

# **East Herts Council Report**

## **Human Resources Committee**

**Date of Meeting: 12 February 2020**

**Report by: Head of HR and Organisational Development**

**Report title: HR and Payroll Team Update Report**

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

---

## **Summary**

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

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

## **1.0 Proposal**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on what the HR and Payroll team have been working on during Quarter 3 (October to December 2019).

## **2.0 Payroll Service**

- 2.1 Payroll continues to deliver its primary mission of ensuring all Staff, Councillors and Contractors on Payroll are paid accurately and on a timely basis.
- 2.2 Payroll have continued to review processes between HR and Payroll to improve effective use and automation through developing the system (Resourcelink). The Payroll Manager, the Head of HR & OD, the HR Trainee Officer (who is the team's key System Developer/Administrator) and the HR & Payroll Administrators met with colleagues at Three Rivers and Watford to share practice and review usage. The main development identified is to develop an online overtime claim form

this will be progressed in February.

- 2.3 The self service element of the HR and Payroll system (MyView) has now been developed so that it can be used by Members for payslips and expense claims as well as accessing and maintaining personal data, this will reduce the production of paper payslips and associated postage once fully rolled out. The Electric Car rate to claim mileage in personal electric vehicles has been added to system to process expense claims for both officers and members. The roll out of MyView to members was delayed whilst the electric car rate was set up and also to allow the new Democratic Services Officer (DSO) to settle into the role before the pilot begun. A pilot with a group of members will begin in February and then once reviewed will be fully rolled out.
- 2.4 The Trainee HR Officer has also created accounts for all casual staff on MyView again meaning that they can access their personal data and update it but also so that e-payslips can be provided again to reduce administration time as well as printing and postage costs. IT have now created accounts for all casuals and this is also being rolled out in February.
- 2.5 Payroll have been assisting with providing the evidence required from payroll as part of the annual statement of accounts external audit.
- 2.6 Payroll has also assisted external Audit with their fieldwork for the annual Payroll Audit (see separate report for full details). The team are proud to gain good overall assurance with no recommendations.
- 2.7 Following the snap general election on 12 December 2019 Payroll prepared for the additional payroll to be processed on behalf of the Returning Officer to pay all

due payments to individuals for election duties. This is ongoing due to the volume of calculations and processing required. The actual election payroll will run in February in line with expectations. Payroll are reviewing the process with the elections team to improve the process in the future.

- 2.8 Payroll has also begun the process of pension auto enrolment which is required by the pensions regulator every 3 years which includes writing to staff currently not in the pension scheme giving them notice that they will be (automatically) enrolled into the pension scheme in February 2020. The majority of staff are already enrolled, the task affects approximately 20 staff who can choose to opt back out if they wish to.

### **3.0 Learning and Development**

- 3.1 Please see the HR Quarterly Management Statistics Report for details around recent learning and development events that have been held. As detailed in the report, a range of events have been delivered. There were 143 employees participating in 22 learning and development opportunities during the period 1 October - 31 December 2019.
- 3.2 During this quarter the training has had a Health and Safety and management focus. Bitesize sessions have been delivered to support the managers in understanding and executing our internal and management processes. A range of Health and Safety events run been run to support our staff across the Council which have included Ladder User & Working at Height, Fire Marshall Refresher, Electrical Safety Awareness and First Aid training.
- 3.3 The mandatory e-learning programmes have been updated and a new course has been added; Lone Working. The new e-learning programme will be rolled

out to staff by the end of January. These courses will be available to members and staff.

- 3.4 Work has commenced on the review of the corporate induction training and a 'Managing Induction' bitesize event has been delivered to support managers through the current induction process. The course content is being reviewed to ensure it reflects the staff handbook, keys messages and contains information on the Council's key projects.
- 3.5 The review of the Learning and Development pages on the intra-net has started to ensure the most up to date information is available to all staff. This will ensure that staff are aware of all the development opportunities that are available to them, not just the face to face training events that are delivered.
- 3.6 The apprenticeship programme is still developing and interviews have taken place for two Town Planning Apprentices. The Council is currently supporting 5 apprentices through their qualification and training. The Human Resources Officer is looking at ways to support the on-going career development of the apprentices coming to the end of their training, taking into consideration the opportunities current available at the Council.
- 3.7 The HR Officer responsible for Learning and Development has also worked with the Elections team to develop the required Poll Clerk, Presiding Officer and Inspector training. The HR Officer then delivered these sessions to appointed staff for the recent general election with support from the Financial Services Manager. The training was well received and resulted in a number of delegates praising the training provided.

#### **4.0 Human Resources Update**

4.1 Both the Trainee HR Officer and the HR Officer responsible for Learning and Development were nominated for a staff recognition award in December. The December winner was from Revenues and Benefits but it is pleasing to note the nominations for two members of the HR team which was relation to them supporting other services above and beyond their core role.

