

Agenda

Scrutiny Management Board

Date: **Monday 28 November 2022**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford,
HR4 0LE**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Michael Carr, Statutory Scrutiny Officer on 01432 260659 or e-mail Michael.Carr@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor Christy Bolderson
Vice-chairperson	Councillor Yolande Watson
	Councillor Graham Andrews
	Councillor Toni Fagan
	Councillor Phillip Howells
	Councillor Graham Jones
	Councillor Jonathan Lester
	Councillor Felicity Norman
	Councillor Louis Stark
	Councillor David Summers
	Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst
	Councillor William Wilding

Agenda

		Pages
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence.</p>	
2.	<p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the board.</p>	
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interests in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the board in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2022.</p> <p>HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 9:30am on 23rd November 2022</p> <p>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</p> <p>Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</p>	9 - 14
5.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public.</p>	
6.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council.</p>	
7.	<p>HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S HUMAN RESOURCES AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY</p> <p>To consider Herefordshire Council's Human Resources and Workforce Strategy.</p>	15 - 32
8.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>To consider the work programme for the board. Papers to follow.</p>	
9.	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</p> <p>To agree the date of the next meeting.</p>	

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The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Management Board held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 7 October 2022 at 2.00 pm

Present and voting: Councillor Christy Bolderson (chairperson), Councillor Yolande Watson (vice-chairperson) and Councillors: Graham Jones, Councillor F Norman, Louis Stark, David Summers and Elissa Swinglehurst.

Councillors in Remote Attendance:

Councillors Toni Fagan, Jonathan Lester, William Wilding.

In attendance: Councillor Liz Harvey - Cabinet Member - Finance, Corporate Services and Planning

Andrew Lovegrove - Director of Resources and Assurance
 Rachael Hart – Head of Strategic Finance
 Michael Carr, Interim Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

Officers:

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Philip Howells.

22. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were none.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public received.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from members of the Council received.

27. BUDGET SCRUTINY - 2023/24 BUDGET SETTING PROGRESS

The Chairperson set out the reason for the consideration of this item, which was to scrutinise the budget performance and emerging issues and to consider the progress of the development of the 2023/24 budget proposals and Mid Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This item was part of the scrutiny of the Council's budget, including the emerging budget priorities,

positioning, assumptions and risks informing the development of the budget proposals for 2023-2024.

To assist the committee in the scrutiny of budget performance, the report included the cover reports for end of year budget performance for 2021/22 and Quarter 1 2022/23, the details of which had already been published in the Cabinet papers, to also provide insight into ongoing issues for the development of next year's budget.

At its next meeting on 28th November 2022, the committee was expecting to receive a report on Budget Performance Quarter 2 2022-2023, which would provide an opportunity provide accountability on the delivery of the Council's budget, as well as further help to inform the recurrent budget issues.

The Chairperson set out the order in which the budget matters would be considered. First, to invite the Director of Resources and Assurance to present the key issues for the development of the 2023-2024 budget, then to move to questions on the end of year budget performance for 2021/22 and Quarter 1 2022/23, then, questions on the development of the 2023-2024 budget, and then to move to debate and consideration of the conclusions reached by the committee. The Chairperson invited the Director of Resources and Assurance to present the report and slides provided in the agenda papers.

The Director of Resources and Assurance set out the context for the budget setting process. He explained that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had advised in July that the local government settlement announced in December 2022 would be a flat two year settlement. Inflation was a significant budget pressure, with global events and uncertainty driving up inflation. It was anticipated that inflation was likely to be over 10% over the medium term. The Bank of England had raised interest rates over summer and further rate increases were expected. In addition, in Herefordshire there was a stated need to invest in children's services. He said that there was a structural disconnect between rate of increase in funding and costs, costs are increasing at an unprecedented rate.

The Government's September 2022 fiscal statement, however, did not provide information on local government funding. Residents and local businesses were facing significant cost of living challenges and energy costs. He explained that the funding model for local government made little allowance for the transition to an inflation driven economy. 9.7% of the base budget was funded from Government grants and the current assumption was that this would not increase.

21.6% of the base budget was funded from retained business rates. The current assumption was that this would not increase. 68.2% of the base budget was funded from Council Tax, the assumption was that this would increase by 2.99%. An announcement on the level of increase in Council Tax that would legally be set to trigger a local referendum on Council Tax to allow for the Council Tax rate to increase to beyond this rate limit was expected in December.

Based on these assumptions at the time and assuming that additional Government support would not be forthcoming, the Council's anticipated budget gap for 2023-2024 was £21.6m. This was derived from current estimated budget pressures of £31.8m and estimated funding increases of £10.2m. This included £4.6m additional budget allocation for Children Services.

He advised that based on the current position, without additional financial support from the Government it would not be possible to balance the Council's budget position without affecting front line service delivery.

