

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CP/10/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 24 May 2023

Report Title: Communities and Place Workforce Planning 2023–2026

Report By: Executive Chief Officer - Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a summary of the Communities & Place Service Workforce Plan for 2023–2026.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the Communities & Place Service Workforce Plan for 2023–2026.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – A failure to manage workforce planning and change puts at risk the Council's capacity to make the most effective use of resources. The impact of failure of statutory service delivery will have a reputational impact, as well as financial implications from any relevant regulatory body. Limited budget will impact on what level of service is delivered, if it is not mandated, especially on the number of staff; training of the staff; plant and equipment available for staff to do their job effectively.
- 3.2 **Legal** – Care is required that large scale and complex workforce change be managed in line with current employment legislation and Highland Council policy. The delivery of core and statutory functions will be impacted if the Service is inadequately resourced, and staff do not have the necessary skills to deliver core functions.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – A screening for impact has been undertaken on the Workforce Plan. This is to ensure that any impacts are effectively identified and, if required, mitigation put in place. The assessment has highlighted that the development of the Workforce plan should have a positive impact for equality, socio-economic, rural and island communities. This is because the plan focuses upon:

- Developing career progression paths to address succession planning
- Reviewing job and person specifications to eliminate gender/age/disabled perceptions on roles
- Targeted recruitment will support economic sustainability in rural areas (migration and repopulation, especially in remote/rural areas is an issue), with potential factors such as housing, transport, remoteness, skills gaps, long-term employment and fair pay all being influencers.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – No implications, other than the hybrid working approach and better use of technology and equipment will contribute to achieving carbon reduction targets.

3.5 **Risk** – Having a sustainable workforce is included as a risk in the Corporate Risk Register. There are also staffing resource challenges associated with budget constraints. This report mitigates the risk of an insufficient current and future workforce.

3.6 **Gaelic** – No implications.

4. Background

4.1 Workforce Planning is the process that organisations use to make sure they have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. To manage their workforce effectively, organisations need to have up-to-date information on:-

- the number of people they employ to carry out different tasks;
- what skills the workforce has and where there are gaps; and
- what skills and staff will be needed to deliver future services and priorities

4.2 Service specific workforce planning has been taken forward in line with the agreed Workforce Planning and Development Action Plan that was approved at the Redesign Board on 23 March 2021. The Communities and Place Service have also assessed their workforce planning data on a detailed section-by-section basis, as there are differences between the different sections of the Service that is responsible for the delivery of key front-line services. This detailed level of assessment has enabled the Service to identify and tailor specific actions that will meet their different challenges.

4.3 The Highland Council's People Strategy approved at Full Council on 27 October 2022 outlines the direction and framework for the organisation over a 5-year period relating to our workforce. The Strategy provides an overview and our approach covering eight key staff elements: staff engagement; health, safety and wellbeing; reward and conditions (including job design); talent management; people development; people data and processes; workforce planning; equality, diversity and inclusion.

4.4 Effective workforce planning will support the Communities & Place Service to:-

- deliver improved services;
- review how many employees are required;
- manage employee budgets effectively;

- ensure sufficient and appropriate training is funded and provided;
- cope with changes in supply and demand for various skills; and
- deploy/recruit staff appropriately.

- 4.5 The Communities & Place Service Workforce Plan has been prepared using the Highland Council 6-step model as in **Appendix 1**. The plan covers a period of 4 years (2023–2026) and will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Service directorate, supported by the HR Business Partner.
- 4.6 As part of the workforce planning exercise, the Communities & Place Service Extended Management Team undertook focused workshops to analyse the context and environment, the current and required workforce profiles and actions needed to ensure the workforce can meet future demands. This was facilitated by HR on a section-by-section basis, which was both inclusive and collaborative, and the level of analysis undertaken by the Service provided an in-depth awareness of challenges and ensures actions are targeted to section specific business needs. Some of the key data populated and analysed is shown in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.7 Following the recommendation from the Workforce Planning Strategy Review Board to take a broader approach to Service Workforce Planning, the sessions were joined by the Service Business Partners for Corporate Performance and Head of ICT & Digital Transformation.

