

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 26 May 2021

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 HR and Payroll Team Update Report

1.0 Proposal

1.1 This report provides an update on key areas the HR and Payroll team have been working on since Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (January 2021 to March 2021) and up to early May 2021.

2.0 Payroll Service

2.1 Payroll continues to deliver its primary mission of ensuring all Staff, Councillors and Contractors on Payroll are paid accurately and on a timely basis.

2.2 Payroll have continued to manage furlough payments and supporting the furlough payment reclaims during the period. The Furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) has been extended until 30 Sept 2021. Furloughed staff have continued to be paid at 80% with EHC making up the shortfall where required to the 80% level and some staff have been flexed back into work (as allowed by the flexible scheme) on occasion to

provide ad hoc work or to take annual leave. Where this occurs they revert back to 100% of pay for that day and there is no furlough reclaim. Staff who are working their notice and on furlough cannot be reclaimed from HMRC, this has been actioned in claims made.

- 2.3 Payroll continued to assist HR with any calculation requirements (redundancy payments) for Hertford Theatre Staff in line with the agreed restructure and temporary redeployments made. Two of these temporary redeployments have been extended with agreement and payroll have actioned these and recalculated any payments.
- 2.4 The Payroll Manager and the part-time Payroll & HR Administrator attended Pension Employer Forums via Microsoft Teams. These were on various pension regulation updates and a refresh on information required upon submission of all pension information for Staff including new starters/Leavers/Retirements and Change of hours.
- 2.5 Payroll successfully processed all year end statutory requirements for 2020/21 financial year to HMRC and LPP (Pension provider). This included balancing the general ledger and closing down the Resourcelink system for the year and then requesting IT to install the 2021/22 new year service pack (on the test system) which was then fully tested by Payroll (before agreeing to install on live) to begin the 2021/22 monthly processing with updated parameters and rates for tax, national insurance and pension.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the pension year end return requires very thorough checking and manual calculations to ensure it is correct and avoid lots of queries coming back. EHC did invest in a customised report from ResourceLink but this has not proved reliable, the matter has been raised and remedial work has been done by Zellis but it still contains errors. The new S151 Officer is confident he can write a customised report through Business Objects which can work with Resource Link this will be

investigated and progressed if possible. The report details Staff circumstances throughout the year such as maternity/sick/unpaid leave and changes in hours to ensure individual data is correct on their pension record for the future. This is a very detailed task and thanks are especially made to Carmela Bavaro (Payroll and HR Administrator) for the quality of work undertaken which resulted in no significant corrections or explanations.

- 2.7 Payroll processed P60's for all Staff & Councillors for the 2020/21 tax year onto 'my view'.
- 2.8 Both the Payroll Manager & Payroll and HR Administrator (who work 4 days and 3 days respectively) are piloting the agile working arrangements by going into Wallfields one day a week on the same day to support joined up working which is working well.

3.0 Learning and Development

- 3.1 The HR Quarterly Management Statistics Report provides the data and details regarding the learning and development events from January to March 2021. All training events have continued to be delivered virtually in response to the current COVID-19 and lockdown regulations.
- 3.2 Employees continue to complete the revised mandatory e-learning courses made available from December 2020 for employees to complete as part of the annual PDR process:
 - Data Protection Briefing 2020/21
 - Annual Health and Safety Refresher 2020/21
 - Safeguarding 2020/21
 - Diversity and inclusion in the workplace 2020/21
 - Lone Working (for selected officers identified as lone workers)

Members continue to work through the first four e-learning courses in line with policies agreed or they can provide evidence that they have completed a similar update from another organisation as this can also be recorded.

- 3.3 The corporate induction programme continued to be delivered virtually via Zoom. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator is the main presenter with guest speakers which normally include the Chief Executive (or the Deputy Chief Executive in his absence) , the Service Manager – Community Wellbeing & Partnerships, Communications Manager, Democratic Services Manager and a member of the Unison Executive. Each presentation is reviewed to ensure it contains the most up to date information on the services and the council's project and priorities.
- 3.4 In January 2021 managers continued to receive bite-size training to support them through the council's PDR process; the training was designed and delivered by the OD & HR Co-Ordinator. Additional sessions were run to support the new managers recruited to the council in January 2021.
- 3.6 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator supported the Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator in the delivery of the Bite-size Climate and Carbon Training. The initial sessions took place via Zoom in March and further events have been booked/delivered in April and May. The first sessions have received positive feedback from the participants. A separate training presentation is being devised for the Leadership Team and Senior Managers. The training objective is to roll out the events to all employees of the council.
- 3.7 The revision of the Organisational Development Policy has been completed (previously known as the Training and Development Policy). The revised policy includes the new process for the Training and Development budget which is to be centralised and managed by HR & OD Services from the 1 April 2021. Previously the budget was managed by the Heads of Service, the change will enable the training requests to be recorded and

