

CABINET - 21 September 2021

WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA Q1 2021/2022 APRIL TO JUNE 2021

Report from Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development & 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 future ambitions of the Council.
3. Many of our staff have continued to work from home where possible during Q1 due to the pandemic and in line with Government advice.
4. This report provides an update for Quarter 1 on key HR activities along with a refreshed workforce profile at Appendix 1.

Quarter 1 overview of activity.

- General Overview of the HR, OD and Corporate Health and Safety Team
- Organisational Development Activities
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion
- Delivering the Future Together Programme
- Apprenticeships
- Organisational Change and Redundancies
- Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing

General Overview of the HR, OD and Corporate Health and Safety Team

5. The HR, OD and Corporate Health and Safety team is a team of professionals with a range of people expertise including HR Business Partnering and Advisory, Employee Relations, Resourcing, HR Business Systems, Reward,

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Organisational Development, Learning and Development and Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

6. The team has in the main continued to work from home but flexibly and subject to the needs of the organisation during Q1. The team has continued to respond to both strategic and business as usual activities whilst maintaining advice, guidance and support in relation to COVID.
7. We continue to update the COVID FAQ's for staff as national advice and guidance changes. A weekly manager's briefing continues to be produced providing updates in response to any changes to national advice along with a wealth of information and top tips for managers on areas such as looking after the wellbeing of employees and sharing good practice.
8. Informal meetings continue to take place every 4 weeks with the trade unions. These meetings continue to focus on COVID and any resulting issues that arise. These are well attended by all trade unions and allow us to deal promptly with emerging issues whilst sharing information, maintaining good communication and enabling positive collaboration across Oxfordshire.

Organisational Development (OD) Activities

Equality and Diversity

9. Work continues on the workforce action plan aligned to the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework.
10. The mentoring programme, which is available to all staff, particularly those in underrepresented groups, provides shadowing and mentoring opportunities to enable all employees to reach their full potential. Twenty-four people have registered for a mentor with 6 matches made so far. Further work is being undertaken to establish why the conversion of requests for mentoring relationships is low however early research suggests that where mentors and mentees require more generic requirements in areas such as career progression or management experience, there is a much greater conversion rate compared to where mentors and mentees only offer and require a very discrete specialism.
11. Our Reverse Mentoring Programme; Mentoring for Diversity has continued during Q1. 15 members of the BAME Network were trained as mentors in February 2021 by an external provider who is experienced in reverse mentoring. These 15 mentors have been matched with members of CEDR and ELT to provide mentoring around EDI with a focus on lived experience. The programme's mid-point review meeting took place in May 2021 and reported very positive outcomes around learning and safe spaces to discuss difficult issues. Feedback from the review meeting includes comments such as
 - *Good equality in the relationship to openly discuss issues without barriers or hierarchy*

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- *There has been permission to have the discussion/freedom to address challenging issues and freedom to voice anything*
 - *Improved understanding of different ways of working has been refreshing*
 - *Improved empathy and curiosity noted*
 - *Good platform for further work*
12. A final review of the programme will take place in October 2021 with the intention of rolling out a further programme in Q3 or Q4 (2021-2022). In addition, the mentors from the BAME Network will all have the opportunity to individually discuss with the Organisational Development (OD) lead for the programme next steps and development opportunities; early conversations indicate that a number of the mentor cohort would like to develop their coaching and mentoring skills and undertake the Coaching and Mentoring apprenticeship. This programme will commence in Quarter 3 and on completion, the mentors may join the OCC wide coaching and mentoring pool, offering a more diverse network to potential coaches/mentees.
13. Additional support has been put in place for the BAME community with professional counselling support from VITA (OCC's Employee Assistance Programme). Counsellors with BAME heritage are available to support with historic or current racial trauma.

Apprenticeships

14. A vacancy arising in the Organisational Development team has been re-purposed as an Apprenticeship Manager to lead on the development of an apprenticeship strategy, improve optimisation of the levy, the development and embedding of career pathways, to support work with our communities around skills gaps and social mobility and to help establish better links with young people across Oxfordshire who are experiencing barriers to employment. The successful candidate commenced employment on 1st July 2021. The development of an apprenticeship hub with some fixed term roles is underway to support this critical work.
15. During the rolling year 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021 there were 265 apprentices on programme, of these around 186 were staff undertaking an apprenticeship as part of their continuing professional development (CPD) or career progression.
16. There were 129 new enrolments during the period (1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021) with a committed spend of just over £1.2 million across the duration of the apprenticeships ranging from 1 year - 5 years. 33 new enrolments in the period were schools.
17. In Q1 2021-2022, forty new apprenticeships commenced on programme compared to only 6 in Q1 in 2020-2021 and a total of 92 for the whole of 2020-2021. Comparison data indicates that new apprentice starts for Q1 2021-2022 have increased by 650% and levy spend commitment by over 350% compared

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to Q1 2020-21. It should be noted that this increase is skewed considerably due to COVID restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic.

