

REPORT TITLE: - WORKFORCE REPORT 2020/21

11 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Neil Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Quality

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the workforce of the Council and a summary of key HR activities for the year ending 31 March 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report be noted.

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

The performance of the Council's workforce is critical to the delivery of all outcomes set out in the Council Plan.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

None.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

Employees are critical to the delivery of the council's services and priorities and monitoring and reporting on key employment metrics enables proactive employment practises.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

Staff are based in a number of council premises across Winchester, but due to the pandemic have been operating from home and the office as service delivery demands.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

This report is for information only and therefore no consultation or communication is required.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

None.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSEMENT

8.1 There is no differential impact on a specified group as all HR matters are applied consistently.

8.2 As required nationally, the council reports on any potential discrepancies in pay, based on gender ("Gender Pay Gap" reporting); in accordance with the statutory timeframe. The council's Gender Pay Gap data is published annually on the Government Gender Pay Gap Reporting Service and on the Winchester City Council website.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 This report does not include any confidential data and therefore a data protection impact assessment is not required.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Financial Exposure <i>Failure to apply pay principles and rules fairly and consistently leading to discrimination and/or legal challenge</i>	The proper and fair application of pay principles and rules.	Positioning the council as an Employer of Choice.
Exposure to challenge <i>Failure to comply with statutory reporting requirements, resulting in adverse local media coverage or legal challenge</i>	Statutory reporting is embedded within HR's annual work programme, and within the committee work programme where appropriate, to ensure publication within statutory timeframes.	
Reputation <i>Failure to deliver public services and the Council Plan due to reduced workforce capacity, leading to public criticism and/or adverse local media coverage</i>	Ongoing workforce monitoring to enable early identification and remedial action where recruitment difficulties and/or high sickness levels could impact on the Council's ability to deliver public services and the Council Plan	

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of the workforce of the Council and a summary of key HR activities for the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 11.2 This is the first workforce report to be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee since it assumed responsibility for the human resources functions of the Council from the former Personnel Committee.
- 11.3 Appendix 1 provides a range of indicators supporting the report commentary relating to:
- (i) the Council's staff establishment
  - (ii) recruitment and turnover
  - (iii) sickness absence

## (iv) equality

Tables, charts and graphs in Appendix 1 are as at 31 March 2021 unless stated otherwise and have been extracted from the Council's Access HR system and separate monitoring records.

- 11.4 Although this will be the format for annual reports, 2020/21 has been a unique year in public service and the report provides additional information in respect of the impact of the pandemic on the organisation.

### **The Council's staff establishment**

- 11.5 As at 31 March 2021, the Council employed 436 permanent and fixed-term staff. This was a decrease of 6% headcount compared to April 2020.
- 11.6 Staff numbers by headcount and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), distribution by grade and contract type metrics are provided in Appendix 1. Headcount is the actual number of staff employed by the council whereas FTE is the total number of hours worked by all staff (headcount) divided by the standard working week of 37 hours.

### **Recruitment and turnover**

- 11.7 There were 50 external appointments, made up of 30 permanent employees (including 2 apprentices) and 20 employees on fixed-term contracts.
- 11.8 There were 87 leavers (68 permanent employees and 19 employees on fixed-term contracts). Reasons for leaving are shown in Appendix 1.
- 11.9 Staff who both started and left within the same year are included in the figures above and account for a reduced net decrease in headcount compared to the number of leavers.
- 11.10 Total annual turnover (i.e. employees leaving the Council for all reasons) was 20% as compared to 17% in 2019/20.
- 11.11 The average length of service was 9 years and 6 months.

