

Report to: Personnel Committee



Date of Meeting 13th June 2024

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 2023/24, which sets out a wider range of detail on workforce matters and an update on recruitment and retention, including the outcomes of a recent pay benchmarking exercise.

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 to inform policy decisions and to provide an overview of workforce matters, as agreed by Committee in November 2021. Analysis is summarised below, with the full data at appendix 1.
2. Committee also 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 2023/24 annual report is included at appendix 2.
3. Over recent years recruitment and retention has been a particular challenge for the Council, as it has for many employers, and this report therefore includes a focus on actions taken or being taken to support recruitment and retention, including the outcomes of a recent pay benchmarking exercise.
4. **Regular People Data Report (appendix 1)** - The latest report reflects the data available from the HR system up to 30 April 2024 unless otherwise stated. Particular areas to note are:
 - 4.1. The number of market supplements applied to posts has increased by 10 from 11 to 21 since the last reporting period. Market supplements are applied to posts which are difficult to recruit to in a challenging labour market and the increase relates particularly to arborists and surveyor roles in the Housing Service, where there is a general shortage of candidates, leading to increased pay rates in the market. Market supplements continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.
 - 4.2. Absence monitoring for the period 2024/25 has just commenced. 0.96 FTE days was lost per person in April 2024 and although this is the start of the monitoring period it is currently projected to be 11.51 days per FTE by the end of March 2025, higher than our target of 8.5 FTE days and higher than the annual figure for 2023/24 which was 10.05 days per FTE. The projected figure will fluctuate as we progress through the fiscal year and we will continue to monitor through the regular people data reports.
 - 4.3. The average length of time to recruit has increased from 61.69 days to 85.15 days since the last reporting period in February, however we still remain below the national average which is circa 100 days.
 - 4.4. The number of agency workers has increased by 4, linked to the usual seasonal demands in StreetScene.
 - 4.5. The number of vacancies recruiting and not recruiting is currently 7.97% of the headcount (44 vacancies). 21 of these are currently being actively recruited to and 12 have been appointed and waiting to start employment.

- 5. Annual People Data Report (appendix 2)** – This report provides more analysis on a wider range of workforce factors for the whole of 2023/24. Some of the key analysis includes:
- 5.1. Headcount increased by 3.75% compared to the same period the previous year but remained below our budgeted FTE of 557.3. The largest proportion of our workforce was paid at grade 4 (28.8%) (£33,945 -£40,221) and the largest service was Housing, Health and Environment which represents 55.25% of the organisation.
 - 5.2. Salary costs increased this year by 14.8% due to increased headcount and the nationally determined Pay Award.
 - 5.3. Staff travelling costs reduced for the second year running by 1.01%, possibly attributable to the Council's Worksmart Policy.
 - 5.4. Vacancy rates remained similar from the beginning to the end of the year, between 7% and 8% of headcount. This compares favourably to when vacancies were at their peak in August 2022, with 60 vacancies and a vacancy rate of 11.76%. Recruitment costs increased this year to £1,368 per head, in part due to market shortages where some posts have had to be readvertised twice, however this is still significantly below the average benchmark cost of £3,000 - £5,000 per head.
 - 5.5. Combined voluntary and non-voluntary turnover reduced to 11.25% compared to the previous year when it was 13.75%. This compares favourably with other public sector organisations which are on average 14.6%.
 - 5.6. Despite capacity challenges, the number of attendees that participated in training activity increased from 372 to 483 over the last year and training feedback continued to be positive.
 - 5.7. The number of apprenticeships grew by 54.54% over the last year, with 17 apprentices, and a significant reduction in the Levy funds therefore being lost to the government (£3,852 compared to £14,854 the previous year).
 - 5.8. The number of FTE days lost per employee to sickness absence reduced by 2.88% from 10.94 FTE days to 10.05 FTE days, although still above our target of 8.5 days. There was a reduction in both short-term and medium-term absence, however there was an increase in absences longer than 2 months which accounted for 42.69% of all absence. 30 employees were absent over the course of the year for 2 months or more compared to 2022/23 when it was 25. Stress, anxiety and fatigue (personal) was cited by 10 employees and was the biggest cause of long-term absence.
 - 5.9. Employee relations issues have been prominent features of 2023/24 with an unprecedented 7 grievances which has largely been the result of complex relationship issues which have not been able to be resolved through mediation. In addition, 9 cases of alleged misconduct were investigated, 4 of which resulted in no further action.
 - 5.10. Our workforce profile has not changed significantly since 2022/23. The average age of the workforce remains at 48 and 1.8% of our workforce are from an ethnic group other than white UK. The number of disabled employees has reduced slightly from 5.82% to 5.43%. The biggest change is the gender split between male and female with 53.75% of our workforce being female compared to 50.75% last year, while the number of males has reduced from 49.25% to 46.55%. The Council's Gender Pay Gap has also reversed, with 4.29% of males paid lower than females, compared to 6.18% of females paid lower than males in 2022/23.

6. Recruitment and Retention Update

- 6.1. As the people data shows, vacancy and turnover rates have reduced. Anecdotal feedback from managers also suggests that the number of applications for roles has improved. Although the general trend is positive, there remains challenges with recruitment to specific professions/roles, for example surveyors, solicitors and arborists. This is in line with the wider market and where necessary the Council has agreed market supplements, as described above, to attempt to mitigate against this.

- 6.2. Over recent years recruitment and retention has been a challenge for the Council, aligned to the experiences of many other employers. A range of interventions have been put in place to support this including a review of the Recruitment Policy, improved pay and grading arrangements (known as the Reward Review), vacancy monitoring (which forms part of the people data reports) and a new employer brand which is used when advertising posts. There has also been a review and improvements to the recruitment process, together with working more closely with managers so that they understand the process, improved training in our processes and updated information and guidance available via the intranet. Further enhancements to staff benefits and the Happy Healthy Here staff health and wellbeing programme have also been implemented, including a new staff benefits portal and Employee Assistance Programme, introduction of Wellbeing Champions and resources to support mental health and financial wellbeing.
- 6.3. Further work planned for this year includes the exploration of an EV car salary sacrifice scheme and further improvements to the Cycle to Work Scheme, consideration of annual leave improvements (subject to UNISON consultation and Personnel Committee approval), a Grow Our Own/apprenticeship video to support recruitment and a review of the recruitment templates.
- 6.4. In 2022 the Council implemented a new pay and grading structure following a process known as the Reward Review. This year some work has been undertaken to benchmark current salary levels against the market to assess whether the Council's pay rates remain attractive. During the Reward Review, the Council reconfirmed that it aspired to being a median pay employer and to also pay the Real Living Wage as its minimum pay point. The pay benchmarking exercise therefore took this into account when determining suitable comparators. In total 29 job roles in 10 job families were benchmarked (Appendix 3). Largely the benchmarking exercise showed that the Council's pay rates remain competitive, apart from the following roles which are currently paid below the median pay rate:
- Public Health Officer, by £1,091, which has been addressed by a market supplement.
 - Solicitor, by £3,594, which has been addressed by a market supplement.
 - Arborist Team Leader, by £4,690, which has recently been addressed by a market supplement.
- 6.5. The results therefore suggest that the current pay and grading structure remains competitive in the market and therefore no changes are proposed. Where there are individual jobs where the Council is not competitive in the market, the market supplement approach, as set out in the Pay and Reward Policy, continues to be used.
7. The HR team will continue to provide regular people data reports to Committee and monitor recruitment and retention rates, including updating the reports to align with the new Senior Leadership Team structure.
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Financial implications:

There are no recommendations within the report.

Legal implications:

There are no specific legal implications requiring comment.