

CABINET

17th December 2024

WORKFORCE REPORT & WORKFORCE DATA JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024 (Q2 2024/25)

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to note the report.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1** The people who work for the Council are the most valuable asset the Council deploys. They make a difference to the county's residents and communities on a daily basis, it is their professionalism that delivers the high-quality services and the council's ambition to become a fairer, healthier and greener county, enabling the Council's ambition to become an Employer of Choice. This ambition is underpinned by the Council's Our People and Culture Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in January 2024. The strategy aims to develop an inclusive and empowering culture, enabling the Council's workforce to be the best they can be to deliver excellent services for the residents.
- 2.2** This report provides an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy whilst also reviews the workforce profile for July - September 2024 (Q2 2024/2025) including the key workforce trends and other relevant management information and performance indicators (Annexes 1 and 2).

3 Key workforce trends in Q2 2024/2025

- 3.1** a reduction in agency spend via Comensura contract and an increase in the off contract (i.e. non- Comensura) spend
- 3.2** an increase in the full time equivalent (FTE) figure in terms of directly employed colleagues
- 3.3** a decrease in voluntary turnover in the 12-month rolling period
- 3.4** a decrease in sickness absence in the rolling 12-month period
- 3.5** an increase in diversity figures

4 Our people and culture strategy

- 4.1** The vision for the Our People and Culture Strategy is that we develop and maintain a high performing, innovative, highly engaged, and agile teams,

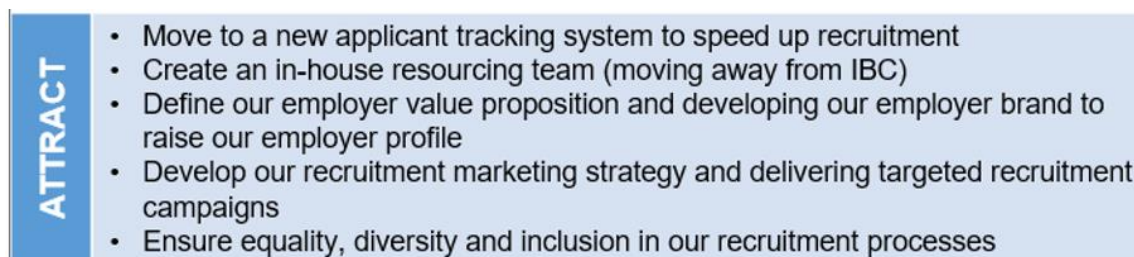
employing the best people, and reflecting the communities we serve. We nurture an environment that supports diversity, equality, and inclusion, and allows all our employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents'. The Strategy focuses on priorities under 4 pillars:



5 Our people and culture strategy – the progress the council achieved in Q2 24/25 within each of the 4 pillars

6 Attract

Within the '**Attract - Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people**' pillar, the following priorities have been articulated for Year 1 of the programme:



7 Attract - Progress made

- 7.1 A new in-house Talent Acquisition and Resourcing team has been established, which has enabled the Council to move away from using Hampshire's Integrated Business Centre (IBC).
- 7.2 In September 2024 the implementation of the new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) was completed, this new system will improve time to hire and candidate experience which should bring about a reduction in the need for, and the cost of, interim, agency or casual back fill arrangements.
- 7.3 Work on the Employer Value Proposition and employer brand, which will raise the Council's employer profile, has been recently launched. Adverts in the new brand are now on LinkedIn and vacancy campaigns are being designed using the new branding. The brand is being rolled out internally to support engagement and retention of colleagues.

