

CABINET - 26 MAY 2020

Workforce Report and Staffing Data Q4 2019/2020

Report by the Director Human Resources

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 our communities. The very nature of the work, and the services we provide, is people intensive. Our residents are reliant on the professionalism of our workforce to deliver high quality services and the Council's future ambitions.
3. This report provides an update of HR activity and staffing data for Quarter 4 (1st January 2020 – 31st March 2020). The staffing data for Quarter 4 is provided at Appendix 1.
4. This report also provides some information relating to the support that HR has provided in response to Covid 19. A snapshot of absence data relating to Covid 19 is provided at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Human Resources – Quarter 4 overview of activity.

5. Areas of focus for the HR team have been:
 - Support with Organisational Change and Development including service re-design.
 - Completion of the re-tendering process for the Occupational Health contract and Employee Assistance Programme. These are two key contracts that enable the Council to best support a healthy workforce and offer a range of accessible support such as counselling, debt advice, legal advice and support with health and wellbeing needs.
 - Further work to embed the Cycle Scheme.
 - Further work on the HR dashboard and data set.
 - HR support in response to Covid 19.

Quarterly Update

Support with Organisational Change and Development including Service Re-design

6. During the quarter, HR has provided support to complete the implementation of the service re-design in the Strategic Capability function and to finalise proposals in readiness for consultation on the Children's Family Safeguarding Plus model in line with the wider Transformation agenda. Work is on-going in relation to the Provision Cycle re-design.
7. With the commencement in post of the Corporate Director of Commercial Development, Assets and Investment (joint role), the new Directorate structure has been stood up. This Directorate incorporates Finance, Procurement and Audit, Legal and Democratic services and Property, Investment and Facilities Management.
8. The Customers and Organisational Development Directorate is now also stood up following the commencement in post of key Directors. This Directorate incorporates Customer Experience and Cultural Services, IT and Digital, HR, Communications, Strategy and Insight.
9. The newly formed Directorates are present on the data attached at Appendix 1 and the reconfiguration of these explains some of the shift in staff numbers compared to Q3.

Re-Tender of Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme contracts

10. The re-tendering process has been completed with a range of representatives from Schools, Fire and Rescue, HR and Health, Safety and Wellbeing taking part in the selection process. Letters of award have been issued and we have entered the stand still period. The contract start date is 1st September 2020.

Cycle Scheme

11. Following recent changes, the Cycle Scheme is open throughout the calendar year with access for staff and members each month, a change that has been positively received.
12. To date there has been a steady increase in the take up of the scheme with 43 applications received for bikes & accessories since early December 2019 with a total value of over £31,000.

Further work on the HR data set

13. Further work and fine tuning continues to be carried out on the HR data set provided in Appendix 1 of this report. Areas of focus in the next quarter will be the sickness absence targets which have not been reviewed in over 5 years and need to be re-set in line with sector norms. HR must consider the type of support provided to our manager population when managing absence and to improve confidence and 'know how' in this area whilst ensuring our staff are able to access and make the best use of the wide range of support that is on offer to them as employees.
14. Exit questionnaires for staff who leave the Council is another area that requires significant work. The process needs to be adjusted to try and secure an improved response rate at the point resignations are received. This will enable better analysis to be undertaken and provide a better understanding as to the reasons that staff choose to leave and in particular if there are areas of concern which need to be addressed.
15. For Q4, headline Apprenticeship data has been provided to give a flavour of the range of apprenticeships on offer, apprenticeship numbers and the use of the levy. Further work is required around apprenticeships to develop and link career pathways within the organisation. As further frameworks are released, increasing numbers of apprenticeship opportunities can be created in all areas of the organisation whilst existing staff can undertake an apprenticeship as an alternative route for continuing professional development. To this end, a vacancy within the Organisational Development team will be re-purposed to focus on the Council's Apprenticeship strategy and to ensure that we maximise the use of the levy.

HR response to Covid

16. The HR team has worked very effectively from home during the Covid 19 pandemic with little impact on the services provided. Flexibility has been key to ensuring those with caring responsibilities and young families have been able to continue to work and this in itself has brought advantages in the current situation.
17. The following is a snapshot of the support provided for the workforce.

- a. FAQ's and Weekly Manager's Briefings

A wide range of FAQ's have been developed and published on the intranet and these are constantly revised and updated as Government advice is released and changed as the pandemic progresses.

Weekly Briefings are published for Managers to ensure they remain up to date in a fast moving situation and aware of the range of learning, development and wellbeing opportunities on offer to help them manage and adjust to the current situation with plenty of support for their staff.

- b. Organisational Development (OD)

The OD Team has produced guidance for virtual and remote working in the following areas:

- practical, technical and behavioural advice for individuals and teams
- guidance for managers on managing remote teams
- advice on maintaining motivation and resilience

On-line Bitesize coaching sessions have been offered to all staff. This offer is a joint initiative with CDC as both organisations have a pool of qualified coaches who are available to deliver coaching sessions to anyone from either authority on request.

