

Workforce Strategy Update Report

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Stephen McGinnes, Mid Kent Services Director
Lead Officer and Report Author	Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services
Classification	Public
Wards affected	No wards

Executive Summary

The Council has had a Workforce Strategy since 2008 and this has been reviewed and developed as the priorities and environment has changed. The most recent version covers the period 2016 - 2020 and was agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee 29 June 2016. As part of the approval the P&R Committee requested that the Employment Committee should receive progress updates twice per year. Following the Committee Structure Review undertaken by the Democracy Committee in the 2018/19 municipal year, the functions of the Employment Committee now fall under the Democracy and General Purposes Committee.

At Appendix 1 the report sets out the progress made against the action plan that supports the Workforce Strategy.

Purpose of Report

The report is for noting.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the progress of the actions set out in the Workforce Strategy be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	4 September 2019

Report title here

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all aspects of the corporate priorities.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Cross Cutting Objectives	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all objectives.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Risk Management	The overarching risk is that if the council does not have a Workforce Strategy it may fail to put in place the actions to deliver the priorities.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Financial	Workforce costs are the single biggest area of expenditure for the Council, accounting for around half of the Council's total budget. The Workforce Strategy therefore has a financial impact, but this is costed within the normal annual budget. Specific initiatives described within this report are also funded from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Workforce Strategy will have an impact on staff – this should be a positive impact as we work to ensure that there are improvements.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Legal	Although there may be specific actions arising out of the Strategy that require legal input, there is nothing identified in the plan overall that will have legal implications.	Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	No personal data is contained in the report.	Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Equalities	No impact identified as a result of this update report. As an employer the Council has a duty to fulfil under the Equality Act 2010. This is ongoing and is embedded in the processes to deliver the Work Force Strategy	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Procurement	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The key themes of the Workforce Strategy are:

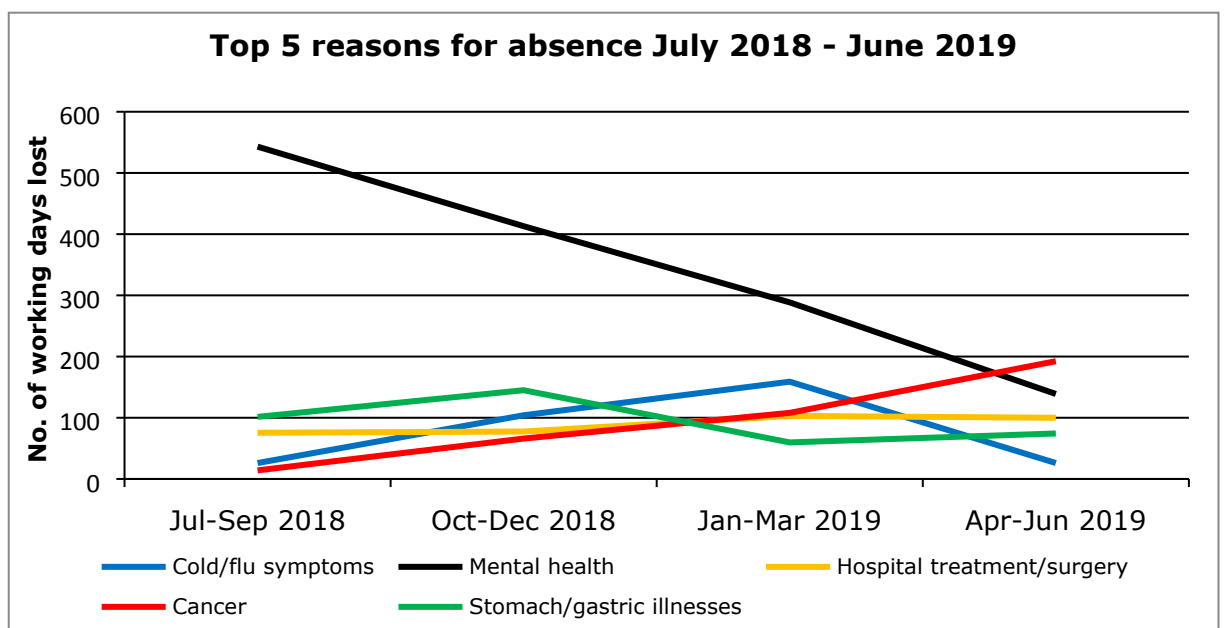
- Organisation culture and change;
- Resourcing;
- Development, and
- Reward.

