

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	CP/9/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 22 May 2025

Report Title: Service Workforce Plan Annual Progress Report

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 24 May 2023, Members considered the Communities and Place Workforce Plan for 2023-2026. This report provides an updated action plan summarising progress to date and actions for 2025/26.
- 1.2 Cluster workforce plans were completed in March 2025 and the Place workforce plan includes information for Housing & Communities, Facilities & Fleet Management, Operations & Maintenance, Planning & Economic Development and Property & Assets. In addition, information from the service workforce plans was incorporated in a Corporate Workforce Action [Plan](#) which was presented at Corporate Resource Committee on 20 March 2025.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
 - i. **Note** the Communities and Place workforce planning progress report and updated action plan; and
 - ii. **Note** the positive outcomes from the report, including:-
 - a. team redesigns and restructures which have improved efficiency, service delivery and supported staff development opportunities within the service; and
 - b. specific training commitments were given to areas such as Environmental Health and Fleet.

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 can have a reputational impact, as well as financial implications from any relevant regulatory body.
- 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 **Risk** - This report mitigates the risk of an insufficient current and future workforce. Having a sustainable workforce is included as a risk in the Corporate Risk Register. There are also staffing resource challenges associated with budget constraints. 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. This report mitigates the risk of an insufficient current and future workforce.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - Staff wellbeing and training is a priority in the People Strategy and the Service action plans, and this is reflected in the Corporate Workforce Plan.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - No implications.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Introduction

- 5.1 On 24 May 2023, the Communities and Place Committee noted the service workforce plan for 2023-2026.
- 5.2 Workforce planning is the process that organisations use to ensure they have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. Our workforce plan supports the Operational Delivery Plan, helping us transform our community, work with partners, and meet our budget and improvement goals.
- 5.3 There have been several changes in the Services since the workforce plan was presented, including the Council's organisational restructure aligning seven services to three Clusters. The Communities and Place Service is now split across three sections within the Place Cluster; however, this report provides an update on the previously titled Communities and Place Service. New workforce plans will be developed based on the new structure in 2025/26.

6 Workforce Planning Updates

6.1 Recruitment & Retention

- 6.1.1 Recruitment continues to be a significant problem in some rural areas and specialist skilled roles, including Environmental Health Officers, Mechanics, Drivers and Principal Waste Officers. Repercussions from Brexit, lower salaries when compared to the private sector, increased outward migration, limited higher education options and an aging Highland population all contribute to the difficulties experienced in recruiting suitable candidates. This is further exacerbated by the age profile of our workforce and predicted high numbers of retirement in the very near future.
- 6.1.2 It is evident that further and ongoing emphasis must be placed on this to future proof the service as only 9% of service staff are 29 years old or younger and 22.5% are over 60 years old. Furthermore, there are 5 apprentices within the service, and this makes up 0.6% of the service workforce.
- 6.1.3 Hard to fill posts were identified, with strategies put in place to fill essential vacancies. Examples of this included internal staff development and promotion, trainee and apprentice job opportunities, flexible/mobile roles and the development of career pathways.
- 6.1.4 The Talent Strategy recognises the Highland Council's need to plan, manage and improve people approaches, and supports the achievement of the [People Strategy](#) and implementation of the Council's [Delivery Plan](#). To create a robust organisation, we must embrace diversity and foster an inclusive workplace that encourages ambition and supports change. The Talent Strategy will provide the foundation to build the 'ambitious, sustainable and connected' culture, placing people at the very heart of the organisation.

6.2 Absence Management

- 6.2.1 The absence levels for Communities and Place increased in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 with the average days increasing from 16.7 days to 18.75 days absence per employee per year.
- 6.2.2 There has been a steady increase in absence levels over 2024/25, with the upward trend in short-term viral illnesses likely to be attributed to the winter months but also, as noted in the Service Performance report, impacting across the year.
- 6.2.3 When comparing FTE days lost trends for long term absences from Q4 2023/24 to Q4 2024-25, there does appear to be an increase. Mental health, musculoskeletal and heart related absences remain within the top reasons for long-term absence.
- 6.2.4 Managers are mindful of the largely manual workforce and the impact of those jobs on employee health and wellbeing and therefore occupational health and physiotherapy referrals are progressed as and when required. This is particularly important based on the aging workforce and the requirement to ensure staff receive the appropriate training and PPE to undertake their roles safely.

