

EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

26 October 2021

RETENTION OF STAFF

Report of the Strategic Director for Resources

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Aim: | All | |
| Exempt Information | No | |
| Cabinet Member(s) Responsible: | Cllr O Hemsley, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, Economy and Infrastructure | |
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| Ward Councillors | N/A | |

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee notes how the Council manages its recruitment, retention and turnover of staff to help mitigate the consequences and impact of losing skills and resource.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Resilience of our workforce – right staff in the right place at the right time – is key to the delivery of our services and therefore any risk of loss of staff can present a significant business continuity risk and hamper the Council's performance and achievement of priorities. This is a live risk for the Council and features on the Strategic Risk Register which is reported to Audit and Risk Committee. The Council's difficulties in certain parts of the business raises questions about whether it is doing all it can to retain staff.
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to appraise the Committee of the processes the Council follows to help manage this risk and provides some data and commentary regarding turnover and recruitment.

2 CONTEXT

- 2.1 As we move through 2021 at a pace and continue to adapt from the challenges of 2020, we are continually seeing headlines around workforce change – remote

working, hybrid models and specifically, how organisations are adapting to attracting and retaining its talent in what is likely to be a different working environment – with different opportunities.

- 2.2 It is inevitable that staff will leave and some turnover is healthy – but losing staff from known skill shortage areas presents a challenge. Like other employers, we look for innovative and cost-effective methods to recruit, retain and progress the best talent that we have. 78% of councils have recently reported recruitment and retention difficulties.

3 THE RUTLAND POSITION

- 3.1 To set the picture, our overall/organisation wide **turnover** is stable with little variation – the 2020-21 figure may have been affected by a pandemic year, ie. reluctance to move on, and it will be interesting to track this when comparator data becomes available for this period.

| 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 13.9% | 13.9% | 13.6% | 11.0% |

In absolute terms this represents c.51 leavers in 2020-21 – excluding casual contracts.

- 3.2 Comparator data has been disrupted over the last year due to cessation/extension of reporting. However, some historic data shows us:

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| LGA Workforce Survey 2017/18 | Average turnover 13.4% |
| Some regional authorities for 2018/19 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicester City Council • Nottingham City Council • Nottinghamshire County Council • Peterborough City Council | 12% 14% 11% 16% |
| English Unitaries 2019-20 | Estimated at 13% |
| Xpert HR Data for 2019 | 17.1% for the UK |

- 3.3 On an annual basis, we review our leaver data by gender, disability, ethnicity, age, and length of service to assess and understand the reasons for any significant variances. Whilst the percentage of leavers in the first year of service was higher than the previous year, the majority were due to roles that had naturally concluded in that period eg. Apprentices, Casual or Fixed term. Only one individual referred to the challenges they had faced in starting a new role during lockdown and balancing this with their home life.

- 3.4 Across our Directorates, staff turnover of the last two years has been:

| | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|-----------|---------|---------|
| Resources | 12.7% | 9.3% |
| Places | 11.2% | 10.7% |
| People | 15.5% | 11.9% |

The People Directorate has the largest staff groups of the Council and includes the well-known national ‘hard to recruit’ to roles such as Social Workers and Occupational Therapists.

- 3.5 Whilst our overall turnover data is not concerning, given the small size of our teams, any turnover can present a risk to the service. Just one leaver in a small team can have a large consequence and impact – for example, Governance. In addition, we experience challenges in attracting to roles for specialist skill areas such as:
- Social Care
 - Estates Surveyor
 - Accountants
 - Legal Services
 - SEND Practitioners.

4 THE RUTLAND EXPERIENCE

- 4.1 We are seeing 'less candidate response' in other service areas such as Community Support, Drivers, Passenger Assistants – this is consistent with an emerging national picture of high number of vacancies vs. low number of candidates.
- 4.2 This can place pressure on those teams and service areas and require some rethinking of the role, a shift in our approach to attracting (eg. use of agencies), internal 'acting up' or use of agency staff.
- 4.3 We also need to acknowledge the local Rutland specific challenges – for example:
- Our pay levels can be lower due to our size meaning it is harder to attract the same skill set to a similar role in a larger authority – this is more prevalent at senior levels although our local Senior Officer Pay structure has significantly helped over the last 6 years.
 - Our teams are small and present less scope to move people around within a service for development or progression to best suit their skills set and retain them in the organisation.
 - In some service areas our roles are much broader than counterparts elsewhere – particularly as we progress our management roles, the expectation of the role is across a range of sub services requiring an ongoing level of operational management and less opportunity to develop more strategically. This has certainly been the experience and feedback from interims that have covered some of our management and leadership roles.
 - A number of our roles are 'single roles' meaning the skills and experience for a specific area or service are focussed on one person creating a vulnerability should they leave. Eg. Health and Safety.
- 4.4 We need to balance the risk of making the wrong appointment vs. not appointing at all. This can be a tough call to make but we should not compromise on quality – the consequence of a poor appointment – ie. making an offer when there are known concerns or doubts, can be far more detrimental to the service and organisation. This reinforces the importance of investing in recruitment and assessment to support decision making. If we do not appoint, we understand the potential pressures on the team and the potential additional cost and lack of stability of agency workers.

