

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Employment in Hampshire County Council
<b>Date:</b>	11 March 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Interim Workforce Report - April to September 2020
<b>Report From:</b>	Jac Broughton

Contact: Jac Broughton, Assistant Director - HR and Organisation Development

1. This paper introduces the Interim Workforce Report for April to September 2020; a six-month review of our organisational workforce data and pays specific attention to the emerging impact of COVID-19 on Hampshire County Council.
2. EHCC are asked to:
  - Note the content of the report in Annex One
  - Review the COVID-19 specific implications that are presented in this covering paper
  - Note the progress in relation to the actions and next steps contained in the 2019/20 Annual Workforce Report

### Context

3. The first Hampshire County Council's Interim Workforce Report, covering the period April to September 2020, can be seen in Annex 1. Within this paper where there are references to appendices these relate to those within Annex 1.
4. The interim report has been produced by the HR+OD profession to formally monitor key workforce data and to review progress against previously agreed actions. The interim report includes the normal suite of data and analysis relating to our people that is published in the Annual Workforce Report and follows the same format as the recent Annual Workforce Report 2019/20 to reflect a typical employee life cycle.
5. The interim report continues the more detailed analysis, at each stage of the employee life cycle, specifically in relation to Inclusion and Diversity as well as paying particular attention to the impact of COVID-19 on our people and services.
6. An analysis of the organisational data has not shown significant change over the last six months in any area of reporting, however, does helpfully

start to identify insights that are likely to be linked to COVID-19. In addition, the report highlights work completed to provide Health and Wellbeing support across the organisation.

7. As well as the impact of COVID-19, the report details the County Council's response to the Black Lives Matter Movement and the work that has taken place with the BME Network.
8. The first half of this financial year has been far from normal because of the global Coronavirus pandemic, that said some important things remain constant for us as an organisation:
  - We continue to manage services to a high standard with a reduced headcount as compared to 2010.
  - We continue to have a high performing workforce evidenced through strong performance management.
  - We remain focused on good leadership.
  - We continue to have a keen focus on the inclusivity of our organisation, indeed, because of international racial tensions and the discriminative nature of the Coronavirus itself, our focus on inclusion and diversity has intensified.
9. In order to prioritise discussions at EHCC this paper specifically covers the COVID-19 findings.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Impacts of COVID-19 – April 2020 – September 2020**

#### Overview

10. Detailed in Annex 1 are the figures showing the number of staff furloughed across the reporting period April 2020 to September 2020. However, now that we are currently in another period of lockdown it felt important to detail further the up-to-date figures now available to us.
11. The data below shows the breakdown of staff on furlough across departments:

## Number of staff placed on furlough across departments

Department	Number of staff placed on furlough prior to August	Number of staff on furlough end of August	Number of staff on furlough end of Sept	Number of staff on furlough end of Oct	Number of staff on furlough end of Nov	Number of staff on furlough end of Dec
Children's Services	139	99	93	89	42	71
CCBS	708	365	72	77	223	117
ETE					6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>188</b>

12. The COVID-19 pandemic has required all County Council colleagues to change ways of working, rise to new challenges, and adapt to a fast moving, unprecedented situation. Results from a survey in October showed that 80% of staff said they had equipment needed to work from home in the longer term, up from 59% in June. 56% reported feeling more effective working from home, up from 38% in June. 60% felt comfortable in a County Council workplace, up from 52% in June.
13. There was no change in people feeling comfortable about returning to County Council workplace (33% in June and in October) and there was a small increase in people enjoying working from home (65%, up from 62%).
14. Areas of focus following the results continue around supporting staff with their mental health, which is an ongoing action from the Annual Workforce Report. This is documented further in paragraph 30. In October, 22% experienced low mental health, slightly up from 19% in June.
15. 62% feel they were able to take regular breaks, down from 69% and fewer staff felt they were keeping in touch with colleagues (down from 94% to 89%).

### **Attract**

16. Between the period April 2020 – September 2020 the Council (excluding schools) advertised circa 627 directly employed roles across all grades. This is a proportionate decrease from 2019/20 where 2,443 roles were advertised across the whole year. The decrease is not surprising in the context of COVID-19, particularly as data also shows that the number of leavers has reduced.
17. 10,527 applications were received, an average of 17 applications per role which is an increase from the average of 10 applications received per role in 2019/20. Again, this is not surprising as according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) the latest UK employment figures on 15 September 2020, revealed a rise in unemployment to a two year high of 4.1% (up from 3.9%).

