

Workforce Statistics – 2024/25 Quarter 1



Report to: Personnel Committee
Date: 26 September 2024
Lead Officer: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive (01279 446004)
Contributing Officer: Clare Seymour, Senior HR Advisor (01279) 446016

Executive Summary

A For the first time this report provides the committee with workforce statistics for information and review. This data will be reported on a 1/4ly basis to enable any trends to be identified, and actions taken to support staff and process improvement. The data provided in this report is a base line and will be developed over the coming months, to ensure we have a holistic understanding of our organisation.

Recommended that the committee:

- A** Reviews the information and statistics (attached as Appendix 1 to the report), recognising this is a 'new start point' and the data provided will evolve over future reports.
- B** Consider, discuss and recommend any additional statistics that may be of use for regular reporting.

Reason for decision

- A** Workforce data is an important tool for managers to understand and thus utilise. It provides information that can help inform the organisations duty to support and develop its workforce and policies and potentially identify any issues/trends that are developing. This report allows the committee to review the data and receive updates on any actions required.
- B** The introduction and development of iTrent, Harlow Council's HR and Payroll system, has made it easier to extract relevant workforce statistics. These statistics provide a source of useful analysis and information regarding establishment, turnover and leavers, sickness absence and equality data.

C This report will be developed over time to aid analysis and identify any trends and issues.

Other Options

A None.

Background

1. The workforce profile report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, provides commentary and data for Quarter 1 (1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024).
2. This is the first Harlow Council workforce statistical report. Future reports will analyse data with comparisons quarter on quarter to demonstrate any trends emerging throughout the financial year.
3. The report provides the following statistics on Quarter 1 (1 April 2024 - 30–June 2024):
 - a) Headcount by Service;
 - b) FTE by Service;
 - c) Breakdown of Employee Basis;
 - d) Vacancies per Service;
 - e) Leavers by reason;
 - f) Sickness Absence Occasion by Reason;
 - g) Sickness Absence Days Lost by Reason;
 - h) Sickness Days Lost by Service;
 - i) Sort Term and Long Term sickness Days lost by Service;
 - j) Employee Age Profile;
 - k) Employee Sex Profile;
 - l) Employee Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin Profile; and
 - m) Ethnicity Profile for Harlow ONS 2021 Census.
4. Items for note from the first reporting cycle.
 - a) The most common reason for sickness absence is Stress/Depression/Anxiety/Psychological. As detailed in chart 6 (a) support to employees experiencing health problems/medical conditions can be provided via Occupational Health Counselling referrals and medical referrals to an Occupational Health Doctor to seek advice and guidance.
 - b) Employees who report that they are experiencing workplace stress, are referred internally to the Health & Safety department to undertake a workplace stress assessment in order to provide support. We currently have a pool of 18 certified Mental Health First Aiders. The Mental Health First Aiders role includes recognising

the symptoms of Mental Health, provide support and signposting to relevant agencies/organisations.

- c) Chart 4 of Appendix 1 details vacancies within Harlow Council. Environment and Planning having 22 vacancies in Quarter 1 – staff shortages in these professions is a recognised national concern.
 - i) As detailed within the statistics, according to a survey carried out by the Royal Town Planning Institute, 82% of local authority planners had advised that their employer had experienced difficulties when it came to hiring planners – with 68% respondents suggesting the competitive salaries are a key stumbling block for local authorities. The council has been working with the LGA regarding their pathways to planning and we hope to move forward to the next cohort of planning graduates.
 - ii) According to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health there is a shortage of resources, and many local authorities are using agency staff due to an unprecedented demand for services. Reporting that 56% of local authorities report that they have had environment health vacancies for 6 months or longer. One of the reasons stated was due to the lack of environmental health officers who were fully qualified and experienced. Internal development including professional training courses is currently taking place to try and 'grow our own' in this area.
5. Following launch of Employee Self-Service (ESS) facility in the council's HR IT system, iTrent, it has undergone several evolutions meaning employees are able to update their own personal data. There are data gaps and HR are reminding to all employees to update their personal data including the sensitive data. It is hoped that more employees will have completed this information for the reporting of Quarter 2 and therefore more statistics can be provided for Quarter 2. Harlow Council cannot enforce employees to disclose sensitive data, but the data requested have an option for employees to choose not to disclose this information and will record this for reporting purposes.
6. The data in Appendix 1 highlights a need to review the exit interview process undertaken at Harlow Council. Whilst leavers are offered an opportunity to complete an optional exit questionnaire as part of their leaver's correspondence, this opportunity is rarely taken up. Data provided at exit questionnaires can be very informative, especially in helping the council understand why employees leave the council, and in identifying pro-active steps to be taken to support retention.
7. The statistical data is to be further developed to include comparatives from across the public sector, and other local authorities where possible, for workforce information and census information to ensure that as an employer we are representative of the make-up of our town.

Issues/Proposals

8. Appendix 1, Chart 6 (b) captures short term and long-term Sickness Absence equating to 605.33 days in total for Quarter 1 (1.89 days per FTE is based on the average FTE for Quarter 1 and not based on the calculation as of 30 June 2024)). The highest reason for sickness absence is Stress/Depression/ Anxiety/Psychological. Support for which support is in place as laid out within this report.
9. The data provided at Appendix 1 should be viewed as a starting point for workforce profiling at Harlow Council and HR will build on this further.
10. The Committee is invited to suggest and request alternatives, amendments and additions to the data that can then be provided on a quarterly basis going forward.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

The Council is required to publish specified information relating to the gender pay gap in addition to requirements to publish proportionate equality information. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a continuing one. The production and review of statistics as contained in this report assists with ensuring that the Council is meeting and furthering its equality duties.

Climate Change

None.

Finance

No direct financial implications arising from this report

Author: Jacqui Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Governance

Other than to ensure that all statistical data is collated and reported in strict accordance with data protection principles, there are no direct legal implications associated with the consideration of this report.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Workforce Statistics Quarter 1 2024

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None