

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
<b>TITLE OF REPORT</b>	Workforce Planning
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	23rd of March 2023
<b>PROJECT LEAD</b>	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Support
<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	Councillor Menna Jones

### Summary

1. This report provides an overview of the Council's situation in relation to recruiting and retaining staff. It refers to the challenges over the past few months and the steps that have already been taken to address the issues.
2. The report also provides an overview of the Council's long-term objectives in relation to Workforce Planning.

### Background

3. During 2022, the latest information at a UK level on the labour market outlook, in addition to Research surveys undertaken by employment bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), clearly indicated that there were problems in all sectors of the economy in relation to recruiting and retaining staff.
4. Whilst the very latest statistics show that there was a decrease in the number of vacancies in the economy between November 2022 and January 2023, the number remains over the one million and research undertaken by employer bodies conclude that organisations will over the course of the next year be increasing their efforts in recruiting and retaining high quality staff.<sup>1</sup>
5. The competition for staff has had an impact on all areas of the economy and has become an issue in local government in Wales and locally for us in Gwynedd as well.
6. It is important to the Council as an employer that we recruit the correct people, with the required skills, to the appropriate roles and that they are empowered and

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the Government of Wales' data unit do not produce specific statistics on vacancies in Wales.

supported to undertake their role to the best of their ability. Our efforts to ensure this involves the following activities:

### **Recruit the correct people**

- Identify and use creative means of recruiting new workers to the Council, with a clear focus on equality and diversity.
- Focus on the candidate's experience, and through that improve recruitment processes.
- Recruit to the Council's values, in addition to professional requirements.

### **Retaining talented staff**

- Appreciate the skills, information, and successes of staff, through continuing to promote the wide range of benefits available.
- Clear job descriptions, which provides a basis to continuous development and appraisal discussions.

### **Develop the profile of the employer**

- Identify what makes the Council unique as an employer, including its values.
- Identify, through various means, the reasons why the Council's workers are proud to work as part of the team. For example, the characteristics of the county, the Welsh language, flexible working arrangements.

7. Recently the HR team conducted an exercise to analyse the hot spots in terms of vacant roles within the Council. The analysis was based on the information as identified at the end of January 2023. It should however be remembered that the situation changes constantly and quickly, and therefore these statistics should not be viewed as undeniable facts on their own.
8. In January, there were up to 200 permanent jobs vacant on the Council's structure. In terms of percentage, this means that about 4% of the Council's jobs were vacant at the time. In addition, there were up to 55 temporary jobs that were vacant. As a total therefore, it could be concluded that there were about 5% of the Council's jobs that were vacant in January this year.
9. This figure does not include staff that are employed directly in our schools. Neither does it follow that all 255 jobs were full time, and it should be remembered that the Council is not constantly attempting to fill 255 roles at any one time. In fact, whilst working on gathering this data, we were informed more than once that managers were hesitating as to whether a job should be filled, either because they were reviewing the duties and responsibilities or they were taking account of the current financial pressures on the Council's departments.

10. As referred to earlier in this report, the published information available to enable us to compare this 5% figure with a comparable organisation is minimal, but to give some context in September 2022 the Health Service in England announced that the vacancy rate in their Services were 11.9% (in a much larger organisation of course).
11. Details of some of the key vacant jobs identified in January can be seen in Appendix 1.
12. At the same time an analysis was undertaken of the number of applications that were received for roles in the period between the 1st of April and 3rd of November 2022. On average, the Council received two applications per role during the period in question. To give some context to this figure, the HR company XpertHR concluded in 2021 that employers in Wales were on average receiving 14 applications for each role (although this is a general and high-level figure for Wales, with the possibility of a high degree of variation between organisations).
13. In such a large and varied organisation as the Council the situation is complex, but the above statistics give a direction to how we address the situation. Further work is being undertaken to identify what departments are suffering most with a low number of applicants; this will help us to form our recruitment plans within the framework shown in paragraph 6 above.
14. There are however some indications that the situation is improving. The following data on job adverts, in particular the reduction in the number of jobs that are advertised, support these indications.

