

HUMAN RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Head of Service:	Shona Mason, Head of HR & Organisational Development
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 Staff Communications Survey Results Appendix 2 Staff Wellbeing Survey Results Appendix 3 Staff Collaborative Working Survey Results Appendix 4 Staff COVID Secure Survey Results Appendix 5 Sickness Absence 2019-2020 Appendix 6 COVID Related Sickness Absences to 30 September 2020 Appendix 7 Remote Working during COVID19 Procedure

Summary

This report provides an overview of Human Resource and Organisational Development activity which supports the Council's wider team wellbeing, providing evidence of good practice and up to date employment policy including the Council's response to the emergency response and ongoing pandemic.

Recommendation (s)

The Panel is asked to:

- (1) The HR Panel receives the report and outlines any particular areas for development or further reporting**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To continue to ensure that we provide an appropriate and fit for purpose framework and support for our workforce to deliver effective services for our residents, while managing external and internal factors

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2 Background

- 2.1 In order for the HR Panel to consider areas of wellbeing, HR policy and best practice, this report will provide details of the following areas which the HR team have undertaken over the past year in line with the service delivery plan.
- 2.2 It should be noted that the emergency response and ongoing pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of the HR service who have had to reprioritise and deal with emerging issues as they have arisen over the past ten months.
- 2.3 Within this overview report the following updates have been provided:
 - COVID19 Update – Summary of the impact of the pandemic on staffing and the HR service
 - Absence Management and Wellbeing of Staff –Overview of absence management statistics for the period 2019/2020 and COVID related absences up to September 2020
 - Job Evaluation – Update on status of the project
 - People Framework Phase 3 – Update on status of project
 - Brexit – Overview of implications of Brexit on existing workforce
 - Workforce Profile - Update on workforce monitoring
 - Future priorities – Update on emerging priorities
 - Cost of living pay award 2021/2022 – Update on cost of living increase for staff

3 COVID19 Update

- 3.1 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic our priority has been the health and wellbeing of our staff.
- 3.2 In March 2020 the pandemic brought about significant changes to working arrangements, including:
 - the requirement for many Council employees to work remotely due to their normal place of work being closed and/or services suspended
 - employees being unable to attend work due to school closures/caring responsibilities
 - clinically extremely vulnerable employees being advised to shield by the NHS
 - employees (or members of their households) in clinically vulnerable groups (i.e. over the age of 70, pregnant, in BAME groups or with underlying medical conditions) being advised not to attend the workplace
 - employees being fully or partially redeployed to support the delivery of the emergency response and key Council services
 - an increased level of employee absence due to Covid-19 related sickness or self-isolation

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- 3.3 During March, April and May 2020 the HR team worked with managers across the organisation to maintain an accurate daily register of staff who were attending the workplace, working remotely or absent due to sickness, self-isolation or shielding. Workforce data was collated and provided to the Incident Management Team on a weekly basis. This provided an understanding of the significant impact of Covid-19 on our workforce and helped to inform decisions on how services would operate with a reduced level of staffing.
- 3.4 At the initial stages of the emergency a total 5 borough Council staff came forward to take on key roles in the IMT, 11 staff in the BECC, 13 staff for the Community Hub and 15 staff in the front line response team.
- 3.5 Further information on Covid-19 related absence is provided in the Absence Management Update section of this report.
- 3.6 The Coronavirus Act became law on 25 March 2020, bringing with it a significant requirement for the interpretation of emergency legislation and provision of employment law advice, for example, on the use of the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme and the management of our agency and casual workers.
- 3.7 On a practical level, the HR team provided advice, support and documentation in relation to, for example, proof of key worker status, use of annual leave and the appointment of volunteers. The team also played a key role in facilitating the redeployment of staff to support the emergency response.
- 3.8 Payroll processes were adapted to accommodate remote working, ensuring that our monthly payroll has continued to run smoothly and the team has worked with our external provider (MHR) to ensure that our HR and payroll system (iTrent) remains compliant with legislative changes. The annual pay review was processed based on the recommendations of managers as end of year My Performance Conversations could not be facilitated.
- 3.9 During May 2020, with the focus shifting from response to recovery, the HR team took responsibility for the delivery of guidance to support the organisation's recovery and strategic objectives. A workforce roadmap was produced and the team provided guidance on working/managing remotely, wellbeing, equalities and the development of virtual interview processes for the recruitment of key roles.

