



Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 15 November 2022

Update on Workforce Matters since February 2022

Purpose	To provide the Scrutiny Programme Committee with an update on workforce matters since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group – Workforce in February 2022
Content	This report provides an update on workforce matters since February 2022 and future plans for the coming 2022-2027 period.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided.
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor David Hopkins (Deputy Leader)
Lead Officer(s)	Rachael Davies, Adrian Chard,
Report Author(s)	Rachael Davies, Adrian Chard Supported by Craig Gimblett, Service Centre

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic placed significant pressure on the Council's workforce. That pressure varied across services and became multi-layered throughout 2020 and 2021 and has continued throughout 2022. As we are emerging from the critical phase and are now focusing on recovery, we are aspiring to develop longer term strategies and objectives to both support and develop the workforce in a post-pandemic world.

A report was produced for the Scrutiny Working Group on Workforce in February 2022 and this subsequent report provides an update on activities since then.

2. Post Pandemic Working Model

On 28 January 2022 the legal requirement to work from home was removed but remained advisory and in March 2022 Welsh Government published *Together for a safer future: Wales' long-term Covid-19 transition from pandemic to endemic* which articulated an expectation that under a Covid Stable scenario (the current state) “there will be a gradual transition back to office working, at the same time as promoting more flexible working practices such as remote working”. The report also articulated the Welsh Government’s long-term aim for 30% of Welsh workers to be working flexibly at or near to home.

The Council employs circa 11,000 employees of which more than half work on the front line, based at depots, schools or in the community. Of the remainder 62 are home workers (under the council’s Home Working Policy) or are dual work based and the rest have the Guildhall or Civic Centre as their assigned work base, albeit the majority have been working from home since March 2020.

Since the Government’s rules around home working have been relaxed decisions about employees returning to the office or staying at home have been left to managers and employees leading to some confusion amongst employees and members about how they should be working now services have returned to business as usual. In addition, in recent weeks there have been instances of customers being unable to contact employees due to a breakdown in customer contact channels within services, leading to a rise in complaints.

To set the long-term vision for operational service delivery, Cabinet therefore approved the Council’s post pandemic working model in October 2022 (*Appendix 1*). The agreed principles are:

1. **Each service¹ will have a written set of operational requirements** which reflect when, where, how, and what customers (external (i.e., the public, internal (i.e., other services/partners/members) can expect to access in terms of services, information, advice and/or guidance
2. The council will set out **corporate customer contact standards** (e.g., response times, contact options including alternative formats to meet our duty under the Equality Act 2010) as part of a customer contact strategy to provide consistency across the organisation
3. Each service will ensure **all job roles fulfil the service’s operational requirements and clarify whether they are available for agile working** driven by the service’s operational requirements
4. Each service will ensure **appropriate arrangements are in place to supervise and performance manage employees** in line with corporate policies, their job roles and their terms and conditions of employment

¹Directors and Heads of Service to determine definition of services for the purpose of applying working model principles; Leadership (i.e., Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service) to be included as a distinct group to define the model to be used to meet the council’s democratic / Members’ needs

5. Each service will seek to **minimise the accommodation space each service requires** and will aim for a maximum staff:desk ratio of 2:1
6. **During the cost-of-living crisis agile employees will be supported to work from their assigned work base or another public sector building, if they choose**
7. Each service will ensure **appropriate arrangements are in place to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees wherever they are working from** (including regular 121s, formal supervision or team meetings as appropriate, regular in-person team contact, ergonomic workstations and clear work / home life boundaries and recognition of caring responsibilities, housing issues and risks of domestic violence/coercive control)

Work will be commencing to assess the needs and demands of each service area, determining their operational requirements, customer standards and whether posts within each service are suitable for agile working. Once complete, the working models for each service will give clarity and long-term understanding of how the workforce will operate, including the scope of agile working that will be available to them.