18. During the first half of the reporting year, we have seen a slight reduction in the number of female applicants, again this can potentially be linked to COVID-19 with ONS reporting that over half of women have caring responsibilities, and we know that 'caring' has been an even more significant feature of life for many people in the first 6 months of this reporting year.
19. We have seen a 5% increase in applications received from applicants between the ages of 20 – 34, particularly in grades C-E. This increase can again potentially be linked to the global pandemic since there have been numerous reports about the impact of the virus on this age group and indeed on the sorts of work delivered at grades C-E. This is supported by the Office for National Statistics data that states that roles within hospitality and retail, which generally employ younger people, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to large numbers of job losses and a potential increase in the pool of available talent for other roles.
20. Our data also shows a slight reduction in the number of applications being received from people declaring a disability. Again, this is perhaps not surprising considering the impact that COVID-19 has had on people with specific conditions that could be classified as disabilities. This is an area we will want to monitor to ensure that we don't experience any lasting reduction in applications from this particular talent pool.

### **Resource**

21. During the pandemic Connect 2 Hampshire continues to play a fundamental role in the resourcing of County Council roles. Particularly an increase in demand has been seen for the roles of qualified social workers and administrative roles.
22. The number of people registering with Connect 2 Hampshire has increased too. The quality of applications received is also high, which has been attributed to people being made redundant from their roles and applying for temporary work. The increase in applications has been seen particularly for administrative roles, where there tended to be approximately 10 applications received per advert, this has increased to an average of 40 per role.
23. Less IT roles have been advertised due to projects being delayed and reprioritised and there has more recently been a reduction in the number of roles in Care being required as turnover has slowed. It is too early to say whether the slowing of turnover in this area directly links to COVID-19 and broader concerns about wider job availability, or whether as hoped, that the adoption of values-based recruitment particularly for care roles within HCC Care is having a positive impact on retention. This is an area we will continue to monitor as the reporting year progresses.

24. We have seen an increased demand, from the agency, for:
- qualified social workers, with demand currently at circa 60 compared to an average of circa 30.
  - administrative workers, with demand currently at circa 60 compared to an average of circa 25.

In both these instances there is a link to COVID-19 (can we say what specifically) and we continue to monitor.

25. Initially working from home had been a challenge for Connect 2 Hampshire. However, with the introduction of Microsoft Teams it has made it easier to contact hiring managers, more so than arranging face to face meetings. Challenges faced included managers arranging urgent interviews and responding to feedback requests for unsuccessful candidates.

### **Onboard**

26. We know that onboarding our staff has been particularly critical during the first half of the year with new starters in a great number of our roles no longer able to physically meet their new colleagues or managers. Unfortunately, we do not have any specific data to provide insight as to the impact that virtual induction has had compared to the more traditional face to face induction, however, anecdotally we know that managers and new staff have found it harder and have needed to invest more time in creating relationships and developing skills and knowledge of the organisation than in normal circumstances. Again, this is an area that we continue to monitor and are already providing additional support and guidance to managers taking on new staff in virtual circumstances.

### **Develop**

27. A planned launch later in 2020 of Microsoft Teams was brought forward to enable staff to work more effectively and efficiently remotely during the pandemic and the benefits of this have been seen also in the way we have been able to continue to develop our people, even though we have not been able to facilitate the bringing together of groups of people face to face.
28. In addition to ensuring that people had the information and skills needed to use the new IT functions available to them, two other specific themes for development in the first 6 months of the year have been inclusion and wellbeing, with wellbeing very specifically linked to COVID-19 and the situation in which our staff find themselves. Updates have regularly been provided to CMT on our well-being work however the below are examples of the work undertaken during this reporting period.
29. A Wellbeing site of pooled resources to make information more accessible was created because of the first lockdown, with the aim to support staff and their families through the COVID-19 pandemic. This has involved the

collating of wellbeing related information from departments in collaboration with Public Health England and Occupational Health and Wellbeing. Further engagement with staff has taken place through Yam Jams to include areas such as Sleep, Stress, Wellbeing, Resilience etc. In addition, Health Assured wellbeing speaker sessions took place to raise awareness of the ongoing benefits of the Employee Assistance Programme and the new app launched.

