The Highland Council

Committee: **Corporate Resources**

Date: **7 December 2023**

Report Title: **Depute Chief Executive Service Workforce Plan 2023-26**

Report By: **Interim Depute Chief Executive**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report defines workforce planning and its purpose and outlines the Depute Chief Executive (DCE) Service Workforce Plan for the period 2023-2026.

1.2   **Appendix 1** – provides DCE service workforce data; **Appendix 2** – sets out the DCE service Workforce Action Plan

2. Recommendations

2.1.   Members are asked to approve the Performance & Governance Workforce Action Plan at **Appendix 2**.

3. Implications

3.1   **Resource –** Employees are an essential and highly valued and Council resource. A failure to manage workforce planning and change puts at risk the Council's capacity to make the most effective use of resources.

3.2   **Legal -** Large scale and complex workforce change must be managed in line with current employment legislation and Highland Council HR policy.

3.3   **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out following approval of the Workforce Action Plan.

3.4   **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - The hybrid working approach and more efficient use of technology and equipment will contribute to achieving carbon reduction targets.

3.5   **Risk** – Workforce Planning is included as a risk in the Corporate Risk Register. There are also staffing resource challenges associated with budget constraints. This report outlines actions to mitigate risks in relation to current and future workforce challenges.

3.6   **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - The ongoing rationalisation of office space and subsequent movement of staff, including where staff are working between office and home, must be managed effectively to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing.

3.7   **Gaelic** – There are no implications arising from this report.

4   **Introduction**

4.1   Workforce planning (WFP) is the process of analysing, forecasting and managing workforce supply and demand; assessing gaps; and determining appropriate actions required. Workforce Planning helps ensure the organisation has the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time and, at the right cost (affordability), to ensure strategic objectives are met.

        To enable effective WFP, it is essential that up-to-date HR data is available and service staff insights are sought, to understand:
        -   Current workforce characteristics including the number of people employed to carry out different tasks and the different types of contracts.
        -   Workforce skills and any gaps.
        -   The number, level and skills of staff needed to deliver identified and anticipated future services and meet changing priorities.

4.2   Service specific workforce planning has been taken forward in line with the agreed Workforce Planning and Development Action Plan, approved by Redesign Board 23 March 2021.

4.3   The Highland Council's People Strategy, approved at Full Council on 27 October 2022 outlines the direction and related framework for the organisation over a 5-year period. The Strategy provides an overview and outlines the approach, covering eight key People elements: Staff Engagement; Health, Safety and Wellbeing; Reward and Conditions (including job design); Talent Management; People Development; People Data and Processes; Workforce Planning and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

        Effective workforce planning will support the DCE service to:

        •   Deliver improved services.
        •   Review how many employees and the type of contracts required.
        •   Manage employee budgets effectively.
        •   Develop a robust service structure with appropriate management providing opportunity for progression and career development.
        •   Ensure sufficient and appropriate training, learning and development is provided.
        •   Cope with changes in supply and demand for various skills.
        •   Deploy/recruit staff effectively and efficiently.
        •   Increase retention and enable succession planning.

5.   Background

5.1   The DCE Service Workforce Plan has been developed using the Highland Council 6-step model:

1. Context and Environmental Analysis
2. Future Workforce Profile
3. Current Workforce Profile
4. Workforce Implications/Gap Analysis
5. Action Plan
6. Review & Evaluate

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.

5.2   The Extended Senior Management Team undertook focused workshops during August 23 to work through each stage, analysing context and environment; identifying and anticipating the current and future workforce profiles required and, identifying actions needed to ensure future demands are met. Workshops were facilitated by the Service HR Business Partner.

5.3   Following the WFP Strategy Review Board's recommendation to take a broader approach to Service WFP, both the service Performance Business Partner and Project Officers from ICT (Digital Strategy) also attended.

The HR data analysed is shown in **Appendix 1.**

6.   Context and Environment (step 1)

6.1   The context and environment analysis carried out recognises both the political and economic challenges The Highland Council, and therefore the DCE service faces.

