

## CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday, 13 June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Employment and Workforce End of Year Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
<b>Report Author</b>	Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide Members with a review of the organisational workforce data for 2023/24. This report provides details of the following:

- Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
- Organisation Age Profile (Non –Schools and Schools)
- Employee Turnover and Stability (Including Redundancies and Early Retirements)
- Attendance
- Equality and Diversity
- Achievements made by Human Resources and Organisational Development within the period.

The report is intended to provide a focus on organisational performance and trends and provides a brief narrative on the overall performance against a number of indicators. A more detailed explanation is provided on an exceptional basis where performance is falling below organisational performance indicators or where there has been a significant movement, either upwards or downwards, in the reported trends. The narrative will include an explanation for the movement in trend and details of any proposed actions to improve or maintain performance.

The performance information is provided for the whole organisation but split to show Schools and Non-Schools data separately.

On a periodic basis, this report will highlight key achievements or projects undertaken in support of the People Strategy and/or Council Plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members note and provide their comments on the year-end Workforce Information Report for 2023/24.
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## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT</b>
1.01	<p><b>Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE)</b></p> <p>The headcount and FTE figures during at mid-year shows an overall decrease of 46 FTE across the Council when compared to last year. Non-schools show an increase of 34 FTE, Schools show a decrease of 80 FTE.</p> <p>The school year ending August 2023 and the present school year have required some schools to adjust staffing structures and levels. Aside from not filling vacancies, 39 school-based posts were made redundant in Flintshire schools during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and several fixed term contracts ceased as some (albeit long term) temporary funding streams ended.</p>
1.02	<p><b>Age Profiling</b></p> <p>Age profiling the organisation is an important part of understanding the age demographics of our workforce and where we may need to focus attention.</p> <p>Understanding our workforce profile, enables the Council to assess supply and potential problem areas within a given service/portfolio and aids succession planning by identifying any skill gaps that may arise. Without an analysis of age profile (and skills profile), no workable long-term planning can be made.</p> <p>As of 31 March 2024, most employees across Portfolios and Schools are within the age ranges of 35-44 (20.25%) followed by 25-34 (15.57%), 50-54 (15.54%) and 55–59 (15.27%).</p>
1.03	<p><b>Employee Turnover and Stability (Including Redundancies and Early Retirements)</b></p> <p>The year-end cumulative turnover percentage for 2023/24 is 13.36%. This shows an increase when compared to the previous year (11.46%) and the previous year (10.53% in 2021/22).</p>

Of the 819 employees that have left during 2023/24, 51% have left voluntarily or moved onto alternative employment (420 employees).

106 (13.06%) left due to normal retirement and 122 (15%) left because of the end of a fixed term contract.

In addition to exit questionnaires and interviews, we have introduced an online leaver survey is sent by employment services to all leavers which employees are encouraged to complete. These can be completed anonymously. The additional information gained from the survey will enable HR and Portfolios to understand the reasons for and put measures in place to reduce the level of turnover.

1.04 **Attendance**

The year-end cumulative turnover percentage for 2023/24 is 10.99%. This shows an improvement when compared to the previous year (11.78%). Long term sickness (absence over four weeks) accounts for 6.56 days lost per FTE, with the remainder (4.43 days lost per FTE) attributed to short-term absence.

26% of all absences across the Council are related to mental health, 21% musculoskeletal, and 11% due to infections. This is consistent with national reports which identify Mental ill health and musculoskeletal as being two of the top causes of both short-term and long-term absence.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Health and Wellbeing at Work report in September 2023 reports that employee sickness absence is at the highest level they have reported for over a decade. It further reports that the average rate of employee absence (7.8 days per employee or 3.4% of working time lost, per year) has risen considerably since before the pandemic in Oct/Nov 2019 (5.8 days per employee) and identifies that average absence levels remain higher in the public sector (10.6 days per employee) than in other sectors, particularly private sector services (5.8 days), although the upsurge in average levels of absence is observed across all sectors.