### **Sickness absence**

- 11.12 Sickness absence continues to be closely monitored. High level reports on sickness absence are reviewed with the Executive Leadership Board on a quarterly basis or as required.
- 11.13 The average number of days of sickness per employee fell to 5.95 days from 7.51 days in 2019/20. This is below the average sickness rate for the public sector of 8 days per employee in 2020 as reported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- 11.14 There was an increase in the proportion of long term (20 days or more) sickness cases vs short term sickness. This is not an indication that long-

term absence is increasing but rather highlights the fall in short-term absence rates resulting from less seasonal illnesses and home working (due to the pandemic) enabling continued productivity with minor ailments. This is notable in that, based on historical absence trends, 'Infections including cold and flu' is atypically absent from the top 5 most common sickness reasons recorded for the year.

- 11.15 Sickness rates relating to COVID 19 peaked and troughed in accordance with national rates and the roll out of the vaccination programme. January – March 2021 saw an increase in short term COVID 19 related absence (1 to 2 days) and is most likely attributable to adverse reactions following vaccination.
- 11.16 'Mental health – Personal' was consistently the top sickness reason across the year, and if mental health for all reasons (personal, work and reason not stated) are combined they account for 36% of all sickness.
- 11.17 Whilst mental health related absence rates are concerning, they are not surprising given wide reporting of the effect of the pandemic on the nation's mental health. To support staff during the pandemic, HR led on a number of mental health initiatives (please see HR activity section of the report) which sought to enhance existing wellbeing provision which includes mental health first aiders, an externally provided counselling service and an Employee Assistance Programme via the corporate health plan. HR will build on these foundations over the coming year to extend the Council's wellbeing and mental health provision.
- 11.18 HR continues to support managers to manage sickness absence within their teams including referral to an external occupational health provider as required.
- 11.19 A revised sickness absence policy is due to be published in the coming year.

### **Equality**

- 11.20 The Council's gender profile of 60% female and 40% male closely aligns with the public sector as a whole as reported by the ONS (EMP13: Employment By Industry June- August 2021). The Council's median gender pay gap of 7.4% as at 31 March 2020 is significantly below the national median pay gap of 15.5%.
- 11.21 HR will continue to encourage staff to update their ethnicity and disability status, which is disclosed on a voluntary basis, to facilitate equality monitoring and reporting. Ethnicity data for the 40% of staff who have disclosed their ethnicity as at August 2021 is included in Appendix 1. Meaningful analysis is not possible from the disability data available and could possibly result in identification of individual employees.

### **Supporting the Council during the pandemic**

- 11.22 The following section of the report provides a summary of key HR initiatives and activities over the past year through the pandemic.
- 11.23 HR continues to be the lead adviser on the statutory and discretionary employment aspects of the Council's response to the pandemic, enabling the Council to continue to serve our community and deliver public services through a supported and enabled workforce.
- 11.24 The majority of staff worked from home from March 2020, but a cadre of key staff remained in the office to ensure seamless support for residents and businesses. All site visits continued and full COVID risk assessments were undertaken for site and office based work.
- 11.25 Full online access has enabled remote working with no loss of service and the continuation of internal and external virtual meetings, briefings, consultation, resident engagement etc. New starter on-boarding/induction, recruitment interviews, management briefings, all staff briefings, performance appraisals, team meetings and less formal team 'catch-ups' ('staying connected'), training, peer recognition/thankyous are just some of the examples of how the day-to-day business and activities of the council moved seamlessly from 'in person' to virtual/on-line.
- 11.26 To facilitate and ensure safe and efficient remote working, IT and office furniture was deployed where requested or in response to needs identified through an IT and a separate Display Screen Equipment survey. E-learning modules were added to the learning and development system to help employees adapt to new working practises and routines, manage hybrid working and take care of their health and wellbeing.
- 11.27 HR organised a staff survey in July 2020 to ask how employees were feeling if they were now working from home because of the pandemic. A follow-up survey was conducted in April 2021. Both surveys showed that the majority of employees felt that working from home was more productive and they had better communications with senior management and their line manager. The surveys also showed that 90% of employees wanted to continue with a mix of working from home and office working when the pandemic is over.
- 11.28 As previously considered in the report, HR has developed and delivered various resources to support staff throughout the pandemic with a particular emphasis on mental health. Technology has been maximised to facilitate access for a largely remote workforce to on-line resources and workshops, e-learning and targeted communication campaigns.
- 11.29 HR advised on and managed the staff consultation and workforce change aspects of the council wide Service Review which redefined the organisational structure below (i.e. scales 2 - 9) the Senior Leadership team. 14 posts were deleted from the establishment as a result of the review.

