

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 MARCH 2023

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR, AND CORPORATE POLICY

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with information relating to the recruitment and retention of the council's workforce.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study, and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications, and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 It is critical for the council to be able to recruit and retain a sufficient number of employees with the right skills to deliver council services and priorities. This is increasingly important at a time of growing pressures on services.
- 3.2 Councils are continuing to report recruitment difficulties and like many employers across the UK, are operating in a challenging recruitment market, with high vacancy rates and skills gaps in some key areas of services. Retention of employees is also a challenge and particularly where there is competition from other employers.
- 3.3 There are significant challenges recruiting to certain vacant posts in a variety of services and professional areas across the Directorates. As indicated, this situation is not unique to local government, other public services are facing similar challenges and problems exist in the private sector also. Many labour market reports reference the fact that recruitment is incredibly difficult at this time.
- 3.4 Vacancy rates and recruitment outcomes fluctuate across the council. The situation is fluid and variable across services and different job roles and professions. The

issues differ and therefore the solutions and actions must be fit for purpose as one size does not fit all.

- 3.5 It must also be noted, however, that despite such difficulties, the council is attracting and recruiting talented and skilled individuals. There are some signs of improving candidate numbers from those wishing to work for the council. This has resulted in competitive selection processes and recruitment successes.
- 3.6 Nevertheless, recruitment and retention are recognised risks for the council and reflected in its Corporate Risk Register. This report will outline some of the challenges and strategies established to date. It is recognised that these will need to be further progressed as part of the council's workforce planning arrangements. A new workforce strategy is being developed with recruitment and retention being a priority area.

4. Current situation/proposal

Workforce Information

- 4.1 Workforce reports are prepared for Corporate Management Board (CMB) in addition to quarterly reports to Directorate Management Team meetings (including: workforce analysis on headcount trends and turnover; absence; and performance management).
- 4.2 To provide some context, **Appendix 1** provides data on the council's workforce: headcount trend from 2019/2020 to 31 December 2022; percentage of employees by Directorate and Schools; working hours, and age profile characteristics.
- 4.3 Staff turnover (calculated by the numbers leaving the organisation as a percentage of the average headcount) for 2021/2022 was 13.09% (402 individuals), and whilst this is not considered particularly high, the impact will depend upon the nature of these posts and ability and time taken to recruit the relevant skills, given competition in the market.
- 4.4 During the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022 over 20% of adverts did not attract any applicants, i.e., 204 from 982. Internal candidates account for 50% of all appointments made (300 of 603), which is a good indicator of skills development, retention, and commitment to growing people.

Recruitment Advertising

- 4.5 Recruiting managers have a range of guidance, training and support available to assist them in the recruitment process. All vacancies are advertised on the council's jobs pages. Posts that are also being advertised externally can be placed on a range of websites including the Guardian Jobs Webpage which is a commissioned package.
- 4.6 Adverts can also be placed on a variety of social media platforms. HR can provide guidance based on the post being advertised. The aim is to reach an appropriate audience for each vacancy. Through social media, a wide range of active and passive candidates can be accessed.

- 4.7 Bespoke recruitment websites exist for certain sectors, for example, education and social care and links are made to national recruitment campaigns, such as “We Care Wales.” The Welsh Government Apprenticeship Vacancy Service (AVS) is also used when appropriate.
- 4.8 Whilst the number of adverts does not reflect numbers of posts being advertised (in some cases, these relate to multiple vacancies), the level of recruitment advertisements has increased significantly. Compared with 2018/19, there were 125% more adverts placed in 2021/2022, i.e., from 529 to 1193, with a further increasing trend this year.
- 4.9 There is of course a limit to which jobs should be readvertised without considering alternative options, albeit it may be appropriate to continue to assess the market periodically, given changing circumstances of jobseekers and applicant availability in the market.

