpose. We aim to create clear pathways

for growth, by focusing on career progression and development opportunities,

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of meeting: Wednesday 4 June 2025**

**Report by: Emily Cordwell**

**Report title:** HR Q4 Stats 24 - 25

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

Not applicable

**Summary** – For members to consider the Human Resources Management Report for Quarter 4 which covers January – March 2025

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

- a) To consider the Human Resources Management report for Quarter 4 (January – March 2025) and provide any comments to the HR Officer/Head of HR and OD regarding the content or formatting of the report.**

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

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the Human Resources (HR) Management report for Quarter 4 (January – March 2025)

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Revised format following recommendations of HRC

#### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 For members to consider the quarterly statistics on:
  - Sickness
  - Vacancies
  - Recruitment and Retention
  - Learning and Development
  - Health and Safety

## **4.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

The data shows that East Herts Council employs a diverse workforce with some areas of overrepresentation.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

### **Financial**

No

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

No

### **Specific Wards**

No

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

**Contact Member**

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## **HR Committee Report for Q4 2024/25**

**Note:** As of 31 March 2025, East Herts Council employed 278.43 fte and had a headcount of 311.

### **1.0 Sickness Absence**

At the end of Quarter 4, the total number of sickness days taken was 548.01 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 293.36 FTE days (53.5%) were due to short term sickness and 254.65 FTE days (46.5%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 4.9% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 4.2% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 9.1%.

At the end of Quarter 4, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 9.09 days.

#### **Short term sickness**

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

77 employees (24% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Q4 totalling 293.36 FTE days.

At the end of Q4, the number of short-term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 3.46 days.

Short term absences that meet out trigger points are handled through our Absence Management Policy processes.

#### **Long term sickness**

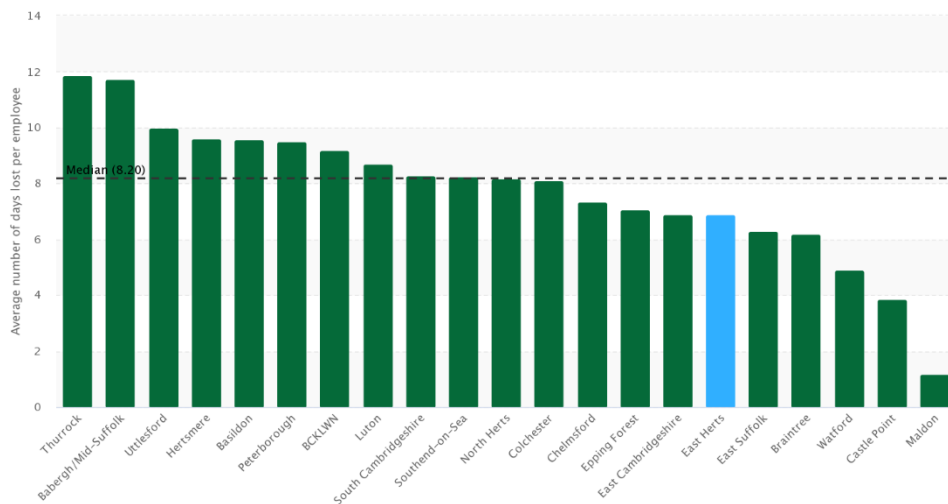
Absences in excess of 4 weeks / 28 consecutive calendar days are considered to be long term sickness absence.

11 employees (3.4% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Q4 totalling 254.65 FTE days.

At the end of Q4, the number of long-term FTE days absent per FTE was 5.63 days.

All long-term absence is being managed with HR staff supporting the employee and manager to help get the member of staff back to work. We use our Occupational Health Service and Employee Assistance Programme to support this process, they provide helpful guidance and recommendations to help us accommodate return to work for the member of staff.

The benchmarking data for 31 March 2025 is not currently available. See graph below which compares average number of days lost per employee up to 31 March 2024.



## 2.0 Recruitment and Retention

### Recruitment

Our biggest recruitment challenge this quarter were qualified accountants, Planning Officers and Environmental Health Officers. East Herts geographical position does mean that qualified staff have a large number of employment options within easy reach and the new standard blended working offer means that their options are now even bigger.

We have a Market Forces Supplement that is applied to hard to fill roles in Planning and Legal services, this is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant. We also have an agreement with LinkedIn to market our top 5 roles, this has helped with attraction. We are also reviewing the new environmental health apprenticeships being developed by East Suffolk Council as a possible future avenue for recruitment.

We have launched a new applicant tracking system which will improve our candidate journey from application to onboarding.

We continually review our offers against the market and adapt what we can given our financial constraints.