- 11.30 An upgrade of the Council's HR system, Access People, has resulted in increased automation; improved workflows for mainstream tasks; and a move to on-line mileage and expenses claiming. Implementation of the recruitment module followed in January 2021.
- 11.31 Award of the corporate health cash plan contract to UK Healthcare renewed provision of this highly valued employee benefit. The health plan encourages staff to proactively manage their health and wellbeing by providing cash back on a range of everyday health and medical treatments for employees and their families together with access to an Employee Assistance Programme (counselling and information helpline) and on-line wellbeing resources.
- 11.32 UNISON, the trades union recognised by the Council, has been consulted as required on key employment and workforce changes such as major policy changes, organisational redesign, employment law changes. HR and the council have worked particularly closely with the unions on developing and implementing COVID safe working practises.

## 12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 This report is for information only. No decisions are required therefore consideration of other options was not required.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

#### Previous Committee Reports:-

This is the first Workforce Report to the Audit & Governance Committee therefore no previous committee reports apply.

#### Other Background Documents:-

None

### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Workforce Report 2020/21 Data

## Appendix 1

### Workforce Report 2020/21 Data

#### Establishment

Table 1 – Staff numbers by headcount and Full-time Equivalent (FTE)

	Headcount	% reduction	FTE	% reduction
<b>April 2020</b>	462	6%	420	7%
<b>March 2021</b>	436		392	

Table 2 – Headcount of staff by grade

Pay Grade	Headcount
<b>Apprentice Scale 3</b>	1
<b>Degree Apprentice Scale 4</b>	1
<b>Scale 3</b>	88
<b>Scale 4</b>	130
<b>Scale 5</b>	76
<b>Scale 6</b>	75
<b>Scale 7</b>	28
<b>Scale 8</b>	18
<b>Scale 9</b>	7
<b>Scale 10</b>	8
<b>Scale 12</b>	3
<b>Chief Executive</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	436

Table 3 – Contract Type

<b>Full time (37 hours)</b>	25%
<b>Part-time</b>	75%
<b>Permanent contract</b>	93%
<b>Fixed-term contract</b>	7%



