

**Name of meeting:** Personnel Committee

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

**Title of report:** Update on Recruitment Challenges

**Purpose of report:** To update Personnel Committee on the current recruitment challenges facing the Council and strategies being put in place to mitigate those challenges.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	N/A
Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a>	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No
Date signed off by Chief Executive	Jacqui Gedman – 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director Finance?	Eamonn Croston – 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft – 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a>	Cllr Paul Davies

**Electoral wards affected:** N/A

**Ward councillors consulted:** No

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered:** Yes

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To receive an update from the Chief Executive and Head of People Services on recruitment challenges facing Kirklees Council and our response to mitigate those challenges.
- 1.2 To note the impact of widely publicised national labour market issues on Kirklees Council.
- 1.3 To note actions and strategies in place and being developed to address the challenges faced, with particular reference to those that also support our social responsibilities and outcomes for Kirklees residents.

## **2.0 Current Labour Market**

- 2.1 There are well documented national labour market issues as we recover from the pandemic; the most recent Office for National statistics highlight 1.1million vacancies in the UK between July and September 2021; this is significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. Unemployment is falling and the reduction in number of overseas workers also has an impact on the labour market.
- 2.2 The increase in vacancies coupled with skills shortages in some areas leads to a very candidate focused market and the end of the furlough scheme for over a million workers in October has not so far started to produce the increase in labour supply that could have reasonably been anticipated
- 2.3 Kirklees Council has not escaped the impact of these national labour market issues which have only served to exacerbate recruitment difficulties in some typically hard to fill areas. Intelligence shared by our temporary staffing provider, REED, demonstrates that those challenges are not unique to Kirklees and at a national level, they are reporting:
  - There is a general candidate shortage across Care & Support and Trades
  - The time to fill vacancies is increasing across the board due to market challenges
  - There is a continued increase in demand for Qualified Social Workers

## **3.0 Recruitment trends**

- 3.1 As the country moves towards recovery from the pandemic there have been some seismic shifts in candidate activity and expectations. Many individuals have taken the opportunity to consider their priorities during the pandemic and this is being demonstrated in market expectations and behaviours.
- 3.2 We are facing what is being labelled [the Great Resignation](#) as individuals seek jobs which meet their revised expectations or indeed leave the labour market completely. As there are more vacancies available in the market, the ease with which job changes can happen is increased indicating this is a real risk.

- 3.3 In general, the labour market is seeing an increase in expectations around flexibility; many jobs which have traditionally been office based have been successfully delivered from home and candidates are generally seeking a continuation of flexible or hybrid working practices to reduce commute times and improve work life balance. As more employers are able to offer flexible working practices, it is becoming less of a unique employee benefit and now an expectation.
- 3.4 Additionally, as individuals reflect on their priorities, sectors which typically have an older workforce, such as the public sector are indicating that 'earlier' retirements are on the increase. This is starting to become apparent in the data we are seeing in the Council. See **Appendix 1**.
- 3.5 As the 'war on talent' to fill the wide range of vacancies across all industries and sectors develops alongside skills shortages, the market is also seeing a noticeable impact on pay, with market forces driving pay upwards.

#### **4.0 Kirklees Context and Hard to Recruit jobs**

- 4.1 Council recruitment has continued throughout the pandemic with a significant increase in the volume of recruitment activity during 2021. Whilst we did see an increase in the volume of applications received across most jobs, this is subsiding; there has not been a noticeable increase in applications for hard to fill roles. See **Appendix 2** for comparator data on recruitment activity for 2020 and 2021.
- 4.2 There are a number of roles that are traditionally hard to recruit to and the current labour market trends exacerbate difficulties in these areas:
- Social Care - both children's and adults and in particular Support Workers and Residential Care Officers
  - Catering and cleaning
  - Social Work – issues are more acutely felt in adults at present
  - Engineering
  - Specialist project management to support regeneration programmes
  - Some trades

It is becoming increasingly apparent that jobs which have not previously been challenging to fill are also starting to see greater challenges.

- 4.3 That said, we have had some areas of significant success during the pandemic, including the largest recruitment exercise undertaken in recent years, appointing over 80 Covid Community Support Officers (CCSOs) in a matter of weeks. These roles provided job opportunities in a climate of high unemployment and opened the door to working within public services and the Council. A flexible and collaborative approach across teams and services supported a fast-paced recruitment, selection and onboarding process. Selection focused on communication, values, and behaviours to assess and give confidence that those appointed could be good ambassadors of Kirklees. During the pandemic the CCSOs have supported areas of work including:
- Testing Centre / Vaccination centres
  - Communities – Engaging with businesses, members of the public, signposting, partnership working, conducting surveys
  - Food Banks / voluntary organisations

- Driving Roles / PPE deliveries / Food Banks / Mobile testing
- Track and Trace – conducting surveys, welfare checks, offering isolating support
- Licencing – Engaging with members of the public, Business Support Roles, taking payments
- Enforcement Roles – Conducting Duty of care visits, visiting waste in garden properties
- Cleaning up areas, removal of fly tipping, litter picking

A project is currently underway to support retention of the CCSOs in the Council, not only to provide a resilience pool but also to identify opportunities for them to grow into hard to fill roles, thus developing a talent pipeline into Kirklees. This is referenced later in this report.

