



Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
Date:	24 February 2022
Subject:	People Management Update – Quarter 3

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the HR Management Information (HRMI) and on corporate HR projects.

Actions Required:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to seek assurance on HR Management Information and note the progress on 2021 - 24 People Strategy projects.

1. Background

This report provides a summary of the HR management information data from 2021 Quarter 3 (Q3) which can be seen in the summary data dashboard in Appendix A.

The report also includes a high-level summary of the 2021 - 24 people strategy projects.

2. HR Management Information

a. Employments

The number of employments increased by 47 in Quarter 3 (5586) and by 107 in total over the last four quarters.

While some areas are still seeing greater turnover and are experiencing difficulties recruiting, other areas have had successful recruitment drives and have been able to increase their staffing where needed. In Q3 the biggest increase in employments was in Place (+38); this was due to successful recruitment to fill vacancies in highways and communities. There were also 14 additional employments in Children's services; this has included employment of relief employees to help provide cover for vacancies and absences.

In Quarter 3, all remaining directorates (other than Children's Services and Place as outlined above) have had only minor fluctuations in numbers overall.

b. Voluntary turnover

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, voluntary turnover levels had remained stable between 8% and 10%. In Quarter 4 2020 this had reduced to 6.18%.

Current figures are returning to pre-pandemic levels and are increasing quarter on quarter reaching 8.77% at the end of Q3. The rate of increase appears to be slowing but continues to cause concern particularly where the national competition for recruiting skilled professionals is greater such as social work and care, legal, IMT and procurement. This has led to a need to increase agency usage and relief contracts in some areas and alternative methods to increase capacity such as increasing the number of posts at a lower level where recruitment is less competitive. The Attraction and Retention Framework outlined in Paragraph 3 sets out more detail on steps being taken to address these issues.

c. Agency spend

Services within the Council use agency workers to provide flexibility on a short-term basis. This may be to cover a role pending permanent recruitment; to cover a secondment; for peaks in demand; specialist skills; or to cover absences such as paternity leave, holiday or sickness. Therefore, the current situation in skill shortages is a typical reason to take advantage of agency resources to help maintain services.

The total agency spend in 2020-2021 was £4.89 million and was £2.2 million less than the previous year. So far in 2021-2022, due to the turnover and recruitment challenges, the total agency spend is £4.26 million. There has been an increase in spend each quarter. If Quarter 4 is to require the same level of agency, the end of year figure is likely to be £5.77 million, a £880k increase on last year. If the upward trend continues, this increase may be closer to £1 million.

The greatest increase in agency spend this year was during October where a number of areas have used additional agency to cover vacancies. This includes Adult Care, Children's Services and Legal Services (Resources). The greatest increase in Quarter 3 has been in Resources which along with the vacancies in Legal Services, agency staff have been required by Business Support to cover additional work for Children's Services.

d. Sickness absence

The information presented on sickness absence does not currently include complete data for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue. This will be updated in the next report.

At the end of Quarter 3, the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) days lost per FTE figure for Directorates excluding Fire and Rescue stands at 7.63. This has now exceeded the sickness target of 7.5 days per FTE.

The number of absences attributed to Cold, Flu and viruses rose steeply from September to November where the seasonal illness were further increased by Covid-19 cases and chest infections.

As the Sickness absence measure takes into account all absence over the previous 12 months, the current figure has been affected by the number of Covid-19 cases over the summer months when absences due to colds and viruses would usually be low. There has also been a consistently high level of mental health related absence since the summer months attributed to the difficulties experienced by staff in the current environment and where people are stretched due to staff vacancies.

In Quarter 3 the highest levels of absence have been in Adult Care and Community Wellbeing and Children's Services.

In Adult Care and Community Wellbeing (ACCW) and Children's Services (CS) the sickness level reduced below the 7.5 target during Quarter 1, however both directorates have seen an upward trend in absences since then (ACCW 10.62, CS 9.04).

In both areas the majority of absences are for cold and flu viruses (including Covid-19), however across the whole Council, mental health related reasons are the cause of most days' sickness.

Support for employee mental health continues to increase. We are monitoring the use of the new mental health first aider provision which launched in October. We are running resilience workshops and mindfulness sessions for staff to attend. In addition to their usual service, the Employee Support and Counselling team are providing 'wellbeing check ins' for staff and are developing peer support groups to help colleagues experiencing grief and loss.

There is a new offer of assessment, priority referral to mainstream services and trauma support in development by specialist mental health practitioners; and we have launched a fitness challenge with One You Lincolnshire for individuals or teams to sign up to increase their activity levels.

e. Benchmarking

As part of the next report, it is planned that we will include reference to Local Government Association (LGA) benchmarking data for the above data sets (excluding agency spend and usage).

3. People Strategy

a) Attracting and Retaining Talent

The main area of focus at the present time is the County Council's ability to manage the challenges around attraction and retention.

In discussion with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), the new People Strategy Board and the Assistant Directors forum with CLT, a new Attraction and Retention framework has been developed to support the Executive Priority on Organisational Resilience.