The Key Assumptions 2023/24 to 2026/27 and the budget pressures by directorates were set out in the report. It was explained that each Corporate Director, in consultation with the respective Cabinet Member portfolio holders had been tasked to develop a savings programme, to deliver an in year recovery program; recurring savings for 2023/4 and future years to be included in next years budget and the MTFS; and a transformation programme. For the production of recovery plans and savings to be agreed by Cabinet. The development of a savings programme would enable the Council to identify further areas of savings to be made to address the financial position. The transformation programme approach included a digital and customer transformation programme review across all services.

It was explained that the budget consultation would include consultation on strategic capital budget priorities, both on line and face to face consultation, to commence in October and a full revenue and capital budget consultation to be carried out once Government have confirmed the local government settlement.

There were then questions from the committee to Councillor Liz Harvey - Cabinet Member - Finance, Corporate Services and Planning, Andrew Lovegrove - Director of Resources and Assurance and Rachael Hart – Head of Strategic Finance on the end of year budget performance, followed by questions on the development of the 2023-2024 budget on emerging budget priorities, positioning, assumptions and risks informing the development of the budget proposals and the arrangements and overall timetable for the development of the budget proposals consultation on the budget proposals.

There were questions about the overall estimated impact expected on the Economy and Environment budget, with further information being requested on this.

There were questions about the measures being taken to mitigate budget pressures to lobby for additional Government funding for Herefordshire.

There were questions about the robustness of the delivery of the emerging savings proposals and the extent to which these had been tested out. It was proposed that the Executive should take further action to ensure that the saving proposals are robust and deliverable.

There were questions about the capital budget projects performance, including questions about the underspending in capital projects. It was responded that these may be to do with projects costing less than anticipated, as well as delayed projects. It was proposed to request further information to provide a breakdown of delayed capital projects to show how much of those are to do with delayed projects and how much to do with the projects costing less than anticipated.

Questions were raised regarding the Quarter 1 Budget and Performance report 29th September 2022 p. 51 (para 36-39), which stated that Herefordshire had an aging population and rising number of unpaid carers and the number of people in receipt of the carers allowance and up to date Census 2021 data of the number of unpaid carers was queried, along with the Definition of domiciliary care at Herefordshire Council and what agencies were involved in making these definitions. It was queried whether there needed to be a glossary to explain technical terms and common acronyms. There was a query on the increase on placement requests.

There was a query as to whether Talk Community Hubs were delivering domiciliary and in front line service delivery in adult social care and whether this was included in the Council budget. There was a question about what savings had been made, not included in the Council budget, through services being delivered through Talk Community Hubs and neighbourhood schemes.

There was a query on risk register C05 digital transformation and the use of technology to support home care and extend independent living, with further information requested on this.

It was proposed to make an information request to respond to these queries in more detail.

At the end of questioning, the committee considered its key conclusions, suggestions and possible recommendations to the Cabinet. It was proposed that further information be requested on what the Cabinet Member and senior officers were doing to ensure the robustness of the delivery of the emerging savings proposals and to test these out, to ensure that the saving proposals are robust and deliverable.

It was further proposed to be suggested to the Cabinet Member and senior officers to take further action now to ensure the robustness of the delivery of the emerging savings proposals and to test these out, to ensure that the saving proposals are robust and deliverable and that this be noted as a possible recommendation to the Cabinet, depending on the response to the proposed information request.

There was also some discussion about the Council's key performance measures and the need to ensure that they include all important outcomes that need to be delivered.

At the end of the discussion, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer drew up the proposed resolutions that had been made and it was, thereafter;

RESOLVED:

That the emerging budget priorities, positioning, assumptions and risks informing the development of the budget proposals for 2023-2024, the arrangements and overall timetable for the development of the budget proposals for 2023-2024, including the plans for consultation on the budget proposals, be noted.

That the following information requests be made:

- i). A summary briefing note on the overall estimated impact expected on the Economy and Environment budget.**
- ii). A summary briefing note on the measures being taken to mitigate budget pressures to lobby for additional Government funding for Herefordshire.**
- iii). A summary briefing note to provide a longitudinal view of the capital budget projects performance, including capital budget underspends.**
- iv). The breakdown of delayed capital projects to show how much of those is to do with delayed projects and how much to do with the projects costing less than anticipated.**
- v). A summary briefing note on the rising number of unpaid carers in Herefordshire, including up to date data on the number of unpaid carers.**
- vi). A request to the department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the number of people in receipt of the carer's allowance.**
- vii). The definition of domiciliary care at Herefordshire Council and the Council's brokerage team and what agencies were involved in determining these definitions.**
- viii). A briefing note on the increase on placement requests, from where these are tending to be from and the reasons for the increase.**
- ix). A briefing note on the extent to which Talk Community Hubs are involved in delivering domiciliary care services and in front line service delivery in adult social care, and whether this was included in the Council budget.**
- x). A briefing note on the opportunity costs not included in the Council budget, delivered by Talk Community Hubs neighbourhood schemes.**

- xi). A briefing note with up to date data on risk register C05 digital transformation: the use of technology to support home care and extend independent living.**
- xii). A summary of the measures taken by the Executive to ensure that the saving proposals are robust and deliverable to be provided to the committee.**

And

That it be suggested that that the Executive take further action to ensure that the saving proposals are robust and deliverable.