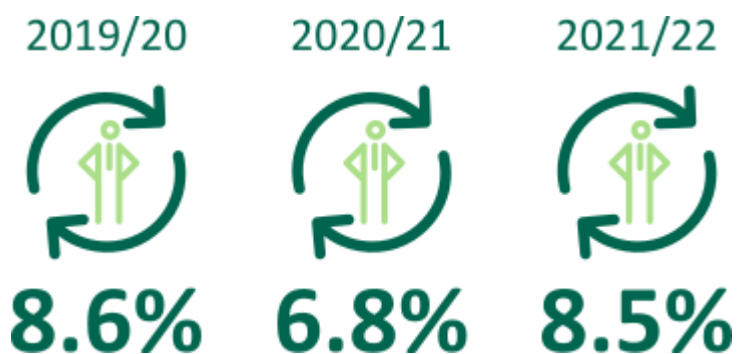
<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of jobs advertised</b>	<b>Number of appointments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
May '22	101	37	36%
June '22	110	38	34.5%
July '22	73	34	46.5%
August '22	87	44	50%
September '22	97	19	19%
October '22	89	50	56%
November '22	83	23	27%
December '22	61	14	22%
January '23	49	23	47%

We will be analysing this data closely over the next few months, to measure the impact of our efforts to fill vacant roles.

## Turnover

15. In general terms, it is not possible to state with any certainty what level of staff turnover can be damaging to an organisation's performance, and to some extent a certain level of turnover can be healthy. It depends how easy it is to identify new staff when individuals leave, and which roles those individuals undertake. When those skills are specialised, are highly sought after, and the recruitment pool is smaller than what might be available to other employers, then losing one or two key individuals can be painful for a service.

16. The latest information on staff turnover at a Council level is as follows:



Figures for 2022/23 will be calculated in in the new financial year.

The turnover at a Council level is consistent and suggest that there is not a huge issue in terms of staff leaving the organisation. We can however conclude that the challenge for us is to identify and attract new staff, when considering the specialised nature of some areas of work and the size of the talent pool available to us.

17. To enable us to learn about the reasons as to why workers are leaving the Council, we are now ready to implement a new arrangement for conducting leaving questionnaires and interviews. There has been some delay in introducing the new arrangements, and our original plan was to introduce the arrangements over the winter months. The problems have now been resolved and staff and managers will be receiving further information over the forthcoming weeks.

18. All the above information will help human resources officers and departmental management teams to better understand how to address recruitment and retention problems.

19. In exceptional and critical situations, the Council can use a market supplement, either to try and attract candidates or retain current employees. Under a market supplement measure, an additional sum is placed on top of the substantive salary for the role, for a specific period. It is used in exceptional circumstances only, and must

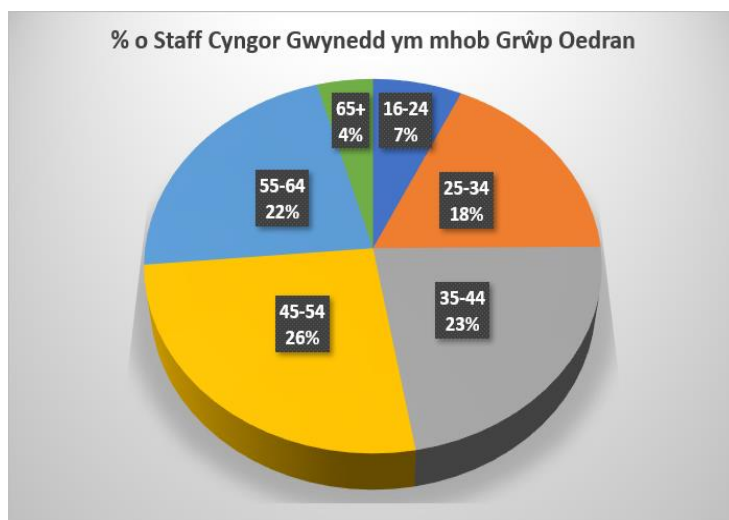
be supported by a sound business case, including data on salaries within other comparable employers. Issuing a market supplement cannot be a long-term fix to recruitment problems, but it is a mechanism that is available in incredibly difficult circumstances.

