

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 15 September 2021

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Human Resources and Payroll Team Update Report

Ward(s) affected: N/A

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 since Quarter 1 of 2021/22 (April to June 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.

The final furlough payments were made in July to 31st July 21, this being the end of contract for the casual staff employed at Hertford Theatre due to the Theatre closure. All have been processed as Leavers on the HR/Payroll system.

Payroll processed the separate election payroll in relation to the County Council & Police & Crime Commissioner election held on 6 May 21, successfully processing individual payments to 438 people on 24 June 21, this being a much larger payroll than previous due to more people being required to comply with Covid 19 protocols. This payroll requires a lot of checking to ensure the status of the people already on the system are still valid especially bank accounts and income tax liability.

- 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.

- 2.8 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 April to June 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)

The licence for the Data Protection Briefing course expired in May. A new Data Protection Course was developed in partnership with the Information Governance and Data Protection Manager which went live in June 2021.

The OD & HR Co-Ordinator is currently working with Hertfordshire County Council to give East Herts employee's access to Prevent Training which will be available to complete through SkillsBuild from August 2021.

An e-learning course is in development to support the email etiquette guidance which was developed as part of the East Herts Together group.

3.3 The corporate induction programme continues to be delivered virtually via Zoom. The course was refreshed in June to ensure it continues to deliver the most relevant information for the new starters. The new content and a new support presenter has improved the flow of the course. Following the staff briefings in July the course will be revised again to include the revised corporate plan.

3.4 The OD and HR Co-Ordinator continued to support the Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator in the delivery of the Bitesize Climate and Carbon Training. 101 employees attended

the events delivered in March, April and May. Further sessions are being delivered in September, October and November. The training objective remains to roll out the events to all employees of the council.

- 3.5 The OD & HR Co-ordinator supported the elections team to deliver training to the Poll Clerks, Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors for the May elections. 337 people participated in the various training events. 223 Poll Clerks completed the new e-learning training and 114 participated in the Presiding Officers and Inspectors virtual events. The service received positive feedback on the new training approach; this blended approach will be considered for the elections going forward.
- 3.6 In June and July 41 managers received bitesize policy update training delivered by the OD & HR Co-Ordinator. The events updated managers on the fundamental changing for the following policies:
- Absence Management Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Code of Conduct for Employees
 - Grievance Policy
 - Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Probation Policy
- 3.7 The 6 July was Talking Menopause Day at East Herts. An external provider 'Talking Menopause' initially asked staff to complete a menopause questionnaire to gain an understanding of what menopause meant at the council. 87 officers engaged in the questionnaire 27% of staff. The results of the questionnaire were fed back to the Leadership Team at a morning briefing, this was followed by a management training session, a drop in for staff and a women's information session

in the afternoon.

27 managers and staff attended the face to face events. A remote manager's session is being considered to enable more managers to attend after the positive feedback from the July event.

- 3.8 The HR & OD Co-ordinator Helen Farrell who currently works 3 days per week and co-ordinates Organisational Development and the Apprentices as well as being a HR Officer has unfortunately resigned to fully pursue their other Career as a self-employed Counsellor and they leave in mid-September (and will provide a handover a later date). The Head of HR and OD would like to thank the OD & HR Co-ordinator for their 23.5 years of service and the contributions they have made to EHC. The Head of HR and OD is seeking to replace the post with a HR & OD Manager who will manage operational HR and OD to strengthen the team, increase resilience and help deliver both internal HR and external HR to our customers.

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 In particular the HR Strategy and Core Staff & Management Competencies has been delayed to allow work to be progressed on a Blended Working Policy first. Unfortunately, the Head of HR and OD had an unexpected sickness absence for over 3 weeks which combined with leave for childcare has delayed work. The LJP in July was cancelled for this reason. The aim is to bring all 3 to the HRC in November, with the Blended/Flexible Work Policy being developed as working draft by 30 September

before being agreed at LJP and then HRC. The new HR Strategy will be drafted for LT and HRC approval and the revised PDR and Competences will be agreed by LT and then reported to HRC.