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- 3.10 A key theme of the workforce roadmap was safely returning staff to the workplace. The HR team worked with the Council's Occupational Health provider (Medwyn) to carry out risk assessments for 58 employees who were identified as having increased vulnerability to infection or poorer outcomes from Covid-19. These assessments identified personal demographics or health conditions which may present a risk to the individual employee. As a result of these assessments, 55 employees were able to safely return to the workplace.
- 3.11 The table below shows the number of employees who were identified as being in different categories dependent upon personal circumstances:

Category	Number of Staff	Percentage of Workforce
Care for a dependant - working from home	12	3.8%
Care for a dependant - unable to work from home	0	0%
Building or office closure - working from home	86	27.6%
Building or office closure - unable to work from home	0	0%
Redeployed (BECC, Community Hub, Meals at Home, IMT, COVID Secure, Recovery Team, Cemeteries)	48	15.2%
Category A - clinically extremely vulnerable Shielding – (NHS advised) unable to work from home	1	0.3%
Category B - clinically vulnerable - working from home	48	15.4%
Category B - clinically vulnerable - unable to work from home	27	8.7%
Redeployed (BECC, Community Hub, Meals at Home, IMT, COVID Secure, Recovery Team, Cemeteries Support, High Street Task Force) *this does not include those employees redeployed within operational services	48	15.2%

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- 3.12 Throughout the pandemic the HR team have continued to support the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce through the:
- Regular publication of FAQs and guidance for managers and staff
 - Liaison with Public Health England and provision of advice in relation to employees who have tested positive
 - Ongoing signposting to wellbeing resources
 - Promotion of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme
- 3.13 Four of the six members of the HR team were redeployed at various intervals to support the emergency response and moved fully or partially away from their normal duties to take on these new roles. In addition, the Head of HR&OD was one of five key individuals deployed to form the Incident Management Team, which focussed completely on the emergency response.
- 3.14 This meant that business as usual for the HR team was significantly affected. All recruitment, absence management, disciplinary and grievance processes were suspended between March and September 2020 and key projects, including the rollout of the People Framework and the implementation of the job evaluation scheme were delayed.
- 3.15 The pandemic has resulted in an increased requirement to deal with the sensitivities of managing those with health conditions, stress and anxiety, bereavement, domestic abuse and isolation. The HR team continue to provide confidential advice and support with these more complex employment matters.
- 3.16 It is anticipated that the restrictions imposed by Government will mean that it is necessary for remote working to continue longer term, with the capacity of offices limited by Covid-secure measures and social distancing guidelines. The HR team are working to formalise remote working arrangements so that these can be managed within clear parameters.
- 3.17 Now, more than ever, it is essential that the Council has the right staff in place at the right time, with the appropriate skills to support its recovery plans. The HR team have recently undertaken a workforce planning exercise with Heads of Service and are working to formalise secondment arrangements for those staff who have been displaced due to ongoing service closures. The team are also preparing to support a potential increased level of organisational change over the coming months.
- 3.18 During the pandemic it has been important to maintain an open dialogue with staff to ensure two way communication and provide a mechanism for staff to raise any concerns so that they can be addressed. The Staff Consultative Group has continued to operate, albeit remotely, to ensure that matters are aired and addressed. A number of pulse staff surveys were also conducted to obtain feedback about how staff were feeling and coping with the ongoing pandemic while working.

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- 3.19 Four pulse surveys were conducted:
- Communications survey in May 2020
 - Wellbeing survey in June 2020
 - Collaborative working survey in July 2020
 - COVID Secure survey in August 2020
- 3.20 The results of each of the surveys can be found in Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- 3.21 As a result of the surveys and feedback received the Council has taken on board the feedback when developing policies, procedures and providing support and development opportunities for staff as well as influencing internal communications.

