

Report to: Personnel Committee



Date of Meeting 04 July 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

People Data Report

Report summary:

This report provides key data on the workforce, to support policy decision making and an overview of workforce matters. It also includes the annual People Data Report for 2022/23, which sets out a wider range of detail on workforce matters.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the Committee endorses the content of the report.

Reason for recommendation:

To support policy decision making and an overview of workforce matters.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information [211130 People Data Proposals Report for Personnel Ctte FINAL.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1. This report provides a regular update on key people data, as agreed by Committee in November 2021. Analysis is summarised below, with the full data at appendix 1.
2. Alongside this, Committee agreed that an Annual People Data Report, providing a wider range of information, including equalities, training and employee relations activity, be provided to the Committee each year and the 2022/23 annual report is included at appendix 2.
3. The people data aims to inform policy decisions and to provide an overview of workforce matters.
4. **Regular People Data Report (appendix 1)** - The latest report reflects the data available from the HR system up to 31 May 2023 unless otherwise stated. Particular areas to note are:
 - 4.1. Headcount has increased from 526 in December 2022 to 549 and is at the highest level over the last 12 months. This is mainly due to the new posts that were agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget, cover for maternity leave and also the TUPE in of employees for the Homes for Ukraine project. The full time equivalent (FTE) figure remains within budget.
 - 4.2. Market supplements have increased slightly from 6 to 8 posts since December, which is due to the completion of two reviews after Christmas linked to the Reward Review implementation. Market Supplements are for specific roles where recruitment and retention is challenging because market forces dictate salary levels. Market Supplements are subject to annual review.
 - 4.3. Vacancies are at 34, compared to 47 in December 2022, but still remain lower than 60 in August 2022. When considering this against the increased headcount, vacancies as a proportion of headcount have reduced from 8.9% to 6.19%. The number of applications for posts appears to be generally increasing as a result of the improved pay rates.
 - 4.4. The average time taken to fill vacancies is at 108.92 days which has decreased since December (when it was 122.61). General benchmarking data indicates that c100 days is around the average time taken by organisations to fill posts and we continue to work with managers to ensure recruitment is undertaken in a timely manner. There were several vacancies which had a direct impact on the average number of days to fill a vacancy due to long notice periods in some instances, advertising more than once or covering the vacancy with an agency before going out to advertise. With the latter, managers are being encouraged to review agency worker arrangements now that the improved pay rates are in place, although it is noted that overall agency worker numbers have increased by 1 in this period and there continues to be market pressure, in some occupational areas, where demand for roles has led to greater pay rates in the agency and interim market, compared to pay as an employee.

- 4.5. The annual cumulative voluntary turnover rate at the end of March 2023 was 12.62% which was higher than the annual turnover rate for 2021/22 which was 9.91%. Benchmarking data suggests that this is not an uncommon trend, with a recent Cendex report stating that voluntary turnover for the UK economy as a whole in 2022 was 16.4% compared to 9.6% in 2021. The current cumulative turnover rate so far this year (April to May 2023) is 1.10% with a projected end of year forecast of 6.6%. We only had 2 leavers in May 2023 which is the lowest we have seen since the pandemic.
- 4.6. There has been a small decrease in the number of full time equivalent (FTE) days lost through sickness absence, from 0.96 days lost per FTE in December 2022 to 0.81 days in May 2023. The projected forecast is currently 9.72 days, which is still above our target of an end of year absence of 8.5 days per FTE. Of particular note is the following:
- As has previously been reported, cases of medium and long term absence as a result of personal stress, anxiety and fatigue due to bereavement and continued operational demands continue to feature. Training funded from the public health budget was recently delivered on a pilot basis to Housing teams who were experiencing particularly stressful situations and working with challenging client groups, which was leading to absence in some cases. The sessions, similar to team 'supervision' sessions used in the NHS, social work and counselling, enabled staff to express concerns, worries and to decompress. The pilots were positively received and will now be offered on a quarterly basis to those who need it. In addition, following a particularly difficult incident, specialist trauma support was provided very quickly to affected employees, which has also been positively received. Analysis of the implications of long-term absence on our overall sickness absence figures is currently being undertaken and will be shared with Committee at the meeting.
 - Covid which had featured in first place for short term absence for some time is now in third place and we are now seeing the return of issues such as stomach, kidney, liver and digestion and cold/flu as the most commonly cited reasons for short term absence.
 - Sickness absence continues to be actively managed and employees are supported in accordance with the Absence Management Policy.

5. Annual People Data Report (appendix 2) – This report provides more analysis on a wider range of workforce factors. Some of the key analysis includes:

- 5.1. Headcount was at the highest level since 2020 when it was 511, compared to 532 as at 31st March 2023. Salary costs had also increased, reflecting the increased headcount and the Reward Review pay increases which were implemented in 2022/23 to support recruitment and retention. Costs are also impacted by the annual nationally determined Pay Award. However travel costs continued to be at a reduced level linked to changed ways of working as a result of the pandemic and Worksmart.
- 5.2. The number of market supplements significantly reduced from 45 to the current 8, as a result of the Reward Review.
- 5.3. Voluntary turnover was at its highest since 2018/19, reflecting the recruitment and retention challenges. As stated at paragraph 4.5, this is in line with the experience of other employers.
- 5.4. Take up of training by employees increased compared to the previous year, although there continues to be capacity challenges for staff finding time to attend training, which is also reflected in the Investor in People (iP) reaccreditation report feedback. The use of free fully funded training courses funded by the EU social fund and delivered by South Devon College, alongside the sharing of training with Mid Devon District Council has enabled us to offer a wider range of training than would otherwise be possible as

part of the corporate training budget. Apprenticeship numbers also increased to 11 as at 31st March 2023 compared to 5 the previous year.

- 5.5. The Council's target is that no more than 8.5 working days should be lost through sickness absence, per employee. However, we have been in excess of this target for the last five years, with 2022/23 being the highest at 10.94 days. The main reason for short term absence was Covid-19 - if Covid-19 absence was excluded from our figures, the average FTE working days lost per person would be 9.9 days. Work-related stress, anxiety and fatigue was the most significant reason for long term absence, alongside, for the first time, long-Covid, both of which reflect the picture in the wider public sector. During 2022/23 we were able to continue to develop our Happy Healthy Here offer, alongside absence management, to support employees.
- 5.6. Unfortunately we have had 2 grievance cases submitted by employees during 2022/23 citing the underlying reason as poor management as well as an increase in disciplinary cases from 3 to 6 compared to the previous year.
- 5.7. In terms of the workforce profile, the average age of the workforce in 2022/23 was 48 compared to the previous year when it was 49. Disability and ethnicity figures remain similar, with many staff not completing this field in the HR system, which we continue to remind staff to do to assist us with analysis and the identification of support and other interventions. The Gender Pay Gap reduced from 8.29% to 6.18% due to more females being paid in the upper middle quartile.

6. The HR team will continue to provide regular people data reports to Committee.
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Financial implications:

There are no recommendations within the report.

Legal implications:

There are no specific legal implications requiring comment.