Update on HR Activity 2022/2023

Committee considering report:	Personnel Committee
Date of Committee:	4 July 2023
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	12 June 2023
Report Author:	Paula Goodwin, Vicky Holland, Harriet Saunders, Lorraine Collins

1 Purpose of the Report

This report is an information only report for the purposes of updating on HR activity for 2022/2023 for Personnel Committee, Corporate Board and Operations Board. This report also includes annual data for the equality makeup of the workforce as at the 31st March 2023, along with other relevant supporting employment data.

2 Recommendation

This is an information only report. Personnel Committee is asked to consider and feedback on the information provided within the report.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	None as this is an information only report.
Human Resource:	The activity stated within this report is completed as either part of BAU activity or as part of the delivery of the Workforce Strategy. This is an information only report so there are no direct implications from the outcome of the report.
Legal:	None

Risk Management:	None			
Property:	None			
Policy:	All information provided in the report take account of the relevant WBC policies and procedures.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		This is an information only report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		This is an information only report.
Environmental Impact:		X		None
Health Impact:		X		None
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		This update report provides information that supports the Workforce Strategy and HR BAU activity to meet Council priorities.

Core Business:		X		This update report provides information that supports the Workforce Strategy and HR BAU activity to meet Council priorities.
Data Impact:		X		None as all data is anonymised.
Consultation and Engagement:	Corporate Board Operations Board Service Director, Strategy & Governance Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Internal Governance			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report is for information only that will go to Corporate Board, Operations Board and Personnel Committee to provide an update on the HR matters contained within the report.

4.2 The report contains a section on the overarching employment data and equalities data either at the 31st March 2023 or for the whole year of 2022/2023 (Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4). Against each data set the date of the data or the period will be stated. Please see Appendix A.

4.3 This report provides and update on recruitment activity, appraisals, training and performance management – casework.

5 Employment Data

5.1 Appendix A details the employment data and equalities data relating to WBC. The headcount at WBC has remained pretty static over the last 5 years with a slight reduction in headcount of 21 since 31st March 2022.

5.2 See table below for headcount and post data for the last 5 years. (This data excludes all temporary posts and agency and off contract workers). The current headcount is 1511.

	2018/2019	**2019/2020**	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**2022/2023**
Headcount	1486	1512	1545	1532	1511

Post FTE	1561.59	1576.61	1621.98	1667.93	1731.10
Occupied FTE	1297.10	1323.62	1366.44	1362.10	1357.90
Vacant FTE	264.49	252.99	255.54	305.83	373.20

Note: As of the 22nd May 2023 there were 206 agency workers who would be covering vacancies.

5.3 Turnover has increased slightly to 14.86% in the past 12 months from 13% and as a result the number of vacant posts has also increased to 373.20 FTE (31st March 2023) from 305.83 FTE (as at 31st March 2022).

5.4 According to XpertHR, the headline findings on labour turnover rates, based on readings from the Cendex database, compiled in December 2022 and drawing on data relating to 279 organisations with a combined workforce of 423,684 employees, are as follows:

24.4% are in private-sector services;

6.5% are in manufacturing and production;