## 5.0 Strategies and Actions to Address the Challenges

5.1 During the pandemic we have placed additional focus on our support into employment initiatives recognising the opportunity we have as an influential employer to lead by example, make a difference to the employment prospects of our residents and promote Kirklees as a good, flexible and inclusive employer.

5.2 The brochure at **Appendix 3** sets out these pathways into employment and the work that we have undertaken has achieved the following outcomes:

- 100 new apprentices (level 2 to post graduate) covering a wide range of services including those that have not considered apprenticeships in the past. Additional pastoral support has been provided to apprentices during the pandemic to support their retention.
- 60 Kickstarters across all service areas and a number of schools, with plans for at least another 40:
- 10 interns have been recruited for Project Search; an initiative which helps young people with learning disabilities and autism into employment, providing them with 'rotations' to experience a number of different roles and working environments.
- Around 80 year 10 students, including a cohort of children in care, have completed a virtual work placement with the Council. During the pandemic, we were limited in our ability to provide traditional work experience, so we developed a new approach to offer interactive 'bite size' introductions to the Council showcasing careers in areas such as engineering, registration, landscape architecture and IT. Sessions have included designing kitchens on budget, designing children's play areas and building bridges with marshmallows. The programme also includes sessions on interview skills and mock interviews to support personal development of those attending. Feedback from schools, students and services has been positive; the approach will now be a long-term offer.
- Successfully bid to be the lead partner on £1.6 million investment for Kirklees Apprenticeships for All which will increase the number of apprenticeships across the district, not just in the Council.

5.3 In relation to broader talent attraction activity, as part of the People Strategy we have developed a new and improved [jobs and careers site](#) launched in October to support showcasing Kirklees as an inclusive and flexible employer of choice and provide a flexible platform to focus on some hard to fill roles. The site also helps candidates to

navigate the recruitment process and will provide a broader platform for materials including videos that have been produced to support specific recruitment campaigns.

5.4 To date, a number of focused campaigns and targeted recruitment have taken place in hard to recruit areas. These have included:

- Videos to support social care and engineering recruitment
- Utilising specialist media and recruitment partners
- Making best use of sites such as Indeed to broaden exposure of vacancies
- Encouraging recruiting managers to make use of professional networks such as LinkedIn and professional bodies

5.5 We plan to pilot online information events to support specific recruitment campaigns and as more careers events begin to run, we will be supporting service specific or council wide attendance.

5.6 In addition, as part of the People Strategy programme of work, there are a number of projects being undertaken which will contribute to addressing our recruitment and retention challenges. Some of these are set out below.

#### 5.6.1 Workforce Planning

In order to ensure that there is effective workforce planning across the Council going forward, there is a specific project underway that will develop and embed a consistent approach to workforce planning across the organisation. This will be piloted in hard to recruit areas and then rolled out in 2022. In the meantime, there is significant workforce planning activity happening across the organisation. The Executive Team are working hard on plans to ensure resilience and succession planning is in place in challenging areas, investing in strategies to 'grow our own'.

Examples include:

- Higher level planning, environmental health, accountancy and engineering apprenticeships
- Using our well established relationships with universities to provide Social Work, IT, transport and legal placements
- Offering GEM Graduate opportunities (see **Appendix 4**)
- Piloting an 'apprenticeship first' programme

At a corporate level, we have a project to build on the success of the recruitment to CCSOs by developing a resilience pool which will become a talent pipeline into the organisation. This piece of work is being supported by the LGA. **Appendix 5** provides an outline to this piece of work.

#### 5.6.2 Timewise

This is a piece of work in partnership with Locala and an organisation called Timewise, where we are seeking to put flexibility at the heart of our front-line roles and at the heart of all our hiring activity. By putting flexibility first, we aim to capitalise on it as being an essential attraction and retention tool as well as supporting service delivery.

#### 5.6.3 Refresh of the People Strategy

This project has taken the learning from the pandemic and linked that to our new Council Plan, refreshing the look, feel and content of our People Strategy. It focuses

on 4 key outcomes of a 'healthy and well people', being 'an inclusive employer of choice', having 'highly skilled, flexible and engaged people' and 'effective and compassionate leadership'. It will be a living document supported by dynamic stories and case studies and will be launched during November.

#### 5.6.4 Leadership & Management Development

We have developed a [Leadership and Management Framework](#) to support colleagues to develop their leadership and management skills. This will help us to grow our own leaders and managers of the future and retain talent. Phase 2 of this project will look at a more targeted approach to developing leaders and managers and will also look at developing people at a more senior level.

- 5.7 The CIPD has also very recently published a report entitled 'Addressing Skills and Labour Shortages Post-Brexit' (see **Appendix 6**) which examines the challenges in the current labour market and proposes a number of options for employers to consider in order to address these challenges. This report is currently being reviewed to assess if there are options that may help us address our particular challenges.

### **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that Personnel Committee notes the recruitment and retention challenges faced by the council and supports strategies and actions being undertaken to address these challenges.

### **7.0 Contact Officers**

Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive

Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services