4 Absence Management and Wellbeing of Staff

- 4.1 Effective absence management involves finding a balance between providing support to help employees with health problems stay in and return to work, and taking consistent and firm action to manage the impact and costs associated with sickness absence.
- 4.2 Appendix 5 – outlines the Council’s approach to absence management between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.
- 4.3 In the first quarter of 2020 we saw a high level of Covid-19 related absence (sickness, self-isolation and shielding. Whilst Covid-19 related absence decreased over the summer months, we are now seeing a further increase in line with national trends.
- 4.4 Appendix 6 – provides an overview of Covid-related absence and outlines how the pandemic has impacted sickness levels and absence management processes.
- 4.5 Since March 2020 we have also seen an increase in absences related to mental health (stress, depression, anxiety, psychological), which may be linked to the current pandemic situation. A high percentage of current long term sickness absence is attributable to mental health. It is likely that this trend may continue over the coming months as resilience levels deplete.
- 4.6 Support has been provided via a number of routes namely online and telephone counselling through the Council Employee Assistance program and the Council’s Mental Health First Aiders. The team have also sought to provide support and additional information by signposting to other platforms such as Surrey Health and NHS support. There was also on-going engagement with the Staff Consultative Group as part of the Council’s ongoing commitment to effective employee relations and to help with the changing requirements placed on staff in this on-going emergency situation.

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- 4.7 The Council's flu vaccination programme was rolled out earlier than usual this year to ensure that as many people as possible were able to take up this offer and 76 employees were issued with a voucher. All employees who were entitled to receive a free flu vaccination from their GP were encouraged to do so.
- 4.8 Formal absence management processes were resumed from September 2020 and the HR team continue to liaise with managers to address outstanding sickness triggers. Interventions, including ill health retirement and capability, are being explored and progressed for some of our long term sickness cases.
- 4.9 The revised Absence Management procedure was launched as part of the People Framework on 1 October 2020.

5 Job Evaluation

- 5.1 As reported at the last HR Panel meeting on 17 December 2019 the HR team had been working with Managers to ensure that all roles within the Council have a new generic role profile which supports the job evaluation process.
- 5.2 Roles had been grouped into 20 job families in line with the Council's pay structure and managers were asked to complete a generic template for each role within their service.
- 5.3 Last year the Council commissioned South East Employers to undertake the job evaluation exercise on its behalf due to the volume of roles to be evaluated, the expertise required and to ensure impartiality during the process.
- 5.4 During quarter three of 2019/20 HR worked with Managers and South East Employers to review the completed role profiles to ensure that they reflect the requirements of the role, there was consistency across the grades and they contained adequate information for the job evaluation.
- 5.5 South East Employers completed the mapping process against organisational structures, the Council's pay structure and individual evaluations. The mapping process was completed with South East Employers providing their initial assessment in January / February of 2020 just as the pandemic started to take hold.
- 5.6 Due to the HR team being heavily involved in the Council's emergency response to the pandemic the job evaluation project was deprioritised in February/March 2020 and has been on hold over the past few months. This delay was communicated to staff and as part of the Council's recovery with a revised completion date of December 2020 as outlined in the revised service delivery plans.

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- 5.7 While it was anticipated that this project will be completed by December 2020 with a further lockdown further impacting on the HR team's capacity this may result in a further delay.
- 5.8 Every effort will be made to complete the project with a view to informing employees of the outcome in early January 2021 although this will depend on the impact of the second lockdown.

6 People Framework – Phase 3

- 6.1 As reported at the last HR Panel meeting on 17 December 2019 the HR team were working to finalising Phase 1 and 2 ready for ratification at Strategy & Resources Committee.
- 6.2 The following policies were presented to Strategy & Resources on 30 January 2020 and approved:
- Part 1 Policy Areas/Scope
 - Part 2 Who does What - Roles & Responsibilities
 - Part 3 Definitions
 - Absence Management
 - Appeals
 - Capability
 - Disciplinary
 - Employee Pay & Reward
 - Grievance
 - Hearings
 - Induction and Settling In
 - Investigations
 - Mediation
 - Performance Management
 - Recruitment & Retention Incentive
 - Relocation
 - Suspension
 - Adoption
 - Annual Leave
 - Dignity at Work
 - Flexible Working
 - Maternity
 - Ordinary Parental Leave
 - Paternity
 - Recruitment & Selection
 - Safer Recruitment
 - Shared Parental Leave
 - Special Leave
 - Working from Home

