

HR UPDATE REPORT

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. From 1st April this has been expanded to include Health and Safety advice.

3. LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- 3.1 Our new Learning Management System (LMS) was launched at the end of March to all employees and councillors.
- 3.2 In-person demos were held at various locations and times throughout April. Videos and guidance notes have also been developed.
- 3.3 All employees are required to complete a range of new and compliant eLearning modules. Other learning requirements can be added to specific roles. Personal progress can easily be viewed on the platform, and managers can easily view progress reports for their direct and indirect teams. Administrators can be allocated 'super user' status so that they can carry out additional functions for their service areas.
- 3.4 We have been working on the ability for agency workers to complete relevant eLearning to the role they will undertake with us – and this was launched at the end of May. This means that agency workers will be compliant and aware of corporate and health and safety priorities in the same way as our staff.
- 3.5 HR manage the site overall, and are working on new generic modules that employees may find of use. Currently we are working with Roxie King on a bespoke climate change module. Future developments will include developing induction programmes into the platform, and looking at how the platform could manage our performance reviews and opportunities to improve this process.

4. RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- 4.1 In addition to our standard recruitment campaigns, in the past quarter we recruited to two Assistant Director roles (Finance and Housing). Previously we have used Solace or other agencies to lead our campaigns at this level, but based on our learning over previous recent senior recruitment campaigns, we decided to use our enhanced skills and our tailored candidate pack to run the campaigns in-house. Both campaigns were successful, and we welcomed Paul Thomas (Housing) in May, and Paul Whittles (Finance) will join us in July.

- 4.2 We have attended 5 recruitment events between January and May 2024 – job centres, schools and Brockenhurst College. We also attended ‘Get Inspired’, a Southampton and New Forest careers showcase event attended by over 600 11- to 16-year-olds, and 37 businesses took part. We had a fun and interactive prominent stand, with the ‘Sam and Ella’ environmental health shop set up. Our Environmental Health Degree apprentices attended with us and helped to showcase our careers. Students flocked to our stand, and all our promotional materials were snapped up!
- 4.3 We updated our application form in April, moving from a full, clunky form, to a CV, and we have been overwhelmed with applications! Whilst it is great news that we are getting more applications including more suitable applicants, unfortunately this has also led to a number of unsuitable applications being received where applicants do not fit the role criteria.
- 4.4 Based on the feedback we have received we have now updated this process at the end of May. We are continuing to allow candidates to provide a CV and other documents to showcase their skills, with two additional features:
- 4.4.1 We have now added a mandatory ‘Supporting information’ box to the application process, where applicants must submit between 100 – 500 words about their suitability for the role.
- 4.4.2 We can add filtering questions for anything that is mandatory to the vacancy, for example ‘do you have proof of right to work in the UK’, or ‘do you have an LGV licence?’ We have introduced a form where recruiting managers can detail all mandatory filtering questions relevant to the role. We give examples of generic ideas, but we can also accommodate any additional questions. It’s important to note that if applicants click ‘no’ to any mandatory questions then they will automatically be excluded from progressing with their application, so the questions must only cover mandatory elements.
- 4.5 A further development coming soon – we are building a different form for operational roles, this will mean uploading a CV isn’t compulsory, and the form will ask some further simple questions to ensure sufficient information is received. Hopefully these updates allow us to attract suitable candidates and should deter any applicants that are not genuinely suitable for the roles advertised.

5. GRADUATE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 We have previously detailed our commitment to both the ‘National’ and ‘Pathways to Planning’ Graduate Programmes. We have put a lot of energy into making our opportunities as engaging as possible. We have attended a recruitment event in London, created a video detailing our projects, and created a tailored candidate pack. We are pleased to be interviewing 4 graduates for the ‘National’ programme and should have appointed by the end of June. We are awaiting details of candidates for the ‘Planning’ role, and again interviews will take place in June.
- 5.2 We look forward to welcoming our new Graduates in Autumn, where they will undergo a tailored in-depth induction programme before embarking on their specific projects. There will be a separate line manager and a coach assigned to each, not linked to the projects.

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

- 6.1 Lauren Farrell, our Customer Service Apprentice, took part in the above online competition in May. The event is an excellent opportunity to work in virtual teams learn, network and showcase skills and expertise. Looking back at the event, Lauren said “It was really interesting! It was great to speak with other people doing similar apprenticeships. I thoroughly enjoyed it”.

7. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The Leadership Development Programme has now been completed, following five days
- 7.2 Three out of the four Masterclass sessions for this have now been delivered.
- 7.3 In terms of next steps, two cohorts will now start in September on the Management Development programme with a further cohort starting in April. Each cohort will consist of 20 staff. This is aimed at those staff that report directly to a member of the Leadership Team and in the first instance this is focused on employees on bands 8 and 9.
- 7.4 Two focus sessions have been set up in June with the trainer in order that she can take on board comments to co-produce the programme with those likely to attend.

8. TIME OFF WORK FOR PARENTS

- 8.1 Recent statutory changes mean that:
- New parents who take at least 6 weeks shared parental, maternity and adoption leave have protection in a redundancy situation to be offered suitable alternative employment (where it's available) for 18 months from the birth or placement of their child
 - Colleagues taking paternity leave are able to take up to two weeks paternity leave (one week at full pay, the second at statutory pay) within the first year of their child's birth or placement. These weeks can be taken in two separate one week blocks.
- 8.2 We took the opportunity to refresh our policies aiming for them to be as simple as possible whilst setting clear policy guidelines.

9. SUPPORT LEAVE

- 9.1 The Carers Leave Act 2023 enables employees who have caring responsibilities for dependants with a long-term care need a right to one week's unpaid leave per year. The purpose of the leave is caring for or arranging care for a dependant.
- 9.2 The introduction of carers leave was an opportunity for us to reflect on how we support all colleagues. On this basis Support Leave was agreed which combines time off for dependants and carers leave, allowing all colleagues up to one working week's paid leave in a 12-month period to support both these types of leave. This approach will widen who this is available to and we believe support our full workforce.
- 9.3 The policy explains the types of situations that are covered and those that are not, a clear framework for how to apply, the support that's available in responding to often

difficult situations and guidance to managers on how to support colleagues sensitively whilst their team member responds to these personal situations.

10. FLEXIBLE WORKING

- 10.1 From April 2024 all employees from their first day can request changes to when, where or how they work. They can make two of these requests in a 12 month period. If they submit a request, we'll talk to them about the proposal and respond within 2 months. The HR team updated the Flexible working policy to reflect this.

11. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GROUP

11. We continue to meet quarterly. Conversations have recently focused on agreeing a terms of reference for the group, improving the Council induction process from an EDI perspective and supporting with content for our new equality and diversity eLearning modules.

11. LGBT+ EMPLOYEE NETWORK

- 11.1 The EDI group has been established for nearly 12 months, as part of those ongoing conversations it was clear there was appetite for employee groups to connect and network.
- 11.2 During June, the LGBT+ Network has been launched. The aims of the network are to connect colleagues, support peers, share knowledge and experience and contribute to improving services.
- 11.3 The HR team have attended all operational toolbox talks during June to introduce the network in consultation with the Councils culture. This has included all operational teams across Housing Maintenance, Waste and Recycling, Streetscene and Open Spaces. Drop ins have happened at Appletree Court, Marsh Lane Depot and Claymeadow depot with the support of existing network members as well as promotion through our intranet and physical posters.

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Background Papers:

None