

HR COMMITTEE – 11 September 2025

HR Update Report

Purpose	For information
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The report provides an overview of the work undertaken within the HR Service over and above the re-active casework.
Recommendation(s)	That members note the ongoing work within the HR Service
Reasons for recommendation(s)	Much of the work supports the council ambition to be an Employer of Choice and the corporate LEAF values
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Services and Transformation.
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INTRODUCTION

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. We also continue to provide Payroll, HR Advisory services and Health and Safety advice to the National Park Authority.

RECRUITMENT UPDATE

3. Make a difference campaign

We attended the South East Employers (SEE) annual recruitment event and were asked to present our 'Make a Difference' campaign activities, similar to the presentation given to the LGA earlier this year. This seemed well received and this prompted a wider discussion leading up to this year's renewed campaign, which we will receive details of in September.

4. Revised Induction Process

Saskia Andrews, our Learning Management System Administrator, is currently developing her wider HR knowledge by undertaking the Level 5 People Professional apprenticeship. As part of this she is helping the wider team by coordinating a revised induction process, starting with a series of short videos featuring the team across our locations, followed with an in-person induction with Payroll and Health & Safety colleagues joining us on a monthly basis. This is a great opportunity to connect with new starters once they've settled in, a chance to meet other new starters that month, and ensure they have all the information they need to do their jobs well.

5. Recruitment Process Review

The recruitment process review is progressing well – we showcased the new processes to a group of managers from across different service areas, and we got valuable feedback. We've worked on this and are undergoing further tests. We hope to get this live late September. It should streamline processes and reduce the time taken by managers and the HR Admin team to process vacancies efficiently and effectively. Alongside this, we aim to launch our 'recruitment toolkit' aimed to answer our most frequently asked questions and equip our managers with the tools required throughout the recruitment process.

6. Recruitment Levels

Recruitment levels continue to be very high, with an additional 18 roles recruited in Waste alone in August. We're using skills across our administration team adaptably to cover the peak in demand. We're really pleased to have recruited a further Pathways to Planning Graduate, Sian Brice, who joins us this September, and is a local Hampshire graduate keen to develop her career in Local Government Planning. Additionally, we have taken on a year 4 apprentice from Marisco, (who went into liquidation earlier this year), allowing them to complete their full apprenticeship on a fixed term contract, and at the same time giving us a well skilled worker to assist with our essential gas works, overseen by a qualified colleague.

7. Hardley Recruitment Campaign

We have been recruiting the additional required Waste roles; we tried using the Job Centre to oversee a large campaign, but despite significant effort from NFDC, we were unsuccessful in filling most roles. The Job Centre presented their recruitment assistance offer at the SEE event, and so we took the opportunity to feedback afterwards on our experience, and we've now met with the national coordinator to plan a way forward for our Hardley recruitment intake and see if this is more successful. If it is, we're happy to act as a case study for the Job Centre on how to recruit well using their service.

8. Agency Worker Framework

The new Temporary Agency Worker Framework is now in place, with 15 suppliers selected following a large tendering exercise. The Framework was launched in August, with all agencies and managers from services that use agencies the most attending a 'kick off' meeting to ensure that all parties are aware of how the framework operates and best practice in communication between nfdc and the agencies.

LEARNING

9. Brockenhurst College Annual Awards

The Chairman attended the Brockenhurst College annual awards ceremony, along with Zoe. He presented the Apprentice of the Year award to Nick Hickson who achieved 100% distinctions in his level 3 Team Leader apprenticeship. Nick works at Poole Hospital as a Catering Supervisor, and he felt that undertaking the apprenticeship gave him new skills and extra confidence in his supervisory skills. The event was an uplifting and inspiring opportunity to see student's incredible achievements.

10. Wellness and Support

We have listened to feedback from our Customer Service colleagues, experiencing increased call volumes and range of customer behaviours, and have put in place a range of development opportunities to support these teams. This includes; dedicated sessions with our Wellbeing Champions, a 'How to handle challenging conversations' webinar which employees can attend 'live' or watch a recording, and we've signposted colleagues to our Embracing Change modules, which again can be attended in person or via eLearning module, as well as creating team pledges related to our behaviour commitments.