44.4% are in charities/the not-for-profit sector; and

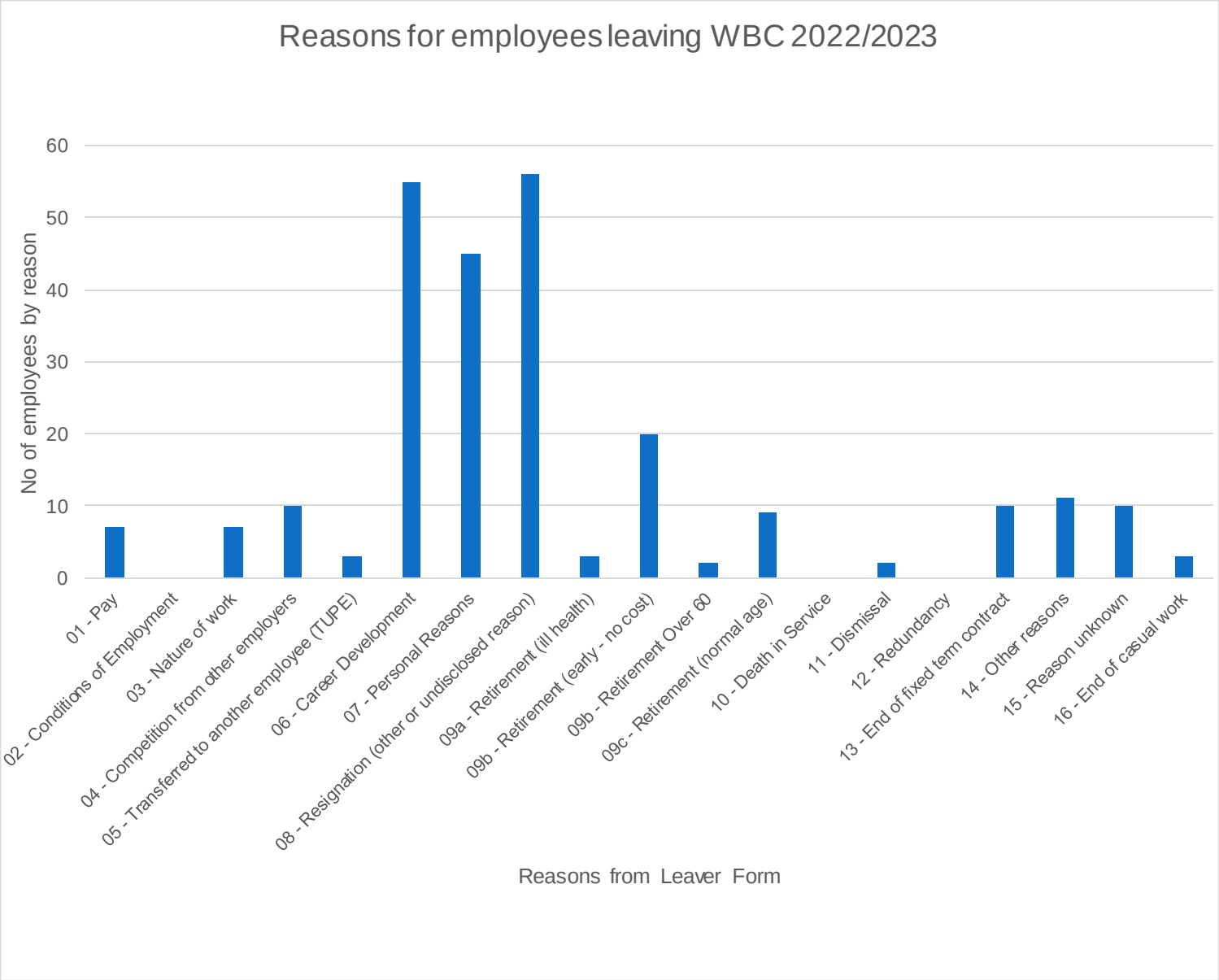
24.7% are in public services.

There are naturally differences in the turnover rates between industry sectors. Most notable are a lower rate in public services than across the economy as a whole, but a higher level among charities/not-for-profit organisations.

According to an recent article in HR Review, on average, employee turnover rates have increased by 8.7 percent since 2019, and are estimated to increase even more in 2023 with a predicted 35.6 percent turnover rate in the UK. The UK rates have increased by 7.7 percent in the last four years.The highest reason given for leaving role in the UK relate to getting a better work/life balance.

5.5 Leavers' data excludes those that are not voluntary such as TUPE transfers. Exit data is collated which does not indicate that there is any substantial issue other than an increase in the availability of job roles that might tempt staff to move on. The exit questionnaire has recently been revamped to improve the quality and encouragement

for staff to complete these to gain more data of reasons for leaving. There is also a drive to encourage staff to have their say by completing the exit questionnaires. The table below shows the reasons a line manager provides when they complete a leaver form (EC5). The three greatest reason for employees leaving WBC are for career development, resignation (with no reason provided) and for personal reasons. The information provided by employees is undertaken on a voluntary basis and therefore when personal reasons are cited it may not always be possible to obtain any further data as to why this is the case.