Recruitment to posts in other service areas is generally more straightforward and successful first time.

All recruitment requests must be accompanied by a business case and signed off by a panel consisting of Chief Executive, Head of HR and Section 151 officer. This ensures that we challenge ourselves to consider if we need to replace roles like for like, should we use the opportunity to reshape roles, do we really need the role etc.

There have been 13 new starters in quarter 4:

- 9 in BEAM
- 2 in Housing and Health
- 2 in Planning

## **Vacancies**

As of 31 March 2025, we had 53 posts unfilled for a variety of reasons. This represents 16.7% of posts.

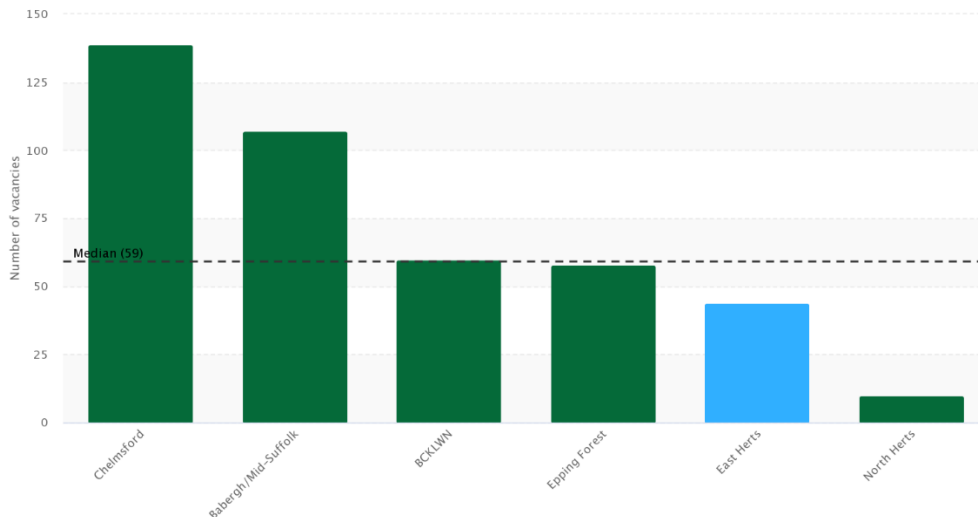
These are the main reasons posts are vacant:

- Being held for budget savings
- Being held as a service review pending
- Being held as part of the decision- making accountability review (DMA)
- To be deleted following service review
- In the process of being recruited to
- Recruitment successful, job offer out but new member of staff has not yet started.

It takes almost twice as long to recruit to a post as it takes for someone to resign and work their notice which often account for the high vacancy number. Business critical posts get covered by agency / interim staff or through acting up arrangements that also offer staff development opportunities.

The benchmarking data for 31 March 2025 is not currently available. See graph below which compares number of vacancies up to 31 March 2024.





## Retention – Turnover

There were 18 leavers in Q4 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 5.6%. The turnover rate for the annual period 2024/25 is 18.2%. This is higher than our target of 14% although not unusual in local government, the national average across all sectors is about 15% with a lot of councils reporting rates of over 20%.

Reasons for leaving in Q4 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, changes in career, and for personal reasons.

The leavers were in the following teams:

- 2 in HR
- 2 in Operations
- 4 in Housing and Health
- 1 in Revenue and Benefits
- 1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
- 1 in Strategic finance and property
- 1 in Legal and Democratic services
- 6 in Planning

Turnover has been notably higher in Planning and Environmental Health, largely due to a combination of external promotions and unique circumstances. While these changes bring disruption, they also present an opportunity to attract fresh talent.

## Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Q1

- We will be reviewing our Market Forces Supplement taking into account salary survey data, information from relevant professional organisations and the implications of any national pay award.
- We will be reviewing our end to end recruitment process.

### **3.0 Learning and Development**

The learning needed in our organisation is delivered by e-learning, one to one training or group-based learning remotely or in person.

HR is responsible for the corporate training budget, including professional training. We use training identified through annual employee reviews to scope the annual training plan. We are utilising the apprenticeship levy, with 4 officers currently completing a level 7 qualification and 1 officer completing a level 3 qualification. In Q1 this will expand with two more officers completing an IRRV qualification.

The annual mandatory e-learning training programme has continued for employees to complete in line with their performance review. These courses include Data Protection, Health and Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding. A mandatory course on preventing sexual harassment has now been added to ensure compliance with the new statutory requirements and increase the safety of all of our staff at work and in work related activities.

In addition to our mandatory programmes there are many other programmes that our staff can access to increase their knowledge and skills. We have renewed our contract with our e-learning provider for a further year.

