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Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Personnel Committee
Date: Wednesday 1 November 2023
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

Membership

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)

Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Barry Wood

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Sean Woodcock

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

The Chairman to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 8)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September 2023.

5. **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive communications from the Chairman.

6. Exclusion of the Public and Press

The following item contains exempt information as defined in the following paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

1 - Information relating to any individual.

2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

3– Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members are reminded that whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, Members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to pass the following recommendation:

“That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.”

7. Shortlisting for the Post of Chief Executive

** The papers for the item will be circulated under separate cover to Personnel Committee members and appointed substitutes who have confirmed attendance at the meeting only. The contents should not be discussed with others and no copies should not be made. **

8. Readmittance of the Press and Public

The Personnel Committee is recommended to resolve to readmit the press and public to the meeting

9. Workforce Profile Statistics (Pages 9 - 28)

Report of Chief Executive

Purpose of report

To provide the PC committee with an update on CDC's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers are taking to address any issues.

Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 to review and note the workforce data for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 (Appendix one).

10. **Policy Updates** (Pages 29 - 54)

Report of Chief Executive

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Personnel Committee (PC) on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To review and approves the following policies for implementation:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Armed Forces and Reservist Policy

11. **Urgent Business**

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members Room at the end of the meeting.

Information about this Meeting

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Evacuation Procedure

When the continuous alarm sounds you must evacuate the building by the nearest available fire exit. Members and visitors should proceed to the car park as directed by Democratic Services staff and await further instructions.

Access to Meetings

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

Published on Tuesday 24 October 2023

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 12 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Amanda Watkins (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Andrew Crichton (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)
Councillor Simon Lytton (In place of Councillor Chris Pruden)
Councillor Andrew Beere (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager

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Appointment of Chairman

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee having stood down from the Committee, the Principal Officer – Electoral Services Lead opened the meeting and call for nominations for the appointment of Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Webb that Councillor Pratt be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

It was subsequently proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Beere that Councillor Watkins be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

There being two nominations for Chairman of the Personnel Committee, it was put to the vote. There were five votes for Councillor Pratt and five votes for Councillor Watkins with no abstentions, resulting in a tie. (Councillor Lytton arrived after the vote had taken place)

Councillor Pratt and Councillor Watkins confirmed they did not wish to withdraw their nomination for Chairman.

The Committee endorsed the suggestion of the Governance and Elections Manager that the Assistant Director of Human Resources, for impartiality, draw a name to appoint the Chairman. The Assistant Director of Human Resources drew Councillor Lynn Pratt's name.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Lynn Pratt be appointed Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

13 **Appointment of Vice-Chairman (if required)**

The Vice-Chairman having been appointed Chairman, it was necessary to appoint a new Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Beere that Councillor Watkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Amanda Watkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of Personnel Committee for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year.

14 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

15 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

16 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

17 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

19 **Workforce Profile Statistics**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to provide the Personnel Committee with an update on the council's workforce, including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that the workforce profile report provided commentary and data for quarter 1 of 2023/24 and that ongoing work was being undertaken to monitoring workforce data as it helped the council measure how well it is supporting staff.

In response to queries from the Committee, the Assistant Director of Human Resources agreed that future reports would display statistics in a format that captured the data to the best affect.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the workforce date for Quarter 1 of 2023/24 be noted.

20 **Policy Updates**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Human Resources explained that the HR team were systematically working through all policies and refreshing them where required, to simply and make them more user friendly.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Health and Safety Manager explained that the Lone Working Policy was being reviewed and updated as there were now more employees lone working.

The Chief Executive assured Councillors that Lone Working was taken very seriously and that the Lone Working policy needed to reflect the modern times. The Chief Executive thanked the Health and Safety Manager for the work undertaken to update the Lone Working Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation:
- Exit Interview Policy
 - Criminal Record Checking Policy and Procedure
 - Politically Restricted and Politically Sensitive Posts Policy
 - Lone Working Policy

The meeting ended at 7.16 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

1 November 2023

Workforce Profile Statistics

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To provide the PC committee with an update on CDC's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers are taking to address any issues.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 to review and note the workforce data for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 (Appendix one).

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Workforce Data for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 has been produced and is available at appendix one of this report. HR monitor workforce data on a quarterly basis to identify emerging trends in staff wellbeing and organisational development. Comparative data is included to assist CDC with benchmarking against the local government sector and, for sensitive information such as ethnicity, gender, age, against the make-up of the district and the UK overall.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The workforce profile report provides commentary and data for quarter 2 of 2023/24. It also includes past data where this is available. This report provides annual analysis on key data such as turnover and absence rates.
- 3.2 The report provides statistics on:
 - Headcount & FTE
 - Employment and role basis
 - Agency usage
 - Turnover
 - Leavers by length of service

- Leavers by reason
- Sickness absence incidents by reason
- Sickness absence rates –all absence, short-term, long-term, stress-related
- Percentage of working time lost due to sickness absence
- Age profile
- Gender profile
- Ethnicity profile
- Disability profile
- Sexual orientation profile
- Apprenticeship information

3.3 At Personnel Committee in June 2023, it was requested that further data analysis be provided in relation to the sensitive information categories. Our collection of this data has vastly improved, and HR and the CEO are continuing to encourage all employees to provide this data. CDC recognise this is not mandatory but are encouraging staff to share as widely as possible as all information helps inform future policies / programmes of support.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 Monitoring workforce data helps CDC to measure how well it is supporting staff - focusing on wellbeing and personal development so it can identify issues at the earliest opportunity to address them effectively. It is also helpful for some data sets to compare how we are performing against the rest of the local government sector, to ensure it remains an attractive employer and retains its staff.

5.0 Consultation

N/A

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to complete workforce statistics, this option is rejected as workforce analytics will enable CDC to address challenges and efficiencies in the workforce more efficiently.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. This is historic information for which any costs will already have been incurred.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Lock, Strategic Finance Business Partner, 01295 227098,
leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 7.2 Monitoring employment statistics assists the Council to understand its employment trends and this will aid compliance with employment law obligations.

Comments checked by:
Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager,
shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,

Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no risks arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:
Natasha Barnes, CSC Service Delivery Manager, 01295 227965,
natasha.barnes@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no equalities nor inclusion implications arising directly from this report.
- 7.5 By monitoring and reporting on the protected characteristics of our workforce, the organisation can use this data to maintain and continually improve our inclusive recruitment and employment practices.

Comments checked by:
Natasha Barnes, CSC Service Delivery Manager, 01295 227965,
natasha.barnes@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

- 7.6 There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:
Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 01295 221748,
jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

N/A

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Document Information**Appendix number and title**

- Appendix 1 – Workforce Profile Data – Quarter 2, 2023-24

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

Claire Cox, Assistant Director of HR

Claire.cox@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

01295 221549

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) comparison and Agency usage

Chart 1 shows that the headcount (based at the end of each quarter) at Cherwell District Council (CDC) has seen an increase of 13 between quarter 1 and 2 of 2023/24.

Quarter 2 of 2023/24 has seen adjustments of 18 leavers and 32 new starters across the organisation.

Chart 1

**Headcount by Quarter
Quarter 3 2020-21 to Quarter 2 2023-24**

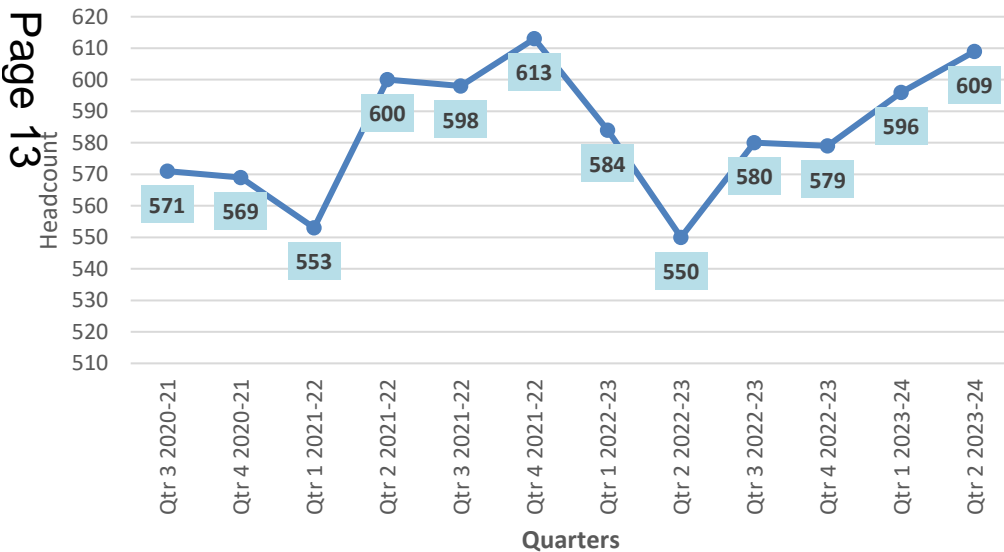


Chart 2 details the distribution of headcount across our departments and directorates as at the end of quarter 2 in 2023/24. Wellbeing and Environmental Services continue to show the highest headcount. The department of Chief Executive’s Office incorporates executive support and employees attributed to the Pan Regional Partnership, for which CDC is the accountable body. CDC are also host employer to the District Councils Network (DCN) and these employees are included in the HR, OD and Payroll directorate.

