

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 November 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR (Human Resources Committee):

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

1.0 Proposal

1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on during Quarter 2 2020/21 (July 2020 to September 2020).

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 received the NJC Pay Award for 2020/21 applicable from 1 April 2020 notification on 24 August 2020 detailing new rates of pay. The Head of HR and OD ensured that staff were aware of the award through internal communications and that it would be processed in September payroll.

- 2.3 The Pay Award required an extensive payroll process including updating all scale points with the new rates of pay plus all elements linked to these rates being updated. The Payroll team were then required to calculate the back pay required for the previous 5 months (April to August) which currently relies on manual calculations and input followed by an independent check.
- 2.4 Payroll worked hard to ensure that the award was processed in full in the September payroll and staff received both their new salary and any backdated salary in the 15th of September pay run. This was followed by overtime arrears/backpay being processed in 15th October pay run due to different calculation process required and need to focus on the main award.
- 2.5 The Head of HR and OD would like to highlight this achievement as one to be congratulated as not only did the team manage to get this into system for the 15th of September pay run (i.e. within 2 weeks of receiving the notification that the award had been agreed) but no queries have been received from staff over the revised payments and back pay.
- 2.6 Payroll have also during the period completed a key improvement by updating costing codes on payroll system as required by Finance following changes to codes on general ledger system. The payroll system interfaces all relevant costs from all on the payroll including pay and deductions which are balanced on a monthly basis and is an annual audit check so this will mean that Finance will be able to take the information straight in and will not need to re-code.
- 2.7 Payroll have continued to manage furlough payments and supporting the furlough payment reclaims during the period. The Furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) come to an end at the end of October and has reduced to a 70% reclaim for September and a 60% reclaim for October in addition to no claims for NI and Pension, Furloughed staff have continued to be paid at 80% with EHC making up the shortfall and some staff

have been flexed back into work (as allowed by the flexible scheme) on occasion where this occurs they revert back to 100% of pay for that day and there is no furlough reclaim.

- 2.8 Payroll have been assisting HR with any calculation requirements (potential redundancy payments) for Hertford Theatre Staff in line with the proposed restructure and current consultation period (see section 6.0 for more details).
- 2.9 Both Payroll and HR have continued to work from home with only 1 or 2 days in the office as required in line with the work from where possible guidance. To keep visual communication with the rest of the HR Team weekly zoom meetings have continued to be chaired by Head of HR & OD. At the meeting all Team members reflect on their previous weeks achievements then priorities for the coming week which allows work loads to be divided appropriately and ensure effective practice is shared. The Head of HR and OD also briefs the whole team (HR, OD, Payroll and H&S) on updates from Leadership Team meetings.

3.0 Learning and Development

- 3.1 The HR Quarterly Management Statistics Report provides the data and details regarding the learning and development events from July to September 2020. Currently all training events are being delivered virtually although face to face options are being looked at for some training where practical/face to face elements are required e.g. First Aid at work and Evac chair training.
- 3.2 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator has been working with external organisations and officers across the council as part of the review and development of the e-learning programmes available on SkillsBuild; the council's e-learning platform. A new course has been developed, others are currently under development or are being revised and refreshed. The 2020/21 mandatory courses have been agreed and will be ready for staff to access at the end of November 2020 in line with the annual PDR process.

Mandatory Courses being revised for relaunch:

- Data Protection 2020
- Health and Safety 2020
- Safeguarding 2020
- Equalities and Diversity 2020
- Lone Working (for selected officers)

New and available:

- Protecting yourself and others from Coronavirus
- In development:
- Fraud Awareness
- Email etiquette
- Managing Home Working

The consistency of the reporting from SkillsBuild is also being investigated and a more regular and defined programme of reporting is being finalised to support the implementation of the training and to provide direct updates to managers.

- 3.3 The corporate induction slides have been updated following feedback and consultation from the East Herts Together Team. The first virtual corporate induction event has taken place and received positive feedback. The format has been updated and 5 guest speakers join the OD and HR Co-Ordinator who hosts the event. Regular corporate inductions have been scheduled with this format across the next year.