30. To provide further key information a set of employee and manager guides that provide focussed detail on support offered by assured organisations outside of the County Council have been designed with telephone numbers and web addresses. Appendix 2 shows page 1 of the support guidance for both staff and managers.
31. Whilst not specifically the purpose of this paper, EHCC may also be interested to see the development we have enabled in relation to inclusion. Following the Black Lives Matter Movement, we agreed to prioritise Race as it felt critically important that we listened and acted with a view to progressing at pace to improve the lived experiences of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues on a day-to-day basis.
32. Having considered several research articles and accounts from other organisations we know that the most effective means of understanding and addressing racism in organisations is to listen, talk and create new shared understanding. Annex 1 references the programme of Let's talk about...Race sessions which have been delivered over the last couple of months to educate managers on staff and to enable safe conversations about race.
33. The purpose of these sessions was to:
  - Improve the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues within the organisation.
  - Support cultural change across the County Council.
  - Increase manager's confidence in being able to raise, discuss and where necessary 'manage' issues that they know or anticipate will be related to race.
  - Increase our people's awareness of cultural differences and their impact on the workplace based on their colleagues lived experiences within the County Council.
  - Help managers and people more widely to overcome the uncertainty of using different terminology.
34. Workforce Development has worked closely with the BME Staff Network to deliver focused Leadership and Management training sessions to members to support their development. Following this one-to-one mentoring has continued, on demand, for those that took part.

35. Following Black History Month Directors' invited Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues to meet with them to share lived experiences both to celebrate positive stories but also learn from more difficult experiences.
36. CMT agreed that our Inclusion and Diversity strategy, action plan and related policies and processes are reviewed, in partnership with our staff networks, to ensure they are meaningful, sufficiently robust and fit for purpose especially in the light of the Black Lives Matter context.
37. The Leadership Development Programmes Firefly and the Transformative Leadership Programmes paused through lockdown and recommenced virtually in August. Recruitment of the next Transformative Leadership Programme cohorts will commence shortly, and this will be reported further in the Annual Workforce Report.
38. The Hampshire Leaders Network has continued to meet virtually during the past six months with sessions focusing on strategic performance, inclusive leadership and Let's talk .... Race. This also includes senior management briefings, virtual breakfasts with the Chief Exec and joint CMT/DMT meetings.
39. Apprenticeships are a key part of our development toolkit and COVID-19 has prevented the usual apprenticeship programme development and promotional activity, especially in the early part of the reporting year. Overall, by the middle of December we expect to have 100 new apprenticeship starts which is 55% lower than the same period of 2019.
40. The good news is, despite COVID-19, most County Council apprentices on a programme have remained on a programme, which is testament to the apprentices, managers and teams supporting them, and the training providers who have adapted provision swiftly in response to COVID-19 measures.

### **Reward and Recognise**

41. This message feels even more important than when written in March. Never has the importance of saying 'thank you' been felt more profoundly across HCC than in this exceptional year we are having. There continue to be countless stories of performance through adversity, support for service users and each other and people generally 'going the extra mile'. All of which amount to huge levels of pride for the work that the entire workforce is delivering. Consideration is being given to how we can honour and recognise our shared achievements later in the reporting year.
42. Reward for exceptional performance is typically through a Special Recognition Payment (SRP). Data for the full financial year of 2020/21 will

be shown in the annual workforce report published next year as in previous years.

43. During the first half of this year SRPs were awarded to staff mainly within Adults' Health and Care (1382 staff) and they were largely used as means of recognising the extra demands being placed on staff, i.e to cover absences and additional duties, during the period of COVID-19 response as opposed to our more traditional use of SRPs which tends to reward staff post event/delivery. A small number (92) of staff in other departments also received SRPs during this period for significant performance though not specifically linked directly to COVID-19. The total number of staff receiving an SRPs this year has significantly increased to 1,474 compared with 398 for the same period last year which is largely as a result of the use of SRPs in Adults' as described above.

