

CABINET REPORT
DATE – 19th DECEMBER 2023

WORKFORCE REPORT & WORKFORCE DATA
JULY–SEPTEMBER 2023 – Q2 2023/24

Report by Executive Director of Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

Executive Summary

2. This report provides the workforce profile for quarter 2 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators (Appendix A). This report also sets out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

Workforce Profile

3. Appendix A of this report provides data and information about the Council's directly employed workforce. The highlights from this data and information are:
4. The Council's directly employed headcount (excluding agency workers) equates to 5339 people (4458.4 FTE) at the end of Q2. This is an increase of 380 people over the past 5 years, an increase of 134 from Q2 2022/2023 and an increase of 3 since Q1 2023/2024.
5. Agency spend continues to be a challenge with total spend in Q2 equating to £9,593,378 compared to £8,401,225 in Q1, representing a 14.2% increase. Directors are meeting weekly to discuss key organisational decisions and actions of which reducing costs and agency spend is priority. The following actions have been agreed and signed off by Directors:

Short term actions < 3 months

- **Vacancies & recruitment approval process**

Vacancy management across Oxfordshire County Council is difficult to track owing to unreliable data and poor systems. To address this we are removing all vacancies from our system which we will then rebuild in line with Financial budgets and Directorate requirements. Future recruitment will then go through a new and robust recruitment acquisition process with vacancies carefully managed going forward;

- **Sabbaticals / career break**

We will re-launch our career break policy and provide guidance to managers to help support decisions. This will enable colleagues to take unpaid time off to

spend more time with family, pursue new interests, focus on wellbeing and also, importantly, reduce costs;

- **Development of a workforce dashboard for CMT**

We are developing a dashboard to enable CMT to track and monitor KPIs on a monthly basis to help inform decisions and interventions as required;

- **Agency spend and approval process**

We are introducing a new approval workflow in the Comensura system (OCC's Vendor Neutral Managed Service Provider) to include sign off on agency spend by an appropriate Senior Manager / Director;

- **Voluntary reduction in hours**

We currently offer employees the opportunity to request flexible working. To help reduce our costs we will be developing a communications plan which will focus on the opportunity for employees to request to reduce their contracted hours. We will also be developing guidance for managers on how to approach this conversation with teams;

- **Review sign off procedure process for honorariums**

We will review our current list of honorariums across the organisation to help us expand spans of control and reduce costs;

- **Tighter control over overtime**

We will be conducting a 'deep dive' into the value and amount of overtime used across the council. This will help identify themes and inform decisions to address 'hotspot' areas / roles.

Medium term actions 6-12 months

- **A 'deep dive' into the increase in FTE**

Headcount has increased by 7% in the last 5 years. Some of this is accounted for due to an increase in social work staff and other recruitment successes. However, more work is needed to establish the full reasons. A 'deep dive' will be conducted for this purpose;

- **Spans of control guidance** – guidance developed by PWC will be reviewed as part of ongoing piece of work with proposals to be discussed further at CMT;

- **Restructures** – creation of a comprehensive tracker for all restructuring activity to include status and numbers effected, reason for restructure proposal and sign off process;

- **Sickness management** – review how we manage short and long term sickness with a view to taking a more proactive approach, tightening our policy, workshops for managers, review of KPIs and targeting hot spot areas.

6. 5% of the Council's workforce is 25 or under which has slightly decreased from the previous quarter which was 6%. The average age of our workforce is 46.

7. We have established benchmarking data from across a pool of 71 other councils across England including County, City and District councils. The average age across the sample group is 47. Of the 13 councils that comprise 'South East Employers' (SEE) the average age is also 47. Initiatives to address this include growing our early careers talent through our apprenticeship offering, graduate programmes, internships and training and development plans.

8. Our rolling 12 monthly voluntary turnover is 12.7%, up from 12.1% at the same time in 2022 / 2023. The average voluntary turnover across our sample pool of 71 other councils is 13% (also 13% across SEE). We aim to reduce this through the following actions:
 - Develop and embed more employee-centred leadership styles through the 12.3.2 Managing for Performance programme;
 - Ensure managers are having discussions during induction, team meetings and 1-1s and setting clear objectives linked to the Council's vision and values;
 - Encourage and celebrate applications for external recognition awards for individuals e.g. apprenticeship awards; and
 - Plan and schedule a programme of celebratory events e.g. Long Service, qualification / apprentice graduations.

9. For this period of July to September, sickness absence per FTE has increased from 8.2 days to 8.4. The average across our sample pool of 71 other councils is 11 days per FTE (9 across SEE). This increase from Q1 is as a result of holiday influences. The top reason for sickness absence remains as stress, anxiety and depression at 31.5% and this has increased slightly when compared to Q1 when it was 29.8%. Steps being taken to address this include:
 - Undertaking a 'deep dive' into sickness management data, trends, policy, training etc as mentioned in point 4 above;
 - Addressing the top 5 priority health focus through targeted plans in areas such as back pain and musculoskeletal issues, long term health and covid related problems; and
 - Upskilling managers to better support and manage absences with an emphasis on mental health and neurodiversity.

10. 10% of the workforce are recorded as non-white which remains static from the previous quarter. The data from the 2021 census and our sample pool of 71 councils is difficult to compare due to the way in which the data is collated and reported. We will seek to address this in future reports. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is very important to us at the council and we recognise that having a diverse workforce is key to our success. 6% of the workforce are recorded as having a disability (versus 8% across 71 other councils and 7% across SEE). This figure has remained static for the last 12 months. Actions being taken include:
 - Raising awareness of the value of a diverse workforce through initiatives such as reciprocal mentoring which started in November 2023, staff network events and celebrating diversity;
 - Ensure hiring managers have received appropriate training and follow objective, structured assessment and selection processes designed to maximise fairness and minimise adverse impact on different candidate groups;
 - Review policies and procedures to ensure they capture diversity responsibilities throughout, that they are consistent, easy to follow and employee-centred; and
 - Introduce future leadership development programmes including a targeted programme for under-represented groups.

11. Workforce data and trends are published in more detail on the Council's intranet.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

12. Equality and inclusion implications are considered across all our workstreams.

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Management

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

Financial Implications

15. The level of agency expenditure was a contributory factor in the year end directorate overspend for 2022/23 and it continues to impact on forecast pressures in 2023/24.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Financial Strategy

Legal Implications

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

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal

Lorna Baxter

Executive Director of Resources

Annex: Appendix A - Workforce Profile Q1

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Michael Fletcher, Head of HR Business Partnering Advisory

December 2023