Further training will be provided to managers to ensure the local induction is being delivered effectively, the staff handbook will continue to be developed and the induction process will be reviewed in line with any feedback received. This is an ongoing

piece of work and it is essential that new ways of working are added to induction process once implemented to ensure new starters are supported and clear on expectations.

- 3.4 A date for a virtual pre-retirement course was released; this event is now fully booked. If the on-line presentation of this course is a success future dates will be advertised in this format.
- 3.5 The OD and HR Coordinator is supporting the Wellbeing Programme through the in-house training budget and by helping to commission and deliver suitable courses to support and develop employee well-being. Clearly this is very relevant form of training and support in the current climate and staff will be provided with a range of bite sized online courses which will help them to manage in these difficult times; ensuring continued and further well-being support.
- 3.6 Apprentice Levy Pot

Two apprentices have progressed onto a further stage of their training and now in trainee posts and are now studying for the next level of their qualification; a level 5 and level 6 respectively. One apprentice continues with their level 3 qualification, while we research the next level of training for one other apprentice. The council continues to fund three officers studying for degrees through the professional training budget.

4.0 Human Resources Update

4.1 East Herts Together (EHT) Development Update

The East Herts Together Group has continued to meet on Zoom whilst most employees work from home and has made good progress on actions.

- 4.1.1 The One page plan for the Eats Herts Together project has been updated to reflect changing priorities. All updated actions have

been assigned to members of the East Herts Together (cross service) Group and target dates agreed. Due to conflicting priorities some work has had to be delayed and moved forward on the plan.

4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- Staff calendars were made public on 3 August by IT and Outlook calendar protocols were circulated.
- The Customer Charter was approved by Leadership Team and has been implemented.
- Zoom Etiquette guidance has been developed to support staff use and ensure balance and has been circulated to staff and published on the intranet.
- Email Etiquette guidance has been drafted to be reviewed and following approval from the group will be used to train staff to use email effectively via the mandatory e-learning programme.
- A best practice guide for Managers and Staff on effectively working remotely has been developed and circulated to staff.
- The corporate values have been refreshed and a new more simplified graphic has been drafted which is easily understandable for staff. This is now with the Design team to be finalised and to ensure it meets accessibility guidelines.
- 7 HR policies have been drafted and are on target to be taken to LJP in January and HRC in February 2021:

1. Discipline Policy
2. Officer Code of Conduct
3. Grievance Policy
4. Absence Management Policy
5. Bullying and Harassment Policy
6. Recruitment Policy
7. Probation Policy and Procedure

- The content of the corporate induction has been developed/improved and also adjusted to work as a virtual

meeting. The session continues to be co-ordinated by the OD&HR Coordinator with 5 further presenters now included.

4.1.3 The drafting of the HR & OD Strategy has been delayed until November which will allow the refreshed values to be used and allow agile working developments to be supported. The draft will be worked up by HR with support from a EHT sub-group (as set out in the plan), then full EHT group and LT. The draft will be brought to the HR Committee in February for consideration.

4.1.4 The development of staff/management competencies has also had to be revised, work will now take place in December 2020. The work that will follow i.e. PDR redevelopment, Management training etc. has also been moved forward in line with competencies development. This year's PDR's which begin in November will use the current form and process and this will be replaced following the competencies development for the 21/22 PDR cycle.