18. Due to the impact of Covid and workplace restrictions in 2020-2021, enrolments in this period were 92 compared to 108 in 2019-2020 however the value of the apprenticeships increased due to an increased number of higher level apprenticeships being undertaken. In Q1(2021-2022) enrolments and spend have again increased. With the introduction of a new Apprenticeship Hub and more resource to widely support the embedding of apprenticeships across the organisation we anticipate the numbers of apprentices and spend continuing to rise in 21/22.

Delivering the Future Together

19. The Delivering the Future Together (DTFT) programme is our internal programme for change. The programme is about supporting, engaging enabling and developing our people. The launch of new/refreshed values and behaviours took place on 9 June 2021 following widespread employee engagement in 2020. The refreshed values are: (1) Always learning; (2) Be kind and care; (3) Equality and Integrity in all we do; (4) Taking responsibility; and (5) Daring to do it differently. These five values underpin the DTFT programme.
20. Supporting DTFT is the Champion Network Lead who has successfully recruited over 130 Champions to support bringing the values and behaviours to life. The Champions are pivotal to DTFT as they start to engage at team level and provide feedback to the programme board on 'what's working well' and 'even better if'. The Champions will receive training during Q2 on facilitation skills and using Microsoft teams, particularly whilst we remain in a virtual meeting world. Champions will be engaging with teams in September with a focus on the value of "Be kind and care".
21. Any shortfall or gaps in the organisational coverage of the Champion network will be identified during Q2 and a further recruitment campaign will commence at the end of Q2/beginning of Q3 if required.
22. The DTFT programme has several broad workstreams which will be refined further as the programme continues, including, Managing for Performance, Attraction, Recruitment and Induction, Talent Management, Reward and Recognition, Learning and Development and Wellbeing. During Q2 these will be refined, and a programme plan of activities will be developed and prioritised.

Organisational Change and Redundancies

23. During Q1. the HR Business Partners and Advisory team have continued to support several organisational change programmes.

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24. The joint Property, Investment and Facilities Management transformation has completed the first phase of restructuring for the senior management tier with Phase 2 and 3 expected to launch in Q2/3.
25. Following the go-live of the new Health, Education and Social Care Commissioning team on 1st March 2021, recruitment to vacancies has continued during Q1 and is ongoing. The appointment to the permanent role of Deputy Director for HESC is complete and the new postholder joined the team on 5th July 2021.
26. The IT structure was reviewed and realigned to deliver the new IT strategy and IT Transformation Programme, undertaken as a joint activity by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Cherwell District Council (CDC). These adjustments to the delivery model will enable the organisation to implement the new IT strategy and digital improvements and create long term sustainability by forming a joint IT Service.
27. The HR structure continues to be reviewed to ensure that the structure and the roles within it are focussed on organisational need. In Q1, appointments were made to key roles such as the Apprenticeship Manager and the HR Business Partner for Schools and Education with the latter due to commence employment on 1st September 2021.
28. In Q1 there were a total of 13 redundancies at the Council across HESC, IT and HR.

Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Wellbeing

29. Recorded sickness absence has reduced slightly since Q4 from 2.87% to 2.74% but remains slightly higher than in Q1 (2020/2021), however overall sickness absence remains lower than before the pandemic.
30. Covid related absence increased significantly in Q1 compared to Q4 however the data confirms that 70% of the Covid related absences were for between 1-3 days which would suggest these absences were resulting from staff being impacted by some of the side effects of the vaccine. This also correlates with the vast increase and rollout of the national Covid vaccination programme.
31. From February 2021, the Council was able to change the way absence can be recorded through the IBC. Previously an entirely employee self-service activity, the change has resulted in managers also being able to record absence in the system should an employee be unable to do so, due to, for example, hospitalisation. This change should start to improve ongoing reporting and accuracy of sickness absence data.
32. The top 5 reasons for absence continue to include stress, anxiety and depression as the top reason. Covid-19 and isolation non-working have

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disappeared from the top 5, with the remaining identified as injury/fracture; operation/post op; ear nose and throat and gastrointestinal problems.