2.2 There has been progress against all of the themes, much of which is cross cutting and affects more than one theme.

2.3 Organisation culture and change

2.3.1 We have rolled out Mental Health First Aid training in 2018 and 2019 with a total of 30 staff trained in Mental Health First Aid. The feedback from staff after the training course has been that managers also need to have knowledge on mental health to enable them to recognise signs of mental illness as well as provide the support required by staff. We have therefore organised training on Mental Health for Managers, this is not the full Mental Health First Aid training but a one day programme covering key knowledge areas on mental health. We also provide quarterly supervision sessions to our Mental Health First Aiders to ensure their knowledge and skills are kept up-to-date and to provide them with additional support if required.

2.3.2 A report was presented to the Employment Committee in June 2018 on Employee Wellbeing and Mental Health. At the time, the main reason for long term absence was mental health which had substantially increased during the year. The figures for June 2019 show a significant improvement in mental health with figures at a similar level to other absences at the council.

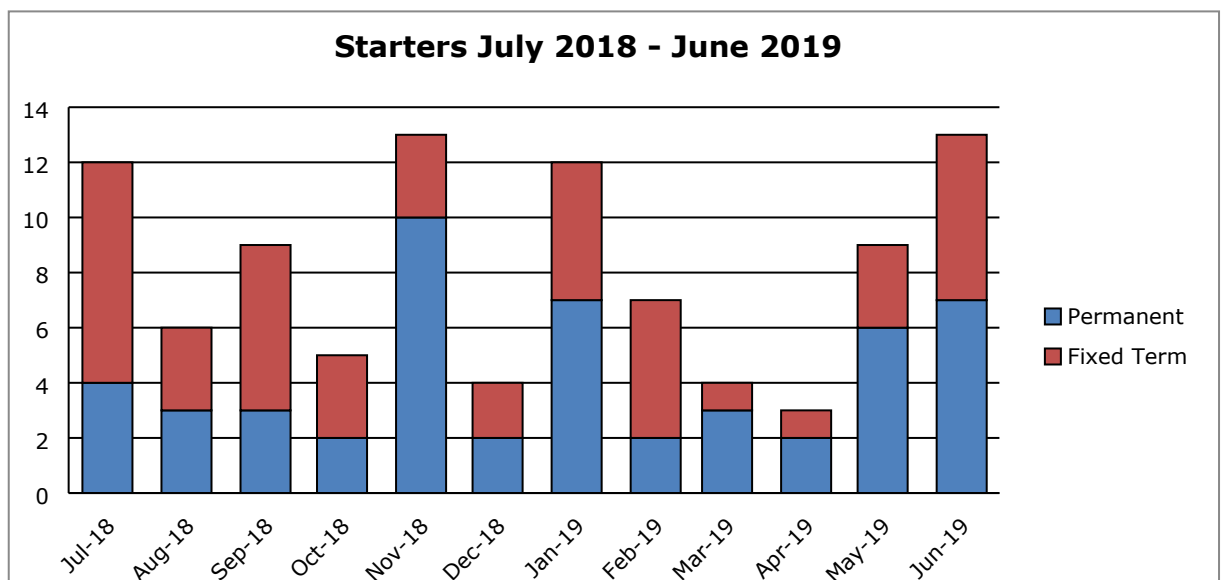


The HR Advisors have been regularly reviewing and monitoring absence levels and advising managers in taking appropriate actions in order to reduce the level of sickness. Each service area has a dedicated HR Advisor who meets with them on a regular basis to discuss ongoing cases and highlight where employees have met sickness triggers. The meetings provide an opportunity for managers to seek case specific HR guidance and support. They also help to ensure that a fair and consistent approach in managing absence has been taken both within and across services and that any emerging issues or barriers in managing absence effectively are quickly identified and addressed. In addition, we have continued delivering wellbeing initiatives, training in resilience and personal best which aims to put a more positive focus on mental health. The training in resilience also includes a combination of the science of stress, mindfulness and other coping mechanisms as well as overall well-being.