The framework has been agreed with CLT and Directorates. It offers services different interventions that they can consider on a short, medium and long term basis to aid attraction and retention. Discussions are now in place on what particular options services desire, enabling the flexibility of Directorate decisions rather than any 'corporate centre' approval.

b) Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an important aspect of the Attraction and Retention strategy whereby levy funding can be utilised to fund training, targeted to the hard to recruit and retain skill areas. There continues to be healthy take up across maintained schools and corporate areas.

The Council continues to support apprenticeships through the levy transfer scheme through which we support 28 apprentices.

As of 1 January 2022, the total number of apprentices is 269 on roll, with a levy allocation of £ 2.8m. 69.5% of apprenticeship training provision is being delivered by local providers.

c) Performance and Development Appraisal

Consultation has been completed on a new appraisal policy which reflects a simpler and more flexible process to monitor performance and support employees as appropriate. The new policy will be launched from April 2022 and will enable performance monitoring monthly, including appraisal, allowing objectives to be added / amended in line with service need (rather than wait for a traditional 'annual appraisal').

d) Employee Survey 2021

The employee survey was completed in November and December 2021 and had a response rate of 44%.

The overall engagement score was 4.06 on a scale of 1-6 with 6 being highly engaged this is an increase from 2019.

There were positive responses about line managers being available and approachable, promoting health and wellbeing, recognising and supporting employees.

Comparison was undertaken with the 2019 results and areas that had not improved were:

- the feeling that they had a fair opportunity to progress and develop their career
- opportunities to use their strengths and talents in their role
- the Council's values providing a clear framework for a team to operate in

- LCC taking a pro-active and preventative approach to support health and wellbeing
- maintaining a good level of resilience and wellbeing most of the time

The implementation of the other projects within the People Strategy will support with these areas.

The areas that had improved compared with 2019 were

- employee's involvement in decisions and processes
- their freedom and empowerment to organise work
- that we operate as 'One Council'
- that employees are taking regular breaks and are less likely to skip lunch breaks
- less employees working when they should be taking sick leave

This is positive for our move towards distributed leadership and action taken to support the taking of breaks in the last 12 months.

More detailed results will be discussed at directorate leadership team meetings during February and March.

e) Smarter Working Policy

As of 31 January, due to the lifting of government restrictions, we are now able to implement the Smarter Working Policy and apply hybrid working through the opening of Service and Leadership Hubs and managed workspace on Newland Campus, as well as locality working. All contractual work bases remain for employees and individuals will be required to attend work in line with service need.

4. Conclusion

The Board is invited to review the HRMI data from 2020 Quarter 4 to 2021 Quarter 3 and seek assurance on HR Management Information and the progress on People Strategy projects.

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Quarterly HRMI data 2020 Quarter 4 to 2021 Quarter 3

7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
People Strategy 2021-2024	Copy can be requested via tony.kavanagh@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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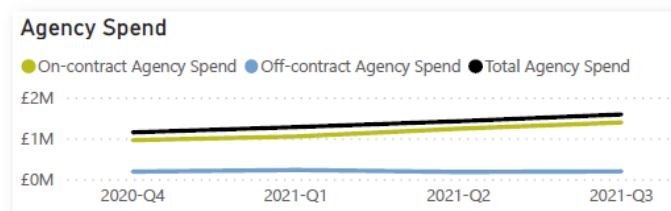
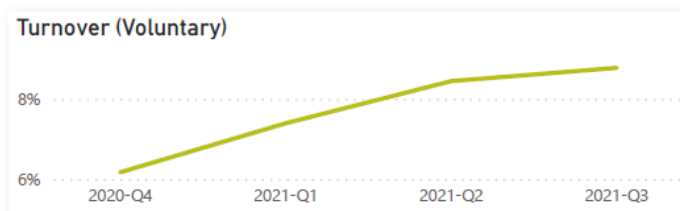
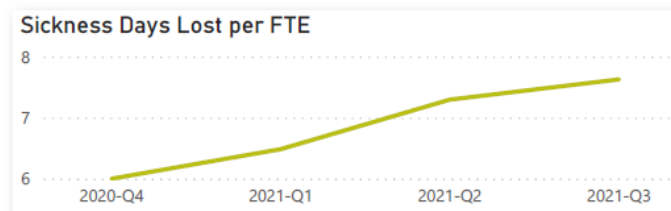
HRMI for LCC by quarter from 2020-Q4

Financial Year - Quarter	Employments
2020-Q4	5479
2021-Q1	5447
2021-Q2	5539
2021-Q3	5586

Financial Year - Quarter	Sickness Days Lost per FTE
2020-Q4	6.00
2021-Q1	6.48
2021-Q2	7.30
2021-Q3	7.63

Financial Year - Quarter	Turnover (Voluntary)
2020-Q4	6.18%
2021-Q1	7.39%
2021-Q2	8.44%
2021-Q3	8.77%

Financial Year - Quarter	On-contract Agency Spend	Off-contract Agency Spend	Total Agency Spend
2020-Q4	£958,030	£190,229.0	£1,148,259
2021-Q1	£1,047,064	£229,914.2	£1,276,978
2021-Q2	£1,237,652	£182,698.3	£1,420,351
2021-Q3	£1,389,820	£196,219.6	£1,586,040



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