### **Progress and Perform**

44. As in the previous section, the first and most important thing to say here is that throughout this difficult year people have continued to demonstrate high levels of commitment to the work of the council and to performance in their roles. The efforts and achievements of our staff group cannot be underestimated.
45. In April it was recognised that departments with critical roles would need support through the pandemic. This was with additional pressures on their services where employees could not attend work due to reasons such as self-isolating, taking care of dependants or were unwell themselves. The Temporary Re-Designation Scheme was set up with many staff offering their help. Staff from across departments supported Adults' Health and Care through the first lockdown. This re-designation scheme is something that the County Council's GOLD group has now decided to reactivate, and which will be in operation again from late January 2021 for as long as necessary. One key difference with this re-launch of the scheme will be an explicit ask of staff currently on Furlough to consider whether they have the skills to support in any areas of need with a view to returning to work.
46. It was recognised through the pandemic that it was necessary to support staff in the workplace through a range of measures which were put in place. We have long managed performance against the delivery of outcomes and/or the achievement of key objectives rather than by attendance in the office and the pandemic has reinforced that, with managers continuing to measure performance against what is being delivered by their teams. We have provided toolkits and guidance to managers to help them shift their style and approach to support them as they have got used to new ways of working.
47. A COVID-19 Self-assessment toolkit was launched in July to provide employees and managers with information and tools to help them assess



their risk of poorer outcomes of COVID-19. Through engagement with the BME Network a self-assessment was launched for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues alongside a self-assessment for other staff who felt particularly vulnerable for reasons, such as their age or an underlying health condition.

48. Compared to the same period last year we have seen a decrease in performance and misconduct cases and whilst the specific rationale for this is unknown, this may be linked to new working arrangements and increased volumes of work for managers during the pandemic.
49. Of the 43 resolved misconduct cases the majority (37%) were due to behavioural issues and 2 of these related to individuals wearing PPE, one was resolved by way of a formal warning and one is still ongoing.
50. Appendix 3 focusses on COVID-19 related absences with data showing the highest sickness absence recorded for these absences was in April.
51. Over the last six months a higher level of absence was attributed to 'Isolating – non-working' for female employees, showing that they were absent for a higher percentage than male colleagues (Appendix 4). However, this higher level of absence will predominantly be due to the following:
  - they were clinically extremely vulnerable and could not attend the workplace.
  - a higher number of female employees working in roles where it was not possible to work from home.
  - they were self-isolating because they or a family member were symptomatic.
  - caring responsibilities: whilst this has not specifically surfaced as a cause for concern through our staff surveys, we know that ONS figures documented in paragraph 4.5 report that over half of women have caring responsibilities, and we know that 'caring' has been an even more significant feature of life for many people in the first 6 months of this year.
52. During Q1 and Q2 20/21 there were 19 new 'resolving workplace issue' cases across Council departments one of which related to the employer's duty of care for an individual during the pandemic. No matter how successful the organisation there are issues that prompt an employee to submit a 'grievance' through the Council's Resolving Workplace Issues policy.

## **Retain and Exit**

53. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 623 leavers which is a decrease in number of leavers given 2,027 left during the full year of 2019/2020. It is however, too early to say if this is a direct impact of COVID-19 or otherwise.

## **Conclusions**

54. A great deal of work has been undertaken in departments, with the support of the HR and OD Department during the first half of the reporting year to support the organisation and its people cope with the implications of COVID-19.
55. Unsurprisingly this has meant that some of the actions (bullet pointed below) identified in the annual report have not progressed as far as hoped by the mid-year point, however, all remain on-going.
- Consideration of attraction and resourcing approaches for the local labour market for both under 25s and those with disabilities.
  - Development and Implementation of an HR Data strategy during 2020/21.
  - The development of 'conflict resolution' with a view to implementing in the Council.
56. Interesting, the pandemic has changed the employment market conditions and we have seen a rise in applications from under 25s and a decrease in applications from those with a disability. This action will remain under review in conjunction with the development of the Inclusion Strategy and until such time as we are able to determine what our workplace will look like.
57. In terms of conflict resolution this remains important to us and we will continue to explore ways to incorporate the principles of this work into our recovery work and will provide updates as this work progresses.
58. Creating an interim report has enabled us to monitor progress and seek to identify trends and issues for the organisation. This has been particularly interesting during this reporting period.
59. The full annual report will be produced in 2021 for consideration by CMT and EHCC.

## REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

### Links to the Strategic Plan

**This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision:**

To note the content of the report and propose any additional next steps ahead of the publication of the Annual Workforce Report in 2021.

### Other Significant Links

#### Links to previous Member decisions:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<a href="#">EHCC Annual Workforce Report</a>	July 2020

#### Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
<a href="#">Equality Act 2010</a>	
<a href="#">Office for National Statistics</a>	
<a href="#">Census 2011</a>	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Due regard to the Equality Duty has been paid whilst compiling this report. For individual actions/next steps EIAs will be completed accordingly in line with the responsibility under the Equality Act 2010.