5. Context and Environment

- 5.1 The context and environment analysis recognises the political and economic challenges The Highland Council and, therefore the Communities & Place Service faces.
- 5.2 Economic changes cited as potentially having an impact on the Service workforce establishment includes:-
- annual savings target;
 - Scottish Government Grants;
 - Highland Council salaries compared with private sector;
 - increased competition for skilled employees;
 - inflation - cost of living increase;
 - costs of materials and fuel;
 - increased demand and expectation for services; and
 - availability/affordability of housing.
- 5.3 The main change in the Service since the last Service Workforce Plan was presented was the Council's senior management redesign.
- 5.4 The Service recognises the need to work with staff and Trade Union colleagues to look at establishing an agile workforce in relation to reviewing current staffing structures, working practices and processes.
- 5.5 The Service also highlighted the need to strive to provide their staff with a sense of belonging and provide opportunities to motivate, engage and empower the Council's

workforce to achieve a working environment based on our values to improve motivation, ways of working and individual capability at all levels.

- 5.6 Consideration is also given to performance management being a critical component to workforce planning. It allows managers and staff to communicate expectations and outcomes, and also importantly provides information to management, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding service delivery. Through effective use of data, leaders can analyse the current situation, identify trends and gaps in the workforce and plan for the future by taking proactive and corrective actions through processes such as recruitment, training and development. Performance management can also help managers recognise areas for improvement and increase staff engagement and retention.
- 5.7 The Highland Council's Digital Strategy and implementation plan was released in Autumn 2022. The strategy takes an informed approach to laying foundations and setting achievable objectives for becoming a digital council. 'Leading', 'Thinking' and 'Being' Digital are the three key themes of the Strategy, which in turn forms part of the Council's wider agenda for its organisational development. This is a key consideration in workforce planning and organisational improvement, with the Council, staff and service users benefiting from increased efficiencies by developing a culture and mindset that thinks digital.

6. Current Workforce Profile

- 6.1 The Service has a total of 772 staff and has an average turnover rate of 14%. The staff comprises 76% male and 24% female.
- 6.2 The Service workforce are predominately on permanent contracts of employment (88%) with the remaining 12% being temporary due to ring-fenced temporary funding for specific projects such as within the Community Support, Contact and Engagement Section. Staff on such temporary contracts are more likely to seek alternative and more secure employment which can contribute to staff turnover.
- 6.3 The Service workforce is also supplemented by agency workers, which is monitored monthly and managed appropriately. The Communities & Place Service have reduced agency usage by nearly 20% compared to prior year and the Service look to continue to proactively decrease the use of agency workers. This has been enabled by reduced staff absences which is also at Item 7 to today's agenda.
- 6.4 The use of agency staff and contractors cannot be looked at separately and must be viewed as part of overall labour costs. The service relies on contractors when unable to recruit mechanics, for example, so the cost of service delivery is moved from staff costs to contractor costs.
- 6.5 Age profile within the Service is a significant factor to be considered within all the sections. There are currently 339 employees (44%) that are younger than 41. 433 employees (56%) are 51 years or older, including 141 members of staff older than 61. Although there is no compulsory retirement date, it is to be expected that between now and 2026, the period covered by this workforce planning report, the majority of the 141

staff older than 61 will retire, which would equate to more than 18% of the current workforce.