6.2.5 The e-learning and face-to-face training available to managers should enable them to provide employees with appropriate support. Additionally, employees can access our Employee Assistance Programme, which provides independent advice to address wellbeing and mental health concerns. Attendance Support Officers also continue to play a vital role in assisting both managers and employees.

6.3 Performance Management

6.3.1 Consideration should be given to performance management being a critical component to workforce planning. It not only allows managers and staff to communicate expectations and outcomes, but it also provides information to management allowing them to make informed decisions regarding service delivery. Performance management can also help managers recognise areas for improvement and increase staff engagement and retention. It is essential that managers feel equipped to manage performance effectively and the service will aim towards 100% compliance with relevant managerial and HR training.

6.4 People Development

6.4.1 People Development was previously a challenge within the service due to the limited availability of internal resources. However, much improvement has been achieved corporately and within the service due to increased resource within the People Development Team including a recently appointed Career Coach, management development training at various levels and a variety of online training on Traineasy. Online access was increased for some front-line and manual workers enabling them to use hotdesking facilities to access online training, payslips and other digital Council resources. Staff can also access online services via their personal devices and mobile phones are issued to supervisory and staff working within the recycling sites, for example.

6.4.2 Training is delivered mostly through toolbox talks, including manual handling training. Due to the variety of roles undertaken within the service, consideration is being given to how training can be shared between teams and an example of this is health and safety related training and mandatory driver CPC training where many teams outsource this to external providers. Shared training to minimise the cost of external training will enable teams to share knowledge and skills and reduce the overall cost to the service.

6.4.3 Furthermore, commitments were given to look at additional and specialist training for teams. For example, the Environmental Health Team are trialling a leadership development programme with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. This is a twelve-month programme providing staff with 20 hours of CPD. In addition, Waste Management Services offer funded driver training to internal staff and all Mechanics now hold IRTEC accreditation which validates the competence of technicians working to maintain commercial vehicles, trailer and passenger carrying industries. An IRTEC licence is valid for 5 years and tests both the knowledge and practical level of an individual.

6.4.4 As part of the [Talent Strategy](#) that was approved by Corporate Resources Committee on 20 March 2025, the organisation intends to work towards Investors in People (IIP) Accreditation. IIP is an internationally recognised accreditation for people management and employee wellbeing, and it aims to increase productivity across organisations by creating a stronger, healthier and happier society. The focus of IIP accreditation is to invest in people, wellbeing and apprentices which aligns with our workforce planning and corporate ambitions.

6.5 Structures

6.5.1 Due to the recent organisational restructure, the service is undergoing significant change and managers are working closely with their staff, HR and Trade Unions to review structures and ensure they are sufficient to enable successful service delivery and staff development. The service values the positive partnering relationship it has with Trade Unions, and they continue to be consulted regarding proposed changes.

6.6 Waste and Recycling Service Change Project

6.6.1 As part of the recycling improvement funded waste and recycling service change project, many job opportunities were created and fixed-term posts were made permanent in Waste Services due to the redesign and changes within the service. Some of the new jobs were linked to food waste collections, contract management, waste awareness, communication and waste reduction activities with communities and schools. The majority of the new jobs were filled by a strong pool of internal candidates. However, the new jobs created gaps that needed to be backfilled, and this resulted in the service being less settled for a period of time. The service change has created more opportunities for staff development as well as enabling sustained service change and improvement.

6.6.2 This was an example of a successful service redesign, and it is now used as a business case to share best practice for management development across the organisation.

6.7 Amenities Review

6.7.1 As part of the Amenities Review completed in 2024, two new teams were insourced including an Arbor team and a Play team.

6.7.2 The Arbor team comprises two Arborists, one HC4 Community Works Operative and includes the possibility of employing one Apprentice. Most recently, following a review in 2023 and a Member decision at the redesign board, a new Tree Officer post was created as a spend to save opportunity to have tighter control over spend with contractors through improved management and to carry out a critical review of work specification by contractors and to review work required, redirecting work to in-house team where possible (which in itself an income generating service).

6.7.3 There are several landowning Services in the Council with a responsibility for trees. The recommendation by the LEAN review was that those Services would contribute towards funding the post, this was agreed, and funding was provided from Roads, Amenities, Housing and the Environment teams.

