

HR COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2023

HR UPDATE

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 This report gives an update on HR matters since the last HR Committee. These matters are in addition to the reactive caseload which includes job evaluations, restructuring advice, grievances, disciplinaries and sickness absence matters.

2.2 We also continue to provide Payroll and HR Advisory services to the National Park Authority.

3. PENSION YEAR END

3.1 The annual Pension Year end reconciliation process has been completed on time.

4. LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

4.1 The procurement exercise has now been completed, with presentations held from the final three bidders.

4.2 A recommendation will now be made to the Project Board and the final bidders will be informed.

4.3 We are aiming to have a new system in place by the end of the Summer.

5. GET INSPIRED – SOUTHAMPTON and NEW FOREST

5.1 We are really pleased to share details of the Get Inspired day that we took part in on 11th May, attended by over 50 businesses and other employers and over 1,200 students, including from New Forest schools, just choosing GCSE options.

5.2 But our involvement started much earlier on – Sally Igra in our Economic Development team played a key role as an event partner helping to develop the event and promote opportunities for local businesses to take part.

5.3 Get Inspired aims to challenge preconceived ideas of specific types of employers or the careers available in the local area and it provides young people with an insight into organisations and careers they may not have previously considered.

5.4 Our HR Admin team coordinated the Council's stand and attended on the day, and colleagues from Coastal (Lizzie Warwick-Champion & Paul Alderton) and Housing Maintenance (Jane Follet) joined us too – captivating students on how drone activities assist with our coastal management, and wowing them with some interesting facts about our Housing properties in a game of 'play your cards right'.

- 5.5 We have recently updated our recruitment branding, and this was an excellent opportunity to show off our new look. The 'giveaways' went down a storm, and we ran out of our 250 sustainable tote bags, rulers, post it's and pencils – so there's lots of NFDC jobs branding out across the New Forest and Southampton area.
- 5.6 It was an excellent opportunity to engage with our young people and potential future employees. It was also great fun! We aim to get out to recruitment events as often as possible moving forwards.
- 5.7 Some pictures of the event can be viewed in the attached Appendix.

6. STAFF ARMY TRAINING DAY

- 6.1 10 of our employees from across services took part in the Army in the South East Challenge, on 24th March this year.
- 6.2 The event provided an opportunity to take part in a series of team challenges delivered by the Army at their Longmoor site, allowing participants to develop teamwork and leadership skills, as well as boosting confidence, and building resilience and courage in themselves and team mates but taking part in fun, interactive mental and physical activities. The skills learnt have been taken back and applied to daily life, and work at the council, as well as gaining an insight into the variety of roles carried out by the Army.
- 6.3 Quotes from our employees were:
"The army day was a great opportunity to get to know colleagues who work for the same company, participating in challenges that involve crawling through mud and using paintball guns was great fun!! I would recommend to all colleagues and future starters!!"
"The Army soldiers literally had us commando crawling on our stomachs through the woods in muddy ditches and puddles with guns, it was great fun. The best bit however was meeting other NFDC colleagues who I would never have normally had the opportunity to work with. I would recommend other staff to give it a go next year!"
"I really enjoyed the challenge day, from not only pushing myself in PT, to crawling through muddy ditches in paintballing and solving various mental challenges with the intelligence corp; but it was also a great opportunity to get to know other colleagues who I would never normally meet or only quickly in passing. I was worried i wouldn't be fit enough for it but there is options to opt in or out based on your abilities, I would highly recommend it to others!"
- 6.4 Chatting to many of those that attended afterwards, they all reported trouble walking the next day - but found it an amazing event to take part in.
- 6.5 It is likely there will be a further event in Autumn, and we have publicised the success of this event, so that hopefully we can capture the interest of other employees to take part then.
- 6.6 Some pictures of the event can be viewed in the attached Appendix.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

