

Divisions Affected – N/A

CABINET - 23 February 2021

WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA Q3 2020/2021

Report by Director for HR

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. As reported in Q2, many of our staff continue to work from home during the pandemic with very limited numbers working from council buildings and has once again reduced due to the change in national restrictions towards the end of Q3.
4. This report provides an update on key HR activities during Quarter 3 (1st October -31st December 2020) along with a refreshed workforce profile at Appendix 1 and absence data including COVID related absence data which is provided at Appendix 2.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) – Quarter 3 overview of activity.

- General Overview of activity of the HR and OD team
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion
- Apprenticeships
- Agile and Digital Working Group
- Delivering the Future Together Programme
- Performance Management Framework

- Organisational Change
- Resourcing
- Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing

General Overview of the HR & OD Team

5. The HR team continues to work flexibly and predominantly from home with no impact on the delivery of services. During Quarter 3, the team has continued to respond to COVID 19 in addition to business as usual activities. We continue to adapt the delivery of our services and the advice and guidance provided in response to the challenges our workforce experience as a result of the pandemic.
6. The team is made up of a range of specialists including H R Business Partners and Advisory, Reward, Resourcing, Business Systems and Data Analytics, Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Organisational Development (OD). The range of knowledge, skills and experience across the team has been instrumental in providing an effective response to the pandemic and this continues to be the case as we move forward and respond to the new and various challenges the pandemic brings whilst ensuring that we move forward to deliver and support council ambitions.
7. We continue to update FAQ's as national advice and guidance changes and in response to new topics that emerge as the pandemic continues. A weekly manager's briefing continues to be produced providing a wealth of information and top tips for managers on areas such as looking after the wellbeing of employees and sharing good practice.
8. Regular informal meetings with the trade unions continue to work well and maintain good communication and collaboration.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

9. Work continues on the workforce action plan aligned to the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework.
10. A mentoring programme has been scoped and training for mentors is scheduled to begin in February 2021. The mentoring programme will create opportunities for staff, particularly those in underrepresented groups, to have shadowing and mentoring opportunities to support everyone to reach their full potential.
11. In addition to the mentoring programme, the council has introduced a programme to focus on reverse mentoring for diversity. A programme has been developed and the council is working with an external provider who is experienced in reverse mentoring. They will carry out training for both mentors and mentees with sixteen members of the BAME network being trained as mentors with members from CEDR and ELT involved in the programme which is due to commence in February 2021.

12. The first ethnicity pay gap report has been produced with the intention of reporting to the BAME Network in Feb 2021. The group will consider and explore any potential barriers to recruitment and career progression within the organisation.
13. The Dignity at Work policy has undergone significant review and has been renamed Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination. The Violence to Employees policy has also been reviewed and renamed as Zero Tolerance: Violent, Abusive and Threatening behaviour. Feedback has been sought from the trade unions and the Inclusion networks who have commented positively and confirmed that both policies are clear and easy to read.
14. A review of all EDI training is underway including training provided during induction, for managers and recruitment and selection.

Apprenticeships

15. This coming year we have made a commitment to focus on apprenticeships and at the end of Q3, a piece of work commenced to develop a workforce planning tool with a key focus and emphasis on embedding apprenticeships and career pathways within it. A clear action plan has been drawn up and is attached to this report at Appendix 3.
16. Apprenticeships can be undertaken by staff in a variety of different ways and under various contractual arrangements as follows:

Apprenticeships training contracts

17. These are fixed term posts and contracted for the duration of the apprenticeship and often referred to as training contracts. Training contracts are offered as both internal and external opportunities for entry level and higher-level apprenticeships. For example, an apprentice can start at Level 3 Paralegal and upon successful completion, progress to a further training contract to study for the Level 7 Solicitor. These types of training contracts appeal to people of all ages who do not wish to enter or go back to university to study or re-train. These types of posts are offered with no guarantee of a permanent role at the end of the apprenticeship.

Permanent posts with career development

18. These are permanent posts within the organisational structure that are offered as a permanent training post with career development or progression whereby the post holder (who can be internal or external) is not expected to be either qualified or fully qualified upon entry to the role. The relevant level of apprenticeship is mapped to the role to support the employee to gain their professional qualifications via a levy funded apprenticeship. Recent examples of this are Finance (AAT), Audit (Intelligence Analyst) and Transport Planning (Transport Planning Technician). Completion of the apprenticeship is a mandatory part of the role. These roles will often be the first step of a defined career pathway in the specialist area using apprenticeship training throughout.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

19. These are opportunities for existing staff to gain additional continuing professional development opportunities via the apprenticeship route. For example, staff may wish to undertake a Learning Mentor apprenticeship to enable them to take the next step in their career towards a management role when a suitable vacancy arises and then undertake a first line management apprenticeship which will stand them in good stead for more senior management roles where they could undertake higher level management and leadership apprenticeships.