8 Thrive

Within the '**Thrive - Enabling our people to thrive and perform**' pillar, the following priorities have been articulated for Year 1 of the programme:

THRIVE

- Give managers the tools and skills to effectively manage performance, absence and change
- Improve the speed of response to issues raised by our people
- Enhance our wellbeing services through corporate wellbeing initiatives to improve people's resilience and reduce cost of living impact
- Develop modern, simple to follow toolkits, policies and digital systems to support our ambitions

9 Thrive - Progress made

- 9.1 A new policy framework has been created and all policy reviews for 2023/24 have been completed including: agile working, domestic abuse, additions to pay guidance, numerous minor policy updates and a new sickness policy and toolkit. These modern, simple to follow policies and toolkits enable a proactive approach to people related matters and early resolution, as evident in the downwards trend in sickness absence.
- 9.2 Work has now commenced on the 2024/25 policy reviews which will include TUPE guidance, the pensions and retirement policy and change management policies and toolkits, which support organisational design.
- 9.3 The capability, disciplinary and grievance policies and toolkits are being redesigned with manager involvement to provide a streamlined, clear and transparent approach to managing these matters in a timely way.
- 9.4 The results of the 2024 employee engagement survey conducted in February have been shared to guide service-level strategies for enhancing employee engagement. Discovery work has now been completed to shape the 2025 employee engagement survey and the future approach to employee engagement.

10 Grow

Within the '**Grow - Enabling our people to grow and evolve for the future**' pillar, the following priorities have been articulated for Year 1 of the programme:

GROW

- Continue to embrace the 12.3.2 performance management tool
- Enhance our early careers offer to improve our talent pipeline specifically to increase numbers of graduates and apprentices
- Develop skills and learning to support transformational change
- Launch a reciprocal mentoring scheme

11 Grow - Progress made

- 11.1 The reciprocal mentoring scheme, which focuses on equality, diversity and inclusion, has, 20 participants Feedback was positive in the midpoint review

and the timescale of the scheme has been extended to allow for the continued development of deeper and more meaningful relationships between co-mentors.

- 11.2 The 12.3.2 managing for performance tool refresh is in progress to ensure alignment with organisational narratives and that quality conversations are happening consistently; workbooks and modules have been redeveloped, additional facilitators have been recruited to deliver upskilling sessions, and an e-learning module is being scoped.
- 11.3 Significant progress has been made in enhancing the early careers offer. Four management trainees started in September, two on a new Chartered Managers Degree Apprenticeship and two on the Local Government Association graduate programme. The first work experience week took place in October and was a success; four young people rotated around services such as Customer Services, IT, Policy, Facilities Management and Transformation. A new internship programme is also in development and the first interns, including supported interns, are due to join the Council in January 2025. These schemes are designed to support succession planning, attract diversity and develop our skills for the future.

12 Lead

Within the '**Lead - Enabling our people to lead and transform for the future**' pillar the following priorities have been articulated for Year 1 of the programme:

LEAD	• Introduce a range of people management controls to enable the organisation to operate within the budget envelope • Resize the organisation to deliver our ambitions within our budget envelope • Support our leaders to have the tools, skills, behaviour and resilience to lead transformational change
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13 Lead - Progress made

- 13.1 A range of people management controls have been introduced to enable the organisation to operate within budget, focusing on agency usage, honorariums, overtime and purchasing annual leave scheme.
- 13.2 Support is being provided for leaders to have the tools, skills and resilience to lead transformational change.
- 13.3 A leadership specialist, funded through the transformation reserve has started working with senior leaders to scope and shape the future work within this pillar.

- 13.4 The key priority under the Our People and Culture Strategy has been the Organisation Redesign Programme, which aims to resize the organisation to deliver our ambitions whilst remaining within the budget envelope.

14 Workforce trends – Full Time Equivalent

- 14.1 In terms of directly employed colleagues (i.e. excluding agency workers), the Council's FTE (Full time equivalent) figure has increased from 4,523.04 to 4,656.19 FTE (which equates to 5,500 people) in Q2. Further details are shown in Annex 2.

15 Workforce trends – agency spend

- 15.1 The last quarter has seen a reduction in agency spend via Commensura, and an increase in the off contract spend (more details in Appendix 1). The overall trend in agency spend is a steady decrease in the last 2 years- the total annual agency spend (including identified off-contract spend) for the 2023/24 financial year was £36.07m compared to £39.71m for 2022/23.
- 15.2 The top reasons for agency use include covering a vacancy, additional workload and sickness. In Q2, which spans the summer, it is also likely that the bookings covered additional workload related to providing statutory services during a time when many colleagues take annual leave during school holidays. The highest agency spend continues to remain in Children's Services, Adult Services, Environment and Highway Maintenance, Law and Governance and Property. Further details are shown in Annex 2.