Environmental Services has had the biggest increase in headcount with 12 new starters in the last quarter. Customer Focus and Housing Services have each had 6.

Chart 2

**Headcount by Department as at
30 September 2023**



Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Chart 3 outlines the fluctuation of FTE which mirrors headcount for this quarter due to there being an increase in headcount, and a higher number of starters than leavers.

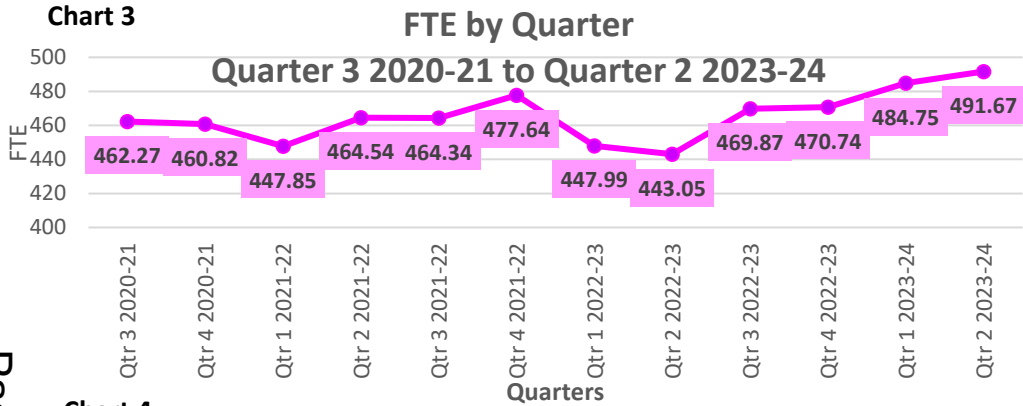


Chart 4 outlines the distribution of FTE across the departments and directorates as at the end of quarter 2 of 2023/24. FTE has increased by 6.92 between quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2023/24.

Since quarter 1 of 2023/24; Environmental Services has seen a reduction of 5.5 FTE and Finance a reduction of 2.39 FTE. HR, OD and Payroll has seen an increase of 3.29 FTE, Housing Services has increased by 2.91 and Customer Focus has increased by 2 FTE.

Charts 5 shows the breakdown of basis of hours across our workforce as at 30 September 2023. Since quarter 1 of 2023/24 there has been minimal change to the make-up of role-basis with our full-time reducing by 0.87% and part-time reducing by 0.66%. Our casual workforce has increased by 1.53%.

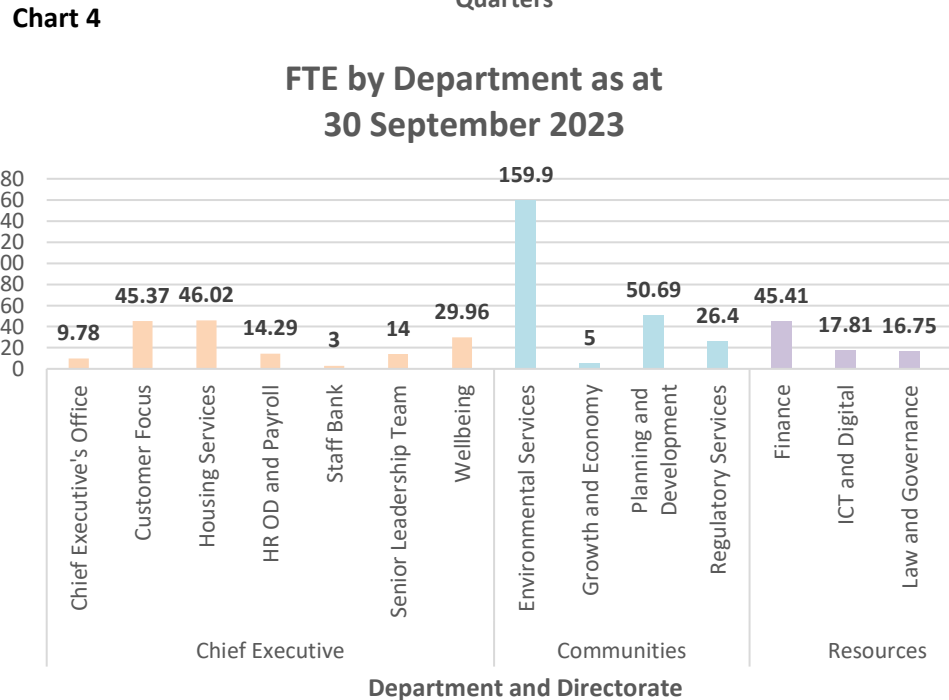
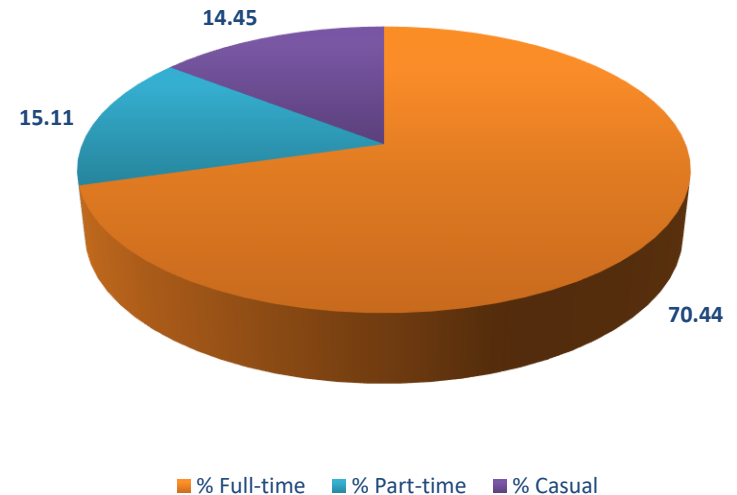


Chart 5
% Breakdown of Role Basis as at 30 September 2023

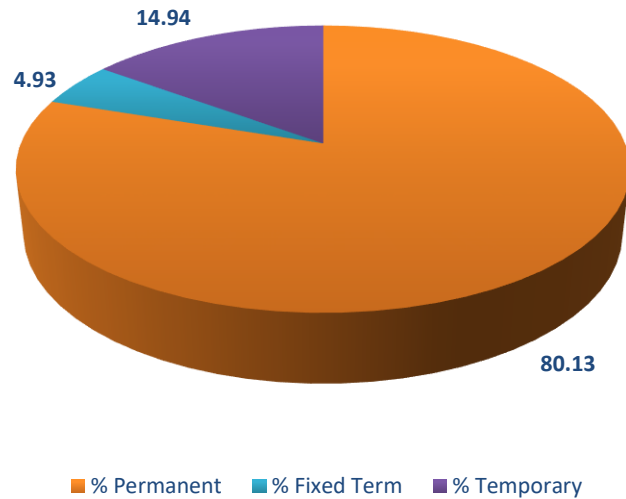


Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Chart 6 outlines the employment basis of those directly employed by CDC shows that 80.13% of our workforce are in permanent roles. This has slightly reduced by 1.55% since Quarter 1 of 2023/24. There has been minimal fluctuation of employment basis since the last quarter.

Chart 6

% Breakdown of Employment Basis as at 30 September 2023



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In addition to employing staff directly, CDC also utilise Agency Workers, either for interim or short-term usage for specific posts and projects.

Chart 7 outlines agency usage as at the end of each quarter for the last rolling year by directorate and department.