Attendance continues to be managed closely, with Managers, Occupational Health (OH) and HR working together to provide additional support, including offering preventative training to help reduce absence, namely:

Title	No of Sessions	No of Delegates
Managing Stress at Work for employees	2	20
Mental Health First Aiders	3	25
Mental Health Champions	3	20
Introduction to Wellbeing/ Resilience and Mindfulness	2	12
Manual Handling	2	18
Vicarious Trauma	3	33
Menopause Awareness	3	29

During the year, we have also delivered 3 attendance management policy to practice workshops to 25 delegates. The workshops are designed to enable participants to apply Flintshire County Council's Attendance Management

Policy effectively and consistently by confidently managing employee's absence.

Vivup our Employee Assistance (EAP) provider also remains available 24/7, 365 day a year.

Occupational Health colleagues have identified several factors which they consider are affecting attendance at work. These are:

#### Aging workforce

There is an increase in the number of employees referred to OH who have musculoskeletal concerns associated with aging.

Portfolios work with HR and OH colleagues to try and accommodate a range of short and long-term restrictions which are necessary to support the employees return to work, or to remain at work with restricted duties.

Occupational Health also provide physiotherapy. Often this is a preventative measure to provide support and reduce the likelihood of absence. In other cases, rapid access to physiotherapy reduces the duration of absence.

#### Changes to Cohort of service users in social care setting

Employees are reporting that in some settings, the cohort of service users have shown to have increased needs which are complex and often physically challenging, for example, an increase in moving and positioning which has potential to exacerbate musculoskeletal issues.

#### Delays in employees having appointments with consultants, investigations, scans, x rays etc.

We have a number of employees whose absence from work has and continues to be impacted due to waiting for diagnostics and initial assessment which impacts on the timescale for effective treatment to begin and results in employees remaining absent from work longer than anticipated.

#### Delays in receiving treatment.

As above, the delay in initial investigations have a knock-on effect in that treatment cannot start, and conditions worsen whilst waiting. This results in the employee remaining absent from work longer than the initial timeframes indicated in their treatment plan or remaining in work with restricted duties.

#### Delays obtaining reports form consultants and GPs in relation to Ill Health Retirement

There is an increase in the number of employees who are applying for ill health retirement. Historically, these requests have been straightforward to progress in that employees have had investigations and reports from consultants about the pathway or prognosis of their illness. In the absence of reports or medical evidence with which we can predict a return to work (or

	<p>not), reaching the criteria for ill-health retirement is proving a challenge, is time-consuming and costly.</p> <p><u>Recruitment challenges</u></p> <p>The knock-on effect of vacant positions is having an impact on some parts of our workforce.</p> <p>Non-work factors, such as health issues and relationships/family, are also common causes of stress-related absence. Flexible support and reasonable adjustments are put into place to help people experiencing challenges to manage personal issues as well as long-term health conditions with the demands of their role.</p>
1.05	<p><b>Resource Management (Agency Workers)</b></p> <p>As of 31 March 2024, there were 110 active agency placements on Matrix across all portfolios. At the time of running the report, 71 placements exceeded 12 weeks (37 Streetscene and Transportation, 18 Housing and Communities, 9 in Social Services, 3 in Chief Executives, 2 in Governance and 1 each in Education and Youth, and Planning, Environment and Economy).</p> <p>The number of active placements is a snapshot at a point in time and refers to open placements, it does not mean they are all engaged and working.</p> <p>The cumulative agency expenditure (via Matrix and 'Off Contract') for 2023/24 is £5.30m. The largest agency spend is within Social Services at £3.07m. The second largest spend is within Streetscene and Transportation at £1.37m.</p> <p>The 'Off-contract' spend for 2023/24 is £2.96m, which equates to 56% of the overall agency spend. The main reasons for 'off-contract' spend is where there is a need to fill specialist, hard to fill roles such as Social Workers.</p> <p>Between them Social Services and Streetscene and Transportation have had a considerable number of posts vacant sometime during the year which results in an underspend of salary, the majority of which is used to fund agency spend.</p> <p>Agency use is a legitimate recruitment pipeline for several of our services. It enables prospective employees to determine if the role available is right for them and us to determine if those workers are suitable. Managed well this is less risk for the workers and for us.</p> <p>Other than in exceptional cases, where there is a compelling business need, agency workers are engaged on the same evaluated rate of pay as if they were engaged directly. This is a day one right we provide which is over and above our obligations under the Agency Worker Regulations and ensures a level playing field.</p>