16 Workforce trends – Turnover

- 16.1 Voluntary annual turnover at the council has decreased from 13.1% to 12.4%, a positive trend towards our People and Culture Strategy KPI target of 11.5% p.a. Top five reasons why colleagues voluntarily leaving the organisation are: to move to alternative employment, retirement, family commitments and moving away/emigrating.
- 16.2 Involuntary annual turnover has increased from 2.1% to 2.3%, the reasons for involuntary turnover include dismissals and TUPE transfers. The TUPE took place in the cleaning service, part of which was outsourced. Further details are shown in Annex 2.

17 Workforce trends - Sickness Absence

- 17.1 The annual sickness absence rate in the rolling 12-month period has decreased from 9.01 days absence per FTE to 8.83 days absence per FTE in Q2 24/25. This is a positive overall trend towards the target of 8 days sickness absence per year per FTE as set in the Our People and Culture Strategy.
- 17.2 There has been a small increase in sickness absence recorded in Q2 24/25 compared to Q1. This increase, which peaked part way through the quarter, is most likely because of the recent training for managers which has prompted

better practice in the recording of sick absence. The council has recently rolled out an improved Managing Attendance Policy and an associated toolkit, which gives line managers the tools to support their teams with maintaining and improving attendance. Attendance management currently constitutes 76.4% of all employment relations cases in the council.

- 17.3 The five top reasons for sickness absence are anxiety/stress/depression, ENT (ear, nose and throat), Injury/fracture, operations/post ops and gastrointestinal problems. Further details are shown in Annex 2.

18 Workforce trends - Diversity profile

- 18.1 **Gender** - the majority of colleagues at the Council are female – 66%, which is in line with the overall national trend in Local Government, this proportion has not changed since the last quarter.
- 18.2 **Age** - 6% of the Council's workforce were under 26 at the end of Q2, which is a considerable increase in the proportion of colleagues in this age group since the previous quarter (up from 5%). This positive trend is likely a result of the recent investment made by the Council in its Early Careers Offer, this programme is designed to attract, recruit, and retain talented individuals who are early in their career, thereby building a pipeline of diverse and aspiring talent. The Early Careers offer was launched in September 2024 and includes a wide range of approaches including building on the Council's existing apprenticeship offer, Graduate and management development programme, T-Levels (government backed, career focused qualification for 16–19-year-olds), internships (including management trainees), work experience programme, schools' outreach and early careers network.
- 18.3 **Ethnicity** - There is a strong positive trend in terms of the percentage of colleagues declaring as being from an ethnic minority background, with the figure increasing steadily - 9.44% in March 2023, increasing to 10.37% in March 2024, and 11% currently. Representation is moving towards the council's target of 12.25%.
- 18.4 **Disability** - the percentage of council colleagues declaring a disability has increased steadily over the last 5 years (3.34% overall) and has increased from 6.06% as of 31 March 2023 to 7.97% as at 31st March 2024. Further details are shown in Annex 2.

19 Equality & Inclusion Implications

Equality and inclusion implications are considered across all our workstreams.

20 Sustainability Implications

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

21 Risk Management

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

22 Corporate Policies and Priorities

The Our People and Culture Strategy referred to in this report directly underpins the Council's ambition to become an Employer of Choice.

23 Financial Implications

23.1 The level of agency expenditure was a contributory factor in the year end service area overspend for both 2022/23 and 2023/24. On-going focus through the Our People and Culture Strategy is required so that costs can be managed within agreed service areas budgets for 2024/25.

23.2 The increase in FTE is also a contributing factor in the year end service area over spend.

Comments checked by:

Ian Dyson, Director of Commercial and Financial Services

24 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal, Deputy Monitoring Officer

25 Staff Implications

Staff implications are considered across all our workstreams and covered in this report.

Lorna Baxter

Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annexes: ANNEX 1 Quarterly workforce dashboard Q2 2024-2025
 ANNEX 2 Additional workforce data Q2 2024-2025

Background papers: Nil

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26 November 2024