5.6 The equalities data provided in Appendix A is collated from the HR/Payroll Information System (Resourcelink) which includes information provided by employees when they were job applicants and some further information provided directly by employees through the HR self-service module (MyView). Applicants are asked to define

themselves according to their ethnic origin and whether or not they consider themselves to have a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010. In some cases individuals choose not to define themselves. The data in these categories, therefore, is based on those who have chosen to define themselves as male/female, having a disability, or minority ethnic. Age data is collected automatically as it is necessary for administrative purposes, such as entry to the pension scheme.

5.7 Other protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 such as sexual orientation and religion have been included more recently, because enough data has now been collected through the recruitment process. However, there are still large percentages of staff recorded as "unknown" in these categories. We aim to improve data collection for equalities through asking staff to update MyView because many of the workforce joined WBC before this data was requested on appointment. "Prefer not to say" will remain an option to select for those staff who would rather not provide sensitive information.

6 Recruitment & Retention

Background

6.1 The information in this section is based on the last 5 years, focusing on full-time equivalent numbers. The data excludes staff employed in schools, casual and agency workers unless otherwise stated.

During 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 there were 574 adverts placed, 462 posts advertised and 242 posts recruited to as opposed to 427 adverts in 2021/2022. As there were 247 new starters during 2022/2023 it is assumed the 5 not recruited through adverts are recruited via agency campaigns.

6.2 The data in Appendix A shows there were 373.20 FTE at WBC as at the 31st March 2023 (including all temporary posts). Of these 206 are covered by workers through Commensura. The new Talent team are currently working with recruiting managers to develop suitable approaches to recruitment that will encourage agency workers to transfer into roles as employees.

6.3 Talent Attraction

Two new talent attraction posts were created and filled in November 2022 to support development of a talent attraction offer for the Council. This has included a review and update of the process for recruitment which will be implemented from when views of Unison, recruiting managers and the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance have been considered. It is intended to reduce administration time for the process for Recruiting Managers, as well as improve the candidate experience and time to hire in what is a difficult recruitment market at present. There have been a range of careers events planned as well as a greater drive using social media and other more proactive forms of talent attraction. A new offer for market supplements, recruitment referral scheme and an updated Recruitment and Retention package for Children's Social Workers was implemented on the 1st April 2023. An updated benefits offer using the EAP through Sodexho, that offers staff a discounted percentage money off scheme has also recently been rolled out that enables staff access to discounted benefits from national and local retailers.

An Employer Value Proposition is also being developed. The Apprenticeship Strategy is being reviewed and there is a greater activity around work experience, T Levels and graduate schemes where the Council is now welcoming it's first cohort of students and graduates in Autumn 2023.

7 Performance Management – Casework

Context

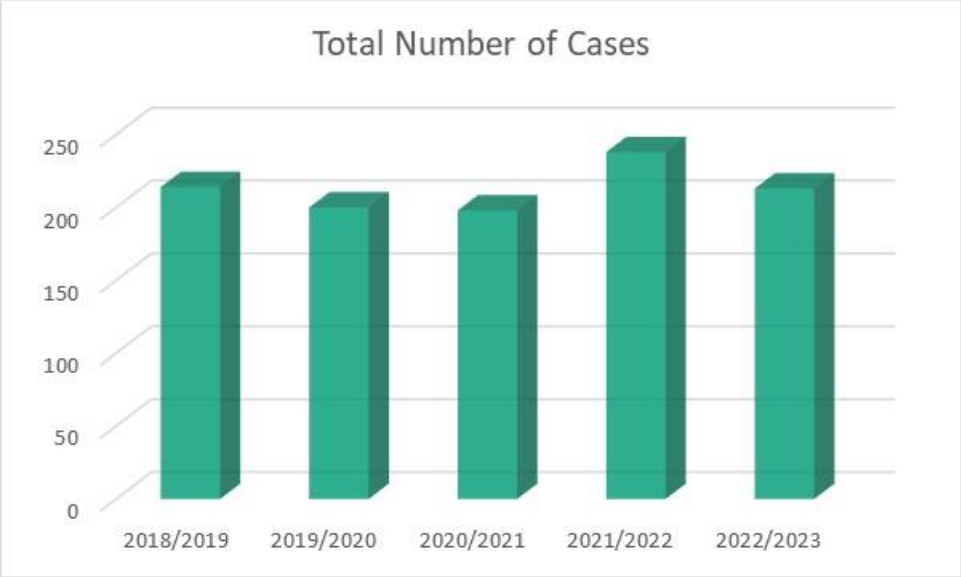
7.1 The Council's HR team supports both corporate managers and around 60 % of WBC schools in managing people issues to conclusion. For the purposes of this report Performance Management includes the following:

- Disciplinary and capability
- Grievances and whistleblowing
- Sickness absence, ill-health retirement, and related adjustments
- TUPE, restructures, and redundancies.

7.2 The previous report gave figures for the first half of the 2022-23 year; this report now gives a full year's data.

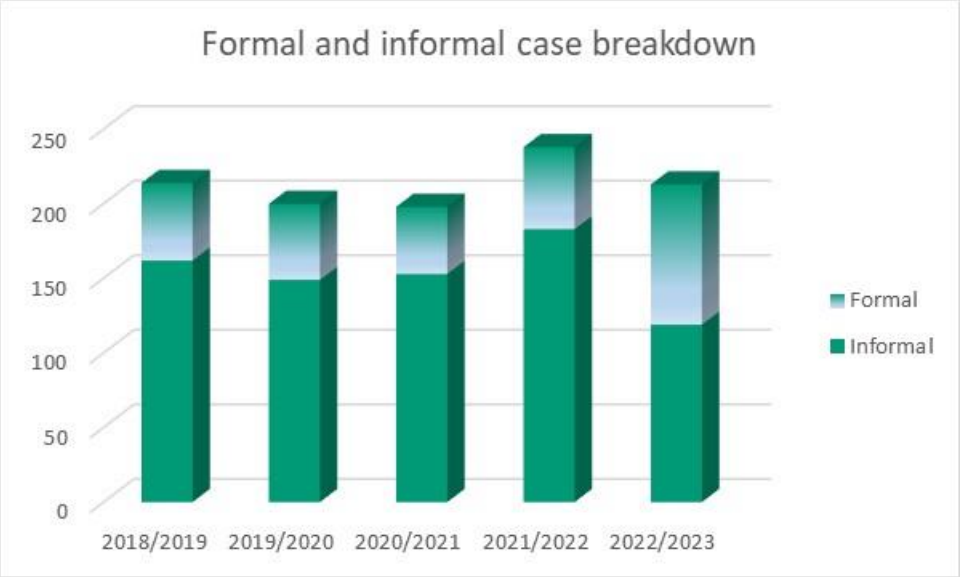
7.3 Table 1 below, shows the number of formal and informal cases within corporate for five full years. The numbers are slightly increased on last year but are statistically insignificant.

Table 1



7.4 Table 1 shows that in 2022/2023 there have been 200 cases which represents 13% of the workforce. Table 2, below, shows the mix of informal and formal casework. During the previous four years formal casework has made up between 23% and 27% of all cases recorded; over the last 12 months formal casework has increased to 44%. Given that the number of cases has remained relatively stable, this indicates that managers are more willing to progress procedures to a formal resolution. There is no evidence as to why this might be, but could be that during the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, cases were managed informally.

7.5 Table 2



7.6 Table 3, below, shows the variation in the main types of cases over the past four years (note – actual numbers are not given, to ensure confidentiality and data protection). As the numbers of cases are not high, it is difficult to draw accurate assessments of causality for any rise or fall in numbers. Anecdotally, it seems that disciplinary and grievance cases fell during 2020/21 due to changing work practices because of Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns e.g. with more employees working from home. This may also be the reason for the rise in ill health retirement cases, as more employees have considered the impact of long-term health conditions and their impact on work and personal life.