33. The number of staff absent due to stress related absence in Directorates appears to have levelled over the past 3 quarters although it remains a third higher than in Q1 2020/21.
34. Management referrals to our Occupational Health (OH) provider for stress/anxiety and depression have in the main steadily increased since October 2020 although they have varied month to month. However, in June 2021 there was a sharp spike with referrals increasing by 100% between May 2021 and June 202, from 16 to 32.
35. Work is underway to try and further track and analyse the underlying reasons for the high levels of management referrals for stress/anxiety and depression through our OH provider including the proportions of occupational and non-occupational stressors.
36. Data reported by our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider for the month of June 2021 confirms that 31 staff used the telephone contact service of which 9 of these contacts were reported as work related concerns with the remaining 22 contacts reported as personal issues not related to work. A further 4 staff contacted our EAP for general legal and information services. This service operates within HMRC guidelines by providing clarity and information rather than advice. On-line data usage was not available at the time of this report and will be followed up with our provider.
37. Early indications seem to indicate that OCC's employees use of the EAP is perhaps lower than it should be compared to that of other organisations. The council has carried out a range of promotional activities to raise awareness of the EAP but this will need to be re-visited. Verbal feedback from the trade unions suggests that when used by employees, feedback about the services provided is very positive. Further employee feedback is being sought from the EAP provider.
38. The council's Employee Assistance Programme can provide staff with a fully comprehensive psychological support service, offering counselling sessions for our staff and a dedicated managers hotline. In addition, higher counselling such as Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) which is particularly helpful for trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) can also be provided.
39. Through our occupational health provider People Asset Management (PAM) we are able to provide wellbeing assessments (Psychological Occupational health Assessments), tailored debriefing sessions (both group and individual) such as dealing with anxiety in Covid times, critical incident debriefing and wellness sessions.
40. Our intranet pages contain advice to managers about how an employee that reports feelings of stress should be helped and we encourage employees to

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complete a stress risk assessment which asks individuals to identify the areas of the work as identified by the HSE where they may be feeling overwhelmed, this enables the line manager to put in place an action plan and address any issues raised.

41. A WAP (Wellness Action Plan) is also available on the Intranet which can be utilised by an employee to help advise their line manager as to how best to support them in the workplace and what keeps them well at work. We also have a Psychological Health Questionnaire available on the Intranet to help employees identify whether they may need to seek support.
42. We have a number of support groups throughout the council and our wellbeing champions are always keen to help signpost individuals to the relevant support.
43. We also have some Stress awareness bitesize sessions available for line managers. Every year we run a number of webinars for staff and have had speakers from MIND Oxfordshire, Able futures and Access to Work over the last 12 months.

Health and Safety - Covid

44. The Corporate H&S Team continues to work with services to review and update risk assessments to ensure continued effectiveness of controls. This means reviewing arrangements in place to ensure the safety of staff and workplaces because the Council's general duty of care remains in place, including duties under the Health and Safety legislation.
45. Some key controls remain unchanged including ensuring adequate ventilation, sufficient cleaning and good hand hygiene. In higher risk roles infection prevention control (IPC) procedures including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) will remain in place in line with government guidance. By taking a gradual and proportional response, this will help limit the increasing number of staff having to isolate as contacts at least until 16th August where in accordance with the Government's roadmap, the isolation rules will change whereby those persons identified as 'contacts' who have received a double vaccination and take a negative PCR test may be exempt.

Lone Worker Mobile Technology

46. Many of our frontline staff are lone workers, this can be through visiting residents' homes alone, working at night or in remote locations. Lone workers can be at risk of harm including violence or ill health while working in locations where it is difficult to summon help or assistance. With more of our workforce working agile it is important managers and staff have assurance that we know staff are safe and help can be sent if needed.
47. The Lone Worker Technology project is implementing a mobile app based service within those high-risk groups to locate and escalate alerts from lone

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workers connected to a 24/7 monitoring service with a priority emergency service response.

48. Teams that have already been onboarded to the system include Highways, Fire and Rescue and Facilities Management with Children's and Adults Social Care during the summer.

Q1 Staffing Data (1st April – 30th June 2021)

49. Appendix 1 of this report provides staffing data relating to the workforce profile including sickness absence, turnover, apprenticeship numbers and agency spend.
50. 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.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

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

Sustainability Implications

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

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Annex: Appendix 1 - Workforce Profile Q1
Appendix 2 – Apprenticeship and Levy note

Background papers: Nil

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