Leading a Mentally Healthy Workplace Skills Bootcamp has been started for the H&S Advisor to lead the Mental Health provision supported by Unison and East Herts Together members. This is a targeted, high-impact programme delivered over 12-14 weeks. It is specifically designed to address the mental health needs and leadership challenges faced by organisations in Hertfordshire. It can benefit employees who aspire to progress and take on a leadership role in managing mental health within their organisation.

A management development carousel ran throughout 25/25 which consists of a series of training sessions, allowing managers to book on topics they'd like a boost on or to learn more about. This continued throughout Quarter 4.

#### **Learning and Development planned for the next quarter:**

- 
- We will be using the outcomes of this year's PDRs to allow us to have a strategic view of what development is required to enable us to maximise the use of our budget and how we best use our apprenticeship levy.
- We will also be trialling a 2 day Managers Essentials Bootcamp for new / relatively new Team Managers.

- Start to develop a simple train the trainer workshop for subject matter experts to enable them to develop their colleagues.
- We will also continue to review our staffing policies to ensure they are legally compliant and balanced in their approach and support ER processes; this is business as usual.
- We will have further Mental Health First Aid refresher training to those who wish to continue in their MHFA role.

## 4.0 Health and Safety

### Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

#### Background Information

Accidents are classified into two categories:

#### Non-Reportable Accidents

These are minor accidents such as cuts, minor contact injuries e.g., walking into the corner of a desk etc, slips, trips. Staff are encouraged to report these and can use the online self-service portal MyView or completing an accident report from the accident report pad. These are designated form BI510 accidents.

East Herts Council operates predominately back-office functions in a low-risk environment, the determination of low risk is based on the Health and Safety Executives definition, therefore, a high rate of accidents is not expected to occur.

#### Reportable Accidents

The **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013**, often known by the acronym **RIDDOR**, is a 2013 statutory instrument of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It regulates the statutory obligation to report deaths, injuries, diseases and "dangerous occurrences".

Types of incidents that are reportable under RIDDOR?

- accidents resulting in the death of any person.
- accidents resulting in an absence from work over 7 days (excluding the day of the accident) e.g., degloving injury.
- non-fatal accidents requiring hospital treatment to non-workers. E.g., anyone not employed by the council.
- dangerous occurrences e.g., collapse, overturning or failure of any load-creating part of lifting equipment, failure of any closed vessel or associated pipework forming part of pressure systems, collapse of scaffold this is not a definitive list.

- Reportable diseases under RIDDOR are listed in regulations 8 and 9 of the regulations. Types of occupational diseases include occupational dermatitis, hand-arm vibration syndrome, occupational cancer etc.

Any reportable accident, incident or near miss arising from construction work e.g., building sites, new builds, demolition work or developments fall under the purview of the Health and Safety Executive.

### Incidents and Near Miss Events

An incident is a broader term for any event, planned or unplanned, positive, or negative, that may or may not result in harm, damage, or injury. In essence, an accident is a specific type of incident that leads to a negative outcome.

Examples of incidents include, but are not limited to the effects of abusive, threatening behaviours, receiving obscene, aggressive, or threatening phone calls, correspondence, effects on the health of an individual arising from illness, health exacerbated by environmental factors e.g. excessive heat, air quality, extremes of temperature.

Colleagues are encouraged to report incidents and near misses in order to identify patterns and themes that allow the organisation to implement measures and controls to protect employee health and wellbeing. A new table has been introduced to report the number of Incident and Near Miss events occurring.

The Council also has the Employee Assistance scheme that offers confidential counselling, advice and support for any person affected by an incident, accident or near miss event.

Further support will also be available through the re-launched Mental Health First Aid provision following the successful participation in a 13-week Mental Health skills bootcamp.

### Work Related Accidents

	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Target 24/25
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents ( <b>Not</b> reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	3	1	3
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	0	0

### Work Related Incidents, Near Misses

	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Target 24/25
H&S Employee Work Related <b>Incidents</b> ( <b>Not</b> reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	4	3
H&S Employee Work Related <b>Incidents</b> (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	0	0
H&S Employee Work Related <b>Near Miss</b> Events	0	0	0

## **Contract Management and Responsibility**

The Council have outsourced a number of high-level services from waste collection and recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and leisure services and employs contractors for capital projects.

However, health and safety responsibilities cannot be passed from one party to another by a contract. If something goes wrong the Council can and will be held accountable by the HSE and the Courts.

The Council therefore ensures that contractors have appropriate health and safety policies in place, monitor contractor performance and safety standards. In order to ensure that services are delivered safely the officers with contract oversight:

- Convene meetings to review performance.
- Monitor complaints received and undertake investigations.
- Undertake onsite inspections and reviews.

