

Rother District Council

Report to:	Licensing and General Purposes Committee
Date:	4 April 2022
Title:	Staffing Digest – April 2021 to March 2022
Report of:	Maria Benford – Human Resources Manager
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To consider the human resource activities and issues through the 2021/22 financial year
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

Introduction

1. This Staffing Digest covers the period April 2021 to March 2022, aiming to give Members an appreciation of progress in the field of staff management.

Recruitment

2. Recruitment has remained active during this period despite the challenges of the pandemic. Turnover for the first six months of this year was 6.25% and for the second half of the year was 5.14%. Difficulties around professional post recruitment have been raised with Members previously and remain a concern. We have been working with other authorities across East and West Sussex to gain insight into the current challenges surrounding recruitment.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) – TUPE

3. None

Employment Relations

4. There have been two investigative hearings undertaken during the year. The outcome of one of these investigations was that the complaint was considered unfounded. The other investigation was undertaken more recently and is currently still under review.
5. We have continued to meet with our HR Liaison Group. We meet regularly to discuss HR matters. These meetings have proven to be an effective way of communicating upcoming HR changes or projects and in providing valuable feedback to the HR team on a range of topics from all areas.
6. An all staff survey was conducted in September 2021. The survey was developed by HR alongside independent body Valuentis. The survey asked a range of questions relating to staff satisfaction, engagement and in particular our COVID-19 response. Results were anonymous and submitted to Valuentis directly, who then collated this information for the Council. While results were

generally positive, the survey has provided insights which will allow us to develop a targeted action plan for making any required improvements.

Employment Initiatives

7. Apprenticeships – We currently have eight apprentices occupying various roles and service areas around the authority. We have been delighted with the success of this scheme and look forward to continuing with this success. Since its introduction, nine apprentices have successfully completed and four have secured employment with the Council.

Training

8. Due to the pandemic, in-house training was put on hold, with training providers not initially set up for online delivery. However, online training has taken place through the iHASCO system on the topics of GDPR and Cyber Security. Professional training has continued mainly through an online basis, Health and Safety and First Aid training has been undertaken and kept up-to-date. Trainers are now beginning to open to more online courses and we have been utilising this form of training to good effect. Management training is now underway.
9. Sussex Training Consortium – STC has now completed the move from Rother to Arun District Council, who will lead the service. This service is now fully back up and running with a good uptake, popular courses include 'Overcome Overwhelm' and 'Personal Resilience'.

Health and Safety

10. We had six minor staff accidents reported during this year. This is up two from the previous year. All have been investigated, one of these was reportable.
11. We continue to provide refresher training for our first aiders as their qualifications expire. We also have a waiting list should anybody decide not to renew their qualification.
12. Mental Health - We have trained seven staff volunteers as Mental Health First Aiders to help support any staff dealing with poor mental health. Alongside this, HR have released supporting information to aid staff in identifying mental health issues and signposting where help can be found through outside agencies or via our Employee Assistance Programme. HR have also provided support and coaching to managers in identifying and dealing with mental health of their staff. We have noticed an increase in assistance being sought from our Mental Health First Aiders; Human Resources are there for additional support for more complex cases.

COVID – 19 Pandemic

13. As referred to earlier, the impact of the pandemic has resulted in homeworking being made mandatory for the majority of staff for a significant period of time. Following easing of lockdowns, homeworking continues to remain in place and has proven effective in maintaining business operations during this challenging period for us all. The Facilities team have continued to work from the Town Hall throughout the pandemic in order to maintain access to the building and ensure the security of our staff.

14. Following the easing of lockdown restrictions, risk assessments, guidelines and measures have been developed and put in place and in order to maintain the safety of staff entering our buildings and when carrying out their duties. We are looking at the opportunities for continued homeworking (in part or full) and the impact this would have on our accommodation needs. Consultation will be undertaken as appropriate with staff and unions before any decisions are taken.
15. Staff meetings are now conducted both in-house and via Microsoft Teams, with an increase in in-house meetings throughout the year as government restrictions were eased.

Restructure

16. Throughout the year we have worked on the senior team restructure, which is now in place and working well. Work is currently in progress with the corporate restructure, with both Directors working on their respective areas.

Policy

17. No new policies have been brought forward in this period. Our Pay Policy was updated in line with the pay award for 2021/22.
18. We continue to introduce “factsheets” to outline the key points, along with a new online policy index to aid accessibility. HR are working with the Transformation team in order to develop a self-service platform to make our policies more accessible.

Conclusion

19. The report highlights that, in addition to dealing with the impact on staff of the pandemic, it has been possible to make significant progress in a number of areas to improve staff relations and management. The next year is likely to be as busy as ever, continuing to adapt how we work post pandemic. Maintaining open and constructive dialogue with staff will be essential to ensuring any changes are successful.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Maria Benford – Human Resources Manager
e-mail address:	maria.benford@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