3. Wellbeing and sickness absence

The all-Wales protocol relating to the management of sickness absence due to Covid has ceased and all Covid related absence is now being treated as regular sickness absence with usual monitoring and management having recommenced.

We have seen an increase in absence levels in Q1 and Q2 of this year, partly due to the continuation of covid related sickness absence but also now due to long term health condition treatments having waited for significant periods. We anticipate that this will continue for the duration of this year as the backlog of health conditions is addressed.

There have been 1212 Covid related absence instances during April to September 2022 which is double in number compared to the same period in 2021, where 601 instances occurred. With the protocol having ceased it is anticipated that this should have an impact on Q3 and Q4 Covid related absences, and we should start to see a fall in these numbers.

Specific dedicated resource is in place to support Managers in the management of sickness absence cases. Whilst sickness absence rates across the Council reduced significantly from 13.38 in 2019/20 to 7.72 in 2020, the pandemic has led to a delayed increase which was 8.11 in 2021 and is currently running at 9.14 for the first half of this year (excluding schools). The Council has maintained its' target rate of 10 days FTE.

Management of Absence Officers work with managers in Education, Place and Social Services in the pro-active management of sickness absence in those Directorates and particularly in Service areas where sickness absence is at its highest. This has included:

- Support to progress current Long Term Sickness cases of over 6 months and address cases which are progressing into 6 months and over.
- Early interventions in sickness cases to support managers and employees in progressing cases as appropriate.
- Strengthening links with Occupational Health by arranging review meetings with the OH Team to assist Managers by discussing next step plans at an earlier stage.
- Provision of additional dedicated clinics for Social Services staff, to minimise the waiting times between referrals and appointments.
- Manager training, guidance and upskilling.
- Support with Manager Compliance

Further information and data, including the impact of the Management of Absence officers in the Education, Place and Social Services directorates can be found in the Absence Management Report Update item of the September Governance and Audit Committee (**Appendix 2**).

Occupational Health continue with dedicated clinics for Social services and Place. Stress Management & Counselling (SMAC) have launched a bereavement support group. OH & SMAC have jointly launched a long-term sickness support group.

Menopause cafes and Health Fairs, which include free health checks have restarted. Additional counselling sessions are being provided to cut waiting time to avoid stress related absence. An additional in-house Occupational Health Officer has been recruited on a part time basis. A new external occupational health contract to supplement internal resource and provide Occupational Health Physicians is in the process of being established.

In addition to the information provided at the Meeting, I have been advised of the following additional support provided by Occupational Health (OH) and Stress Management & Counselling (SMAC), as part of their work on the Corporate Action plan for 2022-24 and COVID-19 recovery.

- Mandatory Mental Health First Aid Training days for Managers
- Stress Risk Assessment sessions and reports
- Mandatory Supporting Employee Wellbeing Training for managers
- A proactive range of prevention workshops and activities to reduce stress and improve employee wellbeing through the Helping Hands & Helping Paws volunteer Service within available resources
- Health fairs and checks to improve wellbeing, awareness and provide signposting to specialist services, which will commence after Christmas
- Long Term Sickness Support Group
- Bereavement support group
- Wellbeing Newsletters, including cost of living support information
- New Helping Hands volunteers have been recruited and are undergoing training
- On-line Suicide Awareness Training will launch November
- Manager Suicide Awareness Training will Launch in December 2022

- A Temporary Part Time Occupational Advisor commenced with OH in September
- The dedicated Stress Management Advisor and Counsellor for Schools commenced September and is working proactively with Education.

The Council has reconfirmed its commitment to the Dying to Work charter and re-signed the pledge in September 2022.

In terms of supporting managers to access improved data, when implemented next year the Oracle Fusion project will deliver a dashboard which will provide real time information for all managers with absence management responsibility and provide them with information on the following:

- Staff absent due to sickness (within their area only) and days lost
- Return to Work Interviews Outstanding
- Record of Action Meetings Outstanding

To support those employees working from home during the pandemic information and signposting to the HMRC tax relief of £6 per week was distributed. This arrangement with HMRC ceased at the end of the 2021/22 financial year and is no longer available for claiming in the 2022 year.