Sickness Absence

7.7 At the end of quarter 4 of 2022/23, the annualised number of days lost through sickness absence for the whole Council is calculated as **9.90 days**. The table below shows the year end outturn absence figures for the previous 4 years.

	2018/19	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Days lost per person	9.84	9.65	7.15	9.95	9.90

7.8 Note that 2020/21 was the primary year impacted by the COVID pandemic. This impacted on absence rates in that normal absence was reduced significantly due to

a large proportion of staff working at home for the majority of the year; thus 2020/21 was an anomaly.

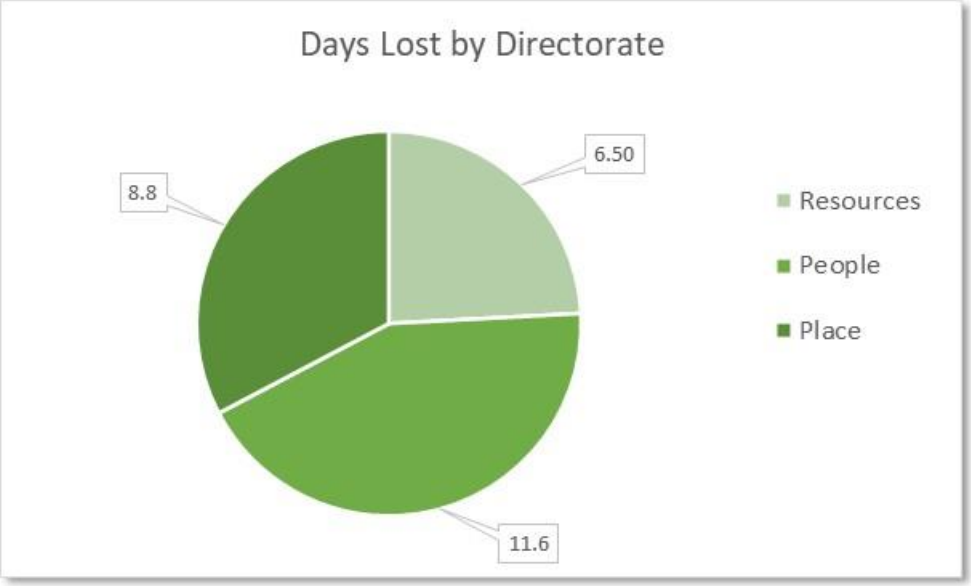
7.9 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes an annual survey on workplace absence for all sectors. The 2021 report published in April 2022 confirms that the all-time low of 3.6 days of 2020 has increased to 4.6 days during 2021 and 5.7 days in 2022, making it the highest level since 2011. This is an average rate for all sectors however it is also commented on that the public sector has a higher rate, but no figure for public sector sickness days per employee is published.

7.10 ONS data for 2022 sickness absence shows a public sector average for sickness absence as a percentage being 3.6% with WBC at an average of 3.7%.

Absence by Directorates

7.11 Table 3 below shows the number of days lost per person by Directorate.

Table 3



7.12 Compared to the 2021/22 year the numbers are almost identical, and any change is therefore statistically insignificant. This is to be expected, as the size of the employee population and the roles they carry out within each directorate is broadly identical as previous years. This does suggest, however, that pro-active management intervention may well have a positive effect on absence rates. For reference, the comparison is:

	2021/22	2022/23
Resources	6.0	6.5
People	12.0	11.6
Place	8.6	8.8

Short term vs Long term absence

7.13 Long-term absence is defined as a continuing sickness absence of more than 28 consecutive calendar days. During 2022/23, long-term sickness absence was 54.5% of all sickness absences (8,082.5 days lost); in 2021/22 it was 65.1% (10,022 days lost). This shows a significant decrease in long term absence.