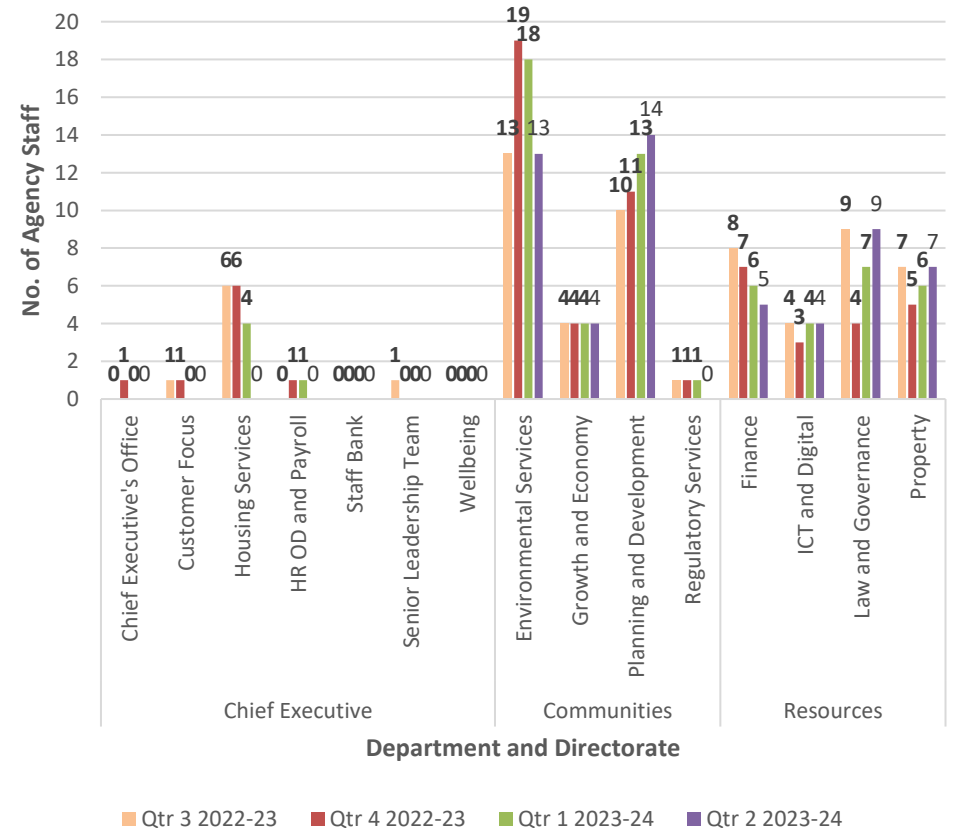
A total of 56 Agency workers were engaged with CDC at the end of quarter 2 of 2023/24. This is a reduction of 8 since the end of quarter 1 of 2023/24.

The highest agency usage is usually Environmental Services, within refuse collection and this is due to having 3-person crews on refuse collection, often utilising agency staff to cover for employee sickness and holidays. Usage in this area has reduced by 5 since the end of quarter 1.

Planning and Development have utilised 14 agency staff in quarter 2, an increase of 1 since quarter 1. Law and Governance have increased their agency usage by 2 in the last quarter. Housing Services has reduced from 4 to 0 in the last quarter. Property has increased agency usage by 1 since quarter 1.

Chart 7

Agency Usage as at Quarter End for the last rolling 12 months



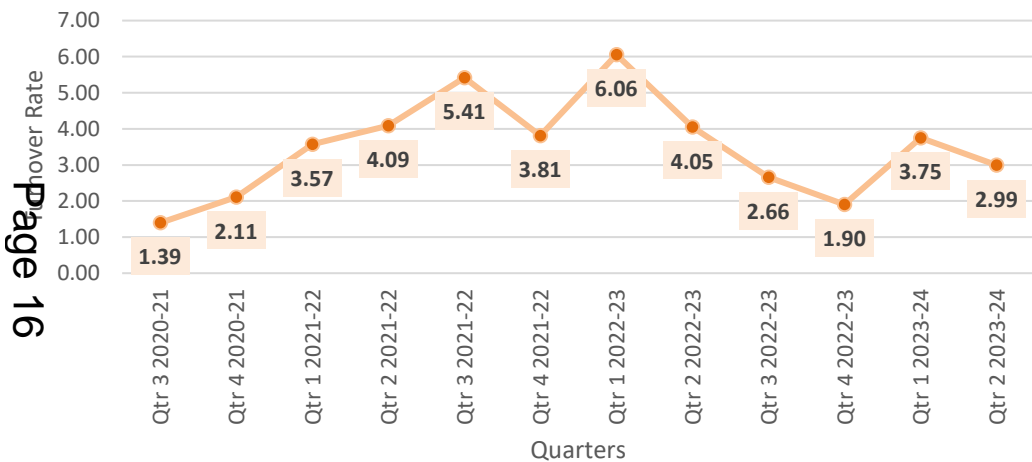
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Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Turnover rates and Leaver information

Chart 8 tracks the turnover rate per quarter from October 2020 to September 2023. The turnover rate is defined by firstly calculating the average number of employees for the quarter period and dividing the number of leavers by the average number of employees.

Chart 8
Quarterly Turnover Rate
Quarter 3 2020-21 to Quarter 2 2023-24



The turnover for quarter 2 shows a reduction of 0.76% in the turnover rate since quarter 1 of 2023/24.

CDC participate in a workforce metric benchmark exercise that is co-ordinated by the Local Government Association. Data around employee turnover is submitted on a quarterly basis by CDC and other local authorities across the country and this has been translated into a mean average across the local authorities sector.

Table 1 provides comparison of the turnover rate for all local authorities across the UK and CDC. Quarter 4 of 2022/23 is showing CDC as 1.6% below the mean. Quarters 1 and 2 have not been published yet but will be updated in future reports.

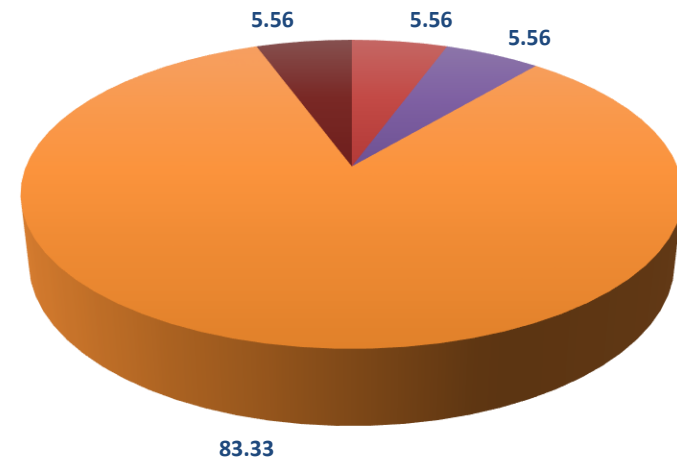
LGA statistics for 2022-23 and Labour turnover comparative data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Quarter	Mean for All English authorities	CDC
Qtr 1 2022-23	4.1%	6.06%
Qtr 2 2022-23	4.3%	4.05%
Qtr 3 2022-23	3.3%	2.66%
Qtr 4 2022-23	3.5%	1.90%
Qtr 1 2023-24	Not yet published	3.75%
Qtr 2 2023-24	Not yet published	2.99%

Chart 10 outlines leavers by reason for quarter 2 of 2023/24. Of the 18 leavers recorded in quarter 2, resignation is the highest reason for leaving, accounting for 83.33% of all leavers. 5.56% of leavers are due to Dismissal – Capability, 5.56% due to redundancy and 5.56% due to retirement.