4.1.2 Actions that have progressed since the last update include:

- A discussion has been held with Unison to start exploring agile/blended working which will also need to consider TOIL, overtime, flexi, working hours and home working allowances. Leadership Team have determined not use Agile but Blended instead as this fits better with EHC in terms of blending home, office and on-site working, EHC recognise that some work is not suitable for home and we want to have a blend where to ensure both opportunities are maximised.
- The re-organisation, redundancy and redeployment policy is being developed alongside a draft blended policy. The draft agile policy will be informed by the agile working trial currently underway.
- A Staff Privacy Notice has been finalised and agreed.
- The Corporate Values and images have been refreshed
- A follow up Wellbeing Survey has been drafted however it is being reviewed in line of the recent lifting of restrictions on 19 July and is likely to be re-run once the blended work policy is finalised.

4.1.4 The development of staff/management competencies has also had to be revised; work will now take place in the in September/October with work being reported to the November 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 continued to use Indeed to advertise posts however we will move to advertising on multiple online job boards using the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) (see below) once it is implemented.

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

HR have purchased an ATS system with Stevenage through a company called Webrecruit and are currently in the implementation process. We have ensured a very competitive price with the system being provided without charge providing we spend a minimum amount on advertising (which is also competitively priced) and the product also includes on-boarding which we will link to the main HR system which will reduce new starter admin and allow notifications. The on-boarding system will allow an electronic signature for contracts which will incur a fee of £2.50 per contract but will allow this to be done electronically.

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 manager surgeries and are being supported under the revised offer. HR are currently supporting HTC with a restructure process.

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 further 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 continue to include twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing with resources in place. Phase 3 of the agile working trial begun on 19 July 2021 and staff continue to be 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 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 April – June 2021:

- First NHS Health Check session by Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service held at Wallfields in June. Due to popular demand, a further three sessions have been arranged in the next quarter. It is a health check-up for adults in England aged 40 to 74. It's designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. Must have no pre-existing condition and have not had one in the last 5 years.
- Diabetes Awareness Week
- Sleeping Soundly Sessions
- Lunchtime Wellbeing Walks every Wednesday from Wallfields
- Mental Health Awareness Week – Explore the natural world was promoted 10-14 May – encouraging staff to celebrate the positive benefits of nature and the outdoors please find here a range of activities at your local East Herts park - [click here](#) for details
- **Dementia Awareness Training**
- **Introduction to Mindfulness**, a proven way to promote mental health and reduce anxiety
- Mind in Mid Herts held daily 30 minute Mindfulness sessions on Zoom;

LWWW events are now promoted more prominently at the top of the page of Team Update, the monthly Staff e-newsletter, and includes a summary of activities and a link to a full list of activities on the Wellbeing Hub on the staff intranet.

Wellbeing Champions

We have commenced recruiting Wellbeing Champions, including asking current Mental Health First Aiders whether they wish to take on this complimentary role so that have a dual role.

8.0 HR and Payroll System Development

- 8.1 The Trainee HR officer has rolled out My View to all members to allow them to submit expenses and mileage claims via the online portal 'My View' and has offered support where required. We are working with the provider Zellis to build asset management within the system which provides a log against each employee of which IT and equipment they have been assigned which both IT and facilities will have access to. We are also working on building an overtime module within my view, which similarly to mileage allows employees to claim online through the portal rather than the manual paper process.
- 8.2 IT have been liaising with Zellis on installing BAM (Business alert manager) which allows for date triggered notifications and emails which will improve efficiency and stop the need for manual processes.
- 8.3 The Head of HR has also secured refunds on H&S and L&D modules which were not fit for purpose. The Head has also negotiated 5 days of consultancy (without charge) to provide a license and portal for data to be taken out of the ATS and put into Resource Link re new starters, this will also this to self-service in terms of some of the set up.
- 8.4 The Head of HR & OD along with HR and Payroll team have reviewed sick pay on the system and have begun making improvements for the system to manage this automatically and ensure all absences as well as leave are managed in hours to ensure it is correctly pro-rated.

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

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