4.2 **East Herts Together Policy Development Update**

A full East Herts Together group has now been established with representatives from all services invited and first full meeting was held on Friday 10th of January. The group were asked to consider initial feedback gathered from across the organisation at the last Service Manager Quarterly Meeting. The group considered and agreed how all staff could be engaged in this transformation programme to ensure a bottom up approach. The Head of HR & OD is developing a engagement tool which can be used both in team meetings and also individually completed on line to ensure all can contribute.

4.3 Some initial 'housekeeping' actions were identified and have begun to be completed in the following areas:

- Supporting all staff to use the MiCollab telephone system consistently to support a one-team approach which allows staff visibility and connections to be more flexible.
- A consistent understanding of how staff are expected to use the outlook calendar and how to link this with MiCollab.
- To develop and implement a standard East Herts email signature.
- To ensure that all staff put photos of themselves on

corporate systems to allow staff to get to know the whole 'one-team'.

4.4 The group also agreed to develop a customer charter as another initial piece of work.

4.5 In terms of Policy development which had been put on hold the group agreed a set of Terms of Reference for HR to begin progressing this work which would be subject to the normal consultation processes which include LT, Unison, LJP and HRC stages:

Agreed TOR for HR/Employment policies

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

4.6 HR have agreed a priority policy list which will begin with focus on the formal HR/Employment Policies (the next LJP in April should therefore include a number of draft policies to consider subject to LT and Unison processes being completed at the relevant time). Policy development will also be subject to the core competency development work which will be produced through employee engagement over how we embed further our values and behaviours.

4.7 The quarterly staff briefings in February will be delivered under a new format which includes a HR update on Starters, internal moves, Staff recognition winners and East Herts Together work. Monthly East Herts together group meetings have been scheduled with the next session on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of February.

## **5.0 Recruitment**

- 5.1 The content of the 'Working for Us' page on the council's website is being updated to better sell the benefits of working for the council.
- 5.2 In addition, the job application form is being revised to be more user friendly. It will now have two parts whereby if a CV is submitted with the application (this is not permitted under our current processes) only Part 2 of the application form needs to be completed by the applicant. The Part 2 section will ensure the candidate provides all the information required that is not normally covered by a CV e.g. any employment gaps, referee details etc. and of course demonstrating how they meet the person specification. We are also working with the Web Admin team with the aim of making the form fully accessible for those who are blind or partially sighted.
- 5.3 From April 2020 we will also be working with Indeed (the largest online general job board) on a 1 year's trial basis to advertise all jobs rather than using the multi online job board package that we had been using with the provider NFP People. The NFP package averaged at £500 per job advert for a multi -site package, statistics have shown that the Indeed site should provide sufficient coverage alongside job specific sites where appropriate. East Herts had been posting on Indeed with a basic free package but this is limited to every 190 days and Indeed therefore removed our access to advertise jobs for free on their site and approached us to agree a package. The Head of HR & OD negotiated a very cost effective annual package which will lead to significant savings. The package is for 60 jobs per annum (based on an average of 5 job adverts per month) and will reduce the cost of advertising on generic job boards to less than 20% of the current costs. The matter was discussed with LT as

services pay their own recruitment costs from their staffing budget and commitment was secured from the Leadership Team that all vacancies will be advertised with Indeed as standard. The package with Indeed will include a branded page (not included in a basic package) where we are able to sell the benefits of working for the council, include case studies and videos, and employees/applicants are able to leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer.

- 5.4 We have also reviewed our internal processes which has included updating the interview and shortlisting paperwork as also covered in the recruitment audit report and ensuring that all recruitment paperwork is returned to HR before a conditional offer is made as managers were not always returning this paperwork meaning that HR had limited equalities data for the shortlisting and interview stages.
- 5.5 The new starter process has also been reviewed to ensure that new starters provide their ID documents and complete the necessary forms before their start date with the council. Currently new starters provide this on their first day however this can present risks for the council if there are any issues or if this is delayed. Under the new process, new starters will need to make an appointment with HR to bring in their documents before their start date. This will allow for any issues to be resolved before the first day. The new starter paperwork has been revised to reflect the changes which will take effect from 1 February 2020.

## **6.0 Casework**

- 6.1 Support has been provided by HR on a number of cases



in terms of probation, absence and capability.

## **7.0 Wellbeing**

7.1 In partnership with the Community Wellbeing and Partnerships Team, HR are continuing to promote the council's wellbeing programme. The Council has submitted a bid for the REBA (Reward & Employee Benefits Association) Employee Wellbeing Award 2020 for 'Best Wellbeing Engagement' covering our Live Well, Work Well staff wellbeing programme. We are pleased that REBA has recognised the quality of the work led by the Community and Wellbeing Partnership team with HR by shortlisting East Herts Council as a finalist. The award ceremony is on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> of March where we will find out if we have won this national employer award.