7.14 Short-term absence has increased to 45.5% in 2022/23 from 34.9% in 2021/22. This is mainly due to the recording of all COVID absence as sickness from 1st April 2023. 21.7% of overall sickness related to infections including COVID in 2022/23 compared to 7.6% of overall sickness in 2021/22. Only long-term COVID absence was recorded as sickness in 2021/22.

Absence Reasons

7.15 The most common reason for both short-term and long-term absence for 2022/23 is "*stress, depression and mental health related*". In total, 24.1% of all sickness absence (long term and short term) was due to "stress, depression or mental health-related", compared to 36.4% in 2021/22.

7.16 Overall, *stress, depression and other mental health illness* has significantly decreased by 36%, with 3,570 days in 2022/23 compared to 5,606 days in 2021/22. The 2022/23 figure of 3,570 is more in line with the pre-pandemic levels. (2018/19 3,703 days; 2019/20 3,400 days). Stress however still remains the significant reason for long-term sickness absence.

External comparison

7.17 On 26 April 2023, the ONS released their analysis of sickness absence in the UK labour market for 2022. The key points in their report can be summarised as follows:

- The national sickness absence rate is at its highest level since 2004
- The most common reason for sickness absence was minor illnesses, accounting for 29.3% of occurrences

- Groups with the highest rates of sickness absence in 2022 included women, older workers, those with long-term health conditions, those working part-time and people working in care, leisure or other service occupations.

7.18 This last point is particularly relevant for our employee population, as WBC employs more women than men (77.3% and 22.7% respectively); 30.3% of our workforce is over the age of 55; and our care, leisure and service roles are maintained (in the large) in-house rather than outsourced. Therefore, we are seeing within WBC a picture that is repeated more widely at a national level.

7.19 The ONS notes the following top five reasons for sickness absence in 2022:

- Minor illnesses – 29.3%
- Other – 23.8%
- Musculoskeletal problems – 10.5%
- Respiratory problems – 8.3%
- Mental health conditions – 7.9%

7.20 In understanding the discrepancy between our percentage value for mental health conditions (24.1%) compared to the ONS (7.9%) it's important to remember that the ONS is looking at the working population as a whole; those in caring provisions or providing front line services are more likely to suffer mental health conditions than those who are more able to direct their own work and/or who don't work in front-line roles. There is currently no publicly available comparison data with other unitary authorities who provide identical services and gaining data relies on requesting such information for a like for like organisation.

7.21 It is also worth noting that NHS waiting lists continue to get longer; this is a common theme for all services from mental health provision to surgical procedures, and this is likely to continue to impact wellbeing at a national level for some time to come.

Support

7.22 WBC continues to offer a range of interventions and services to help maintain employees' wellbeing and to provide informed support if they do become unwell. Our Occupational Health provider continues to review employees face-to-face or via video/phone consultation; we offer up to six counselling sessions to employees for whom this is indicated; our Employee Assistance Programme is available 24/7; mental health first aiders continue to be trained; and our internal wellbeing provision provides an increasing range of services and sign posting. OH referrals can be made at any time and does not have to be as a result of a period of sickness absence. Employees are asked to attend when stress is a cause or sickness absence and/or when long term sickness absence triggers are met which is after a period of 4 weeks.

8 Appraisals

8.1 WBC requires employees to have an annual appraisal. The annual appraisal, and 6 monthly reviews, are utilised to ensure that there is a balance between the strategic objectives of the Council, the respective service and to help staff development.

8.2 Current data for percentages of appraisals completed are shown in the table below, and show an overall total of 83.25% for the Council as a whole as at Q4 in 2022/2023. The WBC target is set at 90% of staff to have had an appraisal within the previous 18 months (this is a temporary extension from the usual 15 months due to COVID) and there is a continual push from senior managers to support this happening. Directorates have been provided with lists of missing data to chase up within services and HR are working with services where reporting lines have changed and data can no longer be input in the usual way. In addition CLT and Operations Board are receiving monthly reports on appraisals so the situation can be monitored.

8.3 Below is the appraisal data for each quarter of 2022/2023. This relates to appraisals undertaken and recorded on My View the HR and Payroll System.

