

Agenda Item	9
Report No	ECI/15/2024

The Highland Council

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 2 May 2024

Report Title: Service Workforce Plan Annual Progress Report

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 On 2 February 2023, Members noted the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Workforce Plan for 2022-2025. This report aims to provide more details on the action plan that has since been drafted and an update on the progress made so far.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **note** the four-year action plan and progress report.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Workforce planning ensures that all reasonable actions are in place to help the correct staffing resource be in place to deliver services safely and efficiently. A failure to manage workforce planning and change puts at risk the Council's capability to make the most effective use of resources.

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.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - Targeted recruitment 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 strong influencers.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - No implications, other than the hybrid working approach and better use of technology could reduce the need for travel.

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 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – No implications, with required Health and Safety measures and training being in place.

3.7 **Gaelic** – No implications.

4 Introduction

4.1 On 2 February 2023, the Economy and Infrastructure Committee approved the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service workforce planning report 2022-2025.

4.2 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.

4.3 This is the first of the annual update reports Members will receive.

5 Action Plan

5.1 Attached is the action plan developed by the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy management team, supported by the HR Business Partner. The last column informs Members of progress made to date.

5.2 It is important to note that it is not possible to provide end dates for most actions because workforce planning is an ongoing process.

5.3 All Services have now completed their workforce plans. HR Business Partners have collated the information from the Service plans into a Corporate Action plan which will be presented at Corporate Resource Committee.

6 Priorities

6.1 Priorities in the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service workforce plan are recruitment and retention, mitigation of aging workforce, staff wellbeing and the development of an effective and sustainable staffing structure.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 2 April 2024

Author: Marina MacDonald, HR Business Partner

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Workforce Action Plan 2022-2025

Appendix

Workforce Challenge/Priority	Desired Outcomes	Actions required	Lead	Target Date	Achieved by March 2024
Management and monitoring of structure and workforce	<p>Affordable and sustainable future workforce and Service</p> <p>Prevent 'knowledge drain' resulting for increasing retirements</p> <p>Support aging workforce to remain in employment</p>	<p>Align structure to budget</p> <p>Continue to review establishment and staffing structures, determining if any adjustments are required to meet current and future needs and practices</p> <p>Identify any potential single points of failure</p> <p>Utilisation of effective succession planning strategy</p> <p>Promotion and broader use Apprenticeship/Trainee Programmes</p> <p>Proactively engage with schools in Highland to promote IE&E professions as career options</p> <p>Develop and support mentoring opportunities</p> <p>Consider and implement measures for an aging workforce</p>	SMT, HRBP	Ongoing	<p>Service structures continually reviewed to ensure affordable and appropriate posts are in place to enable successful service delivery, career progression and succession planning</p> <p>Corporate succession planning toolkit being developed - to be implemented with the Service over the next 12 months to formalise and record the arrangements</p> <p>Vacancies reviewed to determine impact on service objectives and delivery</p> <p>Mentoring and coaching operating within some teams, which promotes staff development and knowledge sharing</p> <p>Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Programmes are well established within the Service, resulting in successful Apprentices, some of whom are award winning - this supports succession planning and aids staff retention, as well as investing in economic regeneration and retaining employees in local communities within the Highlands</p> <p>Building Standards, Planning, and Engineering career pathways are successfully established, with further development required to identify additional career pathways to promote all IE&E professions as career opportunities to school leavers and all prospective applicants</p> <p>Links with Highland schools, recruitment fairs, Universities and training providers established, which can be built on, with the support of Learning & Development colleague, with Services identifying targeted professions/gaps</p> <p>Pilot Intern Programme within Development Plants Team with UHI supporting training.</p> <p>Summer Students securing employment within HC and the local area</p> <p>Teams to consider in-house training provision</p> <p>SMT to review flexible retirement data and align this with career pathways and succession planning</p>