And also;–

That this suggestion be noted by the committee for further consideration a part of the committee’s scrutiny of the Council’s budget proposals.

28. PROGRESS REPORT

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the report. This was a standing agenda item with an information report to receive an update on issues previously considered by the Scrutiny Management Board. This report provided a brief summary update on issues previously considered by the Scrutiny Management Board, including responses to information requests made by the committee, updates on resolutions made by the committee, including reports and recommendations to the Executive and the Executive Response and executive decisions made in respect of scrutiny reports and recommendations. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer explained that there were some information requests pending, that should be tracked in the report to the next meeting of the committee, along with nonfiction of anticipated updates to the scrutiny committee work plans.

RESOLVED:

That the progress report on scrutiny information requests, scrutiny reports and recommendations and other matters raised by the committee be noted.

29. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was scheduled for Monday 28th November 2022 at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.18 pm

Chairperson



Title of report: Herefordshire Council's Human Resources and Workforce Strategy

Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting date: 28 November 2022

Report by: Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of progress against the strategic aims in the council's workforce strategy.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the committee note the report.

Alternative options

2. The committee could choose not to note the report. This is not recommended as scrutiny management board is a key part of the council's scrutiny function and workforce is one of the council's key priorities.

Key considerations

3. The Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) function is broad and impacts all parts of the council. This report focuses on the key lines of enquiry identified by the committee's work planning process.

The HR Function

4. The council's HR and OD function delivers three key areas of activity; employee relations, organisational development and health and safety. Employee relations refers to the HR work which is undertaken working closely with managers and services. This may include managing casework such as disciplinary, grievance, absence and performance or supporting change programmes and workforce planning activities. A key area of work for the employee relations side of HR has been supporting the improvement work in children's with particular emphasis on social work recruitment and retention. The employee relations team has received additional investment in 2021 to support the significant demands of supporting the children's improvement work.
5. The OD function leads on council-wide initiatives which aim to create the best possible working environment for staff to be able to succeed and deliver the council's strategic aims. Equality, diversity and inclusion for staff has moved to this service in the last 6 months. The team focuses on areas such as leadership, talent management, learning and development, culture, staff engagement and wellbeing. This team started from a very low base of investment but it now has sufficient resource to make a difference in these key areas of work.
6. The health and safety team comprises two advisers, one of whom leads on support for corporate teams and the second focuses on ensuring we have a robust health and safety policy framework for maintained schools.
7. Transactional HR activity such as HR administration, payroll and recruitment is provided by the council's majority owned limited company called Hoople Limited.

The Workforce Strategy

8. The council has a workforce strategy in place which covers the years 2021 – 2024. The strategy was written before the pandemic and before the appointment of the council's chief executive. This means that although the strategy is current and reflects many of the aims and ambitions for our workforce, the strategy is silent on some important aspects of working in the council such as children's improvement, our agile working programme which is called 'Flexible Futures' and our culture change programme called the 'Spirit of Herefordshire'.
9. The council needs a strategy that resonates with the workforce and it is therefore intended to bring forward the production of our next workforce strategy by a year so that we can build on these key ambitions.
10. A summary of progress to date against the aims of the current strategy is set out in paragraphs 12 to 35.

Workforce Strategy Achievements – Leadership Development

11. Delivering successful leadership programmes requires sustained work and momentum, both of which were lost during the pandemic but this has now been regained.
12. A three-year contract for the provision of leadership development programmes was established in 2018. The programmes were aimed at:

- a. New managers in their first management role wanting to learn some of the fundamentals of leadership and management;
 - b. Experienced managers who had been in a management role for a while who wanted to refresh their approach and consider different ways of working;
 - c. Aspiring managers with potential to move into management who wanted to undertake some development to prepare them for the challenge of promotion.
13. A total of 117 participants have successfully completed one of the above programmes. Alumni refresher sessions were held during quarter one of 2022.
14. In January 2020 a Future Leaders programme was launched and 16 staff were accepted onto the programme. Unfortunately, due to covid and senior management changes the programme did not complete but lost focus and momentum. A review of the cohort will take place to assess its suitability for future fast track retention and promotion of internal talent.
15. Post covid and as flexible futures has been launched, the design and expectations of leadership are changing. As the council needs to transform the way that it works, it will require different skillsets of its managers and leaders, particularly in managing by outcomes and impact and within hybrid teams. Therefore, the existing leadership development programmes were not re-commissioned for 2022. A review of leadership will commence in November 2022 with a view to modernise the leadership development programme offer to meet the future need of the council and its leaders. Once reviewed a new procurement exercise will be undertaken to find a development partner for re-launch in 2023 or the next three years.
16. At the same time, an apprenticeship framework is being developed which will exploit the use of the apprenticeship levy and professionalise the role of a line manager through either CMI or ILM accreditation and qualification at level three and five of the leadership and management standards.
17. Collaborating with other organisations for wider system leadership experiences is also essential as we seek new and external perspectives and experimental development opportunities. The council has entered a team in the 2022 West Midlands Tri-Sector Challenge. Experiences such as these remain a high priority as part of the learning offer.
18. Underpinning all leadership development is how learning and new skills are applied and mastered whilst operating in the role. To support, in line with the commitment to develop a coaching style approach to line management, between 2019 – 2021 a series of “coaching essentials for managers” was delivered to 70 staff. The sessions were well received and feedback suggested that more was required across the organisation.
19. More work, however, is required to embed a coaching style approach in leadership across the council. Coaching will underpin the council’s new approach to appraisal which is called ‘My Conversation’ and the modernised approach to managing by outcomes and differing working styles. Work has started on the development of a coaching framework for the council due to launch in January 2023 and which will include:
- a. Coaching skills development for all
 - b. Differentiated development for line managers
 - c. The development of an internal coaching pool, again using the apprenticeship levy to upskill existing workforce to lead as internal coaches; and