### Workforce Planning Project

20. Whilst there are currently recruitment issues that we must resolve, “Workforce Planning” is a corporate improvement priority in the Council’s Plan for 2023 – 2028. The aim is to ensure that we have a sufficient pipeline of talent available to enable us to provide services to residents, and that we can ensure that supply in the long term. This means supporting the Council’s teams to be initiative-taking in planning their workforce and therefore avoiding short term recruitment problems.

21. One key factor to consider in planning the Workforce is the age profile of our staff. The following chart illustrates the most recent age profile for the Council’s Workforce:

**AGE PROFILE - % OF STAFF IN EACH AGE BAND**



Age band	Number of individuals
16 – 24	422
25 – 34	1097
35 – 44	1369
45 – 54	1607
55 – 64	1348
65 +	265

22. Over a quarter of the Council’s workforce is over 55 years of age, and the risk with that profile is the possibility that we could lose valuable skills, information, and experience in a relatively short period of time, which in turn could have an impact on services. It is important therefore that our workforce planning activities focus on succession planning, learning and understanding about what skills will be required in the future, and developing leaders for the future. The following is a summary of some of the work that is being undertaken in relation to the long-term aim of the project.

- a) Apprenticeships – Since 2019 the Council has invested in an apprenticeship scheme to attract the next generation of talented staff into the Council’s workforce. The work areas are consistent with departments’ skill requirements, and the scheme contributes through creating opportunities to of all ages to develop through a framework that provides relevant qualifications and skills. Since 2019, over 40 individuals have taken the opportunity, whilst 17 individuals are currently taking part in the scheme. 23 individuals have completed their apprenticeship with 75% of them being appointed to jobs with the Council. The next recruitment cycle for attracting 30 apprenticeships has recently commenced.
  
- b) Cynllun yfory – This scheme was established a number of years ago, as another means of investing in individuals who wish to develop a career with the Council. Since 2017, 28 trainees have been appointed. Each of the 16 individuals that has completed the scheme has been offered a role with the Council. There are currently 11 individuals taking part in the scheme, and we will over the forthcoming 3 months be recruiting another 5 trainees.
  
- c) Jobs fairs and contacts with educational establishments are being used to attract individuals to take an interest in the above schemes. On a wider level, there is collaboration with the Economy and Regeneration Department so that the Council is present in all sorts of jobs fairs, with the intention of further developing this aspect over the forthcoming year.
  
- d) Developing Potential Scheme – a pilot programme has been developed and undertaken within the Corporate Support Department that focuses on developing the existing workforce. There is a focus in the programme on developing an expertise or developing leadership skills. The next step is to offer this programme to other departments. In addition, the Council has in place a programme that focuses on supporting women to develop for leadership roles. We will also over the course of the next few months be developing a new senior leadership development programme.
  
- e) Work experience scheme – Providing opportunities for unpaid placements is seen as a further means of attracting individuals to take an interest in developing a career with the Council. A scheme is being developed that will be focusing on providing real opportunities for individuals to have an insight into working in various departments within the Council.
  
- f) Research into the future of skills and jobs within local government – We will be undertaking research to understand what skills requirement will be in the future. This will enable long term planning for the requirements of the workforce.

## **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

23. Equality, diversity, and inclusion is an integral part of this whole programme of work. At the end of 2022, an assessment was undertaken with *the Inclusive Employers* company, with the specific intention of receiving feedback and improving how the Council recruits a diverse workforce. We are awaiting their feedback, but we will be using the guidance we receive to develop plans to improve how we recruit and attract people to take an interest in the Council as an employer. We anticipate that the feedback will help us to develop our brand as an employer, in addition to providing guidance on improving how we include staff in developing innovative approaches. There is an opportunity here to expand the recruitment net and develop the diverse and inclusive nature of the Council as an employer reflective of the community.
24. The plans that are noted above, in addition to further developments over the next few years, will enable us to be proactive in addressing staffing needs in the future.
25. Members are asked to note the contents of the report and to provide comments.