6.2   Both ICT and Climate Change functions cut across all services and have clear drivers for change and a formulated direction of travel. Robust governance is in place enabling and empowering staff to progress delivery of the Digital and Climate Change Strategies.

6.3   The Service is invested in and well placed for exploring ways to make more effective and efficient use of technology, including automating systems where possible.

6.4   Costs associated with buying and maintaining both new and legacy technology and equipment have increased significantly and will impact the budget and the ability to identify further staff reductions. The Service is keen to adopt a more standardised approach to some areas of service delivery with clearly documented processes. It recognises the importance of collaboration with relevant professional networks ((local, national and third sector) to explore standardising the approach to contracts and budgets where possible.

6.5   The Service also recognises that there is funding potential, in particular within Climate Change/green energy, that can be explored further. However resource is needed to identify and investigate available options.

7. **Future Workforce Profile (Step 2)**

7.1   When considering its future workforce profile, the Service extended management team acknowledged the impact budget outcomes will likely have on current staffing. Savings targets are also likely to impact service delivery.

7.2   It was also acknowledged that as a Service that supports the achievement of corporate projects and objectives, a key driver for change to staffing will likely be service delivery changes within other Council services and at a corporate level in terms of agreed ongoing and planned programmes.

7.3   The Service recognised the increasing challenge of prioritising and managing business as usual activity and project related work where, in some cases, the business case lacks clarity. Resource is required to identify available funding and effectively scope projects which can be taken forward as and when funding becomes available.

Structure & Roles

7.4   Significant restructuring has taken place within ICT in the last 2 years, including systems and technical support work, previously contracted out to Wipro, being brought back in house. The restructure has enabled more generic roles to be created which enables flexibility and movement of staff across the service area. Further generic job descriptions should be created to allow greater flexibility (where appropriate) in other parts of the service.

7.5   It is important that there continues to be a focus on vacancy management and opportunities are taken to explore how services can be delivered differently and technology used most effectively and efficiently to ensure redundancies are avoided wherever possible.

7.6   The Service considers there may be opportunity to look at term-time working within some areas of ICT where work is carried out within schools.

Skills/staff training and development

7.7   There is an appetite for increased staff training and development, in particular to equip staff with digital skills in order to explore how technology can enable more efficient service delivery.
'Leading', 'Thinking' and 'Being' Digital are the three key themes of the Council's Digital Strategy which in turn forms part of the Council's wider agenda for its organisational development:
growing the workforce for the future and ensuring no one is left behind.

7.8   Service survey results showed that only 30% of staff responding agreed that there were "opportunities to develop (their) career with Highland Council." There are several nationally recognised industry courses that staff are able to access and are encouraged to undertake i.e., Agile, ITIL, Prince 2 and Microsoft training modules, however opportunities for additional specialist training should be explored.

7.9   The Service will continue to monitor completion of mandatory modules to ensure compliance. Work will continue with HR, People Development and the Modern Apprenticeship team to identify suitable opportunities for development whether that be specific qualifications, face to face training or via e-learning modules, as well as to identify any funding that may be available for staff development and training.

7.10   Service survey results showed that only 30% of staff agreed that they "regularly received an ERD to review L&D needs with (their) line manager". This figure is starting to increase and all staff need to have an ERD every year and at least one ERD review part way through the year.

Recruitment

7.11   The Service understands the importance of "Growing our Own", particularly given the challenge with recruiting to some higher level technical posts. A number of permanent staff have come through the Modern Apprenticeship route and this continues to work well with a variety of technical/analyst qualifications available on the framework. The Service will continue to engage with HR and the Modern Apprenticeship team to identify funding available to support this.

7.12   The Service will continue to liaise with the HR to ensure standard templates for job descriptions are being used for adverts, relevant channels for recruitment are utilised and, the range of opportunities available within ICT, Digital Services, Strategic Improvement and Redesign and Climate Change are promoted appropriately.