5 WHAT DO WE DO?

5.1 We **recruit to a range of roles and we do it quickly** - the roles we recruit to are varied – for example in 2020-21 we recruited:

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| Social Workers Health and Safety Adviser Conservation Officer School Transport Passenger Assistants Civil Enforcement Officer Early Help Workers Planning Support Technicians Care Managers Occupational Therapists | Transport Inspector Community Support Workers Trainees in Planning and HR Principal Solicitor Business Support Administrators Senior Estates Surveyor Team Managers Transitions and Supported Internship Job Coach |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

In 2020-21 we reduced our ‘time to recruit’ as follows:

| | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| No. of weeks between date of advert and confirmation of appointment (<i>ie. all pre-employment checks complete</i>) | 8.8 weeks | 8 weeks |
| No. of weeks between date of advert and start date | 11.5 weeks | 9 weeks. |

There is limited data available to show a comparator and assess how we are doing compared to others. Our target is therefore to improve on the previous year’s performance. However, data from XpertHR for all sectors (2019/20) shows

Up to job offer:

- 10 weeks for directors;
- six weeks for managers; and
- four weeks for other roles.

5.2 **We adopt various marketing and attraction strategies** and these are identified against the nature of the role – most advertising is digital across sites such as Jobs Go Public, LinkedIn, Forces Family, NHS, and our own Website. Specific professional roles will also have a targeted campaign through relevant job boards. For specialist and senior roles, we will consider commissioning an agency to undertake the marketing and attraction of candidates eg. Head of Children’s Social Care. This decision is based on our assessment and judgement of the market as to which approach is more likely to give us success.

5.3 **Promotion of flexibility and agile working** – this has enabled us to widen our pool of candidates from a geographical perspective as we are less constrained by work location. For example, our flexibility has enabled us to secure appointments in roles such as System Support Officer, Services Manager Children Services, 2 Team Managers in Children Services, Participation and Engagement Officer, Quality Assurance Officer.

5.4 **We develop and 'grow our own' -**

- 5.4.1 There is no doubt our most difficult areas remain in the Health and Social Care profession – candidates are hard to attract given the level of roles being advertised nationally and regionally, and the turnover is high due to the transient nature of the role. Our career grade structure and market supplement for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists means we are more comparable and attractive in the market but there remains many choices for candidates in this area. This shows our commitment to develop and provide a clear pathway for individuals to progress their career.
- 5.4.2 We have been very fortunate to support the Frontline Trainee Social Worker programme and have now appointed 3 individuals who are about to qualify and move onto the second year of the programme.
- 5.4.3 The development of other career grade roles in Planning and Surveying has enabled us to attract in at Trainee level and also promote from within but attracting at fully qualified and experienced level, remains challenging. They are difficult markets where individuals are able to move between the public and private sector.
- 5.4.4 Whilst 2020 was a challenge for our existing Apprentices, we are starting to see a resurgence of interest in both Apprenticeship roles and the use of Apprentice standard qualifications. We have staff studying for:

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| Chartered Survey BSC Honours Building Surveying Adult Care Worker Adult Social Worker Degree | Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Children's Service Data Analyst |
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We have an Action Plan in place with a specific aim of increasing the number of Apprenticeship roles. We are pleased to welcome our most recent Apprentices to our IT team and Rutland Adult Learning.

- 5.5 Having been successful in attracting and recruiting great talent, it's important that we continue to invest in those individuals. Our employer offer and experience includes:

- Wellbeing support through a Health and Wellbeing programme – demonstrating that people matter, and we care.
- Investing in the working environment and enabling our workforce to work flexibility and remotely through a hybrid model. Going forward, restrictions of location or lengthy commute become less of a challenge and hindrance.
- Our 'My Conversation' model – this is our approach to performance management and staff development and represents the dialogue between manager and employee. It focusses on wellbeing, motivations, aspirations and strengths, and anything that may get in the way of someone performing their role to the best of their ability.