- d. Signposting to external coaches where required.
20. Work is still to be undertaken, as a second phase during 2023-24 to develop and facilitate mentoring skills across the council. An exploration of the type of mentoring required is needed, however, all skills will support equality and inclusion, performance, and retention.
21. In December 2021 a new approach to line manager induction was introduced following review. Line managers either receive a personalised induction or a small group is established from within the same directorate, facilitated by a member of the HR team. However, recent feedback suggests that there is more that needs to be done to ensure a quick and efficient induction for those in line manager roles therefore further work is to be undertaken. A line managers' resource hub has also been created to welcome and support new line managers to the council.

Workforce Strategy Achievements – Recruitment and Retention

22. The council, like every local authority across the country has seen significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff. The national shortage of workers to fill vacancies has been well reported and covers all sectors as organisations compete to fill vacancies.
23. Although the recruitment and retention challenges span nearly every service within the council there have been particular challenges within social care. The council has addressed these challenges by focusing a significant proportion of its HR resource on recruitment and retention and although there is still much to do, some of the key activities and work in progress to date are:

Recruitment

- a. Streamlining recruitment processes for managers and candidates
- b. Creation of simplified guides and training for managers
- c. Advice, guidance and support for recruiting managers
- d. Auditing our current processes to ensure they are fit for purpose and areas such as employment checks are robust
- e. Focusing on our advert content to tell our story, be clear on our roles and offer and sell Herefordshire as a great place to live and work
- f. Enhancing our advertising reach through using go-to advertising routes such as social media platforms and specialist sites such as Indeed and Community Care
- g. Holding recruitment events for particular roles to give the best candidates experience
- h. Utilising agency workers to cover vacancies whilst permanent recruitment is completed
- i. Utilising project teams to clear backlogs of work and cover vacancies
- j. Using specialist recruitment agencies to source the best candidates in the market for senior roles across the organisation
- k. Holding recruitment fairs in schools, colleges and local community forums
- l. Introduction of welcome payments for social care roles
- m. Branding our recruitment for particular areas such as children's social care
- n. Creation of dedicated microsites for senior recruitment campaigns
- o. Creation of a dedicated microsite for social care – launching in November 2022
- p. Researching other recruitment avenues such as international recruitment to aid longer term recruitment challenges

Retention

- a. Launching our flexible futures policy across the organisation to ensure our ways of working are agile and reflect the market and therefore attract and retain people in the organisation
- b. Benchmarking our pay and benefits package against neighbouring authorities for hard to recruit roles to ensure we are competitive
- c. Enhancing our offer through using market forces supplements where there is a business case to do so
- d. Enhancing our offer through the re-procurement and launch of our voluntary benefits scheme and annual leave purchase scheme
- e. Strong focus on our well-being and support offer for employees
- f. Focus on personal and professional development
- g. Offering a range of internal secondment and acting up opportunities to develop internal talent and succession pathways
- h. Introduction of retention payments for social care roles
- i. Introduction of career graded roles within some services
- j. Looking how best to enhance our apprenticeship offer and use apprenticeship as a future pipeline of talent

