CABINET REPORT
DATE - 20 JUNE 2023

WORKFORCE REPORT AND WORKFORCE DATA Q4 2022/23
Report by DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the report

Executive Summary

2. Our workforce is the most valuable asset the council deploys. It is our people that make a difference to our residents and communities. The very nature of the services we provide, is people intensive. Our residents and our communities are reliant on the professionalism of our workforce to deliver high quality services and the future ambitions of the council.

3. This report provides the workforce profile for quarter 4 of 2022/23 (January – March 2023) in Appendix 1, and an update on the progress of some of the key workforce priorities.

Workforce Profile

4. Appendix 1 of this report provides data and information about the Council's directly employed workforce.

5. The highlights from this data and information are:

- The Council's directly employed head count (excluding agency workers) has increased during this financial year by 198.32 fte compared to quarter 4 2021/22. Further scrutiny of this will continue and an explanation provided in the next quarterly report if this increase continues.
- Only 4.4% of the Council's workforce is under 25 while the figures for those under 35 is 22%. There has been no real change in these figures in the last 12 months.
- Turnover has reduced over the last 12 months from 13.1% in Q1 to 12.2% in this quarter.
- The number of apprenticeships on programme has increased to 281 this quarter. This has increased when compared to Q4 2021/22 when there were 267. In this quarter there were 51 newly recruited apprenticeship enrolments and the total number of apprenticeship enrolments for 2022/23 was 151 which is lower when compared to 2021/22 when there were 163.
- Expenditure and use of agency workers has continued to increase this quarter with £10.8m spent (£7.4m via Comensura and £3.4m off contract). There has been an 34% increase in agency worker costs compared to 2021/22. 34% of the expenditure via Comensura is for professional/qualified roles in social and health care.

- Sickness absence per fte is 8.23 days which is a slight reduction when compared to Q4 2021/22 when it was 8.46 days per fte but is still above the target rate of 7 days per fte.
- The top reason for sickness absence is stress, anxiety and depression at 23.05% and this has increased slightly when compared to Q4 2021/22 when it was 21.44%. This has been the top reason for absence since Q2 2022/23, prior to this it was due to Covid. Absences due to Covid continue to reduce with 5.4% of absences in this quarter being for this reason.
- 9.85% of the workforce are recorded as non-white. This is slightly higher than Q4 in 2021/22 when it was 9.44% but is significantly lower than the figure revealed by the 2021 census which shows 23.1% of Oxfordshire's population are from non-white backgrounds. This figure however is the total populations and not broken down to provide a figure for those that are economically active and available for work.
- 6.14% of the workforce are recorded as having a disability. This is an increase when compared to Q4 2021/22 when it was 5.47%.

6. Workforce data and trends are published in more detail on the Council's intranet. This includes a breakdown of staffing numbers and trends over the past five quarters by Directorates and Schools, including temporary and part time employees, turnover and sickness rates along with diversity and salary profiles. This data provides information by service and includes the spend and use of agency workers.

Workforce Priorities

7. There are several key workforce priorities that are the focus for this report. These are: -

    1. Workforce Strategy
    2. Resourcing
    3. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
    4. Wellbeing
    5. Corporate Health & Safety

8. A summary of the current workforce related activity and issues in each of the corporate directorates, where applicable, is attached in Appendix 2.

Workforce Strategy

9. Steps are being taken to develop a new workforce strategy for the Council. The strategy will set out four strategic workforce priorities and the areas of focus that will be needed to deliver the priorities. The priorities have been developed using workforce data and insight and the four priorities are:

- Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people
- Promoting a positive and inclusive working environment
- Enabling Growth & Development
- Developing leadership capacity and high performance

10. Consultation on the new workforce strategy has started and the aim is to have a final draft by the end of June 2023.

11. The strategy will support delivery of the aims of the Delivering the Future Together programme and will be supported by a detailed action plan that will set our clearly the work that will be needed to deliver the priorities. The action plan will be a 'live' document and will be monitored and updated as new priorities emerge.