analysed to ensure all training needs and budgets costs are being met in the most appropriate way for the employees and the council.

- 3.8 The new Customer Services Apprentice has been employed and they will complete the NVQ level 2 in Customer Services during their apprenticeship. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator will mentor the new apprentice while continuing to work with the Leadership Team to achieve the council's target to have four apprentices each year funded by the central budget with trainee costs directly managed by services.
- 3.9 Work continues on developing the courses available on the e-learning platform. The OD & HR Co-Ordinator has worked with CLS (the provider of the e-learning platform), the council's elections team and Luton Council to develop a bespoke e-learning course for the Poll Clerks to complete as their part of the election training. If the training is delivered successfully all further Poll Clerk training will take place through the e-learning platform. Other areas currently in development include an Email Etiquette course and a new Data Protection Course.
- 3.10 The OD & HR Co-Ordinator supported an external partner who approached the Head of HR and OD to request that the council deliver the Data Protection Briefing e-learning course by accessing the council's e-learning platform, SkillsBuild. The course was rebranded for them, the partners employees were added to the platform, employees were supported to gain access to SkillsBuild and completion reports were produced for the partner. The course was prepared as part of their training and development day. This project brought income into the service and the OD & HR Co-Ordinator will continue to investigate opportunities to share training and develop income streams for the service.

4.0 Human Resources Update

4.1 East Herts Together (EHT) Development Update

The East Herts Together Group has continued to meet on Zoom whilst most employees work from home and has made progress on actions but work has been impacted by other priorities including elections, policy development and customer work.

4.1.1 The One Page Plan for the East 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 and these are also now in the Pentana performance tracking system. Due to conflicting priorities some work has had to be delayed and moved forward on the plan. In particular the HR Strategy and Core Staff & Management Competencies has been delayed to allow work to be progressed on Agile Working first. The aim is to bring this to the HRC in September.

4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- 5 HR policies have been approved by Leadership Team and LJP and have been brought to this meeting for approval:
 1. Capability Policy
 2. Flexible Working Scheme
 3. Recruitment and Induction Policy
 4. Organisational Development Policy
 5. Appeals Policy (reduced version due to appeals being incorporated in the relevant policies above)
- In addition amendments have been made to three other policies: Probation, Disciplinary and Managing absence to

manage LT members and ensure the CEO is free to manage appeals.

- The re-organisation, redundancy and redeployment policy is being developed alongside a draft agile policy. The draft agile policy will be informed by the agile working trial currently underway.

4.1.3 The drafting of the HR & OD Strategy has been delayed due to other work pressures as above but the group agreed that the key aims of the strategy are that it:

- supports corporate SEED priorities
- supports creativity and innovation
- includes the development of core competencies
- celebrates success / improves staff recognition
- addresses how we promote wellbeing
- covers change management regarding agile working and varied ways of working
- should reflect societal change, the 'new normal' and be pandemic resilient but not COVID focused only

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

4.2 Recruitment

4.2.1 Indeed online Job Board

EHC have been monitoring the performance of Indeed when advertising posts for almost 12 months. In conclusion, Indeed is attracting candidates to apply for our roles however the

quality of candidates is poor as the vast majority are not being shortlisted for interview. We have a meeting with Indeed this month and it is likely that we will not continue with the arrangement.

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

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 remain concerns with the completion of the separate equality monitoring form as candidates do not always complete it, as highlighted previously this will be tackled through a full online form as part of bringing in recruitment software/ATS to replace the recruitment module in the HR system which was not suitable. HR are working with Stevenage on purchasing an ATS system, this work will be led by the Head of HR and OD with two HR Officers and Stevenage counterparts. This work has progressed with three providers shortlisted as part of a joint project with Stevenage. The providers also offer an advertising package which is being explored to replace the Indeed package. See system section 8.0 below for more details.