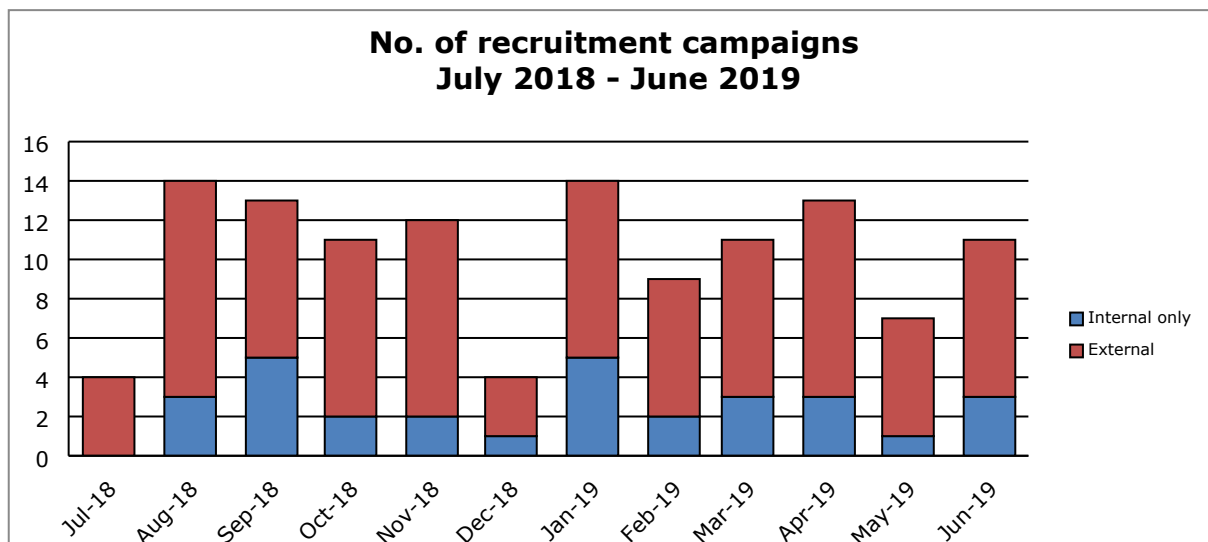
- 2.3.3 The One Council update in February 2019 was organised at Maidstone's Leisure Centre and provided the opportunity for all staff to attend the one session. The event provided an update on the new Strategic Plan and informed staff on the new priorities that they will be working towards as well as providing an update on the progress of various projects. The annual staff awards also took place to recognise the great contribution team members have made to achieving the council's objectives and delivering great services to the public. This has become an important part of reinforcing our culture and values.
- 2.3.4 The One Council event held in July 2019 was delivered differently compared to previous events. This was held at Mote Park and provided the opportunity for staff to use the new facilities in the park and to also see the work that had been carried out in Mote Park by the council. The event was also to thank staff for all their hard work during the year and allowed staff the time to enjoy the facilities in the park. This has proved to be a valuable team building session as staff had the opportunity to spend time as a team and to communicate with staff from other departments. Positive feedback was received on this event as 90% of employees that attended the One Council found the event very enjoyable.
- 2.3.5 The Council's last Investors in People (IiP) review took place in January 2017, resulting in achievement of the IIP Silver accreditation. The Council's next assessment is due in January 2020 and following a review with the Wider Leadership Team it has been decided that the Council will not go forward with this assessment but instead create our own annual engagement survey. This will allow the council to focus on key areas to obtain staff feedback and to action any concerns. Regular pulse surveys will also be introduced to provide additional information and to monitor improvements. These short surveys will help to support improvements in staff engagement, and help us measure how successful our staff engagement initiatives are.