<p>Staff Recruitment and Retention</p> <p>Difficult to recruit vacancies, salaries comparisons with private sector, outward migration and ageing Highland population are contributing factors to recruiting and retaining suitably skilled and experienced staff</p>	<p>Having right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time - now and in the future</p>	<p>Review current recruitment process and continue robust assessment of all vacancies</p> <p>Develop career pathways</p> <p>Refresh Job and Person Specifications</p> <p>Utilise Apprenticeship Programme</p> <p>Explore Intern Programme with UHI</p> <p>Promote IE&E careers with school leavers</p> <p>Analyse reasons for staff leaving through Exit Interview process and resolve where possible</p>	<p>SMT, HRBP, Talent Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Apprenticeship Programme successfully established within the Service, enabling vacancies to be filled and for the Service to grown their own talent and achieve succession planning</p> <p>Recruitment campaigns including use of social media and specialist publications has been successful with the Service securing suitably qualified and experienced staff</p> <p>Further consideration required to encourage internal staff development and promotion, which would assist with recruitment challenges</p> <p>Job and person specifications are being reviewed, in addition to career pathways and training plans being created and established for roles and professions</p> <p>Analysis of exit interview and questionnaires has highlighted salary levels and career progression were the most common reasons for employees leaving - Line Managers should encourage all leavers/movers to complete the Exit Questionnaire to improve the value of this information</p>
<p>Management and monitoring of Agency Spend</p> <p>2022: ca £276k spend 25% reduction from 2021</p> <p>2023: ca £145k spend 48% reduction from 2022</p>	<p>Reduction of agency spend, to achieve most cost effective workforce spend and support stable workforce</p>	<p>Continue monthly monitoring of agency spend and manage appropriately</p> <p>Continue to reduce agency spend and achieve stable and cost effective staffing structure and workforce</p>	<p>SMT, HRBP</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Proactive and robust monitoring and management of Service agency spend continues, with a further 48% annual reduction in agency spend achieved in 2023 (which is in addition to the 25% reduction achieved in 2022).</p>
<p>Staff Wellbeing & Performance</p>	<p>Ensure that all staff have an up-to-date Employee Review and Development Plan, which includes both staff wellbeing and performance</p> <p>A workforce that is supported accordingly, whilst performing efficiently and effectively</p>	<p>Promote/highlights successes - good news stories highlighted at Committee - identify other platforms</p> <p>Establish platform/forum for staff interaction, networking and sharing of good practice</p> <p>Identify business e-processes to be reviewed and developed (eliminate double handling)</p> <p>Review and plan integration of info/data - single point of access - opportunity to align data</p> <p>Improve front line communication with public and explore self-serve option for customers</p>	<p>SMT and Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Good new stories regularly highlighted at Committee - additional platform established with IE&E Viva Engage Community Page</p> <p>Initial Service specific systems and processes identified for improvement/automation - programme to be drafted</p> <p>New financial system replacing Integra commencing April 2024, with training provided for staff</p>

