

Rother District Council

Report to:	Human Resources Committee
Date:	15 April 2024
Title:	Staffing Digest – April 2023 to March 2024
Report of:	Maria Benford – Human Resources Manager
Ward(s):	N/A
Purpose of Report:	To consider the human resource activities and issues through the 2023/24 financial year
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

Introduction

1. This Staffing Digest covers the period April 2023 to March 2024, aiming to give Members an appreciation of progress in the field of staff management.

Recruitment

2. Recruitment has remained active during this period. Turnover for this year was 10.19%, a decrease on last year's turnover and is slightly better than our neighbouring authorities. Difficulties around professional post recruitment have been raised with Members previously and remain a concern. We continue the extension of our work with other authorities across East and West Sussex to include the Local Government Association (LGA) and South East Employers to gain insight into the current challenges surrounding recruitment.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) – TUPE

3. None.

Employment Relations

4. There has been one disciplinary hearing undertaken during the year. There is a continuing flexible working request, which we are endeavouring to resolve imminently.
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. There has been no staff survey taken within this past year, however the workforce plan is looking to address this in the forthcoming year.

Employment Initiatives

7. Apprenticeships – We continue to be delighted with the success of this scheme; within the past year we have had five apprentices successfully complete their training and secure permanent posts within the Council. We currently have five apprentices occupying various roles in service areas across the authority and this will increase in the forthcoming year. This year, the focus has been on higher level apprenticeships up to level 5 to aid our recruitment and retention issues within our professional posts. In the forthcoming year, we would like to see an uptake in lower level apprentices. Since its introduction, eighteen apprentices have successfully completed.
8. Work Experience – Two students have completed their work experience week with us over the last year, working through a variety of service areas and teams within the authority. We have received excellent feedback from the students on their time here, viewing it as a great learning opportunity about work within a local authority.
9. Jobs Fair – The Human Resources team attended several recent jobs fairs, including the De La Warr Pavilion fair. There has been excellent turnout at the fairs and a great deal of interest was received in opportunities at Rother District Council. These fairs are an excellent opportunity to network and meet face-to-face with the local talent pool. Following the interest from job seekers, we continue to contact those on our mailing list with opportunities within their preferred areas.

Training

10. The majority of training has continued to be delivered online; for many trainers, online delivery has become the most common with online courses now including much improved content and engagement levels. Management training courses from ACAS have been delivered and well received along with Personal Resilience and Wellbeing courses through the provider 'Yellowday'. Our Learning Management System - iHASCO continues to be utilised for induction training and refresher training on the topics of GDPR, Cyber Security, Health & Safety and Safeguarding, along with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion courses. We will look to add 'Menopause Awareness' training to this offering, alongside the introduction of our Menopause Support Group.
11. We have utilised MS Teams to remind staff about the requirement to complete annual mandatory training in GDPR and Cyber Security. This is an annual mandatory training requirement in order to meet compliance with data regulations.
12. We have also added a whole new suite of training via iHasco, including wellbeing courses and time management courses. There is also a suite of training for Line Managers, such as Conducting Appraisals, Effective Meetings and Managing a Remote Team. Although take up has been low this year, we hope that with continued regular MS Teams reminders, this year uptake will increase significantly.
13. This year we have successfully appointed a recruitment and training officer to specifically support these areas on a day-to-day basis. This has enabled us to

better support managers and teams with help and guidance in organising professional training in various service areas.

14. Sussex Training Consortium (STC) – STC continue to deliver courses essential to CPD for our staff and add new courses each quarter to their offering, since resuming service STC has seen a steady increase in course attendance. Popular courses include 'Introduction to Project Management', 'Conflict Management' and 'Dealing with Difficult Customers'.
15. This calendar year we have had employees attend a variety of courses, including Dealing with Difficult Customers and Essential Skills for New Managers.

Health and Safety

16. We have had three minor staff accidents reported during this year. This is a slight increase on the previous year. All have been investigated, none of these were reportable.
17. We continue to provide refresher training for our first aiders as their qualifications expire. We also have a waiting list in place should anybody decide not to renew their qualification.
18. Mental Health - We have five trained staff volunteers as Mental Health First Aiders to help support any staff dealing with poor mental health. Alongside this, Human Resources have increased our mental health support training through the iHASCO system and 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. We have noticed an increase in assistance being sought from our Mental Health First Aiders and an increase in the usage of the employee assistance scheme. We have also assisted six staff with additional counselling, which they were unable to access via the NHS. Human Resources are available for additional support for more complex cases.
19. Reported COVID-19 cases increased this year for a short period throughout the winter months, which has resulted in a slight increase in overall sickness absence. There are now no COVID-19 restrictions within Council buildings following the lift of all restrictions as instructed by Central Government. Some signage has remained, as we feel this is good practice to be followed by staff and visitors to the building in preventing large viral outbreaks within our offices. All COVID-19 related sickness absence is treated in the same manner as a standard sickness absence.

Policy

20. No new policies have been brought forward in this period. Policies have been reviewed and updated as required throughout the year.
21. We continue to introduce "factsheets" to outline the key points, along with a new online policy index to aid accessibility.

Conclusion

22. This year has been as busy as ever and we have maintained open and constructive dialogue with staff throughout the reshuffle process. The cost of living remains a concern for staff members; with the satisfactory conclusion of the pay award for September 2023, it is hoped that this will help to alleviate some of those financial pressures. The pay award journey this year has had an effect on staff morale, with strike action being averted. It is hoped, with all the work on the People Strategy, that we will be able to address this temporary dip in morale.

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

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Appendices:	None

Relevant Previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None