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- 6.3 It was envisaged that the new People Framework would be launched and implemented from April 2020. However due to the pandemic the launch of the framework was delayed until 1 October.
- 6.4 The pandemic has also impacted on the HR team's ability to complete Phase 3 which includes the following policies:
- Inclusion & Diversity
 - Overtime
 - Politically Restricted Posts
 - Workforce Change
- 6.5 The above policies in Phase 3 have all been drafted however require some further amendments before being presented to Leadership Team for agreement, presented to Staff Consultative Group for consultation with staff and then finalised for approval at Strategy & Resources. It is anticipated that Phase 3 will be finalised by the end of December 2020 with a view to commencing wider engagement from January 2021.

7 Brexit

- 7.1 The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. A transition period is in place until 31 December 2020, during which time there are no practical changes to immigration between the UK and Europe.
- 7.2 From 1 January 2021, the free movement between the UK and European Economic Area (EEA) will cease and a new immigration system will be implemented in the UK.
- 7.3 The end of free movement means that EEA nationals who currently work for the Council and who are residing in the UK will be required to apply under the EU settlement scheme for settled or pre-settled status by 30 June 2021.
- 7.4 In November 2019 we audited our workforce, considering the impact of the end of free movement on EEA nationals working in the UK. The information gathered indicated that c.2.6% of the Council's workforce are EEA nationals.
- 7.5 We had originally considered asking all employees to bring their passports to work for verification, however, this has not been possible with employees not attending the workplace due to the pandemic. As an alternative, we have relied on our employees self-certifying their nationality, appreciating that the risk of incomplete and inaccurate data is greater under this option.
- 7.6 During November and December 2020 we will be communicating with all staff regarding the impact of the end of free movement, to ensure that employees understand the actions they need to take. These communications will form part of the annual employee data update.

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- 7.7 The end of free movement will also impact EEA nationals who wish to commence employment with the Council after 31 December 2020. At the time of writing, the Council has not applied for a licence to sponsor migrant workers in the future as it is thought that the costs of obtaining this would be prohibitive.
- 7.8 Current Government guidance states that there will be no change to how employers check an EEA national's right to work in the UK until 30 June 2021 and that employers will not need to make retrospective right to work checks for existing employees.
- 7.9 However, as a no deal Brexit now seems likely, we are closely monitoring Government guidance and keeping our right to work checking processes under review to ensure that they remain compliant.

8 Workforce Profile

- 8.1 The data in this report has been extracted from the Council's HR system (iTrent). The HR team ask employees to review and update their data on an annual basis, with the most recent update being requested in November 2020.
- 8.2 The workforce profile data provided below is as at 30 September 2020.
- 8.3 Key findings:
 - The headcount as at 30 September 2020 was 307. This remains virtually unchanged from 31 March 2019, where the headcount was 304.

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- The table below provides a comparison between the Borough profile 2018/19 and the Council's workforce profile as at 30 September 2020.

Category	EEBC Borough Profile	EEBC Workforce Profile
Ethnicity	14% Ethnic minority group 86% White Background	14% Ethnic minority group 78% White Background 8% Not known
Gender	51% Female 49% Male	49% Female 51% Male
Age	0-14 - 19% 15-24 - 11% 25-34 - 11% 35-44 - 14% 45-54 - 15% 55-64 - 11% 65-74 - 10% 75-84 - 6% >85 - 3%	0-14 - n/a 15-24 - 5% 25-34 - 12% 35-44 - 21% 45-54 - 26% 55-64 - 29% 65-74 - 7% 75-84 - 0% >85 - n/a

- There has been a no real change (7.9% in 2019/20 to 8.1% in 2020/21) in the number of employees who consider themselves to be disabled (as defined by the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010).
- Turnover for 2019/20 was 9.3% and turnover for April to September 2020 is 3.9% (10.2% 12 months 1Oct19-30Sep20). These figures exclude those employees who left for non-voluntary reasons, i.e. death in service, dismissal, end of fixed-term contract, redundancy, ill health retirement and unsatisfactory probation. Whilst the number of leavers during the pandemic was more static we are starting to see some more movement within the workforce as individuals decide to move on.
- While the above information provides an update to the Panel in terms of workforce profile further more in-depth analysis has not been possible due to the priorities of the pandemic.