Workforce Strategy Achievements – Learning and Development

24. Learning and development opportunities are now an important part of our employment offer to staff; they support attraction, development and retention of talent. In addition to the leadership development offer there has been a consistent core offer for the workforce. Listed below are some of the sessions that have been available to the workforce and line managers from 2019:
- a. Recruitment and induction training for line managers
 - b. Revised induction offer
 - c. Meaningful conversations training
 - d. Conducting My Conversation workshops
 - e. Making virtual working work for line managers
 - f. Mental health awareness and skills sessions for line managers
 - g. Mental health first aiders training and peer support
 - h. The 'art of being brilliant' and 'bouncebackability'
 - i. Building personal resilience
 - j. A suite of Covid 19 wellbeing sessions – yoga, Zumba, breathing, mindfulness and physical activity HIIT
 - k. MS Teams and digital skills
 - l. Conflict management and personal safety
 - m. A range of skills development delivered by Hoople – assertiveness train the trainer, presentation skills, conflict and de-escalation, continuous improvement
 - n. Unconscious bias
26. The workforce strategy prioritises resilience and wellbeing, in a post covid world. The changing landscape of personal and organisational health means that the health and wellbeing offer is constantly changing and increasingly becoming demanding as the council seeks to meet individual physical mental, social and financial needs. There has been a consistent investment into supporting mental health awareness development sessions. There has also been an investment in equality, inclusion and belonging by purchasing a new suite of equality eLearning modules covering a range of subjects from 'ally ship' through to understanding bias. There is more to be done.

27. As the council increases its employee engagement and equality work it also seeks new and informative ways to signpost the workforce to new and good quality resources, either through accreditation with external bodies or development of in-house resources. Increasing the eLearning offer and the introduction of coaching culture will provide additional self-led resources. The council continues to grow additional resources such as the 'headspace app', 'ask bill' and other resources through our new benefit provider. All contributing to the wider benefits of working for the council.
28. The council continues to perfect the mandatory learning cycle and provision of mandatory eLearning offer. This portfolio of compliance learning is to protect individuals and the council and fulfil statutory obligations around health and safety, safeguarding and information governance. The council aims to achieve a 95% completion rate each year across all modules.
29. The recent employee survey was used to survey staff on the Learning & Development offer and as such a number of developments have been identified:
- The need to revise the Learning & Development offer
 - Offer more social and wellbeing activities to support mental health and reduce isolation
 - Review corporate induction

Workforce Strategy Achievements – Culture, Recognition and Reward

30. Continually working on the council's employer brand and rewarding and recognising the workforce requires individual and specific investment and attention. During covid much work was undertaken to listen and recognise the work and effort of staff. How we now move post covid to normalise this work will be a focus from 2023. The investment of new resources within the learning and OD team will specifically focus on how we listen, engage, appreciate and recognise the workforce. The 2022 employee survey reinforced the need to invest in this area.
31. The council is not starting from a blank page. A new format all staff briefings led by the Chief Executive now includes workforce praise and recognition, the weekly Chief Executive update also highlights services, teams and individuals. As the council builds its new employer brand and bring the Spirit of Herefordshire to life, the new employee engagement concept of 'help us grow' and 'if you grow, we grow' will be shaped.
32. Including the voice of the workforce in what the council does do by engaging, asking and listening more has been well done through the use of the change and wellbeing champions in phase one of flexible futures. There are also plans to widen the Chief Executive's staff panel into a workforce engagement group.
33. In 2022 there has been a focus to widen the employee benefits offer. The council has:
- a. Signed up to 'gems at work' and 'perks at work'
 - b. Re-procured and launched a new benefits provider
 - c. Transitioned to a new employee assistance provider
 - d. Developed and launched initiatives such as 'coffee connections' which help staff informally connect with colleagues
 - e. Developed and launched a new annual leave purchase scheme
 - f. Introduced recruitment and retention payments

34. During 2023/24 there will continue to be a focus to widen the offer available to staff, including a review of HR policy provision, wider salary sacrifice schemes, introduce long service recognition and an employee appreciation programme for 'moments that matter'.
35. All of the work contributes to the council's culture change programme. The change programme will be led by our values and behaviours and ensure they are embedded in all that we do. HR&OD will actively support wider transformation programmes such as process and digital transformation ensuring that people are ready for change and have a growth mind-set. Change is inevitable and uncomfortable. Ensuring that the council role models change and places people at the heart of the change, providing them with the best organisational climate for them to succeed underpins all the council's OD work.

Performance Reporting

36. The performance reporting framework for HR, like many of our services is under-developed but significant work is underway by the performance team to improve our performance reporting using the Microsoft tool called Power BI
37. Notwithstanding that work, the council collects a range of data that is used to monitor the health of the organisation from a HR perspective and produces a monthly data set of key indicator as a matter of routine. The routinely produced data set includes absence, turnover, agency spend, headcount and mandatory training completion rates. It is shared with directorates but it is unclear the extent to which it is used.
38. An annual health and safety report with quarterly updates is produced for the Cabinet Member and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). This ensures senior leaders are sighted on accident and incident trends.
39. The council's quarterly performance report is received by CLT and Cabinet and highlights some aspects of HR performance such as absence and mandatory training completion rates. Key diversity data such as the gender pay gap is reported annually and published on the council's website.
40. The committee has identified key measures it would like included in this report and these are included in appendix 1.

