

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	21 February 2024
Title of Report:	HR & Organisational Development Priorities & Update
Lead Member:	Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD)
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Chris Squire (Service Director HR & Organisational Development)
Contact Email:	Chris.squire@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To present to the Committee the priorities for the Human Resources & Organisational Development (HROD) team and update on key themes and trends.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. That the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. No alternative options as this is an update report for the Committee.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The work of the HROD team directly supports council services to deliver the Corporate Plan, by enabling staff to work effectively and to flourish in their roles. Specific to the Plan, this work empowers and engages our staff and is directly linked to the People Strategy.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

There are no additional implications for the MTFP from this overview report.

Financial Risks

There are no additional financial risks to be noted from this overview report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

This report has no environmental implications.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

The outcomes from this work will reinforce a culture of health & safety. A focus within the programme is equalities, particularly with regard to people who share protected characteristics. This will help to position Plymouth City Council as a place where people aspire to work and develop their careers.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							
C	Climate Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	DJN. 23.24. 192	Leg	LS/00 0010 75/1/ AC/1 3/2/2 4	Mon Off		HR		Asset s		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Chris Squire											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Tracey Lee - Yes											
Date agreed: 12/02/2024											

Cabinet Member approval:



Date approved: 12/02/2024

PERFORMANCE, FINANCE AND CUSTOMER FOCUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –

Human Resources & Organisational Development Briefing

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to brief the Committee on the following:

- The priorities for the Human Resources & Organisational Development Team (HROD) for 2024-25.
- Key workforce trends and data.
- Actions relating to the Big Listen Staff Survey.
- The status of current programmes.

The work links directly to Plymouth City Council's People Strategy.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Plymouth City Council's People Strategy was agreed in 2020. It set the vision for how the authority would support and develop its employees, underpinning the Council mission to make Plymouth a fairer city where everyone does their bit. The strategy sets out four broad objectives:

- Everyone feels welcome.
- Aspire to be the best.
- Attract and keep the right people.
- Be well led.

The past four years have been challenging financial times for all local authorities, however we continue to prioritise high quality services, led and delivered through the hard work of our staff. The ambition coming from the People Strategy has to be creating and maintaining Plymouth City Council as a high-quality and exemplar employer in the city and the South West.

2.2. The current Service Director for HROD started in post in November 2023.

2.3. The Big Listen Staff Survey took place in June-July 2022. Several programmes of work came from the survey and updates are described in Section 4.4.

3. HR-OD Priorities for 2024-25

The HR-OD team has experienced significant change in recent years, due to factors including local government financial challenge, changes in leadership, service restructures and adapting (as a team and leading the workforce) to a post-pandemic working environment. Following the appointment of the new Service Director of HROD, the service has identified key issues that impact on the work of the team and the workforce. There are several conclusions as a result of this work, which have informed the priorities for the team for 2024-25. These conversations also highlighted strengths of the current team and issues affecting it.

3.1. Strengths Impacting on HR & the Workforce

The HROD team has identified the following strengths that impact on the service and the workforce.

- Ambitious administration that cares for the workforce.
- Senior Leadership Team mostly established.

- Real track record of delivering for Plymouth.
- Workforce that really cares about what it delivers.
- Established policy framework and supporting tools.
- A history of strong workforce practices & programmes.
- A strong City-Brand.

3.2. Issues Impacting on HR & the Workforce

The HROD service has identified the following issues that impact the team and workforce.

- Pay & Reward – pressures similar across local government, however local issue with senior grades and pressures elsewhere (e.g. corporate service roles, street services).
- Recruitment & retention in Children's Services.
- Current HR & Payroll system.
- Bureaucracy around current processes.
- Increasing sickness absence rate across PCC.

All of the above are now being addressed, and progress is described in Section 4 of this report.

3.3. Priorities for the HR-OD Team

Based on the points presented in 3.1 and 3.2, above, the HR-OD team has been tasked with an immediate focus on the following:

- Recruitment & Induction – ensuring efficient processes, attractive recruitment advertising, recruitment strategies & plans, revamped induction process.
- HR/Payroll system – re-tender of current system in anticipation of expiry of current contract in March 2025.
- Establishment Control – ensuring we have an accurate view of vacancies against budgeted posts, across Payroll and the Financial Ledger.
- Staff Wellbeing – focus on individual cases and overall wellbeing programmes.
- Workforce Planning – ensuring we have described workforce plans across the Council, to look at key areas such as apprenticeships, succession planning and workforce risks.
- Training Needs Analysis – collating corporate training needs from across the Council.
- Leadership & Management Development – CMT, SLT, 'The Plymouth Manager', Family of Companies – ensuring we have development for managers at all levels of the organisation, together with programmes for colleagues who aspire to management and leadership positions.
- Senior Manager grades – Ensuring that we remain competitive in our offer for senior managers, leaders and subject matter experts, based on analysis and benchmarking with local authorities, other public sector and private sector organisations locally, regionally and nationally.
- Children's & Street Services – focused attention on these areas, to embed work described above which will subsequently be rolled out across Plymouth City Council.

