

HR Committee Report for Q4 2023/24

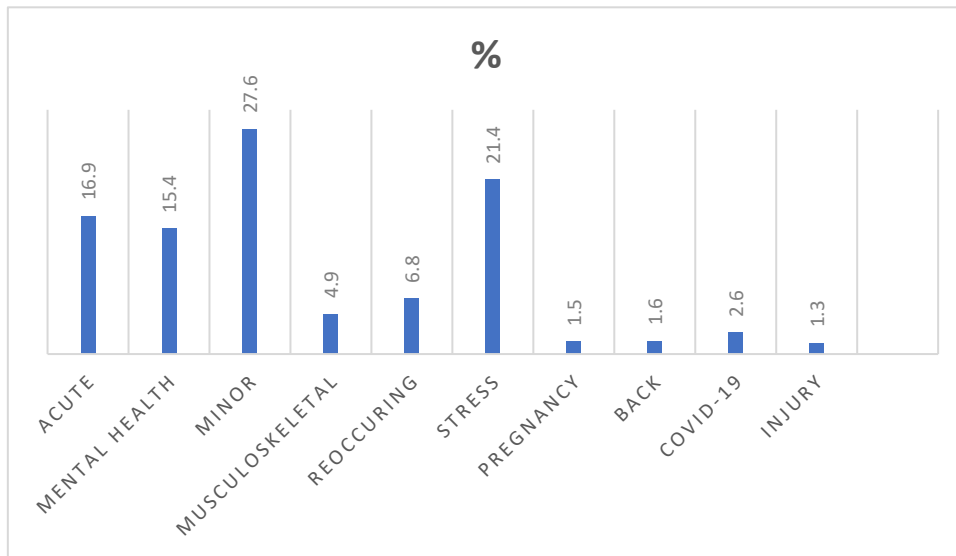
Note: As of 31 March 2024, East Herts Council employed 284.20 fte and had a headcount of 315.

1.0 Sickness Absence

At the end of Quarter 4, the total number of sickness days taken was 665.64 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 329.14 FTE days (49%) were due to short term sickness and 336.5 FTE days (51%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 1.8% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 1.9% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 3.7%.

At the end of Quarter 4, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 6.9 days.

Q4 is broken down as follows:



For reference:

Acute absence relates to cancer.

Short term sickness

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

72 employees (22.9% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Q4 totalling 329.14 FTE days.

At the end of Q4, the number of short-term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 3.31 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.

13 employees (4.1% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Q4 totalling 336.5 FTE 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.

At the end of Q4, the number of long-term FTE days absent per FTE was 3.58 days.

2.0 Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Our biggest recruitment challenge remains the recruitment of qualified Planners. 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 made some progress with the development of a recruitment landing page which has a video of Ben Crystall, the Council's Leader, The Head of Planning and a member of staff explaining the benefits of working for us. We have also developed a recruitment identity that we use in our advertising and advertorial pieces.

We have a Market Forces Supplement that is applied to hard to fill roles in Planning and this is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant. We also have a small agreement with LinkedIn to market our top 5 roles. We do rely on agency staff for some key roles but are actively trying to recruit to the roles permanently.

We continually review our offer for planners 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.

With the exception of Planners all other recruitment requests must be accompanied by a business case and signed off by a panel consisting of Chief Executive, Deputy

Chief Executive, 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 20 new starters in quarter 4:

- 1 in Operations- Hertford Theatre
- 3 in Planning
- 4 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
- 1 in Revenue and Benefits
- 1 in HR
- 4 in Housing and Health
- 3 in Strategic Finance and Property
- 3 in Legal and Democratic Services

Vacancies

As of 31 March 2024, we had 44 posts unfilled for a variety of reasons. This represents 14% 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.

Retention – Turnover

There were 9 leavers in Q4 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 2.9%. The turnover rate for the annual period 2023/24 is **14.4%**. This is slightly higher than our target of 14% but we have had additional turnover through ill health retirements and Transforming East Herts. This turnover rate is not unusual in local government, the national average across all sectors is about 15% with a lot of councils reporting rates of over 20%. Churn in Planning services is even higher in most authorities largely due to the lack of qualified planners at a time when the planning targets are high, when agency work can seem more attractive.

Reasons for leaving in Q4 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, for personal reasons and end of fixed term contracts.

3 in Housing and Health
2 in Legal and Democratic services
1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
1 in Revenue and Benefits
2 in Planning.

Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Q1

- Investigate benefits and costs of using other types of recruitment to fill hard to fill posts
- Review of the end-to-end recruitment process including implementing a new Applicant Tracking System
- Review how we present features and benefits of employment
- Review / reprocur our neutral vendor contract (for agency staff)
- Further campaigns for planning staff
- Introduce manager recruitment workshops.

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.

Employee can request funding for training and development relevant to their role by completing a form outlining how the event will support their learning and individual objectives, all requests are considered but not all can be agreed. Where this is the case we will look to find an alternative solution.

We provide evaluation forms for all corporate training to collate staff feedback and measure the effectiveness of the sessions.

The annual mandatory e-learning training programme is 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.

In addition to our mandatory programmes there are many other programmes that our staff can access to increase their knowledge and skills. In Q4 we also saw 1410 e-learning courses accessed by our staff.

The first cohort for the First Step Programme for aspirant managers was successfully completed following 6 workshops.

Learning and Development planned for the next quarter:

- Complete the development of a 2-day team leader programme and roll out (mandatory)

- Plan and begin roll out of Commercial Awareness and Political Awareness training events
- Develop a simple train the trainer workshop for subject matter experts to enable them to develop their colleagues

Organisational Development activity planned for Q1

- Review and relaunch staffing groups to support the Transformation Programme and minority groups
- Working with the LEP, develop proposals for workplace events for students over the summer
- Ensure all Service Manager Meetings and Staff Briefings have a developmental session for organisational learning
- Further work with Unison and staff on the Anti Racism Charter
- Further work on raising awareness of the menopause
- Co deliver workshops for staff around Co-Design of services
- Ongoing support to the transformation programme

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

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
- Any injury from work in an enclosed space leading to hypothermia or heat-induced illness or requiring resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- 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
- Carpal tunnel syndrome from using percussive or vibrating tools
- Occupational dermatitis from exposure to unknown skin sensitisers or irritants
- Hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) from regular use of percussive or vibrating tools or materials

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.

| | Q4 22/23 | Q4 23/24 | Target 23/24 | Predicted 23/24 |
|---|----------|----------|--------------|-----------------|
| H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (<u>Not</u> reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| H&S Employee Work Related Incidents and Near Misses (No.) | 0 | 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.

Safety Committee Update – Related to the minutes of Safety Committee 07
February 2023

- Item 2 Related to queries in respect to support for insurance related matters, SL advised Safety Committee that all enquiries in respect to any matter concerning insurance or potential claims can be referred to the Risk and Insurance Officer.
- Item 4 The Shared Waste Services Manager advised Safety Committee of an incident involving one of the waste collection crews and a member of the public. The matter has been resolved and both Communications Teams from EHC and NHDC have published messages on respective media reminding customers of the correct process for reporting any perceived failure of service.
- Item 12 Relates to the matter of safety on the top deck after the mandatory lights out time of 21.00 hours. The Committee agreed this should be referred to the Heads of Operations as the Committee is an advisory body and not a decision-making body, it can however make recommendations for consideration on safety matters.
- It was reported that local police have raised issues in regard to an increase in vandalism, anti-social behaviour and graffiti at Northgate End Multi-Storey Car Park.