Heads of Service with responsibility for these functions are responsible for ensuring that effective management controls are implemented.

**Minutes of Safety Committee**  
**Wednesday 05<sup>th</sup> February 2025**  
**Meeting Room Beane / Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Peter Dickinson (PD), Jackie Bruce (JB), John Earley (JE), Dominique Kingsbury (DK), Benjamin Wood (BW), Emily Tickridge (ET), Geoff Hayden (GH), Rowan Perrin (RP), Laura Lightfoot (LL), Steven Sargent (SS)

**Apologies:** Paul Thomas-Jones (P T-J), Ezra O'Neill (E O'N), Ian Sharratt (IS), Chloe Hipwood-Norton (C H-N)

**Announcements:**

(PD) welcomed Laura and Steven who will be representing BEAM Theatre.

**1.0 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 06<sup>th</sup> November 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Action:** No action required.

**2.0 Matters Arising from the minutes.**

No matters arising from the minutes.

**Action:** No action required.

**3.0 Office Housekeeping update – Transformation**

(PD) reported that he has advised the Transformation Team that there are specific health and safety requirements to be met when entering a shared premises arrangement.

- Any incoming tenant will be invited to send a representative to Safety Committee
- All safety information must be shared with tenants.

(GH) advised the following:

- High Oak are occupying the ground and first floors of the old Wallfields building.
- The IT Helpdesk Office will be moving to the ground floor of the old Wallfields building.
- An invitation to view office accommodation in the East wing, second floor, new building has been offered to the car parking contractor APCOA's office-based staff and to the grounds maintenance contractor Glendale's office staff.

APCOA are satisfied with the accommodation and have accepted an offer to move in, no response has been received from Glendale.

GH will be utilising existing storage wall and partitioning from Charringtons House to fabricate meetings rooms on the second floor, east wing.

If High Oak proceed there will be a loss of 20 parking spaces, GH has been asked to review parking allocation based on levels of occupancy. Disabled spaces are unaffected.

**Action: None** - Standing Item

#### **4.0 Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses**

There were 2 non reportable, minor accidents reported between 07 November and 07 February 2025, none were related to any system or procedural failure and no further action was required.

3 Incident was reported in this period relating to feeling unwell due to poor air quality in the ground floor office space occupied by Planning and Housing and Health with high CO2 levels being recorded.

**Action:** See Item 8

## **5.0 Regulatory and Legislative changes (Verbal report)**

There have been no regulatory or legislative changes.

**Action:** None

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

### **6.1 Shared Waste Service – Buntingford Depot**

Due to priority commitments the Contract Manager was unable to attend, there were no updates.

**Action:** No action to be taken.

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

(RP) Advised the Committee that following the recent series of storms, high winds, and heavy rainfall there were no trees lost across the Councils parks, open spaces and play areas which is thanks to the vigilance and thoroughness of the tree risk surveys, robust inspections and commitment of the team.

(RP) also advised that two play areas are being updated and refurbished.

**Action:** No action required.

### **6.3 Parking Services**

(DK) reported that antisocial behaviour remains an issue at Northgate End MSCP with incidents of vandalism, littering, broken glass, and graffiti still an ongoing issue. Work to make improvements to the appearance and access is ongoing.

(DK) informed the Committee that Waitrose had experienced similar antisocial behaviour issues in its own car park.

(DK) reported that there are some space lining issues that need attention.



**Action:** Continue to monitor. (DK) to report lining requirements for attention.

## **7.0 Capital Project updates/EHC Contracts - Health & Safety Compliance and Management**

### Swimming Pools and Gyms – Sport and Leisure Management (SLM)

(ET) submitted the following update via email following the loss of EHDC wi-fi in the Beane Room.

- *Attempted break in at Grange Paddocks leisure centre over the Christmas period; a group of young people kicked the door, no damage incurred, and all caught on CCTV.*
- *Fanshawe and Leventhorpe pool and gym ceased operation 23 December and Everyone Active were offsite early January. Chauncy School are managing the demobilisation of the pool, and the keys were handed back to the school 4 January. Everyone Active are managing the demobilisation of Leventhorpe on behalf of the school, the pool is 80% drained and the hoarding around the external aspect is due to be erected shortly. The pool plant is also isolated; however, the removal of empty bulk tanks of chemicals are still required – again this is due to happen very shortly. Once this has been completed there will be no water or chemical hazards and the keys will be returned to the school.*
- *I believe Jackie asked about Ward Freman, the hoarding is up, pool drained, and we are awaiting to end the contract with HCC and hand the keys back to them.*

**Action:** None

### BEAM Hertford

(LL) reported that there had been occurrences of anti-social behaviour at BEAM, discussions have taken place with local PCSO's, and the Team have now been set up with a lone working personal safety MySOS device, the Theatre are continuing to monitor via the Hertford Town Link Radio.