Degree and Higher level apprenticeships

20. During 2020, apprenticeship spend has increased significantly and this is directly attributable to the number of higher level apprenticeship starts. These include Level 7 Digital Solutions Technologist, Level 6 Teacher, Level 7 Accountancy Taxation Professional, Level 7 Chartered Town Planner, Level 4 Information Systems Business Analyst and Level 6 Social Work degrees.
21. Degree and higher level apprenticeships along with some of the more practical based apprenticeships such as the Level 3 Installation and Maintenance Electrician, are more expensive for providers to deliver and are longer in duration. As a result, these draw down larger monthly amounts against the levy over a more prolonged period of time. As a result, if more of these types of apprenticeships are taken, the numbers of apprenticeships required to maximise the levy budget will be significantly less than the majority of the apprenticeships offered at OCC during the early years of the levy. For example, a Level 3 Team Leader and Supervisor apprenticeship costs £4,500, a Level 6 Chartered Manager apprenticeship costs £22,000 and a Level 3 Installation and Maintenance Electrician apprenticeship costs £18,000.
22. Moving forward, we shall be exploring opportunities to develop links with the local Prince's Trust programmes, schools and education providers to help establish better links with young people across Oxfordshire as well as how we can support young people experiencing barriers to employment to apply for apprenticeship posts, for example, care leavers and young people with disabilities to access apprenticeship opportunities with the council. This commitment to widen the access to and scope of our apprenticeship work is set out in the Corporate Plan for 2021/22 and we have allocated £100,000 to support this development. It is the intention to report on progress in future workforce reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny as requested.
23. There are some apprenticeship case studies attached at Appendix 4

Agile and Digital Working Group

24. The Accelerator working group is a joint programme of work with OCC and CDC to support the rapid adoption of Microsoft Teams and other digital

collaboration tools has been merged into the Agile Programme Working Group.

25. It is recognised that staff are using MS teams effectively for meetings but there is a knowledge and skills gap in using the application for collaborative work. An external training provider has been commissioned to deliver trainer led virtual training from February 2021. These courses are proving to be very popular with places filling up quickly.
26. Virtual Organisational Community development is another workstream of the Agile Working Group with plans established to develop new community opportunities and enhance those already in place.
27. Another workstream is considering a new agile working policy which reflects smarter and more flexible working arrangements. Areas for consideration include home and new base location working, maximising IT and digital capability, supporting work/life balance/wellbeing and comparison and benchmarking with other organisations. As part of this work, contributions a more agile workforce might make to the aims of carbon footprint initiatives for 2030 remain a key focus.

Delivering the Future Together Programme

28. Following a series of virtual workshops during the summer where over 600 members of staff participated in a widespread employee engagement programme to consider what works well at OCC and what could be “even better if”, a staff survey was undertaken to build on the findings of the workshops. The return rate was high with over a quarter of the workforce completing the survey. Results from the workshops and survey were shared with the senior management team in January 2021 and further work is on-going to look at new/refreshed values and behaviours, areas for improvement and lessons from our working arrangements during COVID. This work will help to inform our organisational development, employee assistance and training programmes for the future and enable us to develop modern and effective human resources policy and practice as we seek to implement the long term strategic ambitions of the Council.
29. The Delivering the Future Together programme includes opportunities for staff to connect virtually and help shape the development of the organisation’s support and communication arrangements that are in place whilst so many employees are working remotely and delivering services within the context of COVID.

Performance Management Framework

30. During Q3 a review of the council’s current performance management framework was undertaken. The 12. 3. 2. performance framework was introduced in 2017 and reviewed in 2018.

31. As part of the 2020 review, the framework has been refreshed setting out more clearly the purpose of the framework with a clear emphasis on the need for quality conversations to be taking place between all managers and staff throughout the year. 12 is the number of meetings that should take place over the year with each employee, 3 of which should be extended conversations to look at objective setting, review of performance, development opportunities and to look at what is working well and could be even better and 2 meetings per year should be focussed on service planning in response to the corporate plan. An increased emphasis has been placed on wellbeing as part of the 12 conversations per year.
32. As part of the review the refreshing of documentation and a small toolkit has been developed along with a one page overview describing the framework. Plans are being put in place to develop and roll out new skills training for all managers and further work will be required to embed the values and behaviours arising from the Delivering the future Together programme.