7.13   The Service also recognised potential to link with UHI to explore options for attracting and encouraging graduates where specific technical skills and qualifications are required.

Staff Performance & Wellbeing

7.14   Levels of absence within the Service are low. Where there are instances of long term or consistent short-term absence, this is managed with support from the Attendance Support Officer where required. The Service will continue to review absence data on a regular basis.

7.15   All staff should be aware of the wellbeing support resources available and managers are committed to completing the necessary mandatory courses in order that they are able to confidently provide support where needed.

7.16   Team agreements will continue to be reviewed and updated as required in line with ERDs.

Employee Survey

7.17   Staff will continue to be kept informed of actions being taken forward in relation to the 3 corporate areas for improvement, as well as any other service specific survey actions.

8. **Current Workforce Profile, Implications, and Gap Analysis (Steps 3&4)**

8.1   At the time that the workshop was undertaken, the DCE Service workforce consisted of 163 staff (157.27 FTE). Staff turnover is just below the Council average at 9.9%. The Service employee survey results showed that 79% of staff responding agreed that they "want to stay working with Highland Council for at least the next 3 years".

8.2   The Service recognises the high level of technical expertise, knowledge and dedication of its staff. Service survey results showed that 86% of staff responding agreed they "have the skills needed to do (their) job effectively".

8.3   In terms of where staff are based, Covid caused an immediate shift from staff being office based to working from home. There is no 'one size fits all' in terms of how staff are required to be and the nature of work carried out, particularly within ICT, lends itself more easily to working remotely. On the whole the hybrid model of working works well, however it does present some challenges in terms of managing staff expectations and balancing the needs of individuals and service delivery requirements.

8.4   Service employee survey results showed 93% of respondents "can" work from home. Of the 38% of respondents who said they were working from home "most of the time", 88% agreed that it had generally been a positive experience. The highest scoring benefits of working from home were Work/life balance (85%) and Family Time, Saving money, and Wellbeing (each scoring 67%).

8.5   In terms of Resource and Workload, 60% of respondents agreed that they had the resources to do their jobs effectively and, 56% agreed that they had a reasonable workload. The nature of project work is that it has dependencies in terms of links to other ongoing or planned projects.

8.6   There is a reasonable gender balance (61% male, 39% female) within the Service, given both ICT/Digital and Climate Change functions are recognised as being widely male dominated. The Service is keen to explore ways to encourage more female staff into technical roles.

8.7   The age profile of the Service, although not a significant issue with 34% of staff over 51years, should be monitored given many staff within this age bracket are in higher level management posts which require a high degree of knowledge and technical skill. Whilst there is no longer a default retirement age, it is anticipated that during the period this workforce plan covers, most of the 8% of staff who are over 61years, will retire. It is essential that any "single points of failure" posts are identified and effective succession planning implemented. 26% of staff are below 31yrs. The nature of work within ICT in particular attracts younger people however the skills required are widely in demand. It is important that the wider benefits of working for the council are promoted and, the service continues to develop staff and enable routes for career progression in order to attract and retain skilled staff.

8.8   The Service supports a number of Modern Apprenticeships across a broad framework of qualifications which has proven beneficial in both supporting service delivery and providing a rich experience for apprentices, putting them in a strong position to secure a permanent appointment.

8.9   The majority of staff (87%) have permanent contracts of employment, with the remaining 13% having temporary contracts, due to either ring-fenced temporary funding for project staff or Modern Apprentices.