<p>Attendance Management</p> <p>2022: Not an issue currently within the Service, with absence rates well below the Highland Council average</p> <p>2023: Absence rates have reduced since 2022 and remain below the Highland Council average</p> <p>Viral and Gastro related illnesses are the top two reasons for short-term absences</p> <p>Stress/Debility and Musculoskeletal problems are the top two reasons for long-term absences</p>	<p>Robust and supportive approach to attendance management</p> <p>Provide training in attendance management - ensuring all managers have completed the compulsory mentally health workplace course</p> <p>Utilise the Attendance Support Officers and Occupational Health provision accordingly</p> <p>Promote the Council's Employee Assistance Programme and support/sign-posting available via Mental Health First Aiders</p>	<p>Continue proactive, robust and supportive approach to attendance management throughout the Service</p> <p>Continuation of attendance management training to be undertaken by managers</p> <p>Continued utilisation of Attendance Support Officer, Occupational Health and Employee Assistance/Mental Health First Aider provisions</p> <p>SMT to ensure respective managers have undertaken ERD with their staff, to identify/support any wellbeing issues</p>	<p>Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Attendance management continues to be managed and supported in a robust and supportive manner, with managers seeking HR attendance management guidance as and when required</p> <p>Absence data is provided and assessed on a quarterly basis by the SMT</p> <p>IE&E absence rates continue at a rate lower than the Highland Council average, and have further reduced within the last 12 months</p> <p>Attendance management e-learning module for managers launched at the end of 2023, to aid managers in their support and management of staff absences</p> <p>With Stress/Debility being highlighted as one of the top reasons for long-term absence within the Service, Senior managers have promoted to their respective managers the Council's Employee Assistance Programme and support available via Mental Health First Aiders, to aid supporting staff</p> <p>With Musculoskeletal being highlighted as one of the top reasons for long-term absence within the Service, Managers to ensure Display Screen Equipment assessments are undertaken regularly and reviewed as/when required</p> <p>Managers also promoting regular breaks, appropriate moving/handling techniques, the right to disconnect, shorter meetings, working hours, etc. to staff. Occupational Health and Physiotherapy provision also highlighted to managers for them to take forward when required/appropriate</p> <p>A staff wellbeing survey was undertaken in January 2024. the findings are being analysed and this will be shared with the Service managers and will contribute to workforce planning</p>
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<p>Staff Development</p> <p>The pandemic had a negative impact on the development of staff, with courses and training being significantly reduced</p> <p>Suitably trained staff is essential for Health & Safety, and also aids staff wellbeing, development and staff attraction/retention/promotion, whilst ensuring staff are well equipped and feel confident to undertake duties</p>	<p>Ensure that all staff have an up-to-date Employee Review and Development Plan</p> <p>Draft and deliver Service Learning & Development Action Plan</p>	<p>Managers have undertaken ERD with staff</p> <p>Identify training requirements, draft Service L&D plan and deliver training</p> <p>Promote and monitor compliance of mandatory training courses</p> <p>Pilot in-service mentoring/coaching approach - utilise People Development platform</p> <p>Tailor and deliver customer services training to support clients with mental health challenges, which also links with the direction of the My Council project</p>	<p>SMT, HRBP, People Development Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Service is in the process of completing the annual Employee Review and Development process for all staff</p> <p>Training gaps to be identified and a Service Learning and Development Action Plan is to be drafted with the support of the People Development Team - preliminary discussions have taken place</p> <p>Mandatory training completion/compliance is provided and monitored on a quarterly basis by SMT</p> <p>Management Connections training programme established and run by People Development for Service managers</p> <p>Corporate Mentoring Programme established with both Mentors and Mentees being identified and coached/supported as required</p> <p>People Development researching options for advanced customer services training, for discussion with SMT</p>
<p>Ways of Working</p> <p>Smart ways of working for service delivery and staff</p> <p>Suitable depot and office work environments</p>	<p>Identify smart ways of working to meet Service and staff requirements</p> <p>Teams to complete and regularly review Team Agreements</p> <p>Identify and implement any required adjustments/improvements to work environments</p>	<p>Managers to undertake ERDs with all their staff to identify/support ways of working</p> <p>Managers to review Team Agreements regularly</p> <p>Assess and identify any adjustments required at depots and offices</p>	<p>SMT and Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Service is in the process of completing the annual Employee Review and Development process for all staff</p> <p>Team Agreements developed for each team to ensure appropriate working arrangements in place. Teams Agreements are reviewed regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>A review of the approach to smart working is required to ensure managers and staff have a clear understanding of the corporate position. This will also help the Service contribute to the corporate asset management review.</p>
<p>Engagement Survey</p>	<p>Discuss outcomes with SMT and identify and take forward actions required</p>	<p>Build on strengths and address areas requiring development, which will enhance staff wellbeing and improvement</p> <p>Key areas for improvement identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff being able to challenge how things are done in the Council - Survey results being acted on by management - Senior leader visibility 	<p>SMT and Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate and Service specific survey outcomes were shared and discussed at several employee engagement sessions held in different locations in the Highlands</p> <p>Corporate action plan has been prepared for the Corporate Resources Committee in 2024</p> <p>Further staff engagement sessions to be delivered to enhance visibility of senior management</p> <p>Further SMT discussion required to plan and deliver on areas identified in survey</p>