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 from a diverse range of staff and key staff survey headlines etc.

4.3 HR Services provided to external organisations

The HR audits of both Hertfordshire Building Control (HBC) and Ware Town Council (WTC) (who were also audited for H&S) have been completed.

HBC have subsequently commissioned a variety of development work (policies, revised contract etc.) which has begun. The Head of HR and OD has also undertaken a review of salaries for HBC on staff who moved under TUPE from EHC as specific piece.

Hertford Town Council have had surgeries and are being supported under the revised offer.

Development work has also been undertaken for Datchworth Parish Council.

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

4.4 COVID Update

The Head of HR & OD with support from the team has revised the Office Protocols for staff and members as well as updating the Wallfields risk assessment and reporting symptoms or a positive test. The protocols now include twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing with resources in place. The agile working trial begun on 12 April 2021 and staff are required to book desks so that activity can be managed and monitored.

5.0 Casework

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

6.0 Hertford Theatre Restructure

6.1 A new consultation on the restructure of Hertford Theatre opened on 7 April and closed on 5 May 2021. The purpose of the restructure was to ensure staffing resources are allocated

appropriately to manage the significantly reduced offer as a result of the closure of the Hertford Theatre for redevelopment.

- 6.2 3 members of staff were put at risk of redundancy as a result of the restructure proposals, leaving a core team of 3 left at the theatre during the closure. We will seek both temporary and permanent redeployment opportunities for those at risk of redundancy but due to the technical nature of the roles it will be challenging to find suitable alternative employment.

7.0 Wellbeing Support

Live Well Work Well events promoted/held

- 7.1 The council's employee wellbeing programme, Live Well, Work Well, promoted and delivered the following sessions during January – March 2021:

- Promotion in January of Public Health England's new phase of the Better Health - Every Mind Matters campaign to support the nation's mental wellbeing with the encouragement that "When things aren't so good out there, make inside feel better";
- Time To Talk Day was promoted in February supporting mental health;
- Mind in Mid Herts held daily 30 minute Mindfulness sessions throughout February on Zoom;
- Health Recovery/gentle stretch sessions were held by Nuffield Health in March;
- Promotion of Living Streets campaign to encourage people to make a pledge to walk more;
- Promotion of International Women's Day via a zoom session

over lunch encouraging employees to join and celebrate the fantastic achievements of women across the world;

- Promotion of Stop Smoking Day in March – theme was “Quitting smoking doesn’t have to be stressful”.

7.2 A regular link titled ‘Need someone to talk to’ now appears at the bottom of each issue of Connect which directs employees to the Wellbeing Hub where they can find sources of information and guidance if they are struggling

7.3 Wellbeing Strategy/Plan

The Wellbeing Steering Group has developed a 3 year Employee Wellbeing Framework for EHC, this work is being led by Vicki David from HR with support from Claire Pullen. The Framework and a wellbeing budget has been agreed by Leadership Team and will provide a clear direction for the wellbeing work being undertaken. Further information can be found in the Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2020-21.

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

8.1 Progress with the provider has continued to be frustrating. HR staff undertook training on the Training module as planned (see previous update) only to determine it was not fit for purpose and the Head of HR and OD has negotiated a 50% refund on this module for EHC (as Stevenage had already implemented). The provider Zellis were seeking to charge around £8,000 for an ATi to allow the new ATS once implemented to connect to the main system in terms of data extract and input re on-boarding, the Head of HR and OD has managed negotiate that 5 days non-chargeable support will be provided meaning that this should not be an additional cost.

8.2 The pension report is still not working as expected, remedial work seems to have caused more errors, the task had to be done manually again as reported in section one of this report.

Investigation will begin on using Business Objects (which the council already has licenses for) to run reports on the system, the new section 151 officer is well placed at writing such reports but there will be a cost to get Business Objects to connect to the Resource Link system however this should improve reporting which is proving insufficient currently.

9.0 Options

N/A

10.0 Risks

N/A

11.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No expect for budget issues in relation to recruitment systems and purchasing an ATS.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes – as described in the report

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

12.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

None

Contact Officer

Simon O’Hear, Head of HR and OD
Contact Tel No. – 01279 502141
simon.o’hear@eastherts.gov.uk