

Report to: Personnel Committee



Date of Meeting: 14 January 2025

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.

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 Cttee FINAL.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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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, and aims to inform policy decisions and to provide an overview of workforce matters. Analysis is summarised below, with the full data at appendix 1.
2. The latest report reflects the data available from the HR system up to the end of October 2024 unless otherwise stated.
3. As members are aware, since the last report in April 2024, the new Chief Executive has implemented structural changes, including the addition of a fourth Place directorate. There has also been some movement of service areas between the four directorates. This will therefore impact on the ability to compare this report's data with previous reports, at director and service level. As a reminder, the following services are now under each directorate:
 - 4.1. **Place** - Place, Assets & Commercialism, Growth, Development & Prosperity, StreetScene, Engineering, Recycling & Waste, Countryside & Leisure.
 - 4.2. **Governance** – Human Resources, Communications, Digital Services & Engagement, Democratic Services & Scrutiny, Legal Services, Elections, Licensing, Information Governance, Performance.
 - 4.3. **Finance** - Revenues & Benefits, Finance. Lead for procurement, audit, contract management and risk. Strata Board member.
 - 4.4. **Housing and Health** - Regulated Housing Services, Statutory Housing Services, Housing Strategy, Enabling & Projects, Environmental Health
4. Particular areas to note from the people data are:
 - 4.5. Headcount has increased by 14, from 552 in April to 566 at the end of October 2025, but remains within budget. Some of this increase is due to 3 new Arborist and Maintenance Operative apprentices, as well as a Planning Graduate sourced through the LGA's Pathways to Planning Programme and a National Management Trainee from the LGA's graduate scheme known as Impact. Furthermore, we have had some success to recruit to some Housing posts, which had previously been challenging due to market pressures.
 - 4.6. Market supplement numbers have increased since the last reporting period in April 2024, from 11 to 23. As previously reported, we advised that we would be seeing an increase to this in the next reporting period due to several failed attempts to recruit to some roles in Housing, such as surveyors. 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.
 - 4.7. Vacancies recruiting and not recruiting are at 32 compared to 44 in April. Appointments have been made to 11 of these vacancies and have either since started or start dates have been agreed in the forthcoming weeks. Interviews are scheduled for a further 5 posts and we are awaiting decisions, so in effect there are only 28 vacancies where there is currently no potential outcome. When considering the overall vacancy number against headcount,

- vacancies have decreased from 7.97% in April to 5.65% in October and is significantly lower than the highest level of 10.49% reported in October 2022.
- 4.8. The average time taken to fill vacancies has decreased from 85.15 days to 61.85 days since April 2024. Benchmarking data indicates that c100 days is around the average time taken by organisations to fill posts. As previously reported, we have reviewed the recruitment process to make it more streamlined and have encouraged managers to deal with vacancies much earlier which has had a positive impact, however we will see fluctuations in this figure at the next reporting period as we enter the Christmas period when recruitment activity tends to slow down.
- 4.9. The number of agency workers has decreased by 8 since the last reporting period, with 24 in October 2024. This is due to permanent recruitment of posts that were being backfilled whilst active recruitment took place.
- 4.10. The cumulative voluntary turnover rate at the end of October 2024 was 6.57% and if the trend continues, it is currently forecast to be 9.38% at the end of the financial year which would be higher than the same period last year when it was 5.36%. Overall, we have had 37 voluntary leavers between April and October, only 1 cited they were leaving for a better salary, others cited family reasons or that the role was not the right fit, and 3 decided to resign during a formal process. The forecast for non-voluntary turnover has reduced from 2.16% to 1.27% since April 2024.
- 4.11. The working days lost per FTE has decreased since the last reporting period in April 2024 (0.96 days to 0.80 days). However, the October 2024 figure is slightly higher than the same period last year (0.80 compared to 0.76 days in October 2023) and based on current figures, the projected forecast for the end of the 2024/25 financial year is that 9.68 working days will be lost per FTE, compared to 10.05 working days lost per FTE at the end of 2023/24. The projected figure also remains above the absence target of 8.5 days per FTE, as has been the case now for a number of years. We now have access to Infinitstats, a benchmarking platform which compares data across Councils who are using the platform, it is still in its infancy and council's signing up is currently growing, however current information suggests that at the end of March 2024 the absence rate of 10.05 per FTE is comparable with the average of 10.03 days of organisations of similar size headcount to East Devon District Council. We are only able to benchmark in full years and not the current position.
- 4.12. Of note with regard to sickness absence, is the following:
- Cold/Flu is still the most cited reason for short term absence, followed by phased returns which has returned to second place from first place in April.
 - There was a notable spike of reported cases of Covid in July 2024, resulting in 67.27 days lost by 20 employees, which is the highest since September 2023 when it spiked at 50.52 days.
 - The absence reason "other muscular skeletal issues" is currently the top reason for medium term absence which is a change from April's report when "personal stress, anxiety and fatigue" was top (this is now in second place). New to the top three for medium term absence is "stomach, kidney, liver and digestion".
 - As has previously been reported, cases of medium- and long-term absence because of personal stress, anxiety and fatigue remain a

feature and we continue to promote the wide range of mental health support available through the Council's Happy Healthy Here offer.

- The decrease of FTE days lost in Health and Housing and increase in Place is due to the restructuring mentioned above.
- We are also able to report that as of 18 October 24 we have engaged a new Occupational Health Provider, Optima Health. This change was necessary because of long delays in service provision with our previous supplier which impacted on our ability to manage absence cases in a timely manner. We hope, with time, to see an improvement to the length of time between referral and appointments which will help us to ensure absence from work is reduced and therefore positively impacting on our absence rates.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications in the recommendations.

Legal implications:

There are no specific legal implications requiring comment.