8.10   The Service does not currently have any staff employed via Agency.

9.   Workforce Actions

9.1   The DCE Service will aim to develop an appropriate workforce by taking forward the Workforce Action Plan. This is available at **Appendix 2.**

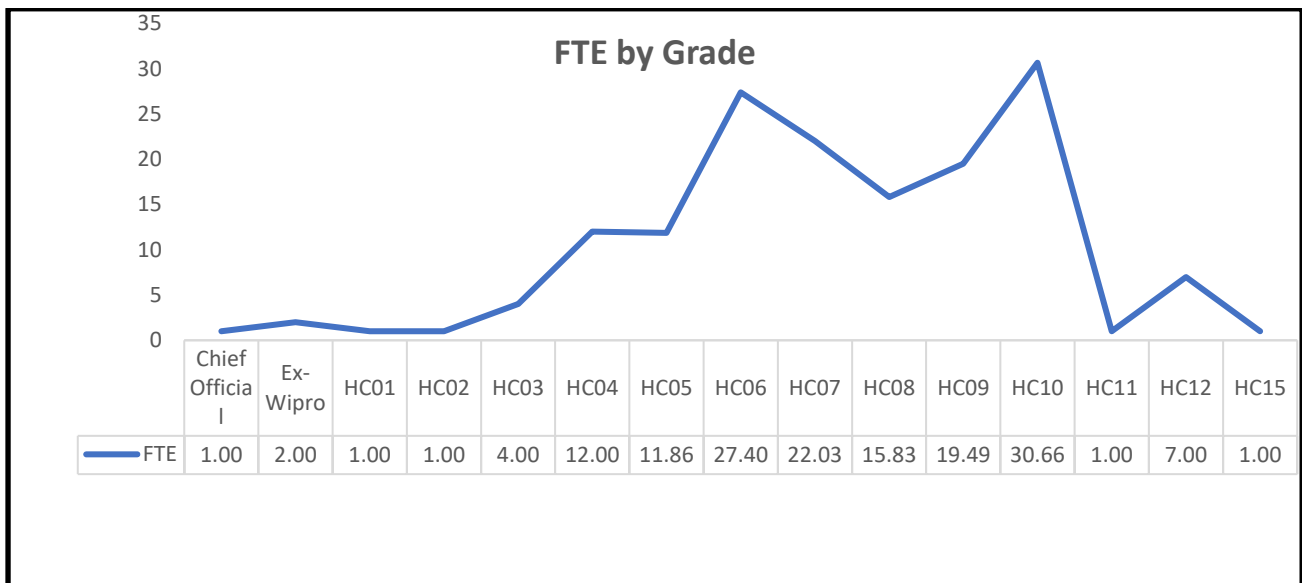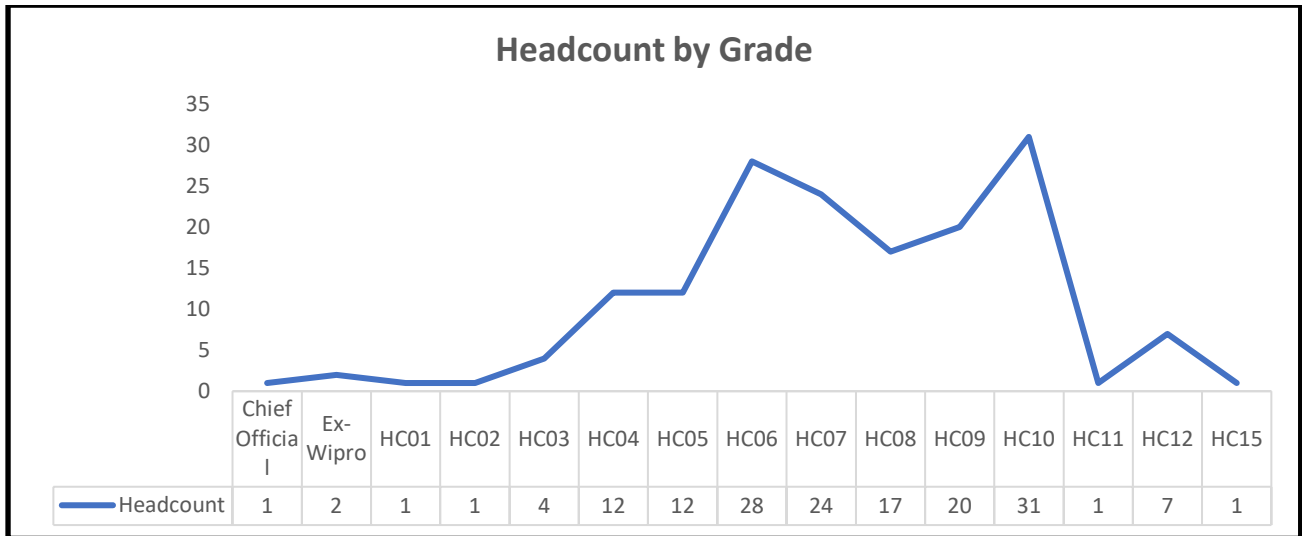**Designation:**   Interim Depute Chief Executive Service