4. Agency workers

The largest total spend on agency this year to date is with Staffline (c£1.36 million) and RSD Social Care (c£373 thousand). Managers have been reminded of the appropriate use of agency workers and that approved suppliers only must be used, unless there are exceptional or emergency circumstances/situations which is authorised by Procurement.

HR&OD continue to send regular reminders to Managers to review the engagement of agency workers who have been engaged for over 12 months and Managers are required to confirm that it is still appropriate for the Council to engage an agency worker rather than employ someone in the post.

In relation to “contract spend with companies providing agency workers”, a competitive re-tender exercise for the provision of Agency Services is underway and has been advertised openly on Sell2Wales. This is currently at evaluation stage. Value for money considerations such as rates offered forms part of the assessment criteria in tender evaluation and award. Officers are progressing with the evaluation and are working towards a new contract award and commencement by 1st April 2023.

A further audit on agency usage was undertaken in Quarter 1 in 2022/23. As a result, an Assurance Level of 'Substantial' has been given. This indicates that there is a sound system of internal control but there is some scope for improvement as the ineffective controls may put the system objectives at risk. Further information and data is available in the September Governance and Audit item; Employment of Agency Staff Audit Report 2019/20 – Update (**Appendix 3**).

5. HR and Service Centre

The Head of HR and Service Centre has been appointed and started work with the Council in June 2022. The separate functions of HR&OD and the Service Centre now report through to one Head of Service and activity is underway to consider how best to deliver services in a cohesive and joined up way across both parts of the service.

The Head of HR and Service Centre hosted a Let's Talk session in September 2022 whereby interested colleagues could engage with the workforce strategy priorities for the future and contribute to a session whereby their views were sought on two of the strategic themes.

The Oracle Fusion project continues to be a key priority for the service area as implementation of the new system will bring about an improved employee and manager self-serve functionality, supporting the aspiration to be a modern employer of choice and use digital technology for people management activity. Successful implementation of the system will impact on the HR offer to the organisation across both parts of the HR and Service Centre function.

6. Workforce Strategy

The Workforce Strategy consultation exercise concluded earlier in 2022 and the final version was approved by Cabinet in October 2022 (**Appendix 4**). A number of activities have already commenced to support the objectives within the strategy (e.g. launch of the coaching and mentoring network) and work is underway to identify transformation projects that can achieve the strategic objectives. A project board is due to be set up shortly where progress can be measured against each objective and its associated actions.

- Theme 1 Leadership and Management**
 - Strand 1 - Culture and Behaviours
 - Strand 2 - Future Leadership
 - Strand 3 – Future Shape of the Organisation

- Theme 2 A Workforce Fit for the Future**
 - Strand 4 – Future Workforce
 - Strand 5 – Recognising Performance

- Theme 3 Being an Employer of Choice**
 - Strand 6 – Recruitment and Retention
 - Strand 7 – Workforce Development

- Theme 4 Workforce Wellbeing and Inclusion**
 - Strand 8- Supporting Our Workforce
 - Strand 9– Equality in the Workplace

7. Headcount/FTE

7.1 As indicated in the table below, headcount has increased in all Directorates. There has been a decrease in total FTE primarily due to reductions in Schools.

In Place, there has been an increase in Traineeship roles (especially in Waste Management) which then result in permanent posts at the end of the Traineeship. Some areas have also received external funding to create specific roles e.g. Workways.

Since the last report the previous Resources Directorate has been replaced by two separate Corporate Services and Finance Directorates which has been reflected in the table below.

In Corporate Services, headcount numbers include additional TTP and vaccination-line teams.

In Education and Schools the reduction in headcount and FTE is due to the reduction in numbers of additional staff in catering and cleaning brought in as a direct result of COVID. Schools funding for additional staff for pupil catch up has also ceased.