Chart 9
% of Leavers by reason
1 July to 30 September 2023



■ Dismissal - Capability ■ Redundancy ■ Resignation ■ Retirement

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Chart 10

Leavers by Length of Service
1 July 2020 - 30 September 2023

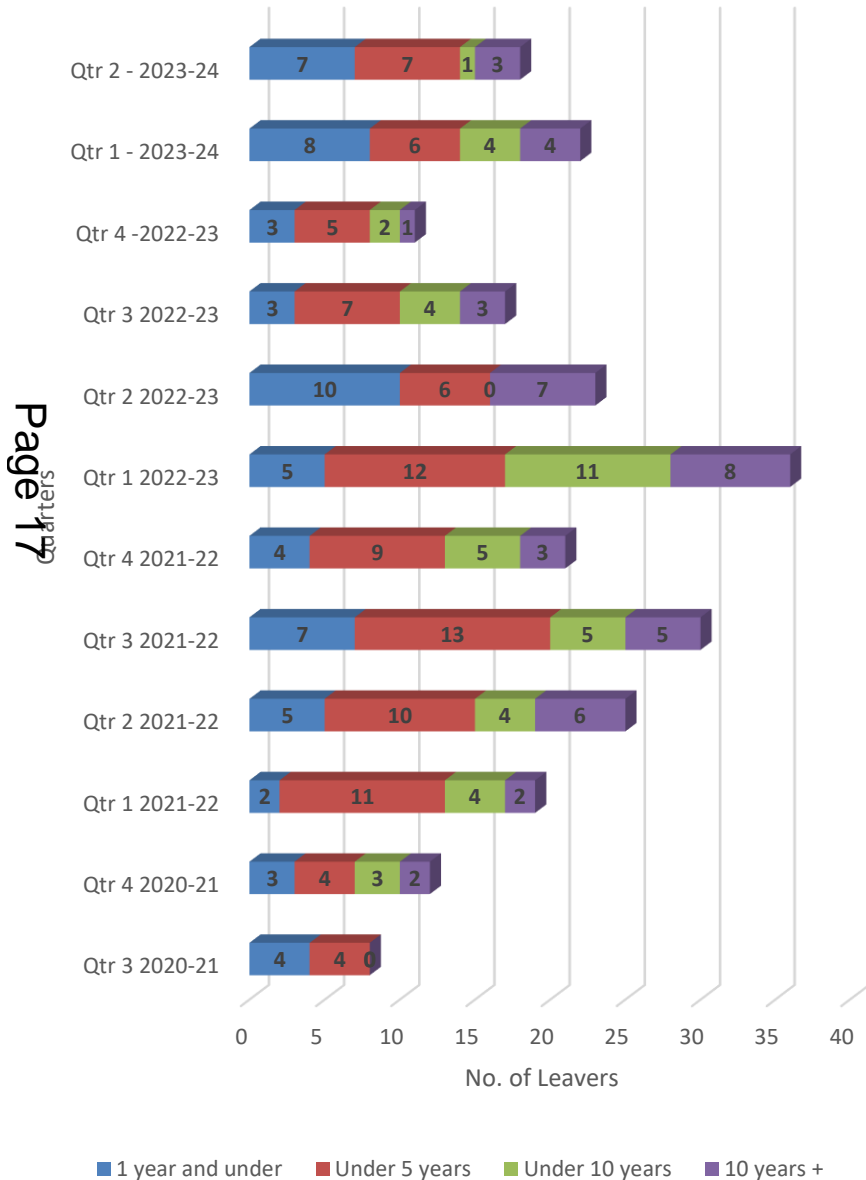


Chart 10 outlines leavers by length of service across the last 13 quarters. In quarter 2 of 2023/24, 7 leavers had less than a year’s service, 7 had under 5 years’ service, 1 had less than 10 years and 3 had more than 10 years.

When a resignation is received within HR, employees are provided with an electronic exit questionnaire to complete via our HR/Payroll system and invited to attend a meeting with a member of the HR team to ascertain why they are leaving and whether they have any advice or comments on lessons learned or improvements that could be made.

Of the 18 leavers in quarter 2, all were offered the opportunity to partake in an exit interview. 10 completed the exit interview questionnaire and attended meetings with a member of the HR Team. This is a 55.55% completion rate, which is up from the last quarter that recorded a 45.45% completion rate. We cannot force employees to provide this data to us or attend a meeting with HR but we will look to review in order to embed this process.

Comments received within the interviews that took place were generally very positive about employment at CDC. 11% raised concerns around culture and issues with line management, although these were not the employees reasons for leaving. These matters have been followed up with the relevant areas.

Career changes and career development in specific areas were provided as more in-depth reasons for leaving by 22% of leavers and 11% were retiring.

Data will continue to be gathered and shared with the relevant managers in a bid to work on any advice received in order to make improvements, where possible, for existing employees, thus aiding retention.

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Sickness Absence reasons and rates

Chart 11 shows the number of sickness absence incidents by reason over the last 10 quarters, back to April 2021. Whilst COVID-19 remains the highest reason of sickness absence across the time period, the number of incidents attributed to this have significantly reduced in the last 3 quarters.

Musculo-skeletal has been the highest reason for sickness absence in the last quarter, accounting for 16.78% of all incidents. This was closely followed by Non-work-related stress accounting for 15.44% of incidents, which has slightly increased in the last quarter. Stomach/Liver/Kidney and Digestion is the third highest reason, accounting for 12.08% of all incidents in the last quarter.

There were 149 incidents of sickness absence recorded in Quarter 2 of 2023/24, this is 4 less than the same quarter of 2022/23.

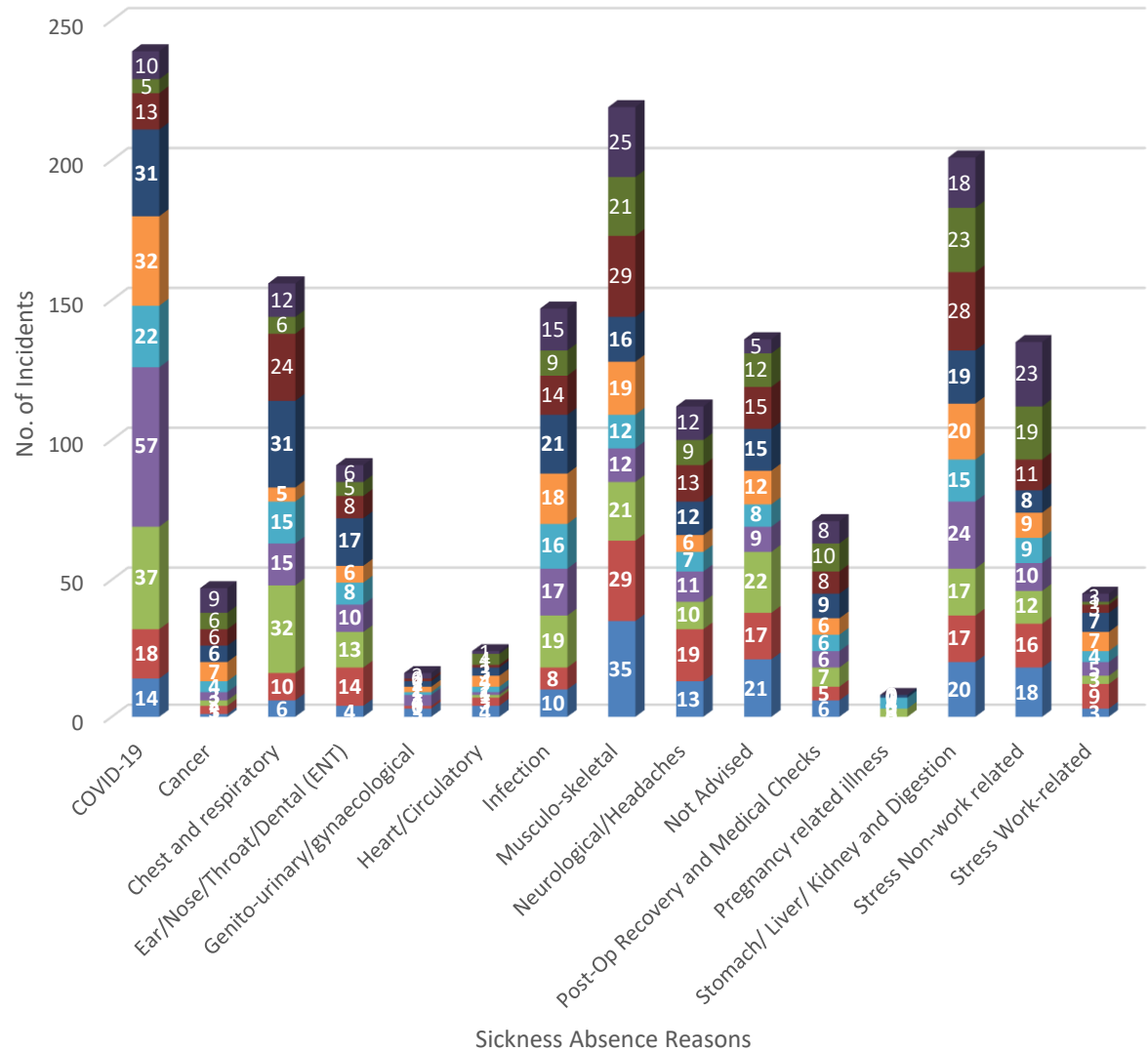
The highest reason for sickness absence in the last rolling 12 months was Musculo-skeletal, with 91 incidents recorded and accounting for 13.98% of all incidents.