- 6.6 Attendance management is addressed within the Service, with managers investing in the process and working with the Council's Attendance Support Officer to facilitate returns to work at the earliest opportunity, whilst also supporting other team members. This has resulted in a reduction from an average of 3.53 days absent per employee in Q3 21/22 to an average of 2.74 days absent per employee in Q3 for 2022/23, for example. The Service also proactively assesses section specific absence data to identify any potential areas/teams requiring support, recognising that almost 70% of the job roles within the Service are manual in remit.
- 6.7 There is a recognition that one of the strengths within the Service is specialist expertise. It is also noted there is a national shortage of Environmental Health professionals. The environmental health team are considering steps to address this locally including promotion of career to school leavers and upskilling options for existing staff, and are engaging with national work to improve the position. There is a need to ensure the Service has an effective succession planning programme and where appropriate use the Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme. Previously there had been limited use of the Apprenticeship Scheme. However, over the last 4 years this has changed significantly, with Managers being proactive in exploring and utilising such frameworks, with particular focus on difficult to recruit posts and remote areas within the Highlands.

The Service also utilised the Council's Graduate Intern Programme following its launch in 2021, which was supported by the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee Fund. This enabled public sector experience and transferrable skills to be gained through a Council initiative, whilst supporting employment of Highland residents.

Further utilisation of the Apprenticeship Scheme will be key in supporting the Service's workforce requirements of the future.

- 6.8 The Council's Senior Management Redesign has been completed within the Communities & Place Service.

7. Future Workforce Profile

- 7.1 When considering its Future Workforce Profile, the Communities & Place Service Senior Management Team acknowledged the impact that budget outcomes could have on their current staffing resource. Savings targets on staffing costs will also impact service delivery and current approaches to this.
- 7.2 The need to use the current workforce as effectively as possible and prioritise service delivery as agreed by Members is paramount to successful workforce planning, as well as ensuring any required statutory roles and responsibilities are fulfilled by the Community & Place Service.
- 7.3 Hybrid working was an area already being explored within the Council. However, the Coronavirus pandemic brought to the fore the opportunity to take forward at speed,

new ways of delivering services for customers as well as new ways of working for staff. Structures and roles that are resilient, enable collaborative working, whilst building agile teams, are therefore a key consideration in workforce planning.

Whilst increasing the effectiveness of activities and meeting aspirations of staff for an improved work-life balance, hybrid working is also intrinsically linked with asset rationalisation, climate change and digital transformation.

Staff wellbeing and performance is a priority, whilst ensuring depots and workspaces for all staff are fit for purpose.

7.4 Building upon the successful utilisation of apprenticeship frameworks to aid Service succession planning will be crucial, considering 18% of the aging workforce will potentially retire within the next 4 years.

7.5 Synergies within the Service and with other Services is an area which will provide opportunities for cross-team/service working.

Establishing career pathways with Highland schools will also provide a route for school leavers into the Highland Council as an employer of choice and aid recruitment and retention of the future workforce.

7.6 Achieving development requirements and supporting a changing workforce for the successful future of the Service requires robust leadership abilities at all management levels. It is seen as critical that the development of managers is recognised and supported as a key priority.

Whilst there will also be a focus on obtaining and maintaining statutory and mandatory qualifications and skills, a further strand of training will concentrate on preparing for the future, succession planning and digital development.

7.7 The Council aims to engage a strategic approach to Talent Management that ensures a strong focus on attraction and retention to secure a workforce that is robust, resilient, dynamic, flexible and thriving. Going forward the Communities & Place Service need to identify talent and generate opportunities for staff to develop multi skills that meet organisational needs, particularly in areas of identified skills shortages. The Council has a genuine commitment to employee wellbeing, which is reflected in the Communities & Place Service staff loyalty and motivation.