2.4 Resourcing

- 2.4.1 We have introduced a new HR service delivery model from April 2019. This requires HR Advisors to attend Head of Service team meetings with their managers to go through key workforce data on turnover, sickness absence, recruitment, starters and leavers and many other areas. The meetings have also proved to be useful to deliver short training sessions on areas that managers need further support on such as managing sickness, understanding the role of mental health first aiders and providing updates on changes to policies and procedures. By providing the knowledge and skills managers will be able to have the capability and confidence in delivering their role more effectively in managing staff.
- 2.4.2 During the last 12 months from July 2018 to June 2019, the team have supported managers in recruiting 95 new staff at the council. This has included permanent and fixed term contracts to various positions at the council. In addition, there were 64 staff that left the organisation over this period.



The number of recruitment campaigns completed during the same period has been 123; this includes internal and external recruitment. There has been an increase in the recruitment activity for July 2018-June 2019 compared to previous years which mainly relate to new posts being created in areas such as Housing.



2.4.3 A careers fair at Maidstone Grammar School that included 26 other public and private sector employers, was attended by HR and the Head of Planning. The careers fair was visited by students from all year groups including sixth form students. The students that attended the event had the opportunity to learn about the work delivered by the council and the different types of jobs available for employment or as an apprenticeship programme. Career fairs provide an effective way to promote the work of the council as well as address any questions the students may have on the sector including career opportunities. We will be looking at further opportunities for the team to attend career fairs at local colleges and schools.

2.4.4 All employers with a salary cost of over £3 million per annum must pay an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of their monthly pay bill. In addition, we are required to have 2.3% of the workforce on apprenticeships as an average from period 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2021. For Maidstone Borough Council this equates to approximately 14 apprentices a year on average.

An apprentice can be a newly appointed member of staff, employed into an apprentice post, or can be an existing member of staff undertaking an apprenticeship qualification. We currently have 5 apprentices within the Council. We also have 11 staff studying for a qualification through this route with another 8 staff interested in completing apprentice qualification in 2019-2020. This will support the Council in meeting the public sector targets of 2.3% of the workforce undertaking an apprenticeship programme.

2.5 Development

2.5.1 In 2018-2019, the central training budget of £42,850 was allocated. The central training plan provides training to staff in areas such as health and safety, safeguarding, management development, personal effectiveness, wellbeing, customer service and IT. There has been 68.5 days of training provided to staff in 2018-2019, which saw 905

places filled by staff, and nearly half of this was delivered by our internal team.

- 2.5.2 The cost of the Council's eLearning system is met from within the training budget. The eLearning system, elms, provides training on; health and safety, safeguarding, management development, personal effectiveness, mental health, wellbeing, information governance, and equality & diversity. In the 2018-2019 year, 2751 courses were completed by staff.
- 2.5.3 Each Service Unit within the Council also has its own training budget, which is used to meet specific and specialist training needs for their team members, often involving attendance on external courses, conferences and seminars.
- 2.5.4 Following last year's cycle of appraisals we carried out an internal survey to understand staff's view on our appraisal process system and the impact it had on their motivation. The results were largely positive with more than 90% of staff feeling that they received useful feedback from their line manager in their appraisal. 62% of staff said they felt motivated after their appraisal, and 70% of staff said they were having regular 1:1's with their line manager. Regular discussions and feedback are an important element of staff engagement and going forward we will be working with line managers to develop their skills in 1:1 meetings and ensure that the meetings take place regularly for all staff. We are currently piloting with two teams within the Council a revised approach to appraisal, which is focused on regular check-ins (1:1's), rather than a formal appraisal and mid-year review. The teams involved in this pilot include the Business Transformation and Street Scene teams. The pilot includes testing some software to support both the manager and team member with keeping a record of their progress, actions, development needs, as well as an opportunity to give and receive feedback to and from others. Results of the pilot will be presented to Management team at the end of the trial period.
- 2.5.5 We delivered two further Personal Best programmes in 2018-2019 and have committed to another two programmes this year. The Personal Best programme is for non-managers and provides 4 ½ days of training designed to support people in developing a growth mind-set, vital in organisations undergoing change and needing staff to get involved in innovation and developing new ideas. This year's programmes will be delivered by our Learning and Development Manager who is training to be a Facilitator for the programme, which reduces the cost to the Council. We will also be running this year a Personal Best for Leaders programme, so that our managers and supervisors are better able to support their team members in developing growth mind-sets and meeting the challenges being placed on them. As part of the programme, CLT will be asked to identify up to 5 challenges that the Council is currently facing, and then in smaller action learning sets the delegates will be tasked to try and come up with some implementable solutions.