Date: 24 November 2023

Author: Isabel McLellan, HR Business partner
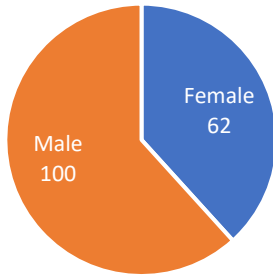

Appendices:

1. Service HR Data
2. Workforce Action Plan

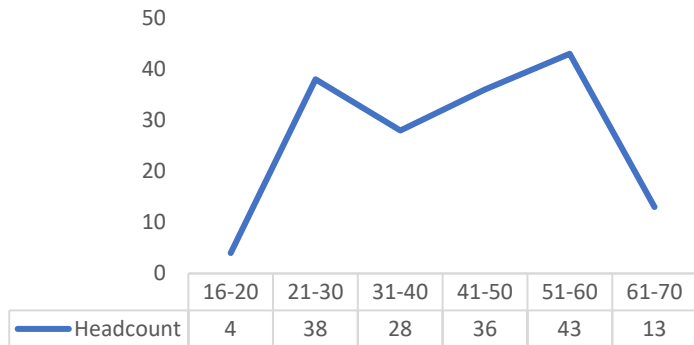**Appendix 1 – Depute Chief Executive Service workforce data**

Headcount by Grade

	Chief Official	Ex-Wipro	HC01	HC02	HC03	HC04	HC05	HC06	HC07	HC08	HC09	HC10	HC11	HC12	HC15
Headcount	1	2	1	1	4	12	12	28	24	17	20	31	1	7	1

FTE by Grade

	Chief Official	Ex-Wipro	HC01	HC02	HC03	HC04	HC05	HC06	HC07	HC08	HC09	HC10	HC11	HC12	HC15
FTE	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	12.00	11.86	27.40	22.03	15.83	19.49	30.66	1.00	7.00	1.00

Gender Split

Female
62

Male
100

Age Range

	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70
Headcount	4	38	28	36	43	13

Contract Type
All Depute Chief Executive

	Permanent	Temporary
Headcount	141	21
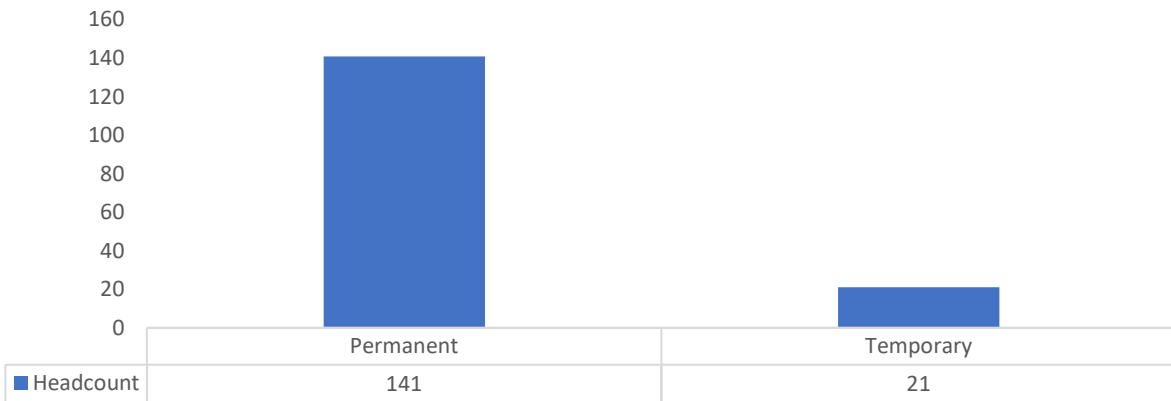
Headcount - all Depute Chief Executive	Total
Headcount	162
Number of Leavers	16
Turnover Rate	9.9%