### **7.2 Financial Wellbeing**

To support employees with their financial wellbeing we ran a series of articles in the weekly staff newsletter, Connect, in the lead up to and after Christmas as this can be a particularly difficult time financially. The articles promoted the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which offers financial support e.g. with debt management and budgeting. We signposted staff to the council's employee benefits hub, MyRewards, for financial advice, tips and tools such as a budget planner, loan calculator, how to get free debt advice, and how to check their credit report. MyRewards was also offering various retail discounts to help staff with the Christmas shopping.

### **7.3 Wellbeing experiences**

Following the free wellbeing taster sessions that were offered to staff early last year and in response to positive feedback from staff, we negotiated discounted rates for

staff wishing to continue to receive these experiences. Sessions on Reiki and Reflexology were offered at discounted rates and taken up by staff in December. We are continuing to liaise with the provider to explore whether other sessions can be offered such as Mindfulness Meditation, Menopause. We are also exploring with Hertfordshire County Council whether East Herts staff can participate in wellbeing events being held at County Hall.

#### 7.4 Happy Back sessions

Following the success of Happy Back taster sessions in October, we have recently promoted further discounted sessions to staff. We are currently analysing levels of interest.

#### 7.5 Flu jabs

The council's offer of free flu jabs to staff was a success 70 staff received a flu jab in November/December 2019 via the Boots Scheme.

#### 7.6 National Wellbeing Awareness Days

We are exploring how to promote National Awareness Days such as Time to Talk Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, to raise important issues and to demonstrate the council's commitment to supporting staff wellbeing.

#### 7.7 Mental Health First Aiders

Mental Health First Aiders continue to meet every 2 months to support each other. Experiences of giving support to staff (and on occasions to members of the public) are shared (anonymously). We are exploring further ways that we can promote the support available from Mental Health First Aiders to staff. Special mental health first aider badges have been ordered that can be attached to lanyards to further promote the support available and encourage staff to identify and approach

mental health first aiders to talk and seek further support when needed.

#### 7.8 Mental Health Support through Access to Work

We are exploring mental health support available for employees through the Access to Work, called Able Futures. Support is available through a dedicated helpline and one on one support.

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

8.1 The HR Trainee Officer has begun further developing the HR and Payroll system in line with their new role which provides approximately 2 days per week to maintain and develop the system. Unfortunately the provider, who are now called Zellis, have been poor in terms of support/customer service and despite only having the system for a couple of years we now have our 5<sup>th</sup> account manager who like predecessors has been slow to respond and support effective use and delivering the outcomes expected. A special demo has now been arranged for 26<sup>th</sup> February on how to more effectively use the system which will include use of the H&S module and the L&D module which is not currently implemented. We are also working to identify another client who is using the recruitment module so we can decide if this should be implemented (HR has previously been told the module was no longer supported by the provider, but this has now been continued).

8.2 As outline in the Payroll update the self-service portal of the system called MyView has now been developed for Member use so that they will be able to access their records and update them, receive e-payslips and claim expenses electronically. All member expenses and

mileage claims will be sent to the DSOs for checking and then a further authorisation by the Democratic Services Manager. The roll out of this which will include member training from the HR Trainee will begin in February, with a pilot of at least 10 members across the different wards and parties.

- 8.3 Similarly, HR will be rolling out the My View self-service access to all East Herts casual staff, meaning all personal data can be viewed online and securely changed if needed, as well as the ability to view payslips/p60's. IT have now set up all casuals to have IT access and are part of the 'active directory'. The Trainee HR officer will again support all staff by providing how to guides and training if necessary.
- 8.4 The dependency/carer leave allowance of up to 5 days within a rolling 12 months in line with policy has now been built in the live HR system and successfully implemented with managers. (The allowance is pro-rata for part time staff) and ensures both pro-rating and that when the limit is reached unpaid leave must be taken. The Trainee HR officer is looking in to developing an online overtime form, accessed via my view. This will again make processes more automated and efficient, with claims being submitted online, and sent to management and then payroll for authorisation.

## **9.0 Recruitment Agency Review**

- 9.1 The Head of HR and OD with the support of the HR Trainee Officer have undertaken a review of Recruitment Agency terms and conditions across the council. East Herts Council have commissioned Matrix SCM to support the procurement and management of Agency workers, following the ESPO MStar 3 framework. This is a Neutral Vendor Managed Service which is web

based and centralises the end-to-end procurement process to enable all parties to achieve the best possible value both in terms of quality and price. The implementation for this project has begun with a go live date scheduled for Monday 13 April 2020.

## **10.0 Options**

N/A

## **11.0 Risks**

N/A

## **12.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

No

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

### **Financial**

No

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

Yes – as described in the report

**Human Rights**

No

**Legal**

No

**Specific Wards**

No

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

N/A

**Contact Officer**

Simon O'Hear – Head of HR and OD

Contact Tel No – x2141

[simon.o'hear@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:simon.o'hear@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Report Author**

Simon O'Hear – Head of HR and OD

Contact Tel No – x2141

[simon.o'hear@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:simon.o'hear@eastherts.gov.uk)