In Social Services, aside from internal investment significant funding has been received to create additional posts particularly in Social Workers, Community Care Assistants and Care staff across Residential Care and Day Services, but there has been an increase in a variety of posts across the rest of the Directorate such as the Community Equipment Service, Commissioning Team etc. There remains significant recruitment and retention issues within this Directorate which we are seeking to address.

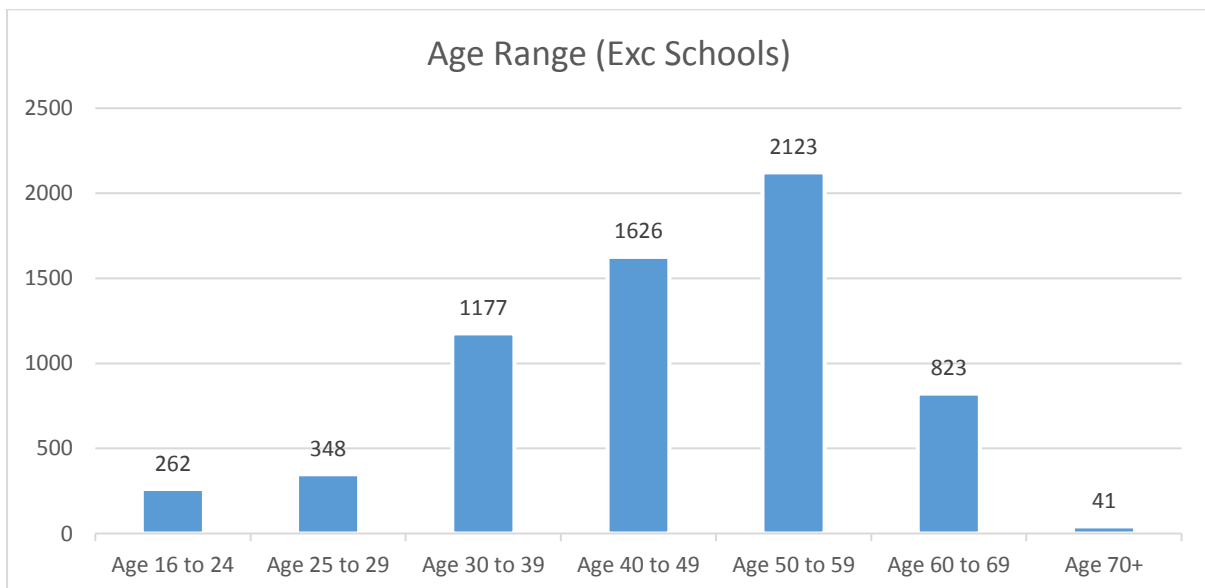
	@31/3/20		@31/12/20		@31/12/21		30-Sep-22	
Directorate	H'count	FTE	H'count	FTE	H'count	FTE	H'count	FTE
Place	2545	2281.1	2582	2324.6	2633	2373.48	2692	2350.43
Corporate Services (Resources)	632	573.81	669	608.3	852	763.46	474	421.19
Finance							248	229.72
Education (incl. Schools)	5904	4436.7	5843	4403.6	6025	4569.99	5943	4250.83
Social Services	1866	1565.4	1944	1623.9	1965	16458.59	2171	1728.95
TOTAL	10,947	8657.01	11,038	8960.4	11,475	9365.52	11,528	8,981

8. Age Profile of the Workforce

The Corporate Age Profile (Headcount excluding Schools) is as follows:

Age Range	Number	Percentage
Age 16 to 24	262	4%
Age 25 to 29	348	5%
Age 30 to 39	1177	18%
Age 40 to 49	1626	25%
Age 50 to 59	2123	33%
Age 60 to 69	823	13%
Age 70+	41	1%

The youngest employees are 16 years of age and the eldest is 82. The disparity in age ranges, as illustrated in the graph below will continue to be considered as part of the HR&OD Strategy and strategic workforce planning activities.