All apprentices on apprenticeship contracts with an end date of April – September 2020 have had their contracts extended to 30th September 2020 where appropriate. This extension ensures our apprentices have sufficient time to complete their apprenticeships and end point assessments.

c. Heath and Wellbeing Offer

A wide range of Health and Wellbeing options are on offer as follows:

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides general advice and guidance on line for all staff along with 1:1 counselling sessions provided over the telephone in this current situation.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy counselling is available on line via our EAP.

A range of self- help videos available on line via our EAP.

With support from the Well at Work group, a 'virtual car sharing' buddy scheme has been established, where staff pair up with those from different service areas and teams for a 10-20 minute conversation at the start and end of each day. This is not counselling but is aimed at reaching out to staff who may live alone or feel isolated in the current situation.

- The provision of reflective sessions (or debriefing sessions) for staff to have space to discuss how they are feeling. This offer is aimed at specific teams within Children's and Adults services.
- Provision of Trauma Counselling sessions, aimed at specific teams.
- Mindfulness sessions have been very well received and further offers include breathing exercises, story telling sessions and positive psychology from our in-house Psychology team.

- Managers are encouraged to hold virtual team lunches, afternoon tea and regular check-ins and to continue to hold team meetings. Managers have been asked to work flexibly with those staff who may have small or young children at home and importantly, managers have been asked to ensure staff book time out for lunch and to give explicit permission for breaks, to book and take annual leave as planned.
18. There is a further range of health and wellbeing options available should the pandemic continue but we are conscious at this time not to overwhelm staff and to seek further feedback on the current offer before adding to or refreshing the options available.

Quarter 4 Staffing Data (1st January – 31 March 2020)

Introduction

19. Appendix 1 of this report provides staffing data relating to the workforce profile, sickness absence, turnover, apprenticeship numbers and agency spend.
20. 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.
21. Appendix 2 of this report provides a snapshot of absence data broken down into the Covid absence categories of isolation working, isolation non-working and sickness due to Covid compared to other sickness.
22. Appendix 3 of this report provides Covid related absence data by Directorate.

Quarter 4 Update

Staffing

23. Staffing numbers have shown a small increase between Quarter 3 (5030) and Quarter 4 (5079), (4123.42 FTE) which includes our retained fire service but excludes schools. There were a number of small increases across several service areas in Q4, with the most significant the result of an ongoing retained fire fighter recruitment campaign.
24. Our workforce is made up of 2747 full time and 2332 part time employees.
25. The workforce gender split remains consistent with two thirds women and one third men. The age profile highlights a slightly higher older workforce with 53.5% aged 45 years and over however overall the age profile for the council is well dispersed across all age bands.

Turnover

26. The Council's Directorate rolling turnover rate for the last 12 months is 11%. However, across the whole workforce (including schools), the 12 month rolling turnover rate increases to 16.4%. Discounting Academy conversions, which account for more than 30% of all turnover in Q4, our turnover rate continues to be lower than the mean figure for Councils in England of 13.7% (LGA 2016/2017 reported June 2018).
27. Turnover in Quarter 2 spiked at 4.1% returning to 2.7% in Quarter 3 and 2.6% in Quarter 4 which is within more regular parameters for the Council.

Spend on agency workers

28. Agency workers are a critical part of the council's workforce. They can provide a cost effective and flexible solution to cover temporary work demands. The Council has a managed service contract with Comensura which focuses on the provision of temporary agency and interim workers through a central electronic portal to an approved supply chain of compliant tiered agencies.
29. A managed service provides the following benefits:
 - Improves oversight of agency spend and trends and helps to improve demand management and the consideration of alternative resourcing solutions
 - Secures the most competitive terms with agencies
 - Grows the supply chain to respond to temporary orders quickly
 - Reduces the time managers spend liaising with agencies and negotiating terms of business
 - Ensures all suppliers understand and comply with council vetting requirements
30. Demand for agency workers is sometimes due to the need to cover hard to fill vacancies such as children's social workers and in these circumstances, can be more costly than direct employment. Measures continue to be taken through recruitment initiatives to keep this number to a minimum.
31. The total spend on agency workers via the Comensura contract for Q4 decreased slightly to £3,203,556, a reduction of circa £150,000 compared to £3,354,448 in Quarter 3.
32. Using benchmark agency charges against actual costs, the Comensura contract has saved in excess of £724,000 in charges in the financial year 2019/20 with £337,435 of these savings made in Children's Services alone.
33. Off contract spend (agency usage outside of the Comensura contract) this quarter has increased by circa £100k to £962,518. The majority of this cost is

within Planning and Place of which £120k can be attributed to the agreed use of a company that provide specialist contractors at a competitive rate equal to Comensura. £116k is related to the procurement of research and development specialists rather than agency provision and has been coded incorrectly.

34. The main reason for requesting an agency worker continues to be to cover a vacancy followed by project work and current temporary workload. The top two most frequently requested job categories in Quarter 4 are qualified social and health care workers and interims, followed by engineering and surveying roles.

Conclusion

35. HR will continue to develop the HR data in this report and review and adjust the targets in line with sector norms. This will continue to be provided quarterly along with a summary of key HR activities.

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29 April 2020