The second highest reason for sickness absence in the last rolling 12 months is Stomach/Liver/Kidney and Digestion, with 88 incidents reported which equates to 13.52% of all incidents.

Chest and respiratory is the third highest reason in the last rolling 12 months, recording 73 incidents and accounting for 11.21% of all incidents.

Chart 11

**Sickness Absence Incidents by Reason
April 2021 to September 2023**



Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

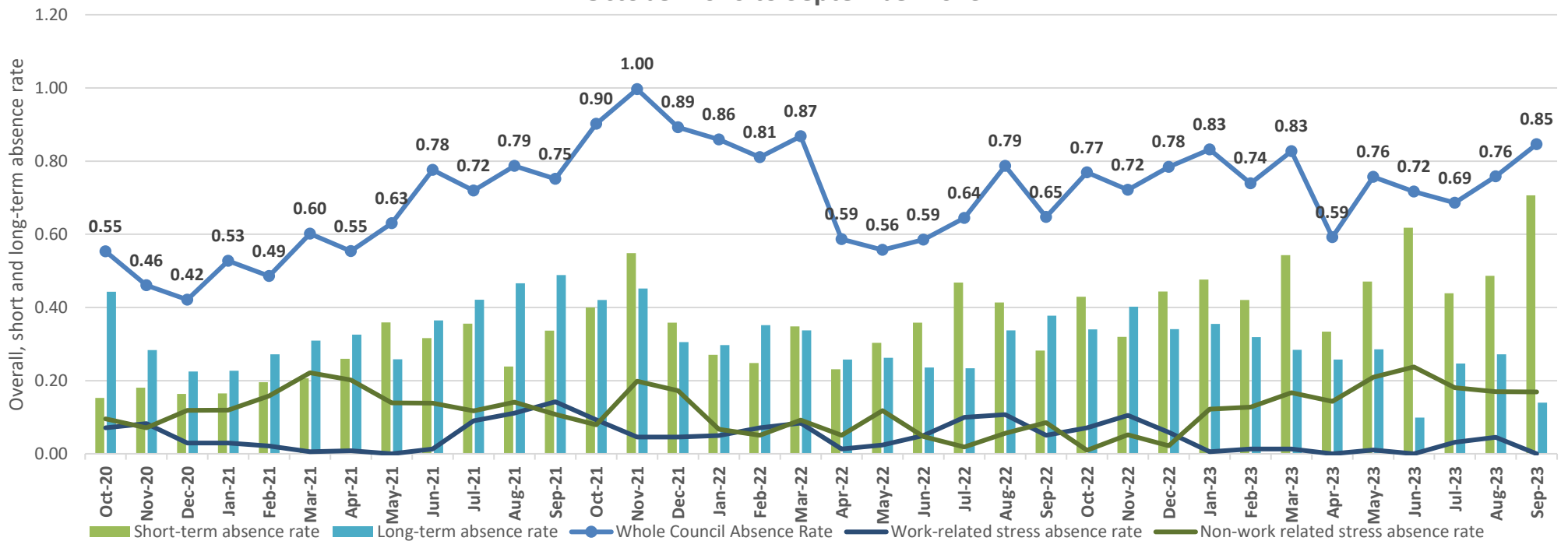
For the purposes of sickness absence reporting, short term absence is recorded as any incident that is less than 28 days, and a GP fit note is required after an employee has been absent for 7 calendar days. Long-term sickness is recorded as any absence spanning 28 days or more. HR work with managers and employees, where employees are off on long-term sick to engage with Cordell Health, CDC's Occupational Health Provider and ensure effective absence management.

Chart 12 tracks the absence rate per month, which is effectively the percentage of working time lost, from July 2020 to September 2023 and shows that CDC are consistently below 1% of working time lost due to sickness absence. The absence rate is calculated by dividing the hours lost due to sickness absence by the available working hours for the period. The highest rate of absence, recording 1% of working time lost; is in November 2021. Quarter 2 records a slightly lower absence rate than quarter 1 of 2023/24 and is 0.20% higher than the same quarter last year, but still remains less than 1%.

Chart 12 also captures the absence rate of short and long-term instances, In the last 12 months. September 2023 has the highest rate of short-term absence, recording a rate of 0.71 days per FTE. November 2022 had the highest rate of long-term absence in the last 12 months, with 0.40 days lost per FTE.

Chart 12

Council Absence Rates by Month
Overall and broken down into short-term, long-term and stress
October 2020 to September 2023



Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

The absence rate attributed to stress is also displayed in Chart 12 and whilst a slight increase in work-related stress was recorded in the last quarter, with a rate of 0.05 in August 2023, this has since declined. Work-related stress accounted for 2.01 % of incidents in quarter 2 of 2023/24 and 2.15% of all incidents occurring in the last rolling 12 months.

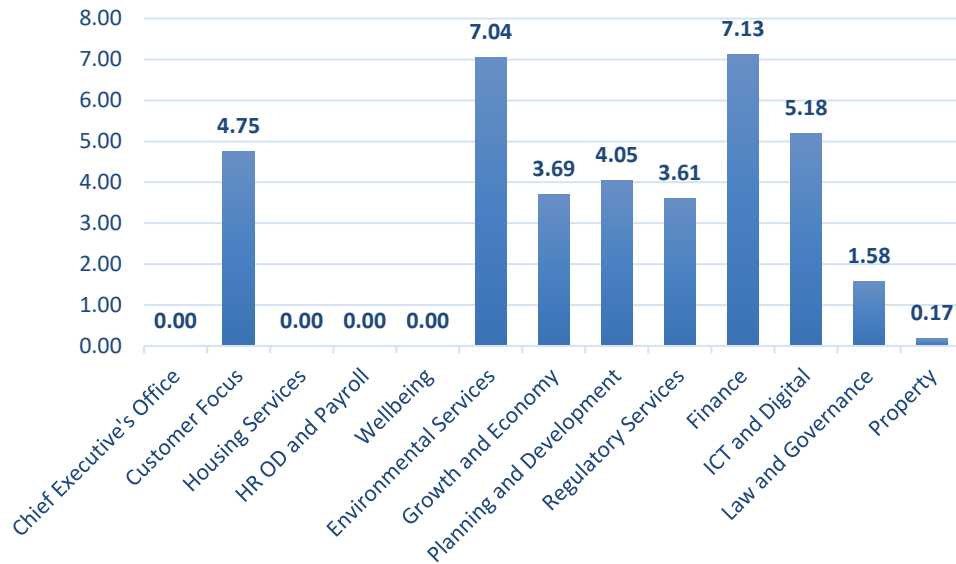
The non-work-related stress absence rate has reduced over the last quarter, despite recording 23 incidents. It has reduced from 0.24 at the end of quarter 1 of 2023/24 to 0.17 at the end of quarter 2. Non-work-related stress incidents accounted for 15.44% of all incidents in quarter 2 of 2023/24 and 9.37% of all incidents across the last year.

HR continue to ensure that Occupational Health support is accessed at the point that employee sickness is classified as long-term unless there are benefits to instigate this sooner. If an employee reports that they are absent due to stress, then an immediate referral to Occupational Health is made to ensure that support mechanisms can be put in place as soon as possible. Employees are also asked to complete a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Stress Questionnaire as this provides information on the causes of stress which aids the organisation in supporting employees to deal with these issues where possible.

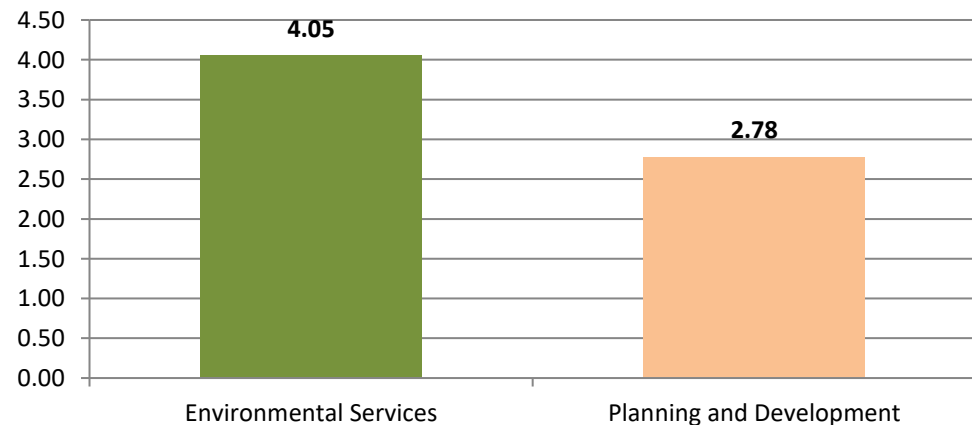
Employees also continue to have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is provided by Health Assured and offers access to counselling, legal and financial advice, and wellbeing resources. The service is confidential and whilst statistics on usage are reported through to CDC; details of which employees have made contact is withheld.