Agency Workers

41. The council recruits agency workers for two main purposes. Firstly to fill vacancies whilst permanent employees are recruited such as in social work posts. Secondly the council might need to hire an agency worker to fill a short term need for a specific skill or task where it is neither necessary nor possible to recruit on a permanent basis. The vast majority of the council's agency workers are supplied through Hoople's resourcing team. For specialist or senior posts, the council relies on specialist recruitment agencies to provide suitably qualified and skilled agency workers.
42. In most cases, the council would prefer to have permanent staff in post and aims to reduce reliance on agency workers. However, agency workers are an important and valuable resource. The market for agency workers is highly competitive and it's essential that the council is able to provide a good working environment where agency workers are valued. Ultimately it is hoped that some agency workers will decide to transfer onto

the council's permanent staff and a simple 'Agency to Perm' process is in place to encourage this.

43. The table below shows the council's agency spend over the last 5 years. Please note that the data below does not include spend where managers have recruited specialist or senior agency workers directly from specialist recruitment agencies.

	Agency Spend (£000)				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020 – 2021	2021-2022
Economy & Environment	559	503	471	321	725
Children & Young People	813	1,719	1,791	2,173	5,985
Community Wellbeing	1,055	959	857	1,129	1,840
Corporate Services	-	-	768	1,155	2,098
Council as a whole	2,427	3,181	3,887	4,447	10,948

Staff Feedback

44. The council's staff survey had a fundamental review this year. The previous survey was held in 2019 and as significant change has happened since then, the new survey was designed to understand, at a deeper level, how people feel about working for the council. There were also a number of validating open questions meaning the council could more accurately understand the workforce sentiment and more importantly help to target change and address needs.
45. A summary of the outcomes can be found in Appendix 2.

Leavers' feedback

46. The council-wide exit interview process offers two feedback routes for staff leaving the council. Leavers can complete an online exit survey or request a face to face exit interview with their line manager or another appropriate person. To try to encourage staff to share their feedback as part of the exit interview process, an electronic alert is automatically sent to those staff who are leaving reminding them of the exit interview process and providing a hyperlink to the online exit survey.
47. The data from completed online exit surveys is captured centrally, whereas records of face to face exit interviews are held locally by managers and therefore this summary does not include data for face to face exit interviews conducted with managers.
48. During the previous 12 months (August 2022 – August 2021) there were 262 leavers and of these leavers 106 completed the online questionnaire. This amounts to a response rate of 40.45%.
49. The key positive themes from leavers have been that the council has a positive and supportive culture, staff are well equipped to do their jobs, they feel trusted to get the job done, they are supported to do well, induction was good and they reported a good sense of commitment to the community to deliver good services.
50. Leavers reported the key areas where the council could improve as being pay and conditions, career progression opportunities, clear organisational direction, better

leadership and better access to training. Overall, 72% of those completing the questionnaire would recommend the council as a good employer and 28% would not.

51. The highest completion rate from leavers were for staff leaving the Children's and Young People directorate which reflects the increased focus the council has had on capturing exit data in this area. There were some strong comments in respects of the pressures felt by social workers. These range from the lack of permanent staff within the teams and the high reliance on interim and agency staff, pressures felt by the current situation that the department finds itself in, and a lack of supervision with managers. Further detail on the exit data reported by leavers for this service was reported at Children and Young People scrutiny committee in February 2022 and a link to that report can be found [here](#).

Conclusion

52. The committee is asked to note the progress made against the strategic aims of the council's workforce strategy which has been achieved against a backdrop of significant change and challenge. Despite the good progress, recruiting and retaining good staff remains the key workforce challenge for the next two years and having great leaders will be essential in ensuring the council is able to meet that challenge.

Community Impact

53. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

54. The term 'corporate parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for children who are looked after by the council. Being a good corporate parent means we should; accept responsibility for children in the council's care; make their needs a priority; and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children. The committee should be mindful of these responsibilities when undertaking scrutiny work.

Environmental Impact

55. Whilst this is an update on the work programme and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

56. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

57. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report concerns the administrative function of the children and young people scrutiny committee, it is unlikely that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

58. The costs of the work of the committee will have to be met within existing resources. It should be noted the costs of running scrutiny can be subject to an assessment to support appropriate processes.

59. The councillors' allowance scheme contains provision for co-opted and other non-elected members to claim travel, subsistence and dependant carer's allowances on the same basis as members of the council. If the committee agrees that co-optees should be included in an inquiry they will be entitled to claim allowances.

60. It is suggested that a scrutiny committee should only have one in-depth scrutiny task group inquiry running at a time.

Legal implications

61. The council is required to deliver a scrutiny function. The development of a work programme which is focused and reflects those priorities facing Herefordshire will assist the committee and the council to deliver a scrutiny function.

62. The Scrutiny Rules in Part 4 Section 5 of the Council's constitution provide for the setting of a work programme, the reporting of recommendations to the executive and the establishment of task and finish groups within the committee's agreed work programme.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the development of the work programme should help mitigate this risk.

Consultees

63. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Planning.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Key HR measures
- Appendix 2 - Staff survey feedback

Background papers

None identified

Key HR Measures

1. The committee has identified key measures it would like included in this report and these are included in paragraphs 2 to 15 below.
2. **Absence-** the council measures its absence rate in terms of the average days lost per full time employee (fte) and the following table shows the average number of days lost, by directorate for the last 5 financial years.