8. Workforce Actions

8.1 The Communities & Place Service will aim to ensure they have the appropriate workforce going forward.

This will be achieved through numerous actions, including:

- continue with the development of an affordable and sustainable workforce;
- identify synergies both within the Service and between Services;

- continue to develop and train staff across the Service in line with role requirements and succession planning, using amongst other routes, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships to support this
- explore mature digital approaches to service delivery/identify business e-processes to be developed and reviewed; and
- establish a training action plan

8.2 Several actions identified through the workforce plan will be linked to work streams covered in the Corporate Workforce Strategy, such as improvement of management data and business processes. Progress updates against the Service's Workforce Plan will be reported to future Committees.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer - Communities & Place

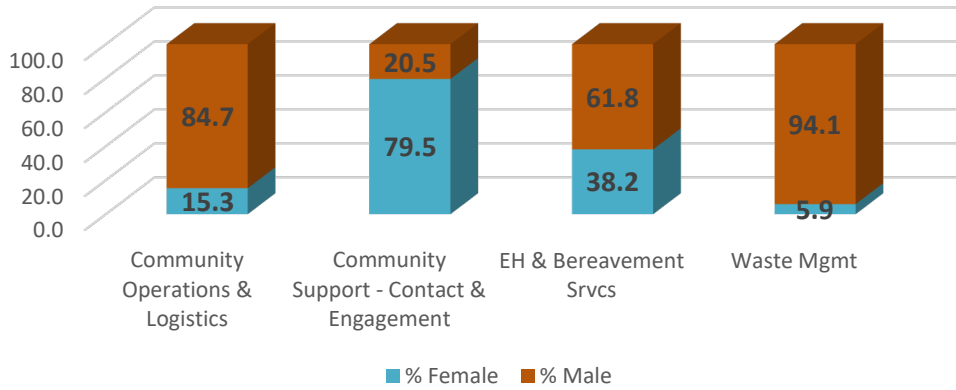
Date: 5 May 23

Authors: Marina MacDonald, HR Business Partner

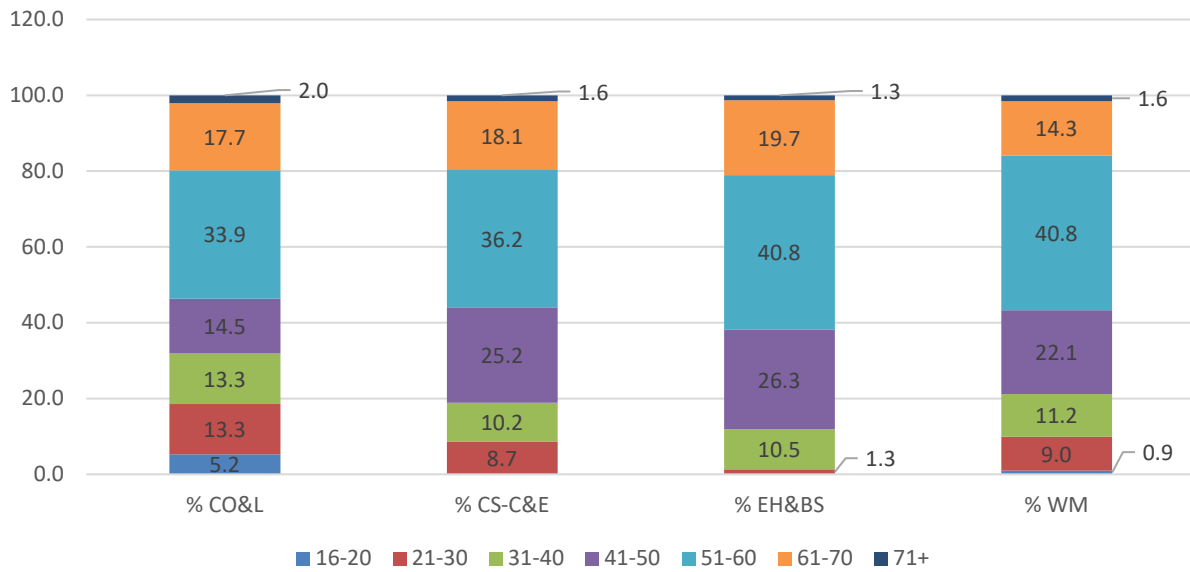
Appendix 1



% Gender Split by Section Communities & Place



% Headcount by Age Range and Section Communities & Place



FTE by Grade Communities & Place