2.6 Reward

- 2.6.1 Employees often underestimate the value of their reward package, particularly when it comes to benefits beyond salary payments. Total reward statements have been introduced to enable staff have a better understanding of their full employment package with the council as this includes all rewards/benefits received by staff as well as other benefits that are available to them as an employee of the council. The statements will help to inform staff of the true value of their employment package with the council as they will be able to see the details of each benefit they receive such as employer pension contributions, payment made by the council towards bus travel, training and development costs and other monetary and non-monetary values. As well as online statements through iTrent, we have also created annual total rewards statements and these were sent to all staff in April. This was to ensure staff that do not have access to iTrent, such as staff working in non-office roles are also able to view the employment package they receive from the council. The total reward statements were communicated to staff in all satellite offices through a number of roadshows and included briefings on current benefits available to staff. A video has also been created by the Communications Team to support the development of total reward statements and has been used as part of the roadshows. A link to the video has been included as a Background Document.
- 2.6.2 There have been a number of wellbeing events organised and promoted over the last few months. In April, we promoted Stress Awareness month and provided advice on how to manage and cope with stress as well as where to obtain further support. On Dementia Action week in May we organised an information session for staff with an external Dementia Friends Champion to raise awareness on dementia. As part of National Diabetes week in June, information was sent to all staff on this year's campaign which was focused around spreading awareness about how it feels to live with diabetes and encouraging those living with the condition to open up. The main purpose for these wellbeing events is to encourage individuals to take preventative measures to avert the onset or worsening of an illness or disease and to adopt healthier lifestyles.
- 2.6.3 The council recognises that many of its employees have parental and caring responsibilities. In recognition of National Carers week we held workshops for staff to provide information, answer questions and to address any challenges faced by staff. The sessions were focused on the council's policies that related to taking time off, flexible working options as well as the support and wellbeing initiatives available from the council to support working parents and carers.
- 2.6.4 The annual Wellbeing week took place between 25 February and 1 March 2019. A number of events were organised across the council at different sites to promote the importance of being healthy and active. Staff feedback was very positive about the events offered and delivered during the week. The aim of the week is to raise awareness on wellbeing by arranging opportunities for staff to get involved in

activities that will improve their fitness, mental health and their overall wellbeing.

- 2.7 The Workforce Strategy sets out the key themes for the period 2016-2020, there is an associated action plan that will be updated on a regular basis to ensure the council continues to develop. The action plan that was agreed in June 2016 is at Appendix 1 and it has been updated with the progress to date.
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3 AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress to date, and agree that work continues on the current action plan. Members could substitute alternative actions or add to the existing ones.
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4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is for the Committee to note the developments and support the on-going work.
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5 RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Workforce Strategy was developed with input from the managers in the organisation and discussed with both the trade unions and Staff Forum.
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7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Developments based on the Workforce Strategy are regularly communicated to managers and staff through the council's newsletter, Team Talk activities, consultation with trade unions, Staff Forum and by email.
- 7.2 Actions within the Workforce Strategy are regularly reviewed by the Wider Leadership Team and twice a year by the Committee.
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8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Workforce Plan 2016-2020 Progress September 2019
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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Workforce Strategy

https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/164653/MBC-Workforce-Strategy-2016-to-2020-final-002.pdf

Total Rewards Video

<https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/jobs-and-apprenticeships/employee-rewards-and-benefits>