4. Current Projects

4.1. Recruitment

Sprint Project

As part of Plymouth City Council's transformation programme and focus on organisational effectiveness, the HR-OD and Transformation teams established a 'sprint project' to focus on reducing bureaucracy and improving recruitment processes. This project was closed in December 2023, with the outcomes including:

- Recruitment authorisation delegated to services.
- Clearer formats, forms, terminology.
- Improved quality assurance of recruitment requests.

A new recruitment project has now been started, looking at how PCC presents itself as an employer-of-choice to prospective candidates (and current staff) and the tools needed to achieve this. This work is directly linked to the Children's Services Improvement Programme, and includes development of our own recruitment pages (members of the committee are invited to view our Children's Services careers' pages - [Careers in children's services | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/careers-in-childrens-services)) as well as the use of tools such as LinkedIn. This has seen creative and effective work across teams, including Communications, Children's Services, Transformation, Finance and HR-OD.

Recruitment statistics show the scale of this challenge:

- Since April 2023 – direct PCC employment:
 - 435 recruitment requests.
 - Circa 30 – 40 new starters per month.
 - Establishment Changes within the HR & Payroll system - to date 2,500.
 - Disclosure & Barring Service processes including self-declarations - to date 1,400.
- Temporary Recruitment last 12-months (via Matrix):
 - 716 placements in total.
 - Currently - 22 placements recorded as 'Interim' – day rate placements.
 - 258 active placements.

The focus on workforce planning within Children's and Street Services will reduce the number of agency staff used.

Chief Officer Appointments

The HR-OD team has run several chief officer appointments processes in recent months, supported by monthly meetings of the Chief Officer Appointments Panel. Successful appointments include:

- Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
- Service Director Human Resources & Organisational Development
- Strategic Director for Children's Services
- Service Director Education, Partnerships & Skills
- Interim Service Director Children, Young People & Family Services

4.2. Management Development

A development programme for managers has been written, covering people management skills. The purpose of this is to ensure consistency of practice across the organisation, as well as develop networks and share good practice. The areas covered are:

- Managing Performance
- Managing Attendance and sickness absence in the workplace

- Managing Disciplinary
- Managing Grievance
- Recruitment and selection for managers

Delivery of this programme will start in Children's Services, followed by Street Services and then rolled out across PCC.

4.3. Welcome Event and Induction

Plymouth City Council has circa 30-40 new starters per month, it is therefore critical we undertake effective and welcoming induction for all staff.

The HROD team has reviewed the welcome event for all new starters within the Council. This event is led by the Chief Executive, with guest speakers to introduce all the key aspects of working life in the council, the role of Members, the role of the trade unions, the employee benefits and the experience they should receive. The first of these new events was held on 8th February 2024.

The team is also reviewing the induction programme from pre-employment through the first 3 months of employment, for employees and managers. Also known as 'on-boarding', this recognises that induction isn't a one-off event, rather a process that takes place in advance of someone starting with the Council and supporting them through their first few months here.

4.4. The 'Big Listen' Staff Survey

The creation of an Engagement Champion Network was the principal action from the last staff survey ('The Big Listen'). The purpose of the network is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard; that their ideas are given fair consideration and actions are taken that make Plymouth City Council a better place to work.

Membership and Role

There are currently 19 members so far from across our services and the intention is to increase this number so that every department has a representative. Introductory welcome sessions with the Champions ran on Thursday 30th November and Tuesday 5th December 2023.

Areas of Focus

The Champions have focused first on two of the main themes that came out of our 2022 Big Listen Staff Survey: Communication and Change Management. Using a framework, they will gather the views from their teams/departments on the realistic actions and solutions that could be taken to improve in these areas. \

The next area of focus for the Champions will be Employee Recognition, and work on this will start in Spring 2024.

4.5. Apprenticeships

The Council currently has 89 active learners, studying & working for an apprenticeship qualification. The Council is in an extremely strong position to launch an apprenticeships campaign, highlighting the opportunities for the recruitment of external apprentices, as a pipeline of talent for all areas of the organisation. This includes the focus on Children's and Street Services, referred to under HR Priorities.

HROD work with Street Services has seen a focus on succession and development at Prince Rock, with 9 recent enrolments out of 13 places on PCC's team leader apprenticeship programme coming from that team. Apprenticeship pay is being aligned to the NJC pay-scales, which will promote the Council as an employer of choice within the apprentice job market.

Work by the HROD team identifies appropriate vacancies suitable for apprenticeships and managers will continue to be encouraged to consider offering an apprenticeship wherever possible.