Charts 13 and 14 provide a breakdown of the percentage of working time lost by department for both short term and long-term sickness absence.

**Chart 13 % Working Time Lost due to Short Term Sickness Absence
1 July to 30 September 2023**



**Chart 14 % Working Time Lost due to Long Term Absence
1 July to 30 September 2023**



Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Comparative sector data for sickness absence rates has been sought from the Local Government Association (LGA) and is displayed alongside data for CDC in Table 2.

LGA Sickness data for quarter 1 or 2 of 2023/24 are not yet available but will be added into a later edition of these statistics. The LGA calculate the mean sickness absence rate across all English authorities as 2.5 days per person in quarter 4 of 2022/23. CDC records a rate of 1.65 days in quarter 1, 2.11 days in quarter 2, 2.27 days in quarter 3, 2.4 days in quarter 4 and 2.04 days in quarter 1 of 2023/24.

CDC is consistently lower than the mean average for the sickness absence rate in comparison to all local authorities. CDC remains lower on the percentage of working time lost due to sickness absence. In quarter 4 of 2022/23, CDC's short term absence rate was 0.62% higher than the mean average but the long-term sickness absence was 0.72% lower. Comparative data for quarter 1 and 2 of 2023/24 will be provided in a later version of these statistics once available.

Table 2

Metric Type	Value Type	QUARTER 1 Mean for All English authorities	CDC Qtr 1	QUARTER 2 Mean for All English authorities	CDC Qtr 2	QUARTER 3 Mean for All English authorities	CDC Qtr 3	QUARTER 4 Mean for All English authorities	CDC Qtr 4	CDC Qtr 1	CDC Qtr 2
Sickness absence rate	Days per FTE	2.8	1.65	2.3	2.11	2.6	2.27	2.5	2.4	2.04	1.97
Days lost through sickness, short term	%	11.6	1.37	5.5	1.79	1.9	1.19	1.6	2.22	2.16	2.20
Sickness absence, short term (FTE)	Days per FTE	1.2	0.89	0.9	1.17	1.1	1.24	1.0	1.44	1.41	1.63
Days lost through sickness, long term	%	11.1	1.16	4.2	1.46	2.3	1.08	2.2	1.48	0.98	0.83
Sickness absence, long term (FTE)	Days per FTE	1.5	0.76	1.3	0.94	1.4	1.13	1.4	0.96	0.63	0.54

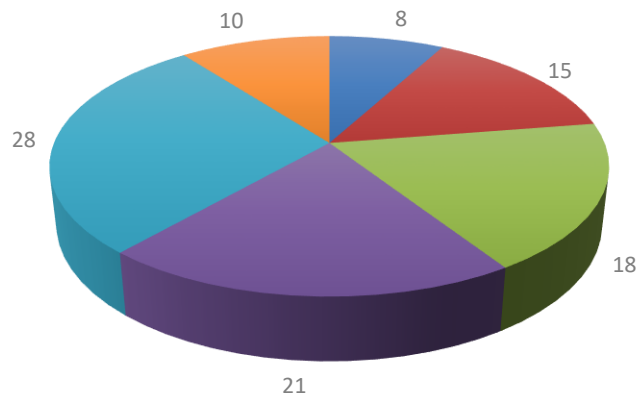
Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability and LGBTQ+ Workforce Profile as at 30 September 2023

Chart 15 shows a breakdown by age of the CDC workforce, expressed in percentage. 10% of CDC employees are over 60. 49% of CDC employees are aged between 41 and 60. 19% of the workforce are aged between 31 and 40 and 15% aged under 21 to 30 and 8% are under 21. There has not been more than a 1% increase or reduction in any of these categories in the last quarter.

Chart 15

Age Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2023



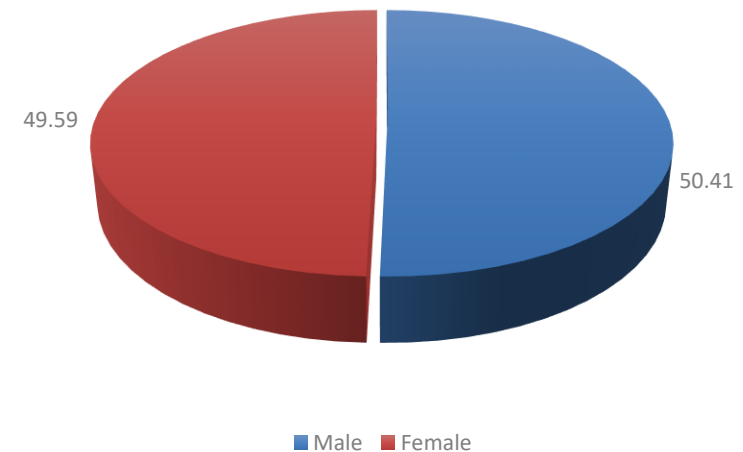
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Chart 16 breaks down the gender of the CDC workforce and shows that CDC is almost a 50% split.

CDC record statistics on employees sensitive data in order to ensure that our workforce is representative of the district we support and serve. Where we are under-represented, we need to review what we can do to ensure these groups are aware of the employment opportunities we have available. Local Insight data in relation to gender and ethnicity within the Cherwell District has been used to compare against the make-up of our workforce.

Chart 16

Gender Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2023



Out of a population of 161,837 within the Cherwell District, the latest census data records that 49.6% are male and 50.4% are female. At CDC, 50.41% of our workforce are male and 49.59% are female meaning it is representative of the district.

At the end of quarter 1 for 2022/23, it was reported that 51.25% of the workforce had not recorded their ethnic background. By quarter 3, this has reduced to 24.14% and by quarter 4 this has reduced further to 18.83%. Quarter 4 of 2022/23 recorded that 80.17% of the workforce have provided this data, with 5.53% preferring not to specify. In quarter 1 of 2023/24, 84.4% of the workforce have provided this data with 5.58% preferring not to specify. Requests continue to be made to the workforce to ensure this data is completed in the HR/Payroll system.

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Chart 17 shows a breakdown of ethnicity within CDC. Comparative data has been sought both nationally and from the district and is presented in Table 5.

Chart 17 Ethnicity Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2023

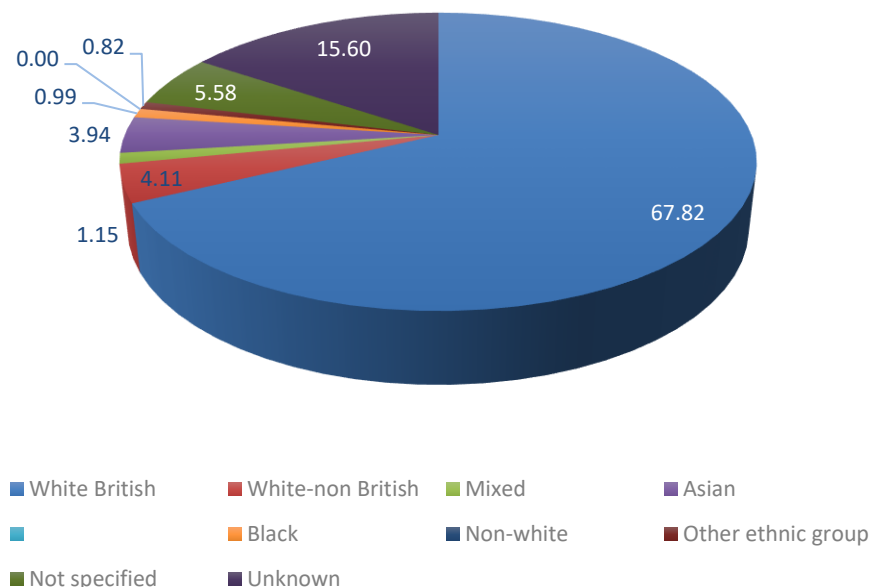


Table 3

Ethnic Group	England average (%)	Cherwell District (%)	CDC (%) Qtr 4 22/23	CDC (%) Qtr 1 23/24	CDC (%) Qtr 2 23/24
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	9.3	6.0	3.45	3.69	3.94
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4.0	1.8	0.52	0.84	0.99
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2.9	2.9	1.38	1.34	1.15
White	81.7	88.1	69.60	70.81	71.92
Other ethnic group	2.1	1.3	0.69	0.84	0.82
Not specified	N/A	N/A	5.53	5.20	5.58
Unknown	N/A	N/A	18.83	17.28	15.60

CDC’s workforce is predominantly white British with 67.82% of the workforce that has recorded their ethnicity in this category.