	Number of working days lost per fte				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020 – 2021	2021-2022
Economy & Environment	6.36	6.21	6.52	5.19	7.73
Children & Young People	7.12	7.34	9.24	6.13	6.68
Community Wellbeing	12.64	12.99	12.04	10.83	11.17
Corporate Services	-	-	4.16	4.82	5.81
Council as a whole	8.22	8.37	8.67	6.87	8.05

3. The table shows absence rates increasing to their pre-pandemic levels. Community Wellbeing consistently has the highest rate of days lost per FTE and targeted joint work with HR, managers and unions has failed to illicit any significant improvement. It should be recognised that workers in this service work with some of the most vulnerable members of the community and whilst some office or home based workers may be able to continue working with minor colds or infections, workers in this directorate must pay higher regard to infection control.
4. The council's absence rates benchmark reasonably well with the local government average of 8.3 days (source LG Inform Benchmarking).
5. The council also monitors reasons for absence and in the last 12 months the most common reasons across the council are stress (35.83%) infections (26.25%) other (17.48%) coronavirus (7.88%) long term conditions (7.42%) anatomical conditions (5.15%).
6. **Ratio of agency to employed staff** – the table below shows the ratio of agency workers to council employed staff in post. There are limitations to this data and it should be used with caution. For instance it does not capture some workers who are engaged directly though agencies.

	% of council employed staff				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020 - 2021	2021-2022
Economy & Environment	97.85	98.38	98.77	98.82	98.08
Children & Young People	95.50	92.91	93.26	92.11	83.59
Community Wellbeing	94.42	95.94	95.87	92.69	92.71
Corporate Services	-	-	93.15	92.67	91.66
Council as a whole	95.92	95.74	95.26	94.07	91.51

7. **Turnover and vacancies** – the table below shows the number of starters, leavers and the turnover rate for the council as a whole. A deeper dive into the turnover statistics show that all areas of the council have seen an increase in turnover with a steeper increase in Community Wellbeing and Children and Young People directorates. The table also includes the number of vacancies which have been managed in the corresponding years and the significant increase in recruitment activity in 2021/2022.

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020 - 2021	2021-2022
New starters	169	177	180	190	265
Leavers	158	152	140	167	238
Turnover rate %	13.03	12.43	10.88	12.45	17.56
Live vacancies (number of jobs recruited to)	375	394	346	379	554

8. **Mandatory training completion rates**- the council has a suite of mandatory training courses which must be completed on a cyclical basis. The council aims for 95% completion rate for all modules and the current completion rates are listed against this year's courses in the table below. Non-compliance with mandatory training without good reason is treated as a potential disciplinary offence.

	Completion rates by directorate				
	Children & Young People	Community Wellbeing	Corporate Services	Economy & Environment	Topic average
Info. governance	90%	98%	98%	95%	95%
Info. Security	90%	97%	95%	98%	95%
Health & Safety	83%	96%	94%	97%	91%
Fire Safety	90%	97%	96%	98%	95%
Fraud Awareness	86%	96%	96%	97%	93%
Display Screen Equipment (DSE)	82%	95%	95%	96%	91%

Directorate Average	86.8%	96.5%	95.6%	96.8%	
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Equality and Diversity Dimensions

9. The council publishes a summary of its diversity statistics on an annual basis in its 'Equality in Employment' report which can be found [here](#). The majority of diversity data the council holds relies on self-report by employees at the time of their appointment and staff have the ability to update and add to their diversity data at any time during the course of their employment. Capturing data at the time of appointment is by far the most effective way to get the data and the council has been hampered in this by a recruitment system that does not capture this data by default. In September 2022 the council launched a new recruitment system which will be able to capture this data by default and an increase in data capture rates is anticipated.

10. A summary of the council's diversity data as at 31 December 2021 can be found the tables below.

11. Age profile of workforce

	Total	Total %
Age 16-24	48	3.5
Age 25-29	97	7.1
Age 30-44	433	31.9
Age 45 – 59	595	43.8
Age 60 - 64	142	10.5
Age 65 – 74	39	2.9
Age over 74	3	0.2
Total	1,357	100

12. Workforce by gender

	Total	Total %
Female	1026	75.6
Male	331	24.4

13. **Workforce by Sexual Orientation** - 2.4% of employees have identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other, slightly higher than the 2.0% in 2020 and 2019. An estimated 2.7% of the UK population aged 16 years and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual in 2019, an increase from 2.2% in 2018 (source: [ONS](#)).

	Total	Total %
Bisexual	6	0.4
Gay	8	0.6
Heterosexual	780	57.5
Lesbian	17	1.3

Other	1	0.1
Prefer not to say	349	25.7
information not obtained	196	14.4

14. **Disability profile of workforce** - 4.0% of the workforce has identified as being disabled, and this figure is the same for full-time employees, and slightly lower for part-time employees (3.7%). Of the 218 new starters in 2021, 3.7% identified as being disabled, which is in line with the existing workforce. Unfortunately 61.5% of new starters in 2021 failed to provide information on their disability status.