9. Grade profile

Excluding Chief Officers, HOS, Soulbury and centrally employed teachers, 59% of posts are occupied by women, 41% occupied by men. The numbers in grades 3,4 and 12 are almost equal. The only grade with significantly more men than women is Grade 7. This has largely remained unchanged as a result of Covid.

10. Permanent / Temporary Split

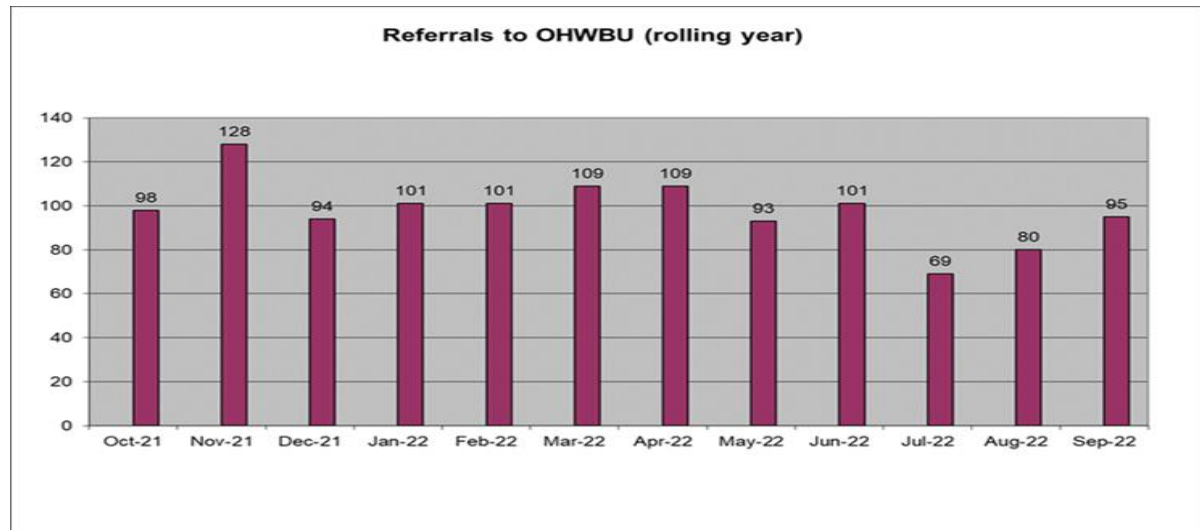
The composition of the workforce, excluding schools, as at 30th September 2022 is as follows;

Employment Category	Female	Female Percentage Split of Full and Part-time workers	Male	Male Percentage Split of Full and Part-Time Workers
Full-Time (permanent and Temporary)	1655	44%	2180	84%
Part-Time (permanent, temporary, job-share and seasonal)	2135	56%	430	16%
Total	3790	100%	2610	100%