Table 3 compares the make-up of ethnic groups across the UK and the Cherwell District and then compares this with the make-up of our workforce. The Cherwell District has a higher percentage of residents in the *White* ethnic group than the average across the UK. Of the workforce data recorded, the *White* category for the workforce, whilst has increased slightly in the last quarter, remains 16.18% less than the Cherwell District.

The CDC workforce is slightly under-represented in all the ethnic groups in comparison to the district but shows an increase in quarter 2 to the *Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh* group, which has increased by 0.25% in the last quarter, but still records a 2.06% difference. The *Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African* group has also had a slight increase in the last quarter but still records a 0.81% difference.

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

The Personnel Committee requested further information on ethnicity by grade across the organisation. The grade bands have been split into 3 categories; A to E who generally have no supervisory or line management responsibilities, F to I; who are typically team leader and supervisory level roles and then J and above which are management grades.

Chart 18 outlines the percentage of employees by ethnic group and grade band.

This is the second quarter we are reporting on disability statistics. Whilst we have requested this information be completed by employees, we have only seen a 3% increase in the recording of this in the last quarter, as illustrated in Chart 19. This data is all collected from the same place so the HR Team are committed to completing further follow-up on this in a bid to improve the data collection within this category. Chart 20 shows a breakdown of data relating to disability by grade band.

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Chart 18 Ethnic Group Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 September 2023

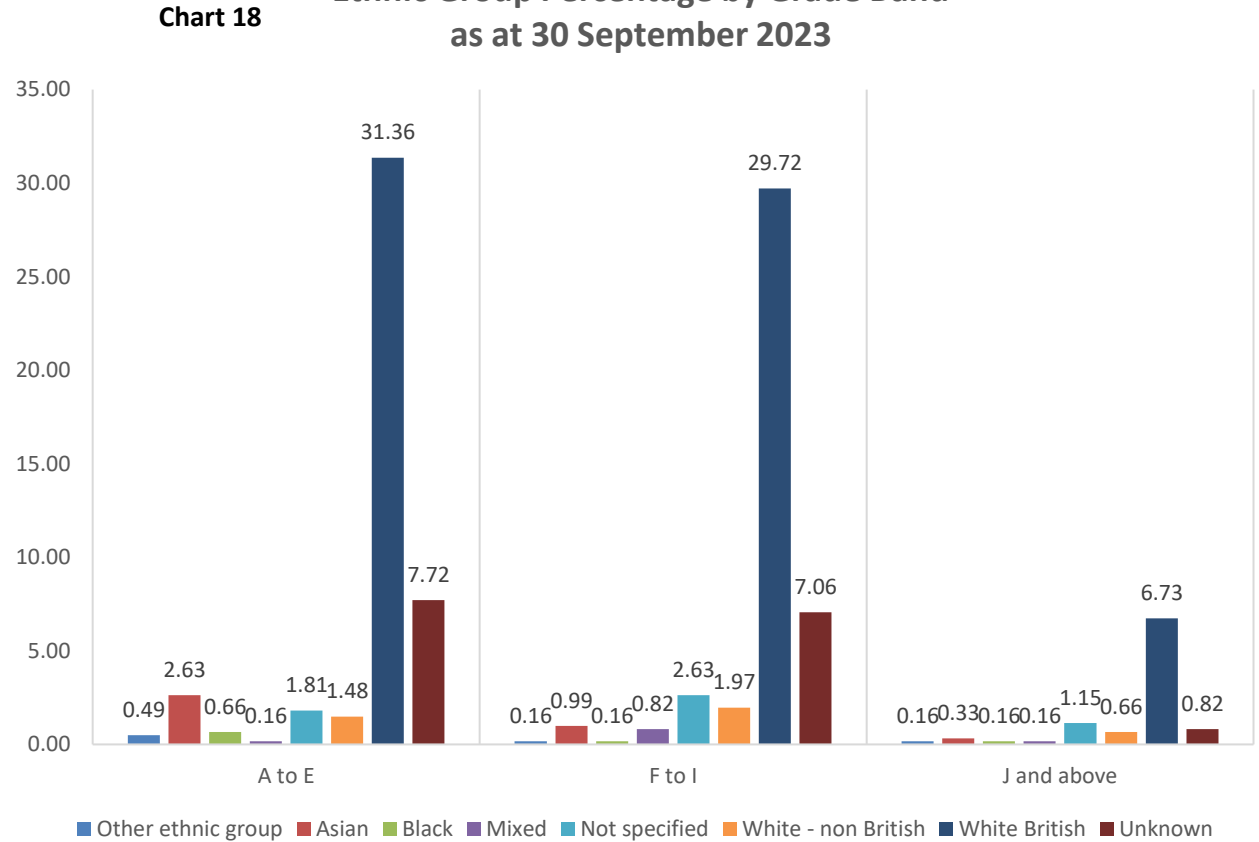


Chart 19 Disability Percentage Profile as at 30 September 2023

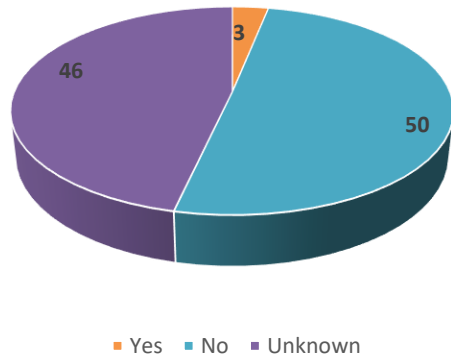
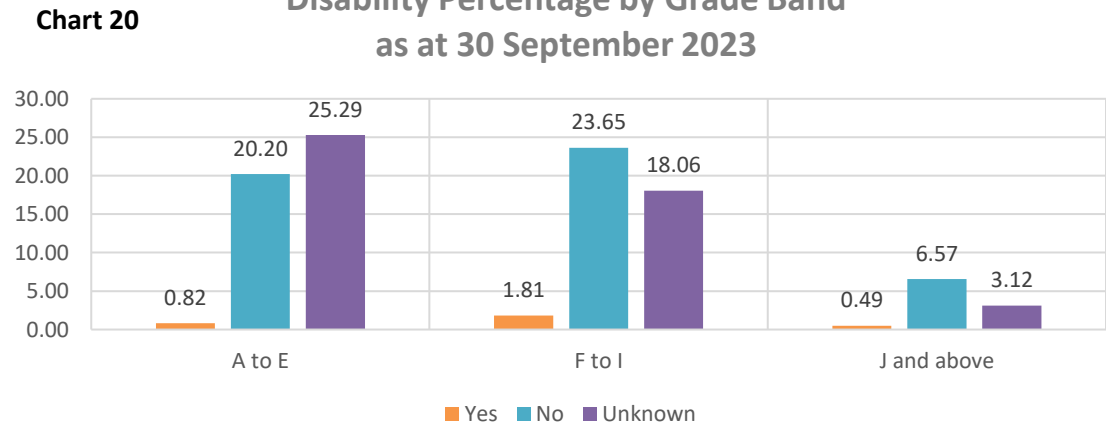


Chart 20 Disability Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 September 2023



Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

CDC is a disability confident employer which means we participate in the Department of Work and Pensions Scheme to guarantee interviews to any disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria for our roles. Where disabilities are identified, management and HR work closely with employees and the council’s occupational health provider to review any reasonable adjustments that could be put in place to assist the employee in their role.

The Personnel Committee also requested data on sexual orientation for our workforce which is provided at Chart 21.