Organisational Change Programmes Update

33. The HR Business Partners and Advisory team continue to support several projects where changes to staffing structures are needed. Work continues on re-design across a number of areas and updates will be provided in future reports as these develop and move forward to the consultation phase.

Provision Cycle

34. Since the Q2 report, the joint (OCC and CDC) consolidated Procurement and Contract Management Hub went live on 4th January 2021. Recruitment to vacancies within the Hub continues and the Resourcing team continue to support both the permanent, and interim recruitment to the new structure.
35. Consultation on the Health, Education and Social Care (HESC) spoke of the provision cycle concluded on 13th November 2020. 16 voluntary redundancies were agreed and these staff leave the service between December 2020 and February 2021. Selection processes have commenced for the new roles, some redundancies may result where staff do not have the necessary skills and competencies for the new roles. The new structure will go live on 1st March 2021.

HR Resourcing – Key Projects

Covid 19 Mass Testing (Schools and Community)

36. Following the government announcement that schools and community mass testing sites were to be set up, the HR Resourcing team have provided support by engaging with a local recruitment agency who have recent experience of

resourcing for roles in university testing sites. All staff are pre-screened and vetted to ensure compliance standards are met.

37. A briefing guide for school leadership teams has been created as well as a template job description for a Covid 19 Testing Operative. A standard pay rate has been suggested following a review by the HR Reward team to ensure consistency across the county. Schools who need additional support with recruiting to their Testing vacancies can access support from the Council's existing agency arrangements
38. The HR Resourcing team are also supporting initial scoping meetings with the Public Health team regarding the set up of 3 additional community mass testing arrangements with approximately 45 vacancies to be launched in February 2021.

Children's Services

39. The team have continued to support the transition to the Family Solutions model including onboarding new starters and supporting hiring managers throughout the recruitment process. All management vacancies are now filled, 10 new social workers are under offer, 7 have started and 29 vacancies remain.
40. A very positive response was received for the newly created Children's Practitioner roles. Over 80 applications were received, and 25 interviews scheduled with 17 offers underway so far.

Growth Recruitment Campaign

41. The team continue to support the Growth Recruitment Campaign which has a large number of vacancies covering a range of specialisms including Project and Programme Managers and technical roles such as Transport Planners. Support has been provided to design job descriptions, develop creative advert copy, market rate/reward package research, recruitment timeline planning and the development of a talent pool.
42. Initially, nine various Project Manager roles were advertised, five have been successfully filled and recruitment continues for the remaining four. A further campaign has gone live in January 2021 for a range of roles including Principal Infrastructure Planner, Transport Planners and Quantity Surveyor

Senior recruitment

43. During Q3, the team supported the recruitment to the role of the Corporate Director, Environment and Place.

BBC Radio Oxford £1 million-pound jobs appeal

44. We are continuing to engage with BBC Radio Oxford who are running a campaign to help promote and connect local job seekers with over a million pounds worth of work in Oxfordshire. OCC job vacancies are being promoted

for free in bulletins live on air. They will also appear on the BBC Radio Oxford website.

Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing

45. During the winter we have seen higher prevalence of COVID nationally alongside increased transmissibility of the new variant. Within Oxfordshire, and in particular Oxford and Cherwell there has been steep increases in levels of COVID within the community. This deteriorating picture led to the government introducing National Restrictions in December and remain in place to be kept under review.
46. The underlying message for staff is to work from home if they can, however, It is important to consider that much of the Council's frontline work will continue as it is deemed statutory or essential and much involves community-based work e.g. visiting service users and families in their own homes or care settings. It is, therefore, important against a backdrop of rising cases that any risk to staff and service users is reduced so far as is possible.
47. In response, and in conjunction with services, the Corporate Health and Safety Team regularly review safe systems of work to ensure they remain robust and in-line with the latest public health guidance. This has included:
 - Working with the PPE Cell to continually ensure our staff have access to the necessary PPE.
 - Work with FM Cell to ensure buildings which are open are COVID-secure.
 - Ensure staff are reminded that in light of new variant and increased likelihood of transmission it is even more important they strictly adhere to safe working practices and infection control procedures.
 - With the re-introduction of 'shielding' all staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) must stay and only work from home.
 - All others who are deemed at higher risk (70+, other health condition, BAME etc.) are individually risk assessed.

Supporting Staff to Work from Home

48. Not having the correct workstation set-up can lead to aches and pains and in severe cases long term ill health. With many of us working from home the H&S team has worked closely with colleagues in HR, FM and IT to ensure staff have access to the support and equipment they need to work safely, this has included provision of chairs, screens, desk risers etc. In addition, a new Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Self-assessment has been developed to provide a greater level of oversight and assurance that issues are being identified and staff signposted to where they can access support.