9 Future Priorities

- 9.1 Currently there are a number of emerging priorities that the HR team are working on to support the ongoing pandemic and recovery. These include:
- Enhanced remote working procedures
 - Workforce planning to support service reviews
 - Virtual recruitment processes
 - Virtual induction processes

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- 9.2 The Council had an approved Working from Home procedure which supported staff to work from home on an ad hoc basis. This is now no longer fit for purpose. Initial guidance was provided to staff and managers about remote working during the pandemic however as remote working is likely to be a feature for the foreseeable future the HR team are working with Leadership Team to produce a more robust procedure to ensure expectations are clear moving forward. A draft procedure has been developed and is detailed further in this report. Consultation is taking place with staff during December.
- 9.3 It is envisaged that over the next few months a number of service reviews will be undertaken to help determine how the Council will plug the £1.3M deficient which has been identified in next year's budget. If there are any significant changes to service provision this may have workforce implications which HR will be required to support with. Workforce planning over the next few months will be important to ensure that the Council is best placed to deliver services in the coming months and years.
- 9.4 During the past six months the Council has had a recruitment freeze in place with only essential roles being advertised. As we continue to recover from the pandemic we may start to see an increase in our turnover which may result in an increase in the need to recruit. A small number of essential roles have been advertised over the past 6 months which have also required to be run in a different way to meet social distancing and COVID Secure arrangements. Virtual processes for both recruitment and induction will require further exploration and guidance produced to support with these arrangements.

10 Remote Working during COVID19 Procedure

- 10.1 As part of the Council's People Framework an approved Working from Home procedure was in place to support employees to work from home on an ad hoc basis as and when agreed by their manager. Occasional home working provided flexibility.
- 10.2 As a result of the pandemic a large proportion of office based staff have been working from home and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future to support with COVID Secure working arrangements and ongoing government guidance.
- 10.3 Therefore a procedure has been developed to define parameters and provide clarity for staff and managers in relation to ongoing remote working. This procedure is an interim procedure while the Council takes steps to establish future needs and requirements in terms of agile working. The procedure is outlined in Appendix 7.
- 10.4 Staff are being consulted on the new procedure and feedback will be received by 6 January 2021..

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10.5 The procedure will be presented to Strategy & Resources on 28 January for approval and will form part of the People Framework.

11 Cost of Living Pay Award 21/22

11.1 In line with the Council's approved Employee Pay & Reward Procedure 2020-2024 the cost of living pay award in any given year will be in line with CPI and will not normally be expected to exceed the rate of CPI.

11.2 As outlined in the policy the CPI rate will be taken in the month of September prior to the April when any pay award is implemented.

11.3 Therefore the cost of living pay award for April 2021 will be 0.5% which is based on Sept 2020 CPI rate. The approximate cost of the 0.5% pay award is £50k.

11.4 The current approved budget for the cost of living pay award is 2% at an approximate cost of £200k.

11.5 This will result in a £150k saving from the 2021/22 budget.

12 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

12.1 Impact Assessment

12.1.1 None arising from the contents of this report

12.2 Crime & Disorder

12.2.1 None arising from the contents of this report

12.3 Safeguarding

12.3.1 None arising from the contents of this report

12.4 Dependencies

12.4.1 None arising from the contents of this report

12.5 Other

12.5.1 None arising from the contents of this report

13 Financial Implications

13.1 Financial implications of the cost of living pay award for 2021/22 are detailed in section 11 of this report.

13.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

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14 Legal Implications

- 14.1 None for the purposes of this report.
- 14.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None

15 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 15.1 Council's Key Priorities:
- 15.2 The following Key Priorities are engaged:
Effective Council.
- 15.3 **Service Plans:** These matters are included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 15.4 **Climate & Environmental Impact** of recommendations: None arising from the contents of this report.
- 15.5 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety** Implications: None arising from the contents of this report.

- 15.6 **Partnerships:** None

16 Background papers

- 16.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Human Resources Overview 17 December 2019

Other papers:

- Employee Pay & Reward Procedure 2020-2024