1.06	<p><b>Equality and Diversity Workforce Monitoring</b></p> <p>It is important to us that we recruit and retain the best workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We monitor our workforce to find out whether it broadly reflects our local communities and to ensure our practices are free from discrimination, helping us to deliver appropriate and accessible services to all our communities.</p> <p>The Council collects diversity information on recruitment and the make-up of our workforce to help us meet our obligations under the Single Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Information gathered can, if analysed regularly, help us to identify barriers that prevent access to employment and career development for certain groups of people, and to develop solutions, such as positive action plans or alternative policies and practices.</p>
1.07	<p><b>Specific achievements / initiatives during the reporting period</b></p> <p><b>Vivup EAP</b></p> <p>In October 2023, our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider CareFirst was replaced by Vivup.</p> <p>Vivup is an exciting modern user-friendly service which offers confidential support when our employees need it most including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/7 365 days a year telephone help and support with personal or work-related problems</li> <li>• Face to face and virtual counselling</li> <li>• Downloadable self-help workbooks</li> <li>• Debt and financial advice</li> <li>• Podcasts, blogs</li> <li>• Health and lifestyle support and so much more</li> </ul> <p>The EAP is designed to complement not replace our Occupational Health offer. Whilst the initial uptake and feedback to date has been positive. Occupational Health colleagues will continue to seek feedback and meet regularly with the provider to ensure we get the best possible service.</p> <p><b>Learning@Wales</b></p> <p>In March 2024 Flintshire Academi transferred to Learning@Wales eLearning platform. This replaced the previous platform – Learning Pool. The project began in November 2023, following previous testing. During the project, the Flintshire pages were designed, and 10 course categories added. The mandatory eLearning modules were prioritised, along with a certification page to enable users to check course completion. In total 46 courses were made available for the launch and over 6100 users were uploaded. Over 28,000 historical mandatory course completion records were also uploaded to enable users to retain previous completion data. A reporting function was added and evaluated to ensure accuracy.</p>

	<p><b>OPAS-G2</b></p> <p>Flintshire County Council's Occupational Health Department manage employee clinical data in compliance with both the Data Protection Act 2018 and GMC guidelines. The OH Department's existing 'OPAS Express' software which was hosted by the Flintshire's IT department had been in place since 2012 and was being withdrawn by the supplier having been deemed obsolete with no support.</p> <p>The ideal solution to the problem was with OPAS-G2, a new intuitive web-based portal which provides the facility for managers to access and electronically submit referrals directly to the OH. Employees are now able to view the content of their referrals and reports on their own devices. Appointment reminders are sent automatically from the system via text or email.</p> <p>In addition, Employment Services have a facility to submit e-forms to new recruits from OPAS-G2 to ensure all appropriate questionnaires are submitted and that all relevant pre-employment medicals are undertaken by Occupational Health in a timely manner.</p> <p>After 9 months of bespoke configuring, programming, and testing, the new OPAS-G2 system went live on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 which brought across 14,800 employee records for current employee and former retained records across five business units.</p> <p>Flintshire's ageing IT server which supported the old system for years was finally decommissioned a week later.</p> <p>The journey has been a long one, yet Occupational Health have strived to provide an intuitive and seamless transition for all managers, HR users and employees.</p>
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<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None arising directly from this report.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	None arising directly from this report.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	None arising directly from this report.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Employment Workforce Report Dashboard

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	None.

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Sharon Carney, Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development.  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702139  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:sharon_carney@flintshire.gov.uk">sharon_carney@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
	None.