Appendix 2 – DCE Workforce Action Plan

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	When
1. Service Structure & Roles			
1.1 Review vacancies to determine if/where required and if/how work can be delivered differently. 1.2 Continue to review post to post reporting on MyView and ensure accuracy. 1.3 Explore feasibility of term-time contracts for posts within Education settings (ICT). 1.4 Continue to review the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for new qualifications available (including for upskilling existing staff). 1.5 Continue to engage with HR and the MA team to identify available funding for Modern/Graduate Apprentices/placements. 1.6 Review current establishment and determine if present structure & roles are sufficient to meet corporate programme objectives and, offer routes for career development. 1.7 Create more generic job descriptions to allow greater flexibility and movement between different areas of the service. 1.8 Provide/publish service information on roles & responsibilities within ICT, Digital, Improvement & Redesign and Climate Change – Who? What? Where? Why?	Establish a sustainable, cost-effective structure that is fit for purpose and ensures safe and effective service delivery. The structure provides flexibility for staff to move between areas and provides opportunity for development and career progression. Service staff can make clear connections between their work at team level and Corp plan.	Senior management with support from HR Business Partner	

2 Recruitment			
2.1 Review current job descriptions are aligned to strategic objectives and ensure consistent use of standard template outlining option to work flexibly and staff benefits package. 2.2 Liaise with Talent team where required to promote recruitment opportunities using relevant channels. 2.3 Explore Trainee posts where recruitment of fully qualified candidate is challenging (with grade increasing on completion of qualification/training) and recouping percentage of training costs where person leaves post within ? years (tbc). 2.4 Work with MA team to develop promotional information for schools/careers events etc. to showcase ICT and Climate Change and the range of roles and development routes available. 2.5 Explore linking up with UHI to identify opportunities for placements/promoting opportunities for graduates.	The service is proactive in identifying and attracting staff with the required skills and positively promotes HC as an employer of choice.	Senior and service managers with support from HR Business Partner	
3 Staff Skills, development & training			
3.1 Ensure all staff have an up-to-date Employee Review and Development plan and that this is logged on Traineasy. 3.2 Monitor staff completion of mandatory training – quarterly stat and via ERD. 3.3 Explore inclusion of digital confidence measure as part of ERD. 3.4 Draft and implement a Service Learning and Development plan informed by staff ERDs.	Staff have completed mandatory training and have opportunity for further development and training.	Senior management with support from HR Business Partner	Training stats reviewed quarterly and via individual ERDs

4 Staff performance & wellbeing			
4.1 Service SMT to review Attendance Management stats on a regular basis to identify causes of absence and work closely with the Attendance Support Officer and Occupational Health to identify any trends and take proactive action where required. 4.2 Make staff aware of the Employee Assistance Programme and Mental Health First Aiders. 4.3 Ensure that all managers have completed the compulsory Mentally Healthy Workplace course. 4.4 Work with teams to complete/update Team Agreements – use ERDs to monitor/review on an individual basis.	Substantive and timely support for staff will reduce staff absence, performance issues and improve overall staff wellbeing, ultimately resulting in reduction of cost and turn over.	Senior and service managers with support from HR Business Partner	
5 Staff Survey			
5.1 Discuss outcomes of survey in SMT and teams. 5.2 Develop action plan to enhance positives and address areas of improvement. 5.3 Ensure staff are kept informed (regular updates)	Staff feel engaged and involved with plans for improvement.		