Appraisal/Performance Management Completions %	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**
People	85.64	85.48	81.76	84.57
Place	85.54	77.04	77.34	83.63
Resources	92.76	83.96	83.56	79.26
Total	87.15	83.20	81.04	83.25

9 Training

9.1 The Corporate Training Programme consists of Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Training. Some Mandatory training is used to calculate the Corporate KPI's (key performance indicators) which are reported centrally. All of our training is delivered using a variety of delivery methods and a blended approach of E-learning, Virtual (Zoom or Teams) as well as Face to Face training depending on the subject of the course.

9.2 Corporate training is commissioned annually and HR work with key stakeholders within the Council to design the programme based on the needs of the Departments and employees collectively. There is a dedicated resource that supports training for Social

Care teams as their annual mandatory and non-mandatory training need is large due to the nature of their service delivery.

9.3 Each year HR undertake a Training Needs Analysis survey for all staff to get their views on the training and learning they would like or need in the future to undertake their job roles. We had valuable comments and feedback from the survey this year and in previous years which has helped us evaluate last years programme and design the 2023/24 programme.

9.4 Last year we ran training and awareness workshops to support employees with wellbeing, and financial pressure, particularly during the cost of living crisis. Resilience & Wellbeing has been running since 2021, and this is a very popular course, there were staff and manager tailored sessions, and feedback was excellent. We ran some hybrid working courses, financial wellbeing, menopause awareness workshops, mental health first aid sessions, giving and receiving feedback, and emotional Intelligence. All these were additional to the usual mandatory courses that are published on Learning Time. They were well attended and had fantastic feedback.

9.5 Using the information from the TNA and our stakeholders we are designing a programme for the forthcoming year. We have identified common themes that arise throughout the survey results and are working on implementing a shortlist of training to include in our programme this year.

9.6 One of the largest themes of our training offering was again Wellbeing and this seems to be the biggest area of need again for this year.

9.7 The Training Programme is published on the intranet and shows what training is available to book within our Learning Management System - Learning Time. There is mandatory and non-mandatory training which is dependent on the role. For example, managers have different mandatory training to non-managers. Social Care workers have quite different responsibilities therefore their mandatory training is more extensive and specific.

9.8 The learning can be classroom (face to face or virtual) or e-learning. Courses are run by subject matter experts, some internal and some external. WBC have internal experts that run training, for example the majority of our Health & Safety training is run by the Health and Safety Manager and his team. Some Social Care training is run by Social Care experts who are qualified and experienced in specific areas. Many courses are run by external training organisations with specifically commissioned skills, experience and expertise. HR have received excellent training feedback which is based on comments rather than a statistical methodology and have worked with some companies for many years, and therefore they understand our culture, as well as our policies and procedures.

9.9 The figures below show the number of courses completed over the last four years.

	2019/20	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Number of employees who completed at least one course.	1169	1305	1097	1475
Percentage of employees completing any course (e-learning or classroom)	89.15	90.42	89.00	97.61
Total courses completed	7376	7419	7722	9517

As you can see the number of courses completed has increased over time, due to the availability of training, and more relevant training available.

The table above only relates to corporate training. This is not fully reflective of all training and employee development that takes place at WBC. Each department will have it's own budget for post specific training such as CPD for lawyers. The 70-20-10 rule, a key principle used for employee learning and development, reveals that individuals tend to learn 70% of their knowledge from challenging experiences and assignments (generally on the job learning), 20% from developmental relationships (coaching, mentoring and buddying for example) and 10% from coursework and training. So it is important to ensure a holistic approach to all employee learning to ensure WBC offer an approach that suits all employees and their learning styles too to get the best from them.

As part of the appraisal process each employee should be completing, reviewing and implementing a Personal Development Plan. These should be discussed with their line manager at each appraisal meeting. Some professions also have more specific and dedicated learning and training time and approaches such as social workers.

17 Conclusion

The contents of the report are for information for Personnel Committee on the 4th July 2023.

