

# HR Committee Report for Q2 2024/25

Note: As of 30 September 2024, East Herts Council employed 288.39 fte and had a headcount of 324.

## 1.0 Sickness Absence

Unfortunately, due to reporting problems with our HR & Payroll system, sickness statistics for quarter 2 are not available. All, short- term and long-term absence will be included in quarter 3.

## 2.0 Recruitment and Retention

### Recruitment

Our biggest recruitment challenge remains the recruitment of qualified Planners, and Environmental Health Officers. 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 a Market Forces Supplement that is applied to hard to fill roles in Planning and Legal services, 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 are about to launch a new applicant tracking system which will improve our candidate journey from application to onboarding.

We continually review our offers 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.

All recruitment requests must be accompanied by a business case and signed off by a panel consisting of Chief Executive, Head of HR and 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 27 new starters in quarter 2:

- 15 in BEAM
- 1 in Operations
- 6 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
- 2 in Housing and Health
- 1 in HR

- 1 in Revenue and Benefits

## **Vacancies**

As of 30 June 2024, we had 46 posts unfilled for a variety of reasons. This represents 12.4% 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 17 leavers in Q2 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 4.2%. The projected turnover rate for the annual period 2024/25 is 18.1%. This is higher than our target of 14% but we have had additional turnover through retirements and redundancy. 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%.

Reasons for leaving in Q2 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, redundancy, changes in career, for personal reasons and end of fixed term contracts.

The leavers were in the following teams:

6 in Operations  
5 in Housing and Health  
2 in Revenue and Benefits  
1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy  
1 in Leadership Team  
2 in Planning

## **Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Q3**

- We will be launching phase one of our new Applicant Tracking System Tribepad in November. This will improve our internal processes, improving efficiencies and the candidate journey. refresh managers with recruiting best practice. It will include:
  - Review how we present features and benefits of employment.
  - Allow managers to track progress from recruitment to onboarding.
  - Additional advertising campaigns
  - Review our internal recruitment process.
  - Introduce manager recruitment workshops.
- We will be reviewing our Market Forces Supplement taking into account salary survey data, information from relevant professional organisations and the implications of any national pay award.
- We will be reviewing our employment offering, looking at contributions towards professional fees to attract and retain talent.

### **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. We are utilising the apprenticeship levy, two assistant planners started a masters in spatial planning in September 2024.

Employees 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 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. A mandatory course on preventing sexual harassment will soon be available for all staff.

In addition to our mandatory programmes there are many other programmes that our staff can access to increase their knowledge and skills.

East Herts Together group has been relaunched to support the Transformation Programme and other key projects.

**Learning and Development planned for the next quarter:**

- Learning and Development cycle is being produced to allow a systematic, strategic approach to our training budget, succession planning and skills gap analysis. The first draft is currently with the Be Agile working group for feedback before coming to LT. This will utilise apprenticeships for management development and a wider-reaching training offer to upskill and develop our managers. Apprenticeships at all levels will be encouraged. DMA review will drive the requirement for change management and culture and values training that will be scoped and started to be developed in Q2 into Q3.
- Start to develop a simple train the trainer workshop for subject matter experts to enable them to develop their colleagues.
- Staff training on the new duty to protect against sexual harassment in the workplace will be commissioned from the training budget to ensure compliance with the new statutory requirements and increase the safety of all of our staff at work.
- PDRs will be re-communicated to encourage completion and give an opportunity for staff who have completed already to update progress toward their goals.
- Leading a Mentally Healthy Workplace Skills Bootcamp will be started for H&S Advisor to lead the Mental Health provision supported by Unison and East Herts Together members. This is a targeted, high-impact programme delivered over 12-14 weeks. It is specifically designed to address the mental health needs and leadership challenges faced by organisations in Hertfordshire. It can benefit employees who aspire to progress and take on a leadership role in managing mental health within their organisation. We will also offer a Mental Health First Aid refresher to those who wish to continue in their MHFA role.

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.

	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Target 23/24
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H&S Employee Work Related Accidents ( <b>Not</b> reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	3	<b>2</b>	3
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	<b>0</b>	0
H&S Employee Work Related Incidents and Near Misses (No.)	0	<b>0</b>	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.