**Action:** None

### Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford

(BW) – Nothing to report.

### Glendale – Grounds Maintenance

**Action:** No action required.

### Contract Compliance

**Action:**

## **8.0 Property – Premise’s Maintenance and Repairs**

(GH) advised Committee that the following steps are being taken to address the concerns regarding the ventilation issues being reported on the ground floor, west wing, Planning and Housing and Health office.

**Action:** (GH) / (JE) to arrange for adjustment to be carried out. CO2 levels will be monitored and if levels are not reducing it may be necessary to retrofit the passive air vents.

(GH) Advised that the following will be undertaken. Install 3 x inline extractor fans and 6 lengths of worm ducting that will connect to the vents either end of the corridor that will extract fresh air and recirculate into the office area.

Quote received for work and in the process of appointing contractor to undertake.

## **9.0 Facilities Management**

(GH) met with the Councils contracted cleaning company representative to explain and show the sub-standard cleaning and, in some areas, where no cleaning appears to take place.

The external shower block hasn’t been cleaned for a considerable period of time.

(GH) advised Committee that the manager from Birkin agreed and apologised, and that action would take place.

(GH) explained that the council are looking at retendering the contract as this has now expired but advised that TUPE regulations apply.

**Action:** (GH) to monitor and update Committee on the response and if there are signs of improvement.

(GH) updated Committee on the status of Charringtons House, he is in the process of undertaking the final removal of viable materials, fixtures, and fittings for repurposing at Wallfields. He advised that there have been repeated break ins despite the building being boarded up and that security arrangements are in place to monitor the site until it can be demolished.

(PD) the Committee would like to thank (GH) for the work that he has been undertaking at Wallfields as part of the transformation project and the refurbishments that have utilised much of the furniture, fixtures, fittings, carpeting, and lighting taken from Charringtons House to fabricate working space at Wallfields, this has been a significant piece of work with savings made by repurposing viable items for continued use.

## **10.0 List of Issues**

### **10.1 Employee side (UNISON)**

UNISON welcomed the decision of Leadership Team to commission an access audit.

**Action:** None

### **10.2. Management side**

Leadership Team approved the request to commission an Access Audit of Wallfields.

(PD) has received a quote from Direct Access Consultancy Ltd regarding carrying out an access audit of Wallfields. PD will be agreeing dates in due course.

**Action:** Update Committee on progress.

(PD) advised Committee that the new inspection forms are ready for testing, and he will be speaking to respective teams to arrange

for the forms to be tested. He has spoken to the Parking Team initially and will be helping to test the forms.

(PD) updated Committee on the completion of the first stage of Mental Health First Aid training and plans to embed a re-launch of the mental health support at East Herts.

One of the issues is the provision of a 'safe space' in which colleagues can discuss any mental health concerns with a mental health first aider, it is therefore essential to accommodate this provision when looking at how we manage and utilise space at Wallfields.

## **11.0 Health and Safety Training**

PD has been asked to consider options for arranging training for managers on the process of preparing and implementing Risk Assessments.

**Action:** Update Committee on progress.

## **12.0 AOB**

### Safety Committee

Safety Committee is not a decision-making body, its function is to provide the organisations leadership the opportunity to discuss with employee representatives matters about which it must consult with the workforce.

It is therefore the request of the Safety Committee to ask that a member of Leadership Team assume the chair to ensure that the Committees discussions and recommendations have a voice at the Leadership Team Meetings.

The Safety Committee propose Ben Wood as he already attends meetings and would make an ideal representative if Leadership Team were to consider the proposal.

## Wallfields Tree Work

(PD) advised Committee that Operations are commissioning work to reduce the two Beeches in-between our building and the bowling green.

Noted that although not actually causing an actionable nuisance yet they are approx. only a couple of feet away from the building - Operations have sourced a quote to have the crowns cleaned, a couple of low branch hangers removed and cut back from building.

**Meeting ended: 11.30 am. – Due to repeated failure of the EHDC Wi-Fi in the Beane Room (this has been reported to IT for investigation).**

**Date of Next Meeting: 07 May 2025**

**Time: 10.00am**

**Location: Beane Room, Rivers Suite**

**Teams: Microsoft Teams meeting**

**Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.**

Meeting ID: **334 740 738 70**

Passcode: **DTGQLU**