18 Appendices

Appendix A Employment and Equalities Data

Background Papers:

Not applicable

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

Wards affected: not applicable

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Appendix A

WBC Employment Data and Equalities Data as at 31st March 2023

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Headcount	1486	1512	1545	1532	1511
Post FTE	1561.59	1576.61	1621.98	1667.93	1731.10
Occupied FTE	1297.10	1323.62	1366.44	1362.10	1357.90
Vacant FTE	264.49	252.99	255.54	305.83	373.20

Starters and Leavers – 5 years (1st April 2018 to 31st March 2023)

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/2023
Number of starters in year	209	243	175	210	247
Number of leavers in year	211	211	142	220	242
Turnover (%)	14.19%	14.08%	9.29%	14.30%	15.9%
Voluntary turnover (%)	12.30%	12.14%	8.44%	13.00%	14.86%
Average length of service of leavers	5y 8m	6y 2m	6y 8m	7y	5y 9m
Average length of service of employees employed at year end	8y 8m	8y 7m	8y 8m	8y 9m	8y 10m
Stability index (% employees at year end with 12 or more months' service)	89.23%	87.10%	90.29%	89.43%	86.3%

Percentage % of Starters by Age Range – 5 years (2018 to 2023)

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Under 25	12.44	10.29	18.29	20.95	9.72%
25-34	24.40	19.34	26.86	22.86	25.10%
35-44	23.92	25.51	17.71	23.33	25.91%
45-54	24.88	25.93	24.00	21.90	21.05%
55-64	14.35	17.70	12.00	9.52	17.00%
65+	0.00	1.23	1.14	1.43	1.21%

Percentage (%) of all leavers during the last 5 years by age range

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Under 25	6.16	3.32	5.63	9.09	5.79%
25-34	14.22	19.43	16.20	12.73	23.97%
35-44	25.12	20.38	21.13	19.55	21.07%
45-54	22.75	24.17	21.83	22.73	19.83%
55-64	24.64	25.12	22.54	21.36	19.83%
65+	7.11	7.58	12.68	14.55	9.50%

Equalities Data as at 31st March 2023 (5 years from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2023).

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Female	77.46	78.04	77.35	77.48	77.30
Male	22.54	21.96	22.65	22.52	22.70
Disability	3.57	3.70	3.88	3.79	4.24
Ethnic Minority	7.07	7.08	6.99	7.77	8.27
Under 25	3.23	3.70	3.75	4.18	3.04
25-34	15.28	14.02	14.82	14.69	15.09
35-44	21.53	22.09	21.36	22.32	21.84
45-54	30.89	30.89	30.61	29.57	29.78
55-64	25.30	25.00	24.40	24.02	24.69
65+	3.77	4.30	5.05	5.22	5.56
Bisexual	0.67	0.93	1.36	1.57	1.59
Gay/Lesbian	0.94	0.93	0.91	0.85	0.86
Heterosexual	52.83	56.28	58.58	61.16	62.74
Other	0.61	0.73	0.84	0.91	0.93
Prefer not to say	5.11	5.22	5.24	5.94	6.29

Prefer to self-describe	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.07	0.07
Unknown	39.84	35.92	33.01	29.50	27.53
Agnostic	1.14	1.59	1.94	2.09	2.32
Atheist	3.16	4.43	4.98	5.42	5.82
Buddhist	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.26
Christian	30.15	30.89	32.23	32.11	32.76
Hindu	0.67	0.40	0.39	0.26	0.86
Jewish	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00
Muslim	0.40	0.40	0.39	0.52	0.33
Sikh	0.20	0.26	0.39	0.39	0.33
None	18.30	19.71	20.39	23.04	23.23
Other religion/belief	1.48	1.65	1.62	1.31	1.52
Prefer not to say	5.18	5.22	5.18	5.81	5.82
Unknown	39.17	35.32	32.49	28.85	26.74

Census Data 2021 for West Berkshire - Equality

	Headcount of population	% of total population
Disabled under the Equality Act	23671	15%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	137777	85%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	5991	4%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	2030	1%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	3856	2%
White	148384	92%
Other ethnic group	1186	1%