Attraction

- 4.10 In a challenging competitive recruitment market, it is important that the council promotes what it has to offer its employees. For many candidates, salary is not the only factor considered when accepting a job offer. Availability of career and development prospects are relevant, as are opportunities for a flexible work life balance.
- 4.11 The council’s jobs site has recently been updated and new pages developed to promote the council as an employer and the county borough - “Living and Working in Bridgend County Borough”. It sets out the range of benefits the council can offer.
- 4.12 Dedicated recruitment campaigns have been created for social work and social care, as part of the recruitment and retention programmes led by the service and in collaboration with colleagues in Communications, Marketing and HR. These have included the promotion of key roles through articles, interviews and videos involving employees.
- 4.13 Job fairs and careers events can also be a good opportunity to highlight what employment opportunities the council has to offer. In September 2022, the annual jobs fair, hosted by the council and Department for Work and Pensions, also focused on careers, with officers from all council Directorates and secondary school pupils in attendance.

Managing hard to fill posts

- 4.14 Traditionally there have been posts in certain professional groups in local government which have been hard to fill, e.g., lawyers, social workers, engineers, ICT. This position is now more widespread and includes areas where this has not previously been the case, including business support, accountancy, and catering. There are options that can be explored but these will need to be considered in the context of the specific role.
- 4.15 Temporary cover options include the use of agency workers, offering internal interim arrangements via honoraria, or acting up, and commissioning pieces of work. These

are not permanent solutions but may help whilst more creative solutions are explored.

- 4.16 Skills mix in teams can be reviewed. It is important that person specifications accurately reflect the job responsibilities. For some roles, qualifications and registration with a professional body is an essential requirement, whereas on other roles alternative experience may be sufficient.
- 4.17 A market supplement policy was approved by Council in October 2021 as a means of tackling recruitment and/or retention issues by temporarily increasing the pay awarded to a post, without altering the determined job evaluation grade. Market supplements are considered based on a robust business case and must be the absolute exception rather than the rule.
- 4.18 There are dedicated recruitment and retention projects in the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, where the two highest priorities for the social care workforce are the retention and recruitment of domiciliary care workers and children's social workers. The project boards chaired by the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing, are supported by a workforce officer hosted in HR. Current priorities include the recruitment of international social workers and a refreshed approach to recruitment of support at home care workers.

Retention

- 4.19 It is vitally important that there is also a focus on retention, to ensure that employees have a positive experience of the council as an employer and feel their skills are valued, have career and development opportunities, and are treated fairly. Management arrangements, employee support, and working conditions will influence employees' decisions on whether to remain working for the council.
- 4.20 Staff surveys and employee feedback are good means of understanding the views and opinions of the workforce. The findings of the most recent survey are imminent and will help to shape organisational development.
- 4.21 Exit interviews are a means of gathering the views and opinions of those who are leaving the council. The destination of the leaver and contributing factors can be explored. Best practice suggests that such interviews are undertaken by individuals who are not in the direct line management. Such interviews are being undertaken for children's social workers and whilst this arrangement is effective, a council wide approach is required.
- 4.22 This can be achieved by introducing exit questionnaires as an online survey for all leavers. A protocol is being developed for consultation with trade union representatives and managers. Meanwhile options for sending the questionnaires and collecting responses are being explored. The aim is for implementation from 1 April 2023.

Workforce planning – grow your own schemes

- 4.23 Investing in growing your own schemes offers medium term recruitment options. There are many benefits of this approach which include developing qualified,

skilled, and experienced candidates for permanent roles. The council offers apprenticeships and graduates schemes, in addition to a programme to grow our own social workers, via secondments and traineeships. These offer a positive approach to workforce planning.

4.24 The council has appointed over 144 apprentices, 81 of whom have subsequently secured permanent employment with the council, and 26 are still undertaking their apprenticeship. This programme has been particularly successful in ICT, Procurement, Social Care and Building Control, where there were skills gaps and recruitment challenges. For example:

- 14 ICT apprentices have secured permanent roles within the last 8 years, with some securing senior positions or undertaken further development such as degree programmes.
- The Procurement Team have appointed 3 procurement apprentices; one has been successful in gaining a permanent role, while the other 2 are currently training.
- Of the 3 social care apprentices, 2 have secured permanent employment with the other 1 still on programme.
- Development and Building Control have taken on 2 apprentices in recent years both subsequently securing permanent employment.