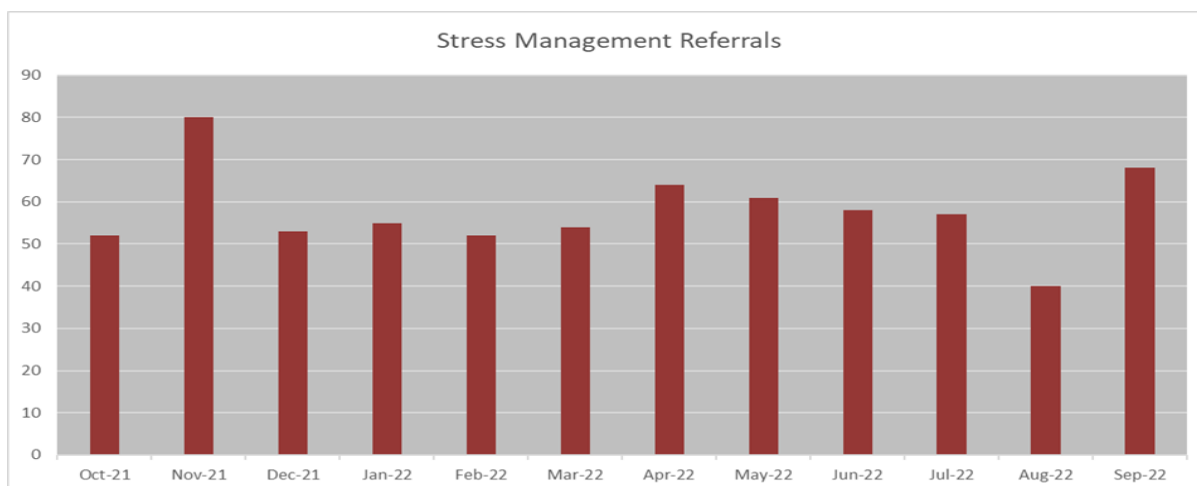
There has been no significant impact on employment status as a result of Covid.

11. Occupational Health Data

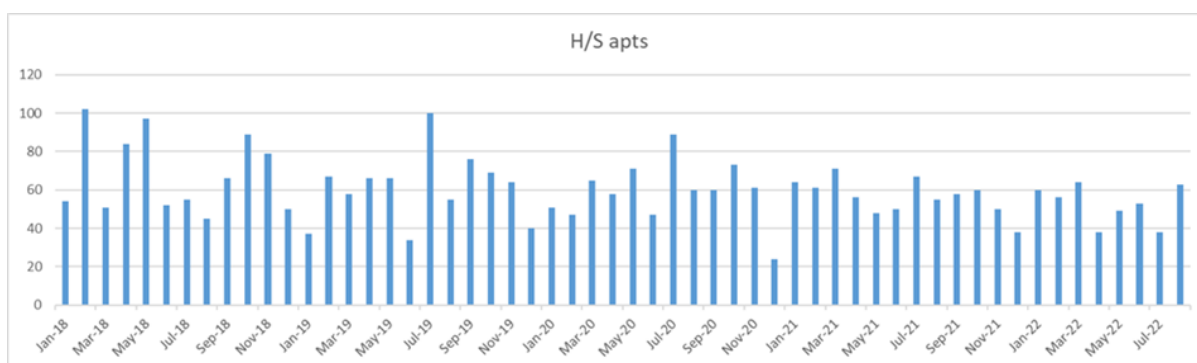
The number of Occupational Health referrals up to September 2022 are as follows;



The Number of Stress Management referrals up to September 2022 are as follows;



Health Surveillance appointments are a legal requirement for certain roles to check, lung, skin, hearing and vibration to make sure the workforce are not being made unwell through working activity. The number of appointments up to September 2022 are as follows;



12. Overall Assessment

All service areas are continuing to undertake significant and challenging activities to support the organisation and residents as we emerge from the pandemic.

The report highlights the focus on forward look – setting out our working model and approving a new Workforce Strategy to provide an opportunity to reset the expectations of our workforce and give clarity and assurance to our colleagues on what the future at Swansea Council will be.

The report also highlights the continued corporate support and advice provided to managers and the workforce in order to keep everyone safe, maintain mental health and well-being as much as possible, and continue to deliver services and support to residents.

13. Integrated Assessment Implications

13.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

13.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

13.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

13.4 The IIA (**Appendix 5**) has identified no implications in relation to the above.

14. Legal Implications

14.1 There are no legal implications.

15. Financial Implications

15.1 There are no financial implications.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Cabinet report - Post Pandemic Working Model, October 2022

Appendix 2 Absence Management Update – Governance and Audit Committee,
September 2022

Appendix 3 Employment of Agency Workers – Governance and Audit Committee,
September 2022

Appendix 4 Workforce Strategy 2022-2027

Appendix 5 Integrated Impact Assessment

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Date: 04 November 2022