

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- TUESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2023**

**Report of Chief Executive
Lead Member: Cllr Ashcroft**

Part A

Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with an update in relation to staffing, turnover, recruitment and retention as requested at the meeting of the Committee held on 27 June 2023.

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the report.

Reasons

To allow greater understanding of the staffing, turnover, recruitment and retention issues within the Council.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Corporate Delivery Plan was agreed by Cabinet in April 2023. Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly updates against this plan.

At the meeting on the 27 June 2023, additional information was requested and is outlined in this report.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

This is a stand alone report to provide additional explanation against the quarterly performance report.

Report Implications

Financial Implications

None

Risk Management

There are no risks associated with this report.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Caring for the Environment	No
Healthy Communities	No
A Thriving Economy	No
Your Council	Yes

Key Decision:

No

Background Papers:

None

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Part B

Background

At the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on the 27 June 2023, it was noted that several of the Corporate Delivery Plan objectives and indicators had not progressed due to staffing related issues.

As a result, the Committee requested a separate report outlining details of recruitment and retention and accompanying data relating to staffing and turnover.

It is recognised at a national level that the Local Government sector is experiencing long term workforce challenges. The Local Government Association (LGA) has identified the following key issues;

- Ageing workforce, especially in key technical professions.
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining key staff into the sector.
- Competition from the private sector in certain occupations, especially on remuneration.
- Unsuitability and / or inaccessibility of training for local government staff.

A study undertaken by Penna (executive recruitment consultants operating in the local government sector) in September 2023 further outlines some of the challenges facing local government.

The study identified that;

- 94% of Councils are experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties.
- 62% of Councils are thinking of increasing the number of Apprentices.
- 84% of employees use company reputation to inform job applications.

Charnwood – Staffing and Turnover

Management data relating to staff numbers and turnover is collated within the Council on a quarterly basis - the relevant information is outlined within the table below;

Measure	Q1 (April – June)	Q2 (July – Sept)	Commentary
Headcount	500	509	The increase is due to the change from casual to permanent staff at the Town Hall
Full Time Employees (FTE)	402	407	
Number of starters	30	40	
Number of leavers	15	16	
% staff turnover	3.21%	3.14%	
Number of retirements	2	1	

The turnover figure for Charnwood for 2022/2023 was 14%. The table below shows how the Council compared with others in Leicestershire for the same period and indicates that Charnwood is very much in line with others locally.

Local Authority	2022/2023 Turnover
Charnwood BC	14%
Harborough DC	16%
Hinckley BC	14%
Melton BC	15%
Oadby and Wigston BC	16%
Rutland CC	14%

Agency Staff - In order to maintain service delivery, particularly in hard to recruit areas, there is use of temporary agency staff. The Council has a contract with Matrix-SCM, who are a neutral vendor, for the supply and management of agency staff. The benefits of this type of contract is that margins are negotiated by the neutral vendor and are fixed, generally at a lower rate, for the client.

As at the 31 October 2023 the number of temporary agency staff in contract with the Council through Matrix-SCM was 30.

There are areas within the Council where managers have needed to source agency staff from outside of the Matrix-SCM contract – these have predominantly been in the Strategic Housing and Planning Services and have ensured continuity of service from professional officers. As at the 31 October the number of agency staff who are engaged through agencies other than Matrix-SCM were 16.

Sickness – sickness is one of the Council's key performance indicators and is reported to Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. The target is 7.5 days per member of staff per year. Since the COVID pandemic, the annual target has been met (see data below) – this may be attributed to more flexible working arrangements under the Agile Working Policy. Triggered absences continue to be monitored in a supportive way.