- 6.7.4 The in house play team that was originally established as a team of three in 2021 has now developed and includes one Service Support Officer (SSO), one Foreperson, five Play Technicians (Techs) and one Play Strategy Coordinator. Since their establishment the team collectively have worked with over 50 community groups, refurbished 27 play areas and had the Play Park Strategy and action plan approved for the next ten years.
- 6.7.5 The Techs were introduced to reduce spend on external contractors, to improve service delivery and to build capacity and experience within frontline operations to retain safe, accessible play areas. The creation of the team presented an opportunity to reduce budget pressures whilst effectively reducing risk with regards to inspections and maintenance.
- 6.7.6 Originally a team of three Techs were recruited, however due to the success of the team an additional three were added to the establishment in 2024 and one of the existing Techs was promoted to Foreperson. The team are responsible for maintaining 311 sites across Highland with a total asset value of around £21m. In addition to the Techs a decision was made in 2022 to recruit a Play Strategy Coordinator (PSC) to develop a Play Area Strategy, focusing on local engagement and involvement from communities and to carry out Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSAs) for every site. The results of the PSAs would then inform the local deployment of the Scottish Governments (SG) capital funding for play area provision.
- 6.8 Fleet Audit for Office of the Traffic Commissioner
- 6.8.1 As reported elsewhere on this agenda, a full audit of the Council's fleet operations concerning compliance with the Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Operating License was undertaken by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) in 2024/25, and an action plan was produced to resolve the issues identified. Some of the actions relate to workforce planning elements including management structures, training, compliance, sufficient job descriptions and employment contracts. All the actions are underway at various stages of completion, and these will be a priority for the service in 2025/26 with regular updates being submitted to OTC.

7 Action Plan

- 7.1 The updated workforce action plan developed by the Communities and Place Management Team, supported by the HR Business Partner, is included as **Appendix 1**. The last two columns inform Members of progress to date and actions for 2025/26.
- 7.2 It is important to note that it is not possible to provide end dates for some actions because workforce planning is an ongoing process.

8 Priorities

8.1 The workforce planning priorities identified for the Communities and Place Service over the next 12 months are:-

- Recruitment and retention;
- Staff wellbeing and absence management;
- Learning and development;
- Continued implementation of a sustainable staffing structures;
- Fleet OTC audit actions; and
- New workforce plans to reflect the new Council structure

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 23 April 2025

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Background Papers: Communities and Place Workforce Planning Committee Report

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Updated Workforce Action Plan 2022 - 2026

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE - WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2026 (Updated May 2025)						
WORKFORCE CHALLENGES PRIORITIES	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
Age profile						
22.5% of staff within the service are 61 years or older, including almost 53% of staff who are aged 51 years or older. 24.5% of the workforce are aged 40 years or younger.	1. Utilisation of an effective Succession planning strategy	1. Sustainable service into the future with sufficient staff numbers	SMT, HRBP, Talent Team	Workforce for the future portfolio	Service structures are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the right people and jobs are in place to enable successful service delivery, career progression and succession planning. A corporate succession planning toolkit was developed and implemented in 2024 with single points of failure identified and actions agreed to resolve.	Succession planning toolkit to be implemented annually or when there is a change e.g. restructure, increased turnover.
	2. Promotion and utilisation of the MA and trainee Programme	2. Minimise ‘knowledge drain’ from increased retirements			The apprentice and trainee schemes are well established within some areas of the service, including Fleet Mechanics and Environmental Health. These schemes require sufficient mentoring and coaching which requires dedicated resource. Some teams were able to offer funded driver training to existing internal staff.	Continue to promote and utilise modern apprentice and graduate schemes to fill vacancies. Increase the number of apprenticeship and trainee schemes. Currently 0.6% of the service workforce are apprentices. SMT to review flexible retirement data and align this with career pathways and succession planning Create Cluster and Corporate apprentice development programme to motivate, engage and attract new staff.
	3. Identify ‘single points of failure’	3. Increase the interest of H&P as a career option to school leavers			Succession planning enabled single points of failure to be identified and targeted recruitment and apprenticeship schemes enabled many to be mitigated. Further development is required on an ongoing basis to monitor single points of failure and create career pathways and an increased number of apprenticeships to promote Communities and Place career opportunities to school leavers and other prospective applicants.	Identify and monitor single points of failure and prioritise this in succession planning.
	4. Develop and support mentorship opportunities	4. Support the ageing workforce to remain in employment			Informal mentoring was introduced in some teams to promote staff development and knowledge sharing. The service is keen to enhance this and promote it across more teams. The organisation introduced a corporate mentoring scheme which is available to all staff to act as mentors and mentees.	Increase the informal mentoring provision within the service and encourage engagement with the formal corporate scheme. Managers to link this to ERDs, succession planning outcomes and career pathways. SMT to promote the corporate mentorship programme to potential mentors and mentees.
	5. Proactively engage with schools in Highland to promote Communities and Place career opportunities				Developing the Young Workforce – managers attend DYW events to promote career opportunities to school leavers. Job adverts for hard to fill roles were extended and circulated to secondary schools and colleges. The waste teams work with schools as part of the net zero working group to promote waste composition analysis to change working practices and educate pupils on career opportunites.	Continue to work in partnership with DYW and the Modern Apprentice Team. Further partnership working with schools and the modern apprentice programme is required to align the events with service skills gaps and hard to fill vacancies. Roll out school engagement relating to job opportunities
	6. Consider and implement measures for an aging workforce				Flexible working is encouraged and supported within the service. ERDs and 1-1 management meetings are undertaken with employees to ensure training, support and development opportunities are available to all staff. Organisational training and support is available to staff in areas such as financial and retirement planning.	Implement succession planning and mentoring to enable opportunities for knowledge sharing and internal staff development. Promote life long learning and multi-generational teams to encourage varied perspectives and engagement. 100% of ERDs to be completed annually.
Employment Types	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions

The Service has an annual agency worker spend of approximately £1,528,454.60.	1. Review use of agency staff and reduce as part of the Recruitment strategy	2. Continued reduction in spend	SMT, Talent Team, HRBP	Workforce for the future Corporate Solutions	There are currently requirements to utilise agency workers to cover insufficient staffing levels, sickness absence, vacancies, annual leave and fluctuations in service delivery. The service is exploring options to reduce the use of agency workers, including creating a bank of relief staff and reviewing service establishments to ensure they are flexible to meet service delivery requirements.	Continue to review and reduce the reliance on agency workers to deliver services. HR to report agency usage figures to SMT on quarterly basis.
		3. Improved service delivery				
Recruitment and Retention	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
Difficult to recruit vacancies. Repercussions from Brexit, lower salaries when compared to the private sector, increased outward migration and an ageing Highland population all contribute to the difficulties experienced in recruiting suitable candidates.	1. Develop Recruitment Strategy	1. Ensure the right people at the right place at the right time, now and in the future	SMT, Line Managers, Talent Team, HRBP	Workforce for the Future	The Talent Strategy was approved in March 2024, along with the ongoing Workforce for the Future Portfolio developments. Managers identified hard to fill posts and found creative ways to fill essential gaps. Examples included internal promotion and staff development, apprentice frameworks and development of service career pathways.	Continue to focus on resolving recruitment challenges, particularly in rural geographical areas such as Lochaber and Skye.
	3. Review current recruitment process	3. Efficient and effective recruitment process			The recruitment process was reviewed and the approval process is now managed internally reducing the overall length of time to fill posts.	Talent link usage reports are being developed to assist HR and managers to analyse recruitment data.
	4. Refresh current job descriptions				Job descriptions are being reviewed to accurately reflect the duties, skills and experience required for each role.	Continue to review job descriptions and prioritise based on succession plan and hard to fill roles.
	5. Develop career pathways				Career coach appointed to assist the organisation develop career pathways.	Develop career pathways and promote throughout teams. Use the pathways during staff ERDs and when advertising vacancies to highlight training and career development opportunities.
	6. Explore options with UHI to develop relevant courses to prevent future workforce moving away from the Highlands				The service works with UHI and other colleges and universities to deliver apprenticeship and trainee schemes.	Explore opportunities for hard to fill specialist and rural roles. Discussion to take place with the Education Service and the Modern Apprentice team to align career events with service succession plans
	8. Review longstanding vacancies and determine if work can be undertaken differently				There are some posts in areas that have been vacant for a number of years and the service have been creative in identifying alternative service delivery solutions and internal staff development opportunities to resolve the issues.	This will be an area of focus for SMT going forward to consider alternative options for posts that have been vacant for more than 6 months.
The service has a 15.3% turnover rate	9. Analyse reasons for leaving through Exit Interview process and resolve where possible	13. Reduce turnover			The turnover rate has increased from 14% to 15.3%. It is understood that some staff choose short-term employment in seasonal grass-cutting roles while they seek other permanent job opportunities, however only 7% of the workforce are employed on temporary contracts. Analysis of exit interviews and questionnaires showed that change of career and bullying and harassment were the most common reasons for employees leaving the service.	The organisation should encourage all leavers and movers to complete the exit questionnaire. Utilise the job evaluation scheme where there has been a permanent and material change to duties and level of responsibility. SMT to receive exit interview data on a quarterly basis. Managers to undertake ERDs and regular 1-1's to discuss any concerns and health and wellbeing.
	10. Review induction programme to improve support to new staff to increase the chances of long term employment				Inductions need to be reviewed across the service and it is recognised that the requirements will vary according to the needs of different roles and teams. Full inductions should be undertaken when internal staff change job roles as well as for new appointments to the organisation. Inductions should be based on career pathways and linked to ERDs.	The People Development Team are reviewing the induction process and this may result in the creation of a corporate induction session for new starts. All managers should complete the online induction training.
Staff Development	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions

The pandemic had a negative impact on the development of staff because courses and training were not available.	1. Draft and implement a Service Learning and Development plan	2. Ensure that all staff are well equipped and feel confident to undertake their duties	SMT, Line Managers, HRBP, People Development Team	Workforce for the future portfolio	<p>The Environmental Health Team are trialling a leadership development programme with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.</p> <p>The Service is in the process of completing the annual Employee Review and Development process for all staff.</p> <p>The service is working with People Development to create a condensed ERD tool for managers to use with front-facing staff to enable key conversations to take place with a high number of staff about wellbeing, health and safety and development.</p> <p>Front-line areas of the service often struggle to provide staff with protected learning time. Alternative strategies are being considered to overcome this challenge, such as computer access and logins for all staff and introducing dedicated training days and hot desking.</p> <p>Other teams within the service have provided protected time for mandatory and priority training and this is discussed with staff during 1-1s and ERDs.</p>	<p>Work with People Development to produce a service learning and development plan</p> <p>Complete and implement condensed ERD tool</p> <p>Undertake 100% of ERDs</p> <p>Ensure protected learning time for all staff</p> <p>Create Fleet Training and Compliance Officer role</p> <p>Continue to develop management and HR training resources.</p> <p>Finalise and implement Career Pathways to assist managers and employees to have conversations about development.</p> <p>Explore shared training opportunities with other teams, services and clusters, such as Health and Safety training.</p> <p>Continue to explore specialist training requirements for teams.</p>
Structure and Roles	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
Given the current and forecasted budget challenges, the service has reflected on what, where and how services are to be delivered to best utilise the existing workforce. This resulted in a review of the Waste Management Service to achieve service delivery improvements, efficiencies and budget savings. Additionally, other structure reviews are being progressed to drive service improvements. Continuous reviews are required as failure to manage workforce planning and change, puts at risk the Council’s capacity to make the most effective use of resources.	1. Review current establishment and determine if the present roles are sufficient to meet change in needs and practice.	2. Establish a sustainable, cost effective structure that is fit for the future	SMT, HRBP		<p>Headcount = 751</p> <p>FTE = 714.44</p> <p>Individual team structures are being reviewed to meet the needs of the service, achieve service improvement and efficiencies, provide staff development opportunities and to achieve consistency of post titles and pay grades.</p> <p>Changes such as creating new essential roles and making some fixed-term roles permanent have helped to stabilise structures. This is an ongoing process and requires further focus across the service.</p>	<p>Continue to review structures in line with corporate priorities and service budgets.</p> <p>Further work is required to enhance cross geographical working to achieve efficiencies, consistent working practices and an equal distribution of work.</p> <p>The Amenities Operating Model Project will review seasonal worker contracts to explore opportunities to create permanent jobs.</p>
New Ways of Working	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
The Coronavirus pandemic brought to the fore the opportunity to take forward at speed, new ways of working for staff as well as new ways of service delivery.	1. Identify Service Requirements and how this can accommodate a blended way of working.	4. Enhance service delivery and staff wellbeing through a blended approach to working	SMT, HRBP	Reconfiguring our asset base Corporate Solutions	<p>Team agreements were developed to ensure that appropriate working arrangements are in place. Team agreements are required to be reviewed regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>A review of the hybrid working policy is ongoing to ensure managers have a clear understanding of the corporate position. This will help the organisation to achieve the corporate delivery plan priorities.</p>	A review of the corporate hybrid working model is ongoing in line with the Corporate Solutions and the Reconfiguring our Asset Base portfolios.
	2. Identify office space (where and what) required					
	3. Work with teams to complete the team agreement documents about ways of working					
Staff Wellbeing & Performance	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
The service absence levels have increased from 16.7 days to 18.75 days absence per employee per year.	1. Provide training in absence management and performance management policy, guidance and processes.	5. Reduce staff absence and performance issues and improve overall staff wellbeing, resulting in reduction of cost and turn over.	SMT, Line Managers, HRBP, People Development	Workforce for the future Corporate Solutions	An attendance management e-learning module for managers was launched at the end of 2023 to enable managers to provide employees with appropriate absence support.	Achieve 100% completion for mandatory management training on attendance and performance management.
The council average is 13.15 days absence per employee per year.					Face-to-face training was also developed in the last 12 months to assist managers with attendance and performance management to complement the online training provision.	
Stress and musculoskeletal problems are the top two reasons for long term sickness absence within the service and this needs to be proactively addressed.	2. Utilise the Attendance Support Officers and Occupational Health to identify trends and act proactive to reduce absence				The Attendance Support Officer continues to provide managers and employees with support and advice on effective absence management. In addition, employees have access to the employee assistance programme.	Additional Attendance Support Officer resource is being considered to assist the organisation with the analysis and reporting of absence management data.