4.6. Pay & Reward

New pay grades ('M & N') for senior managers, leaders and subject matter experts were approved by Full Council in 2023 and are part of the Pay Policy Statement. The HR-OD team is currently running a project to re-evaluate all posts at grade L, to assess which ones may be in scope for placing in the new grades. This work will also see the implementation of the Recruitment & Retention Strategy, that was agreed in March 2023.

Once completed, the team will then start a project to assess the viability of our current job evaluation system for senior roles.

4.7. Sickness Absence

The HR team is working very closely with directors, managers and individual members of staff on sickness absence. This includes a focus on the 'Top 100' and those with frequent periods of absence and is done in an open and supportive way. Processes are supported by Occupational Health, our Employee Assistance Programme, trade union representatives and new line manager training (as described in section 4.2).

Increased absence levels in Plymouth City Councils are due to muskulo-skeletal and stress & anxiety. We are seeing positive results from interventions in areas such as Independence at Home and Street Services.

It should be noted that increasing levels of sickness absence are being seen across the UK, notably due to stress & anxiety.

The increase in sickness absence can be seen in figure 1:

Figure 1 - Sickness Absence



5. Data Analysis

Workforce data is now presented in a 'flashcard' format for the Council and individual services. An example of this (reflecting corporate data) can be seen in Appendix One, service area flashcards include brief analysis of the figures. This data is discussed at senior team meetings within each service area, with strategic directors discussing implications and actions monthly at the Corporate Management Team meeting.

6. Link to the People Strategy

The priorities and programmes of work described in this paper link directly to the delivery of the People Strategy and will inform its next iteration. This is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Links to People Strategy

Link to People Strategy		 PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL
Everyone Feels Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment & Induction • Staff Networks • Staff Engagement – Survey & Awards • Culture Programme 	Aspire to be the Best <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CoreHR</u> Replacement Programme • Establishment Control • Organisational Training Needs Analysis • HR ‘Surgeries’ • HR-OD leading on M365 adoption • Monthly Development Sessions for HR-OD • Organisational Effectiveness Programme 	
Attract & Keep the Right People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Wellbeing – Analysis & Report • Workforce Planning • Recruitment & Retention analysis & report • Pay & Grading Review • Young People Strategy • Ways of Working (inc. Hybrid) 	Be Well Led <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership & Management Development – CMT, SLT, ‘The Plymouth Manager’, Family of Companies • Regular 1-1s with Directors • Development Sessions for trade union representatives, managers & HR staff • Senior Manager Grades 	

7. Conclusion

The priorities for the Human Resources & Organisational Development Team, together with current and planned programmes of work, show the clear development of the existing People Strategy for Plymouth City Council and set the way ahead for its next iteration. Good progress has been made across all areas, however we do not underestimate the amount and quality of work that is needed in order to support the workforce required to deliver the Plymouth Plan.

Chris Squire, Service Director Human Resources & Organisational Development

Appendix One – Workforce Flashcard

QUARTER 3 – 2023/24 HEADLINES	
<p>Total Headcount 2,538</p> <p>Council headcount: 2,538 Council FTE: 2,166.34</p>	<p>Sickness absence 10.31 days lost per FTE (RYTD) December days lost per FTE: 0.89 <u>Top 3 Reasons for sickness RYTD</u> Short term: Cold/Flu, Stomach/ Gastric/ Liver, COVID Long term: Stress – Personal, Anxiety/ Depression/ Psych – Personal, other musculoskeletal (exc. Back and neck)</p>
<p>Change since 31/3/23: +32</p>	<p>National Avg: 8.7 days lost per FTE (LGA 2022)</p>
<p>Vacancies</p> <p>Work in progress – establishment cleanse currently taking place to remove all unbudgeted, vacant posts from the establishment.</p>	<p>Annual Turnover (RYTD) 11.33%</p> <p>% Turnover in month: 0.67%</p> <p><u>Top 3 reasons for leaving RYTD:</u> Resignation, Retirement, Dismissal</p>
<p>National Avg: 14% median vacancy rate (council-wide) (LGA 2021/22)</p>	<p>National Avg: 13.4% (LGA 2021)</p>
<p>Cost of agency workers: £1,084,768.39 per month (December)</p> <p>Agency Workers 314 % of Headcount: 11.0% % of pay bill: 11.77%</p> <p>Full year forecast: £9,329,337.43</p>	<p>23/24 Apprentices 41 Total Apprentices 88</p> <p>Internal development starting 23/24: 20. External appointments starting 23/24: 21.</p>
<p>National Avg: 6% (22/23) FOI response</p>	<p>National and PCC annual target: 58 (2.3%)</p>
<p>Agency Placements over 36 months: 15</p> <p>Placements 13 - 24 months: 45 Placements 25 - 36 months: 10</p> <p>Total number of placements: 314</p>	<p>Formal HR Casework 35</p> <p>Attendance: 6 Disciplinary: 15 Performance: 2 Grievance: 8 Employment Tribunal: 3</p>
<p>National Avg: N/A</p>	<p>National Avg: N/A</p>