Please see updated EHT plan in landscape view on next 2 pages

1. We will set the standards for customer service, and remove the barriers to working as 'one team'

1a	Introduce a new Customer charter	Su Tarran	Aug-20	✓
1b	Develop calendar management protocols	Ciaran MacCullagh	Apr-20	✓
	IT to switch all accounts to reviewer and Comms to promote	Helen Standen/Vicky M	Jul/Aug 20	✓
1c	Introduce a corporate email signature	Vicky Mullins	Apr-20	✓
1d	Roll out/promote photos for outlook, Micollab, and Outlook	Tyron Suddes	Apr-20	✓
1e	Roll out/promote use of Micollab by all	Emily Cordwell	Jul-20	✓
1f	Survey all staff on strengths and weaknesses of our 'one team' to help inform Strategy and Competencies	Claire Kirby	Apr-20	✓
1g	Develop Zoom Etiquette to support staff use and ensure balance	James/Vicky M/Jackie	Sep-20	✓
1h	Re-implement Email Etiquette and train all staff to use email more effectively	Helen F/Geoff/Alex	Nov-20	
1i	Produce best practice guide for Managers and Staff for effectively working remotely	Su/Vicky M/Simon B/ Sara	Oct-20	✓
1j	Refresh Values - make more simple	Emily T/Simon B/Geoff H	Oct-20	✓
1k	Develop a staff charter which sets out expectations from EHC and also expectations from staff/ this may be linked with revised Values	Claire/Simon/Richard	Dec-20	
1l	Develop Agile Working Policy and Practices which include use of tools such as voicemail	Helen Standen/Ben Wood/LT/EHT	Jan-21	
1m	Corporate Induction improved	Helen Farrell/Ciaran/LT	Jan-21	✓

2. We will review our policies and ensure they are fit for purpose and interact effectively with each other

2a	Develop HR &OD Strategy up to end of the new corporate plan, this needs to be considered/approved by EHT, then LT and then HRC	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie LT Review HRC	Nov-20 Dec-20 or Jan -21 Feb-21
2b	Review and develop all employment policies to take the employee through their career journey, a prioritised order has been devised by HR who will draft improvements with EHT members as listed, once drafted all EHT members will be engaged for feedback via email, then LT, Unison, LT and finally to LJP/HRC for adoption and implementation	HR/Tyron/Su T/Alex C	In line with LJP meetings: Jan-21 Apr-21 July-21
2c	Review polices which provide support for staff to manage work life balance/wellbeing	Vicki D/Tyron/Emily T/Alex C	see box above

3. We will develop competencies and training to underpin the values and behaviours of our 'One Team'

3a	Develop staff and Management competencies	Simon O/ Claire/Simon B/Jackie	Dec-21
3b	Develop a new PDR process to support competencies	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	April-21 Nov-21 roll out
3c	Develop recruitment tools to support competencies	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	Mar-21
3d	Develop a management training programme to support staff in their roles	HR/Simon Barfoot/Jackie	From June-21
3e	Review the staff recognition process	Vicky M/James/Geoff	Dec-20

4.1.5 3 year Staff Survey and re-run of Staff Wellbeing Survey

4.1.6 The staff survey is due to run in December 2020, LT have also agreed to re-run the staff well-being survey in relation to continued remote working arrangements and updates to wellbeing needs. The Communications team will support an online in-house survey again and have suggested the surveys are combined; development will begin in November with roll out expected in early December. HR will review and develop questions, seek feedback from EHT and these will then be approved by LT and then the joint survey developed.

4.1.7 The survey will be run in-house rather than externally as in previous years which will allow quicker turn arounds and focused follow up where required. The success of the well-being survey where we had nearly a 100% return has proved successful in terms of participation and in line with working as One Team; we want staff to provide feedback and be willing to have follow up discussions to ensure clarity and potential improvements can be made so it will not be anonymous and will be a more transparent process. This is also for budget saving reasons as well as in keeping with the spirit of 'one team' we want staff to feel empowered to give their honest opinions without anonymity.

4.2 Recruitment

4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

EHC have advertised 4 posts since the trial with Indeed began in June this year. As at the time of writing this report, two of the four posts had reached conditional offer stage, one post was at the shortlisting stage and one post reached the interview stage however the one candidate being interviewed withdrew from the process.

Candidates are asked to state on their application form where they saw the advert and this data is recorded in HR. Analysis of the data shows that Indeed is attracting a good proportion of the candidates overall. Of the total number of candidates for all four posts, 37 out of 66 candidates (56%) saw the advert on Indeed. It is likely that more candidates were attracted via Indeed than the data reflects as candidates are directed from Indeed to the East Herts Council (EHC) Website to complete their application. This can sometimes mean that candidates state on their application form that they saw the advert on the latter.