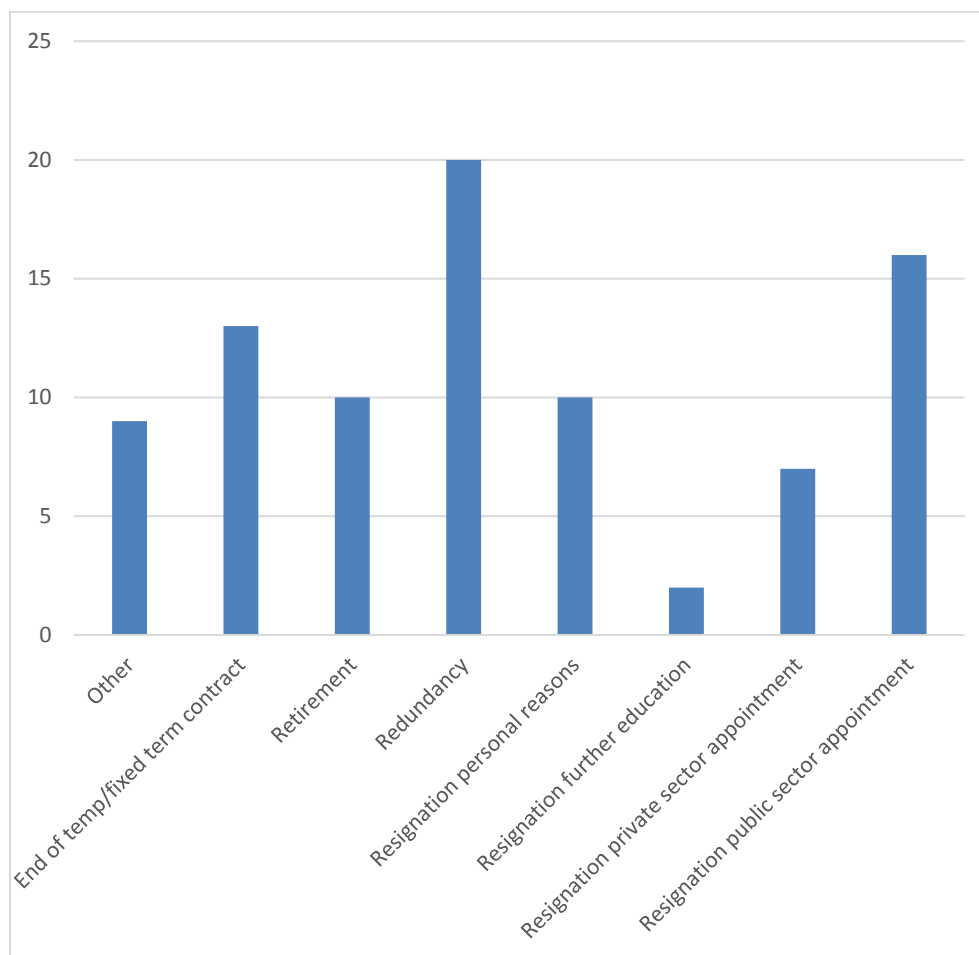
## Sickness

Table 4 - Top 5 sickness absence reasons (averaged over April 20 – March 21)

Sickness Reason	Percentage of total annual sickness	Previous Year's ranking (out of 19)	Direction of travel
Mental Health - personal	24%	1	↔
COVID-19 Coronavirus	9%	15	↑
Back and neck problems	9%	6	↑
Surgery related	8%	12	↑
Stomach, liver, kidney & digestion	8%	4	↓

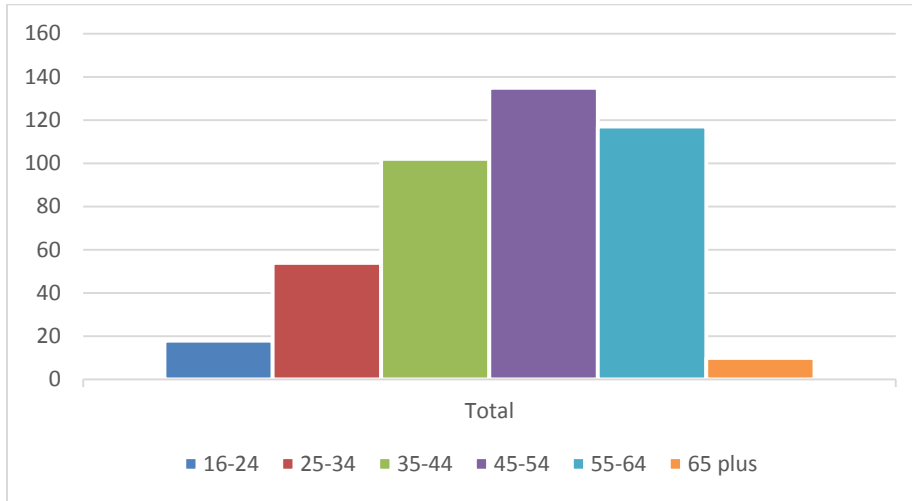
## Recruitment and Turnover

Table 5 – Reasons for leaving the Council



**Equality**

**Table 6 – Age profile**



**Table 7 – Ethnicity profile as at August 2021**