	3. Ensure that all staff have an up to date Employee Review and Development plan which includes Staff wellbeing.				ERDs and regular 1-1 with line managers are undertaken in the service with a condensed tool being developed to enable managers to have essential conversations with a high number of front-line staff.	
	4. Make staff aware of the Employee Assistance Programme and Mental Health First Aiders. Ensure that all managers have completed the compulsory Mentally Healthy Workplace course.				Managers have been encouraged to complete the compulsory Mentally Healthy Workplace training.	Provide quarterly report to SMT on training completed
					Mental health, heart and musculoskeletal related problems continue to be the top reasons for long-term absence within the service. DSE assessments are undertaken regularly and reviewed by line managers. Occupational health and physiotherapy referrals are undertaken to support employees where required. The Right to Disconnect policy was created to help the organisation recognise and respect the boundaries between home and work and supports the introduction of a behavioural framework aligned to organisational values, best practice and employee engagement based on trust and empowerment, maintaining a focus on work outcomes rather than presence.	DSE assessments to be reviewed regularly Managers to promote healthy working practices
					A staff wellbeing survey was undertaken in January 2024 and the findings helped to inform workforce planning. The wellbeing survey found that Highland Council are getting wellbeing right in many areas but also highlighted opportunities for improvements and factors staff feel impact the effective management of mental health and wellbeing. The results highlighted that 75% of C&P respondents felt the demands on their time were reasonable and manageable and 75% said they feel they can do their job well. However, 21% of respondents felt they can influence change within their team and 27% said changes within their team are opportunities for improvement. A report was submitted to Corporate Resources Committee in March 2024 and the results of the survey were communicated to staff.	7% of C&P staff responded to the wellbeing survey. More emphasis should be placed on enabling staff to complete future surveys to ensure representative findings and recommendations. The survey report should be reviewed with SMT to discuss the findings at a service and cluster level and identify any further actions.
Staff Engagement Survey	ACTIONS REQUIRED	DESIRED OUTCOMES	WHO	Link to the Delivery Plan	Achieved by May 2025	2025/26 Actions
In the survey undertaken in 2022, staff were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with a number of statements in relation to working with Highland Council.	1. Discuss outcomes with Senior Management Team and take to team meetings.	3. Building on the strengths and address areas of improvement will enhance staff wellbeing and performance.	SMT, Line Managers, HRBP		The outcomes from the 2022 staff engagement survey were shared and discussed with the service and a corporate action plan was drafted for Corporate Resources Committee in 2024. The employee engagement strategy was developed and is due to be published imminently. As per the Trade Union Partnership Agreement, staff and trade union engagement is carried out in relation to changes that impact staff. Viva engage is used more frequently to share service information and corporate updates.	Implement the employee engagement strategy. Explore ways to effectively engage with front-line staff who may not have digital access. Continue to engage with trade unions and staff as required. Consider further team surveys and other methods to communicate with staff and gather feedback.
	2. Develop an action plan to enhance positives and address areas of improvement.				The key areas for improvement were identified as follows: - Employee engagement - Senior leader visibility - Change management These areas for improvement are discussed regularly with SMT to ensure staff engagement and change management are dealt with appropriately.	The service should continue to recognise and deliver on these desired outcomes.