



**Minutes of** **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Recruitment and Staff Retention**

**Meeting date** **Thursday, 30 November 2023**

**Members present:** Councillor Michelle Le Marinel (Chair), Councillors Gordon France, Christine Heydon, Alex Hilton, Dedrah Moss and Kim Snape; and

**Members attending Virtually:** Councillor Samantha Martin

**Officers:** Hollie Walmsley, Head of Human Resources and Clare Gornall, Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies:** None

**19 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

**20 Minutes of the last meeting**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of 19 October 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

**21 Staff Sickness Figures (where they are linked to recruitment and retention issues)**

The Panel referred to the information circulated by Hollie Walmsley, Head of Human Resources, which was as follows:

In total, since April 2023 for services shared with SRBC (regardless of the employer of the person) or Chorley council employees:

788 days of absences recorded for mental ill health - 30 instances in total

181 days lost attributed wholly or in part to work - 6 instances, 5 people

Of the 181 days wholly or in part attributable to work, two absences of 19 and 20 days respectively were attributed to workloads.

These two absences were both within customer services, both are South Ribble employees working within a shared service.

Arising from queries from members, Hollie informed the Panel that there was not one service disproportionately represented, the figures just highlighted overall trends. She confirmed that in some service areas, (e.g. relating to the Local Plan), staffing issues related to difficulty to recruit rather than sickness.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

## 22 Responses to Survey questions

As requested at the last meeting, Hollie Walmsley circulated survey questions to Senior Management Team / Directors regarding recruitment and staff retention issues. The questions were as follows:

1. In the last 12 months have any of your services experienced difficulties with recruitment?
2. If YES which services?
3. Are there any specific positions/roles which have been more difficult to fill?
4. Have difficulties with recruitment impacted your services abilities to deliver their objectives? If YES Please provide detail.
5. What have you done to overcome these difficulties?
6. Are there any identified skills gaps in your services?
7. If YES, please provide detail.
8. What are your short term (0-6 months) plans to overcome these gaps?
9. What are your medium to long term plans?
10. In the last 12 months have any of your services experienced difficulties due to turnover?
11. Have difficulties with turnover impacted your services abilities to deliver their objectives? If YES Please provide detail.
12. If YES which services?
13. What have you done to ensure that turnover is effectively managed?

Hollie Walmsley gave a presentation on the survey responses received. The responses reflected issues and trends already identified during the course of the study, but they also detailed what measures had been taken to address and hopefully resolve those issues.

Some examples were:

- Finance – issues had been resolved by the implementation of a longer term strategy including the creation of ‘career grade’ posts.

- Use of consultants for planning policy;
- ICT – using external partners / consultancy where appropriate;
- ICT – career progression – as individual skills develop, salary and expectation increase. So the more basic level tasks are delegated to another person (e.g. at entry level) or are automated through use of technology
- Director of Communities – re-examined their approach to graduate positions, in terms of career progression

Hollie explained that sometimes using a consultant was better value for money, for instance where recruitment costs are high and the post is required less than five days a week. In such instances, the monies would be re-allocated from the staffing budget to another budget.

In some circumstances, outsourcing is more appropriate (having a “bank” of agency staff). The most important thing is to ensure that whatever approach is used, it demonstrates best value for money.

Hollie stressed it was important to acknowledge that in some sectors, such as building control and ICT, there would be a higher turnover of staff due to the attraction of better pay in the private sector. In addition, ICT had an extra level of competitiveness due to the fact the industry can recruit internationally as often roles can be performed remotely. One option would be to become a sponsored employer and so recruit non UK residents. It was also noted that as yet not all the vacancies had been filled following the ICT restructure. Arising from the discussion, Hollie clarified that all staff who attend late/evening meetings outside the flexi time bandwidth are entitled to time off in lieu.

Hollie summarised that the issues cited in the survey were being addressed as part of shorter or longer term plans (such as in the examples given) and/or as part of a new recruitment strategy.

**Resolved** – That the responses be noted.

## 23 Date of next meeting

The Chair informed the Task Group that at its next meeting on Thursday, 14 December 2023, members would be in a position to consider the draft report and agree its recommendations.

She also indicated that she had asked the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Peter Wilson to the next meeting to relate his views on the Task Group’s findings prior to completing this piece of work.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Cabinet Member for Resources be requested to attend the next meeting; and
2. That the draft report be submitted to the next meeting.

Chair

Date