Quarter	Figure	Target	RAG Status
Q2 – 2023/24	2.71	3.4	G
Q1 – 2023/24	1.18	1.8	G
Q4 Outturn - 2022/23	7.4	7.5	G
Q4 Outturn – 2021/22	5.97	7.5	G

Charnwood – Recruitment and Retention

In attempting to address some of the issues around recruitment and retention the Council is undertaking a range of measures, these are outlined below;

Recruitment and Retention Policy

As it has become increasingly more challenging for the Council to attract and retain employees, there has been a need to consider the use of recruitment and retention incentives.

The Council has introduced a new Recruitment and Retention Policy. The Policy specifically references 'Golden Hello' payments and Market Supplement payments. Requests for these incentives are reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and a record is maintained.

This policy demonstrates that the leadership team are aware of the difficulties managers are experiencing in recruiting specialist staff or where managers are aiming to retain the skills and expertise of those who are already employed within the Council.

Since the policy was introduced (at the end of 2022) there have been 3 Golden Hello payments made and 10 Market Supplement payments added to employees contracts of employment.

Whilst these incentive payments have been successful in some areas, there are other service areas where it has not made an impact on the number of applicants applying for vacant positions.

Alternative Contracts

There are a range of options available to managers and staff to encourage staff into the organisation and to stay, these include agile working, compressed hours and job share arrangements.

In addition, the Council has promoted the use of;

Apprentices – There are currently 8 people on apprentice courses – the current apprentices are existing members of staff who are undertaking further training and development under the apprenticeship framework.

At present there are no entry level apprentices within the organisation. However, through discussions with Heads of Service, there is a desire to include more within the structure. A piece of work is being undertaken to identify alternative ways in which apprentices could be funded and managed within the organisation.

Career Graded Posts - An additional area the Council has looked at in relation to the retention of staff are Career Graded posts. By using these posts, staff benefit from continued development in their knowledge and skills along with increasing their salary as they gain qualifications and experience. Heads of Service have been made aware of this as an option, where staff retention is evidenced. Currently, the Council has the following Career Graded posts on the establishment:

Job Title	Grade Range
Finance Assistant	Grade C - E
Planning Officer/ Senior Planning Officer	Grade E – PO1
Enforcement Officer / Senior Enforcement Officer	Grade E – PO1

Graduate / Intern Post – within the Planning and Growth service, some very successful joint working has taken place with Loughborough University which has allowed the Council to recruit a Planning Intern. As part of their studies the intern will work for a year in the service, to both utilise the knowledge they have gained by putting this into practice. The Planning Intern started in post during October 2023 and will leave September 2024. It is hoped having worked and experienced life in a Local Government Planning service they will look to apply in this area in the future.

Recruitment Project

A project has been established to review and improve the recruitment process for applicants and recruiting managers. The project has three distinct components.

The first is a review of the information available to applicants on the website - enhancements have already been made in this area to ensure that the recruiting pages look modern. In addition, the benefits of working in the local government sector and specifically for Charnwood Borough Council have been reviewed and promoted.

Another component has been to map out the applicant process to ensure that it is as streamlined as possible – aligned to this is a review of the application form and a decision is being considered regarding accepting CV's as an alternative to completing the whole application form.

The final part is a review of the back office processes to ensure that they are also streamlined and any duplication in terms of form filling is removed from the process. This will greatly improve the experience for recruiting managers.

Benefits

As referenced above, the benefits of working for the Council are promoted on the website under the recruitment pages. A review of the current benefits has been undertaken and a project to introduce a cycle to work scheme and a low emissions vehicle scheme has been undertaken.

Continued Personal Development

There are a number of ways in which staff can undertake continued personal development and these are consistently promoted across the organisation. The personal review process encourages managers and staff to consider where these opportunities are available and are appropriate.

Salary Mapping and Job Market Intelligence

A range of benchmarking has been undertaken to determine if Charnwood is comparative in terms of pay. The insight so far suggests that the Council is broadly comparable but perhaps less competitive in senior roles.

Discussions have been held with East Midlands Councils (EMC) who are looking at supporting an East Midlands benchmarking project which the Council will fully engage with.