Resourcing

Resourcing Strategy

12. The Senior Leadership Team approved a Resourcing Strategy in Q3 2022/23. The priorities in this strategy are being progressed but focus has been on exploring the procurement of an applicant tracking system that would replace the current IBC resourcing model. Work is also now underway to implement other work streams of this strategy which include a new careers microsite for the council to improve the candidates first impression of the council as an employer and the development of an employee value proposition and employer branding to attract more candidates for our vacancies. An employee value proposition is the set of benefits offered by Oxfordshire County Council as an employer in return for the skills, experience and qualities candidates can bring.

Agency Workers

13. Whilst the demand for temporary agency workers has risen significantly over the last 12 months some steps have been taken and will continue to be taken to monitor and reduce this demand and to ensure these workers have the same benefits as other employees, with the aim of converting as many as possible to permanent directly employed contracts. This includes:

- The implementation of an agency tiering system with Comensura which means requests for an agency worker will be sent to those agencies with the lowest level of margin (cost per hire) first. The higher the margin the higher the tier and this should result in a reductio in overall agency costs
- Improved employee onboarding guidance and support for agency workers including a welcome to Oxfordshire County Council document and access to the employee benefits platform (VIVUP)
- New agencies added to the Comensura agency framework to help improve the performance of order fulfilment.
- Supplier engagement sessions set up within social care to improve communication with agencies and hiring managers.
- Improved Comensura guidance to support managers and avoid the use other more expensive methods of temporary worker procurement.

Recruitment

14. A number of recruitment campaigns have been running during this quarter, and steps taken to increase applications, and some highlights are:

- A Return to Social work programme has been created by Children's Services Resourcing Lead and the Principle Social Worker. This programme offers free training, including work placements to social workers looking to return to practice after a career break. Once completed and Social Worker Registration is reinstated participants have a guaranteed interview with Oxfordshire County Council. So far there are 4 candidates for this programme. Work to develop similar schemes for social workers and occupational therapists in Adult Social Care are being developed.
- A careers microsite for Children's Services has been refreshed to improve the candidate experience. Alongside this Google and LinkedIn analytical campaigns have been running and this has resulted in a 67% increase in CVs received between Feb and April 2023 compared to the same time period for 2021/22.
- Planned breakfast mornings in children's and adult services to encourage agency social workers to convert to permanent contracts and a sabbatical leave scheme for front line social workers and occupational therapists to support retention of experienced staff.
- Recruiting social work apprentices.
- The resourcing team are developing direct sourcing strategies to target candidates for senior roles across a number of social media platforms to encourage more applications with the aim of reducing the demand for temporary agency workers.
- An increased use of different job boards search platforms to attract more diverse candidates, including Southeast Jobs, NHS Jobs, Forces for Families Jobs, University Jobs Boards, DWP Findajob. The team are also working with the Council's employability service. Further job boards will be sourced and used to further expand the Council's presence with the aim of increasing the number of diverse candidates.

Apprenticeships

15. The total number of apprenticeship enrolments for 2022/23 was 151, with 74 completions and 31 withdrawals. The Apprenticeship Hub is continuing to review all withdrawal data to understand why employees are withdrawing and to take steps to minimise this.

16. The total expenditure on apprenticeships for 2022/23 £914k against a committed levy of £1,337k including the government 10% top up. Spend against the levy has increased every year since it began in 2017 which has resulted in a continuous reduction in the amount of expired levy being returned to the Education and Skills Funding A.

17. Some highlights in relation to apprenticeships are:

- In 2022/23 Q4 11 employees have enrolled on our first L5 Coaching Professional apprenticeship. This aims to develop more coaching capacity across the council.
- In 2022/23 Q4 the first cohort of L4 Business Improvement Apprenticeships who started in 2020 completed their apprenticeships, many with distinctions.

- An apprentice who undertook a L4 Data analyst apprenticeship as part of Continued Professional development took 2nd place in the Computer Society 'Future Data Leader of the Year' awards.
- The Council has been selected as a finalist in the Large Apprenticeship Employer category as part of the OxLEP Apprenticeship awards with one apprentice being a finalist in the Special Recognition Award and Apprentice Ambassador Award.