4.25 Schools are encouraged to raise awareness of apprenticeships as a positive career choice. Officers have engaged with pupils through attending options days/evenings; schools careers fairs; skills sessions with pupils on application and interviewing skills.

4.26 Several graduates are now in post across the council, whilst options for the 2023 social work training intake are being considered.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 As this is an information report, there is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty, and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services, and functions. This is an information report; therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an EIA in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of the well-being goals/objectives under the Act as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report as it is an information/update report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That the Committee considers this report and provides comments on the recruitment and retention challenges faced and the action being taken to improve the situation.

Kelly Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR, and Corporate Policy

23 February 2023

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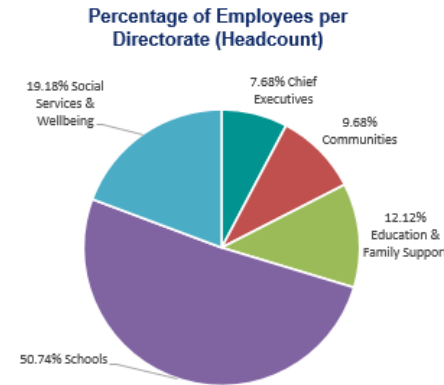
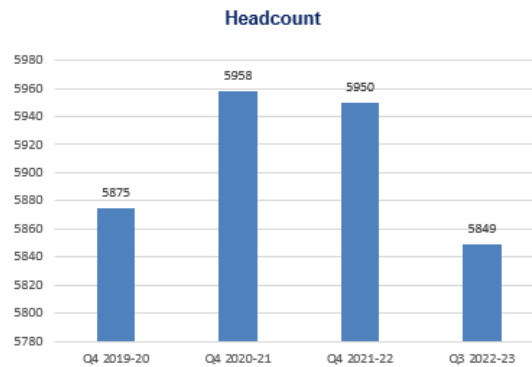
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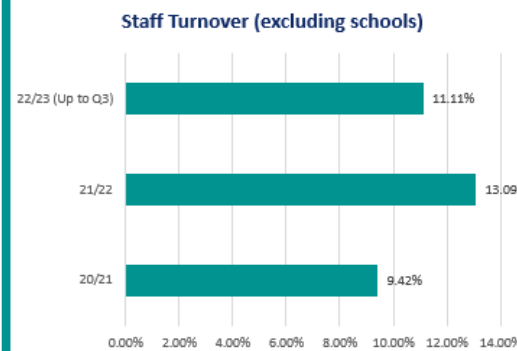
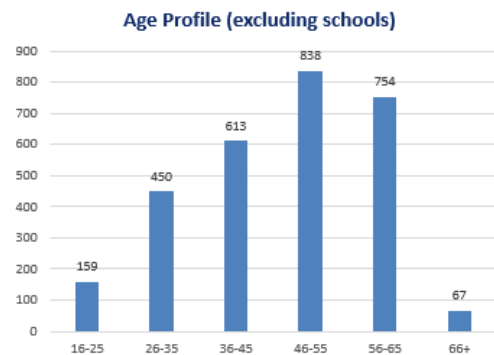
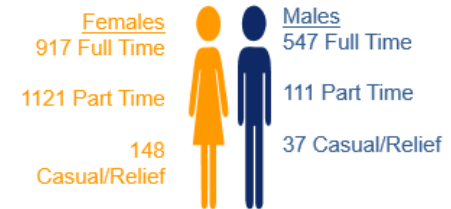
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Background documents: None

Q3 Workforce Information - 2022/2023



Gender & Working patterns (excluding schools, based on headcount)



Advertising Information (excluding schools)

- There were 982 adverts between 01.04.2022 – 31.12.2022
- 204 adverts had no applicants.
- There were 3,060 applications from 2,166 applicants.
- 603 appointments, of which 300 are internal.