- 7.1 These national awards run by the Local Government Association take place 24/25 May for entry level 2 and 3 apprentices. This exciting virtual event provides apprentices with the opportunity to learn, network and showcase their skills and initiative through coordinated collaborative team challenges – working with other apprentices from across the country they have never previously met. It is also an opportunity for mentors and managers to see their apprentices in action outside of the day job, and cheer them on in their challenges.
- 7.2 This year's theme is climate change and there are awards and prizes up for grabs, such as Local Government Apprentice of the Year, runners up, and Best Team.
- 7.3 We are pleased that all four of our apprentice recruits will be attending with their manager; Ned Jackson with Phil Dunsdon from Accountancy, Matt Ellery with Leigh Nash from Engineering, Callum Smith with Wayne Dawkins from Grounds Maintenance, and Harry Roberts with Neil Passmore from Streetscene.
- 7.4 There is a celebration event to present the awards, and HR will also attend this final event to show corporate support for the apprentices. Go NFDC apprentices!!

8. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

- 8.1 Anxiety was the theme for Mental Health Awareness Week which ran from 15 – 21 May 2023. A dedicated page featured links to help manage anxiety and also focused on anxiety as a result of the current cost of living crisis.
- 8.2 To help promote the existence of our Wellbeing Champions based across the council an article featured the work of Sarah Jennings who is a wellbeing champion. Sarah gave some hints and tips on how to manage our mental health, together with explaining what the role involves.
- 8.3 During mental health awareness week we re-launched our Wellbeing Walks (see para below) and suggested how mindfulness colouring can help be a distraction for our minds, with the opportunity to drop in to the Workplace Café to find out more.
- 8.4 A Brief Bite training session on mental health awareness for managers will also be running on 8 June and is currently open for booking via the HR Hub.
- 8.5 Vita, our employee support line provider have also launched a digital learning platform with the links being promoted during mental health awareness week and in particular the module focusing on mindfulness.
- 8.6 Anxiety in children was also referenced on these pages and for staff who have children we highlighted an online platform called Kooth which released lots of new content at the start of mental health week. The aim of the free platform is to provide support to the younger generation on coping with panic attacks and social anxiety in a way that is appealing, safe and easy to use.

9. WELLBEING WALKS

- 9.1 As an event running in Mental Health Awareness week, a new set of dates were published for wellbeing walks to take place from Appletree Court during May to August during lunchtime.
- 9.2 The aim of such walks is to take time out of the day, walk outdoors, enjoy the forest surroundings and catch up with others. The first of this new batch of dates took place on 17 May and was attended by 6 members of staff. From those who attended there is an interest to meet others who like to walk at lunchtimes.
- 9.3 Due to our hybrid working approach the scheduled dates may not be suitable for everyone and from those who attended the recent walk, a Teams group has been set up for those people to message their new found colleagues and suggest other dates to catch up and walk together. It is hoped that this group will grow as others join future walks.
- 9.4 During Covid a lot of new employees started the Council and are still yet to meet others in the council. Catching up walking in the forest enables staff to put faces to names they have seen on emails or spoken to on the phone and even network and discuss work when they are walking together.
- 9.5 It is also acknowledged that these walks take place from Appletree Court and not our satellite sites/depots. However, those at such sites have been encouraged to join a walk if they wish or set up something from their own site. It was also recognised that those who are in already very physical roles, e.g. refuse teams are unlikely to join a wellbeing walk. Other suggestions for wellbeing activities are being sought by the council's wellbeing champions.

10. NEW STAFF ENGAGEMENT GROUPS

- 10.1 Two new staff engagement groups have been set up, one to look at the Staff Survey results and one to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters.
- 10.2 Each group has met once so far and further feedback from the groups will be considered by EMT in due course.

11. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- 11.1 A tender process has commenced for the delivery of a Senior Leadership Development Programme.
- 11.2 The tender closes on 2nd June and then the proposals put forward will be considered and the final 4-6 will be reviewed by EMT before presentations are arranged.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

None.