18. Digital skills are a key requirement for the council and well-developed digital skills can support career progression and improve retention. To support this, in 2023/24 there is a plan to develop a Data & Digital Skills Academy. The Academy will offer a variety of Data & Digital training using the apprenticeship levy and will be supported by apprenticeship team and the ITID service and experienced/specialist mentors from across our services.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

19. The Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, and staff survey, were both completed by officers across the organisation at the end of September 2022. In February 2023 Stonewall awarded Oxfordshire County Council Gold for commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion at work. The Council has also secured a position in Stonewall's Top 100 list which recognises exceptional employers who are committed to supporting their LGBTQ+ staff and customers, with praise for creating a workplace where LGBTQ+ employees can bring their full selves to work.

20. Throughout Q4 2022/23, the Council continued to promote religious events and awareness days related to protected characteristics through daily intranet headlines. Examples include Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, Holi, Orthodox Christmas, Lunar New Year and LGBT+ History month.

21. The lack of GSCE English and maths is often a barrier to career progression so since 2021 Level 2 English and Maths has been offered to employees with a focus on employees in the lower pay quartile of the gender pay gap report. 43 passes have now been achieved, with 25 live English enrolments of which 20 are women, in addition there are currently 33 live math enrolments of which 26 are women. 14 expressions of interest have been received since the previous quarter and are currently moving through the pre-enrolment stage.

Wellbeing

22. To support our employees through difficult and challenging times we have provided over 50 webinars this past year, ranging from 'mental health awareness' to 'menopause', from 'NHS Health Checks' to 'financial awareness', and have endeavoured to promote our four pillars of wellbeing - mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing through our activities.

23. A Health Needs Assessment (wellbeing survey) took place in October 2022 which has resulted in a number of improvements to the information available for our employees to support wellbeing and is informing the development of a wellbeing strategy and actions to deliver the workforce strategic priorities. In the year ahead

we will be collaborating with directorates to target wellbeing initiatives based on their results of the survey.

24. The Wellbeing Newsletter which has previously only been sent to employees who subscribed to receive it is now being made available to everyone. This provides a range of ideas and suggestions about wellbeing and publicises wellbeing events.

Corporate Health and Safety

25. New H&S for managers training launched in Q4 2022/23 and forms part of the managers competency framework. This training meets the legal duty to protect our employees and aims to develop a positive health and safety culture. All managers are required to complete this training and completion is monitored and will be reported to the Health and Safety Assurance Board.

26. Personal safety and security remain a key health and safety priority for the council and as well at the obvious impact on a person's physical and mental health, poor management, and response to incidents of violence or threatening behaviour in the workforce can adversely impact recruitment and retention. In Q4 2022/23, the following has been completed: -

- Carried out a briefing to the Extended Leadership Team to highlight the issue and how we can ensure issues are consistently dealt with in accordance with our policy framework.
- Facilities Management have undertaken an initial review of building security including security contracts e.g., guards, CCTV. This will inform ongoing work to improve security arrangements across the estate and ensure a consistent approach.
- The use of the lone worker safety app has been extended to approximately 300 staff in Adult Social Care Operational Teams and 100 Facilities Management Cleaners.

27. The development of a new accident and incident reporting system is underway. The new system will be based on SharePoint and is used by both directorates and maintained schools and is expected to be launched Autumn 2023. The system will offer enhanced benefits and functionality.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

28. Equality and inclusion implications are considered across all our workstreams as identified in the section above.

Sustainability Implications

29. There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

30. There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

Financial Implications

31. There are no revenue and/or capital resource implications within this report.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

Legal Implications

32. There are no potential legal implications of any actions/outcomes detailed within this report.

Comments checked by: Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

LORNA BAXTER
Director of Finance

Annex: Appendix 1 - Workforce Profile Q4

Background papers: Nil

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May 2023