For the 2 posts that have reached conditional offer stage, 4 out of the 12 candidates (33%) invited to interview said they saw the advert on the EHC website, 3 said Indeed (25%), 2 were internal candidates (17%), 1 said LinkedIn (8%), and 2 did not say (17%).

The 2 candidates who were given conditional offers said they either saw the advert on the EHC website or they didn't say where they saw the advert.

We are still at the early stages however the data is encouraging and indicates that Indeed is attracting good quality candidates. We will continue to monitor performance as more posts are advertised under the new arrangement.

We have developed a branded page on the Indeed website where we are able to sell the benefits of working for the council and employees/candidates are able to leave reviews regarding their experience of the council as a recruiter/employer. The page will be developed further to include case studies and videos and will help to build the council's brand.

4.2.2 Improved Job Application Form

The new two-part application form (where candidates only have to complete part of the application form if they also submit a

CV) appears to be working well and we have not been made aware of any issues with candidates completing it. There are concerns with the completion of the separate equality monitoring form as candidates do not always complete it, as highlighted in the equalities report this will be tackled through a full online form as part of bringing in recruitment software to replace recruitment module in the HR system which was not suitable.

4.2.3 Corporate Web Site

In line with the update to the council's page on the Indeed website, the council's website has also been updated to include a 'Why join us' page and will be developed with case studies etc.

4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

The Head of HR and OD and HR Officers has developed the offer with revised/increased rates for pay as you go services to ensure EHC staff costs (including on costs) are fully met as well contribution/margin which can support running costs going forward as the rates have not been updated for a number of years. The offer has been expanded to include more L&D support and additional H&S support to maximise use of the HR team and generate further income for EHC. As well as revised 'pay as you go rates' the service now requires a retainer and offers a number of proactive pre-scheduled/paid services i.e. HR and H&S Audits, management coaching, HR Surgeries and H&S Surgeries meaning income can be better predicted and is not just reliant on pay as you go which may or may not be requested.

The bid to provide services (HR, L&D and H&S) to Ware Town Council has been successful and work will officially begin from 1/11/2020 although a few services have already been purchased and delivered.

Revised costings for Hertford Town Council have been developed (in line with the WTC package) and discussions will take place with the intent for revisions to be implemented from 1st January 2021.

Further developments are being considered to determine if Payroll services could also be offered from the existing payroll team, pricing is yet to be determined by some initial interest has been received.

Hertfordshire Building Control has also expressed interest in HR Services. A meeting has taken place with the Head of HR and OD and a HR Audit has been agreed which then made lead on to a full HR external service being provided.

In line with budget reviews HR are now providing an increased income target to reflect to work being generated and to support HR staff costs.

5.0 Casework

- 5.1 Support has been provided by HR on a number of cases in terms of disciplinary, absence and capability.

6.0 Hertford Theatre Restructure

- 6.1 A 30 day consultation period began on 13 October with Unison and staff at Hertford Theatre regarding a proposed restructure. The purpose of the restructure is to ensure staffing resources are allocated appropriately to manage the current programme offer at the Hertford Theatre. The proposals aim to create a smaller core team of staff that ensures the Hertford Theatre is adequately resourced in line with COVID-secure requirements including social distancing requirements and encouraging cashless transactions. In addition to this, there is a pending capital refurbishment programme due to be delivered from

next August 2021 (subject to planning permission and final review of the business plan). With the combination of a reduced programme due to COVID-19 and a closure of the Hertford Theatre for the construction programme, it has been necessary to review the staffing requirements for the current programme running up to the closure of the building.