11. We've continued to develop our 'free learning resource' pages, providing learning activities linked to each of our Behaviours Commitments – colleagues can use the resources to read, listen or share skills and knowledge to develop each of the behaviours.
12. The HR and OD teams have developed and delivered a series of one-hour Behaviours Commitments interactive sessions, to showcase the Behaviours toolkits.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

13. The third Cohort 3 finished in July. We will now take time to review our Management Development offering to staff.

LGBT+ EMPLOYEE NETWORK

14. The LGBT+ Network continue to meet regularly on a quarterly basis, hosting drop ins for staff to grow their network and support the workforce. The group have a chair, vice chair and secretary who support the group to agree discussion topics and focus for any drop-in sessions that are organised.
15. The Network contributes directly to the EDI group providing valuable support in this area, as well as continuing to plan how to expand and raise awareness for both groups across the Council.

EDI GROUP

16. The EDI group continue to meet quarterly, discussing various work issues, commenting on policy and contributing to upcoming initiatives that support our inclusive culture.

The group have recently discussed the behaviours framework and equality impact assessment (as part of the People Strategy), the use of pronouns in staff email footers, translation services available at NFDC and action plans for the staff survey results; particularly how these link to the Councils Corporate Equality Objectives.

The next meeting is scheduled for early September 2025 and will focus on HR policy updates which were approved by EMT in July (probation, annual leave and neonatal leave) and discuss any comments for the upcoming review of the bullying and harassment policy.

STAFF RECOGNITION EVENT

17. In July we held our staff recognition event staff. This was to recognise those that had successfully completed long term training

and those that have submitted a corporate suggestion through the staff suggestion scheme.

18. We also wanted to recognise any member of staff who were deserving of a special recognition award. The Leadership Team were asked to nominate individuals for this. Four nominations were made and it's fair to say that those individuals were delighted to have been put forward.

BRIEF BITES

19. We continue to offer the Brief Bite training to our managers. So far this year we have run sessions on Bullying and Harassment, Sickness Absence, Performance Management and Recruitment. The next upcoming sessions include *Managing Sickness*, *Day to Day Performance Management* and *Performance Management: When Things go Wrong*. These will be delivered across September and October.
20. Staff can book themselves onto these sessions directly via the Learning Management System. HR continues to share session dates and send reminder emails to all managers in the lead-up. This approach aims to improve attendance across the Council and support the development of our line managers.

CASE MANAGER

21. The HR Advisory team have developed a Case Manager system using Power BI to track our reactive cases. This will enable us to have up to date information readily available when we have our monthly catch ups with senior managers about issues within their own teams.
22. It also enables us to have a corporate overview of cases at any point in time.

ANNUAL PAY AWARD

23. The annual pay award has been agreed for Chief executives, Chief Officers and those covered by the NJC agreement.
24. The payroll team have worked hard to ensure that the award and any back dated pay from April was paid to staff in August.

MHR ITRENT

25. The contract for the councils HR and Payroll system has been renewed for a further five years. This will ensure that we have suitable systems in place as we progress towards Local Government Re-organisation.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

26. The HR Advisory team are currently reviewing the Exit interview form and the process to encourage a better take up from our leavers.
27. As retention becomes more difficult it is more important than ever that we understand why staff are leaving. The ability to report on the data, which will include the creation of dashboards, will enable EMT and senior managers to keep this under review.

SUPREME COURT RULING

28. Single sex toilet provision for staff

Last month, the Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of a woman, according to the Equality Act 2010, is based on biological sex.

HR and the facilities team have been working together to identify where arrangements can be made that ensures that we are an inclusive employer and have facilities that are suitable for all staff. New signage will be used to inform staff where the facility is a unisex facility rather than male or female facility. We are working with both the EDI group and the LGBT+ group to ensure the signage is correct.

UPDATED HR POLICIES

29. Following approval from EMT in July, the HR Advisory team has updated both the Annual Leave and Probation policies. These are now available on Forestnet.
 - The annual leave policy, has been produced to bring the policy into the corporate format. The policy replaces the previous 'leave entitlements' policy on Forestnet. All other leave entitlements, for example maternity, exam leave, parental leave, and bereavement leave, all now have their own separate policies.
 - The probation policy, has been revised to reflect current HR practices and brought into the corporate format. A key change is the formalisation of final probation meetings, which will now include invite to probation meeting and confirmation of the outcome.

Corporate plan priorities

30. Much of the work undertaken by the HR Service supports the council's ambition to be an employer of choice.

Options appraisal

31. Not Applicable

Consultation undertaken

32. Not Applicable

Financial and resource implications

33. None

Legal implications

34. The provision of single sex and unisex toilets will ensure that we are complying with the Supreme Court ruling.

Risk assessment

35. There are no risks associated with the recommendation.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

36. None

Equalities implications

37. As an inclusive employer the provision of single sex and unisex toilets will ensure that we are complying with the Supreme Court ruling and ensuring facilities are available for all staff.

Crime and disorder implications

38. None

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

39. None

Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None