- Surveys and shorter Pulse Surveys to gain feedback and understand how people are. We undertook a series of these through 2020 and into 2021. Staff have appreciated being able to open up and express their views, opinions and feelings. These results have informed actions of the Wellbeing Group and instigated a Leadership programme for managers – Managing and Motivating Teams during COVID-19 and beyond. They will continue over the next few months with an additional focus on feedback of the ‘hybrid’ working model.
- Employee development and training – access to essential training and opportunities to develop skills to our staff can be the best they can.
- A Coaching for Managers programme will progress our previous workshops and support managers to have quality conversations with staff – enhancing internal communication, engagement, openness and honesty. It’s important that staff feel recognised and rewarded for their work – feedback and discussions about development are key to this and we need to ensure we can do it well.

6 WHAT MORE DO WE NEED TO DO?

- 6.1 Marketing and attraction moves at a pace – we are currently reviewing our framework to develop a matrix of roles/professions and options for advertising. This includes existing and emerging digital marketing packages.
- 6.2 Reflect on the profile of candidates through recruitment – ensure that we can attract from a more diverse candidate pool.
- 6.3 Selling points – how we present ourselves – our bespoke recruitment website gives a professional and honest view of us as an employer. Recruitment adverts and job profiles need to also tell a compelling story and we are adapting our style to present what candidates need to see. It is important that we are open and honest so that expectation matches reality.
- 6.4 The candidate experience – our Applicant Tracking System already provides a professional and efficient route through the recruitment process for recruiting managers and candidates. We need to match this with prompt responses, opportunity to engage early on – informal discussions, site visits. Recruiting managers need to engage in the process – remember they are ‘selling’ the Council and their job, they need to impress candidates. We are designing some manager focus groups to raise the appreciation of ‘investment’ needed if they are to recruit the right person promptly.
- 6.5 Vary and flex our assessment process to reflect the nature of the role and give us the best chance of determining the likely success of candidates – both in terms of fit for the organisation as well as their job ability. We are seeing some successful approaches where the assessment enables for early dialogue between the recruiting manager and candidates, followed by technical assessments (exercises and case studies), panels with peers or service users, and then a final interview.

This blended approach provides for a variety of opportunities to assess a candidate and at the same time ensure they have a true and valid view of the organisation and the role. As part of the development of the Corporate Plan we are revisiting the Council's values and behaviours and these will ultimately form part of our assessment process.

- 6.6 On-boarding and Induction – having recruited successfully, the ongoing engagement and experience with us is key. We have a good track record and positive feedback on individual's engagement with us prior to their first day. In normal circumstances, induction would include plenty of interaction with colleagues and learning at the workplace. Over the last year we have been more successful than we may have anticipated, where induction and new joiner's experience has been 'remote'. Our current planning includes an induction journey through our Learning Management System but will also feature opportunity to meet and engage with peers across the organisation.
- 6.7 Managing performance – the probationary period provides us with a framework to manage and respond to any emerging concerns or issues regarding an individual's performance. We need to support managers to make some tough decisions – but the right decision if things are not going well. An in-house coaching skills programmes for managers will include tackling and managing poor performance.
- 6.8 Exit interviews – our current process and system is not giving us enough detailed information and leavers do not always respond. We need to redefine the questions we are asking, and how, to enable us to better understand, not just the reason for leaving, but to have some further deeper understanding of an employee's experience and hence, what we can learn from that and change.
- 6.9 Alternative options – be creative and open about doing something different rather than replace like for like e.g. redesign of the role, different service models, alternative provider options – particularly for single roles where we may be left vulnerable.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements to this paper.

8 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1 This paper provides information and is advisory. The Council could do less in its approach to recruitment but this would be detrimental to our ability to recruit, and place a risk on our ability to deliver services.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None directly from this paper.

10 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no legal and governance considerations to this paper.

11 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None.

12 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12.1 None

13 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None

14 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

14.1 None

15 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Human Resource implications - the Council has a Recruitment Policy which sets out its approaches and procedures to attract and recruit staff.

15.2 Environmental Implications – our Recruitment process operates through an Applicant Tracking System which is a technical solution; all engagement and communication with candidates is system driven or by telephone. Our use of hard copy/paper, printing and postage is therefore minimal.

16 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Whilst our organisation wide turnover has stabilised, we recognise the consequences and risk of any turnover in any service – it is more noticeable at a local level and by the team.

16.2 Recruitment and retention of staff is key to enabling us to deliver our services to the community. We recognise the factors that will impact on our ability to recruit – these are varied from national skill shortages to more regionalised issues and of course the context of our own organisation. Our strategies and approaches to recruitment therefore need to support mitigation and management of those risk as far as we are able.

17 BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 There are no background papers.

18 APPENDICES

18.1 There are no appendices.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.