- 6.2 The proposed restructure has put 10 members of staff at risk of redundancy. 4 roles remain unchanged in the proposed structure, one existing role will be ring fenced to 3 of the at-risk staff and a new role has been created which will be ring fenced for 2 of the remaining at risk staff. It is hoped that 2 of the 10 staff at risk of redundancy will be retained following a ring fenced selection process.
- 6.3 Many of the staff at Hertford Theatre were furloughed and this ends on 31 October. All but one of these staff cannot return to the theatre at the end of the furlough period due to the COVID-secure requirements. The Head of Operations is working with other Heads of Service to find temporary redeployment elsewhere in the council for these members of staff during the consultation period, and for those that do not secure a role in the new structure, for their 12 weeks' notice period. Current roles being explored include COVID Wardens, supporting Revenues and Benefits and supporting IT. These staff will also be placed on the redeployment register to try and find them permanent redeployment elsewhere in the council before their leaving date.

7.0 Wellbeing Support

- 7.1 A comprehensive list of measures to support staff wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic was provided in the last HR & Payroll Update and most of these have continued over the last quarter (July – September). Further measures that have been implemented in the last quarter include:

- More regular office based working has been accommodated where employees have requested it (although since the recent government advice changed to work from home where possible, this has reduced again)
- More teams have been meeting face to face in line with social distancing guidelines to support staff wellbeing and help overcome feelings of isolation

7.2 World Suicide Prevention Day was promoted on 10 September encouraging staff to download the Stay Alive App which includes practical tools and information.

7.3 National Fitness Day on 23 September was promoted encouraging staff to share how they keep fit and upload their photos, giving ideas how to keep fit, promoting a mindful walk organised by Mind in Mid Herts and offering a free 7 day pass to gyms, swimming pools and fitness classes at Everyone Active.

7.4 The cycle to work limit has gone up from £1,000 to £2,000 following a change in legislation and after feedback from staff that £1,000 wasn't enough to buy a high spec bike. This increased limit means that staff can buy higher spec and also electric bikes. They don't have to buy a bike from Halfords as Halfords also works with lots of independent bike shops.

7.5 Daily mindfulness sessions throughout August were on offer to staff via Zoom through Mind in Mid Herts

7.6 Promotion of the national Talk to Us campaign by the Samaritans which highlighted their free listening service, and encouraged staff to listen to the really important things their friends, family and colleagues need to tell them, giving 5 simple tips on being a better listener.

7.7 Flu Vaccinations

In 2019 the council offered flu jab vouchers under the Boots Scheme however this was unavailable this year due to excess demand as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, staff are able to obtain a flu jab from a provider of their choice (e.g. Tesco, Lloyds Pharmacy, Boots) and will be reimbursed by the council. The council has secured additional funding from Public Health Hertfordshire to support this.

7.8 Mental Health First Aiders

At their networking meetings during the quarter the Mental Health First Aiders discussed the importance of staff taking annual leave during the pandemic, and how they could encourage staff to take breaks now that we are approaching the Winter time by sharing hints and tips e.g taking walks at lunchtime, having a virtual chat with a friend/colleague, bitesize yoga.

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

8.1 Progress with the provider has continued to be poor which led to the Trainee Officer and the Head of HR and OD raising further concern and insisting that senior staff from the provider take action. The provider Zellis have now assigned East Herts with the Commercial Director and Client Success Manager to ensure all outstanding issues get resolved. A product demonstration has now been arranged for early November to ensure we are making effective use out of the system and to review unimplemented modules. A refund has now finally been received for the recruitment module which was not fit for purpose and therefore not implemented. Agreement has also been made to refund the H&S module as this is not suitable either. The combined refunds and reduction to annual costs going forward will allow HR to look in to purchasing a third party ATS (Applicant Tracking System) which will manage the

end-to-end recruitment process, on line application forms, online shortlisting, onboarding option and will allow for name blind recruitment.

- 8.2 The HR Trainee Officer has begun further development of the HR and Payroll system which provides approximately 2 days per week to maintain and develop the system. We are now looking to implement BAM (Business Alert Manager) which is an application that allows trigger alerts on dates. (For example, alerting managers when a probation is due 6 weeks before). Work has also begun on testing the pay-back work so that this can be automated in the future.

9.0 Options

N/A

10.0 Risks

N/A

11.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes – as described in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

12.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

Contact Officer

Simon O’Hear – Head of HR and OD

Contact Tel No – 01279 502141

simon.o’hear@eastherts.gov.uk