	Total	Total %
Disabled	54	4
Not disabled	760	56
Prefer not to say	16	1.2
Information not obtained	527	38.8

15. **Ethnicity profile of workforce** - The approximate percentage of Asian, Black and other ethnically diverse people in Herefordshire's working age population is 4.9% (source: 2011 Census). This compares to 6.9% of the Council's overall workforce as at 31 December 2021 (6.7% in 2020). Of the 218 new starters in 2021, 20.8% identified as an ethnicity other than White British, which is a very high figure. Unfortunately 56.9% of new starters have failed to provide information on their ethnicity, signifying that our process for encouraging people to provide diversity data needs to be improved.

	Total	Total %
Any other Ethnic Group	3	0.2
Asian or Asian British - Any other	5	0.4
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0.5
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0.1
Black or Black British – African	5	0.4
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0.3
Chinese	2	0.1
Mixed - Any mixed background	7	0.5
White - Any other White background	55	4.1
White - Gypsy/Romany, Irish Traveller	4	0.3
Total BAME employees	94	6.9
White – British	798	58.8
Prefer not to say	104	7.7
Information not obtained	361	26.6

STAFF SURVEY FEEDBACK

1. **Me and my job** – This was a positive response and gave an overall good picture of how staff feel about their work. Staff score highly on indicators of sense of purpose (85% saying their work is meaningful), being proud (84%) followed by trust also at 84%. Staff indicated that they were able to use their own initiative (80%) and with the score of being willing to go beyond what is needed at 79% this section of the survey is a solid foundation to build on. People enjoy their work, have a personal sense of purpose and come to work to do a good job within a role that they enjoy. The standout areas for improvement being able to access information, this was a reoccurring theme throughout the survey from formal filing systems, the use of dated paper systems, staff directory being out of date, modernisation of systems, changes to systems and processes required and not knowing who or where to go to. 36% of staff responded negatively that their workload was manageable.
2. **My team and line manager** - Again this was a positive picture overall. Teams are supporting each other well and there is a sense of comradery. The lowest positive agreement score being 60% which was “my manager encourages me to reach my full potential”. The areas for improvement are managers need to hold regular 1-2-1s or supervisions and concerns about reporting line managers.
3. **Working at the council and council culture** - Demonstrating council values and behaviours, equality and diversity scored well. However, four out of the five lowest ranking scores from the whole survey came from this section. The main emerging theme is that more is required to articulate the council’s overall vision and purpose. This in turn needs to be translated simply into priorities that staff can identify with in their day to day roles. Information needs to be shared across all services and not retained within directorate or in some cases even service silos. More to help people understand what’s going on and how they belong was an emerging theme, along with more need for recognition. There is a strong requirement to transform and modernise processes procedures to help people be more effective in their roles (78% feeling that they don’t help). Culturally speaking only 44% would recommend the council as a place to work. Specifically staff said what they do not like - the council’s reputation, manager practices, inflexibility and poor work life balance, pay and financial support, outdated processes, working practices and ways of working.
4. **Information and communication** – The results were a story of two halves. Communication with colleagues and within teams featured highly (84%) and knowing how to access and where to get support did too (73%). The workforce value the Chief Executive updates and they feel that communications are easy to understand. The areas for improvement are to make the communications more engaging and relevant to staff and ensure that staff are involved by listening and then demonstrating that their opinions are valued. Cross referenced against earlier sections the area of workforce engagement, appreciation, listening and recognition requires work.

5. **My learning, career and development** –91% of respondents feel that this area is important to them and 84% also state that they believe that they have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs and are in jobs that they enjoy doing. But the council needs to do better with providing access to opportunities and finding time for self-development. Providing a culture where learning and support of personal growth is valued (40% report they are not encouraged to reach their full potential).
6. **My health and wellbeing** – 53% of our respondents have moderate health, 5% high and 42% low. This brought the council's overall wellbeing score to 23.24 out of a possible highest score of 35. The national health is benchmarked as 23.61 therefore, we are benchmarking well. This is positive given the difficult year that many colleagues have faced in children's services, given that most are still transitioning into different ways of working post covid and that the cost of living and financial concerns are a societal constant.
7. Finally, the employee engagement score. This is 3.56 out of 5. The council loosely maps to the Gallup employee engagement standard. Using a score out of 5 this can easily be used to benchmark against other organisations where their data is available or willing to be shared. The score is healthy and positive, despite the challenges and some feedback received.
8. The survey was successful and the high response rate provides statistically valid insight into the views of the workforce. The directorate reports show some slight variance in terms of the top five and five improvement areas but are all broadly similar. The council's leadership team is now using this data to plan actions to address areas of concern, build on our strengths and demonstrate to the workforce that we are listening.