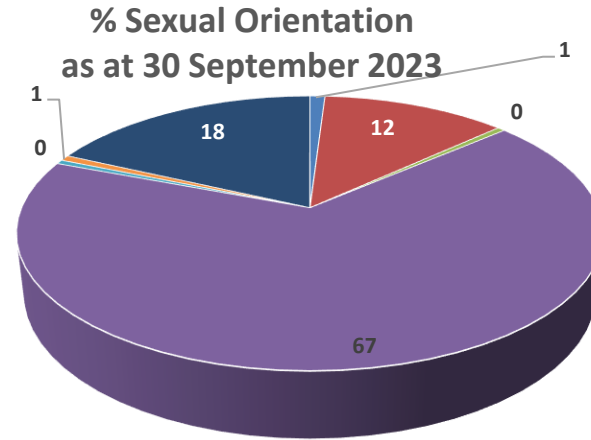
Within this category, 12% of the workforce have declined to specify and 18% have not completed this data. This data collection has marginally improved in the last quarter.

As with ethnicity information, sexual orientation data has also been broken down into grade bands and this is shown at chart 22.

As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity strategy that was published this year, we have a workforce plan with actions to work through. Data around protected characteristics will continue to be tracked whilst the actions are undertaken, and variations will be provided in future iterations of these statistics.

The HR Team will continue to work with the organisation to gather outstanding data and will continue to update on a quarterly basis.

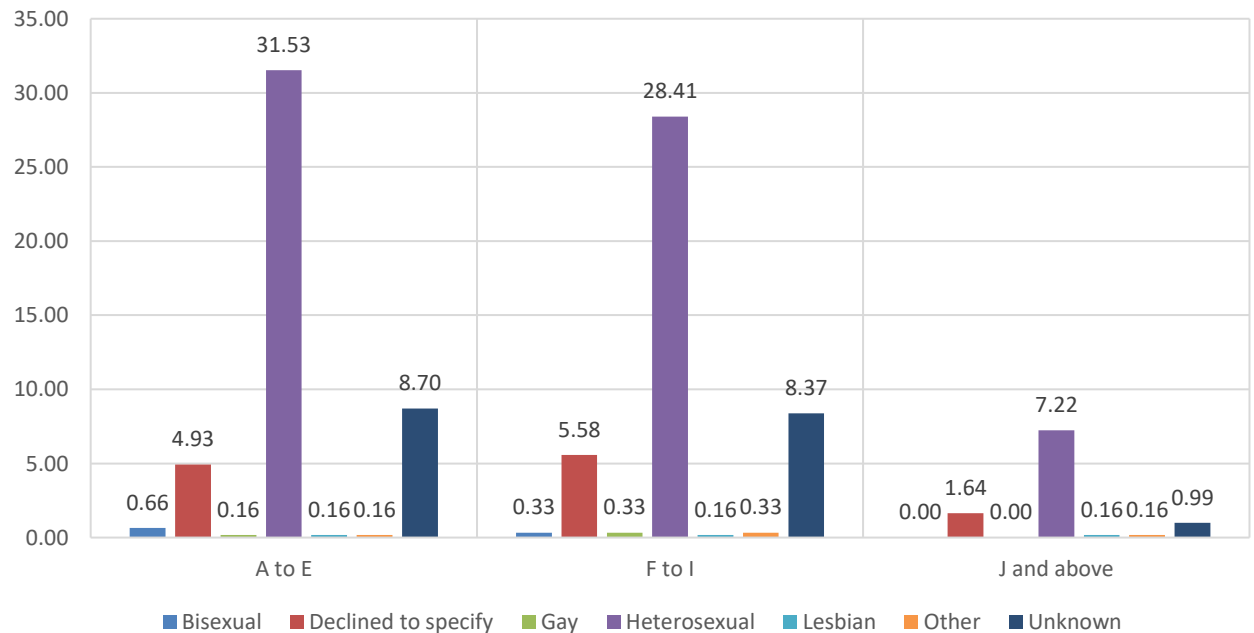
Chart 21



■ Bisexual ■ Declined to specify ■ Gay ■ Heterosexual ■ Lesbian ■ Other ■ Unknown

Chart 22

Sexual Orientation Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 September 2023



■ Bisexual ■ Declined to specify ■ Gay ■ Heterosexual ■ Lesbian ■ Other ■ Unknown

Apprenticeships within Cherwell District Council as at Quarter 2 – 2023/24

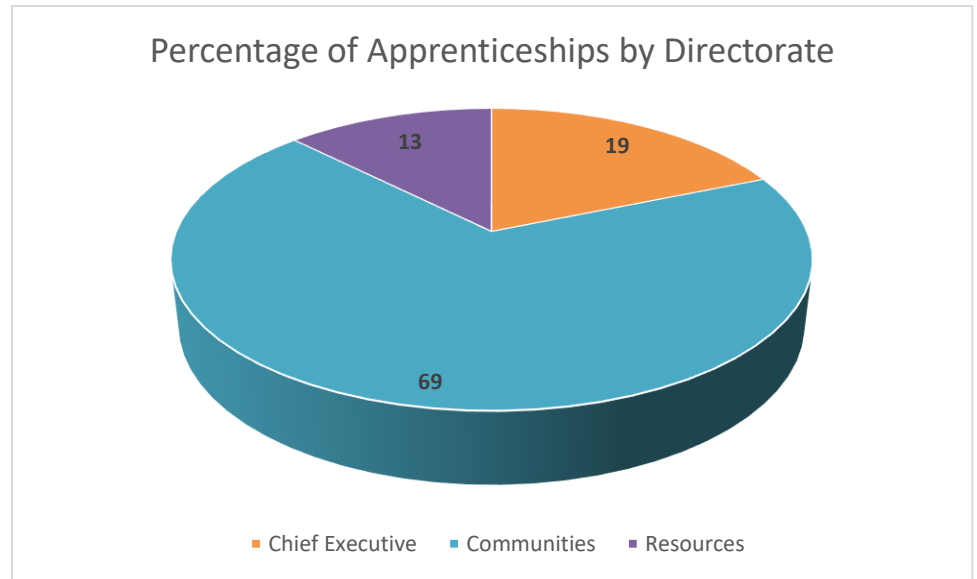
Chart 23

Information

There are 16 apprenticeships currently running within the Council for this quarter, of which 1 is an apprentice on programme, employed specifically as an apprentice; and the remaining 15 are employees undertaking an apprenticeship as CPD or career progression.

There are currently 11 apprenticeships within the Communities Directorate, 3 within the Chief Executive Directorate and 2 within the Resources Directorate – please see chart 23.

Details of the apprenticeships at the organisation are detailed in the table below. The Organisation is using its apprenticeship levy predominantly for upskilling existing staff.



Apprenticeships details below:

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
Autocare Technician	Level 2	2 ½ Years	1	Apprentice	Fleet Management	Communities (1)	12,000
Team Leader/Supervisor	Level 3	1 ½ Years	5	CPD	Sport and Physical Activities (2) Housing Options and Homelessness (1) ICT (1) Environmental Protection & Enforcement (1)	Chief Executive (3) Resources (1) Communities (1)	22,500

Appendix 1 - Cherwell District Council, Workforce Profile, Quarter 2 2023-24

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
Improvement Practitioner	Level 4	1 ½ Years	1	CPD	ICT	Resources (1)	12,000
Building Control Surveyor	Level 6	4 Years	3	CPD	Building Control	Communities (3)	72,000
Chartered Surveyor	Level 6	5 ½ Years	1	Apprentice	Access and Grants	Communities (1)	27,000
Chartered Town Planner	Level 7	2 ½ years	4	CPD	Planning	Communities (4)	53,600
Environmental Health Practitioner	Level 6	4 years	1	CPD	Regulatory Services	Communities (1)	22,000
					Total apprenticeship levy committed		221,100

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15

Future Apprenticeships

The Learning and Development Manager has been attending Directorate Managers meeting to talk about apprenticeships and managers are actively talking with their staff regarding qualifications and apprenticeships.

Current amount in the Levy Account

The Council currently has £161,202 in their levy account. It is estimated that a further £81,293 will be received over the next 12 months, based on funds entering the Council’s Apprenticeship service account, including the 10% top up from the government. It is estimated that the Council will spend £55,379 in the next 12 months based on the current apprenticeships within the table above.

Expired Funds

To date the Council have not had any expired funds retracted from the levy account.

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

1 November 2023

Policy Updates

Report of Chief Executive

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Personnel Committee (PC) on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

1.1 To review and approves the following policies for implementation:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Armed Forces and Reservist Policy

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The policies outlined above are part of the rolling programme of policy updates that officers are bringing to Personnel Committee for approval as HR systematically work through and refresh all HR-related policies.
- 2.2 UNISON are also provided with these documents for review and comment. Any feedback received will be shared at the PC ahead of these policies being approved.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The approach officers are taking to review all HR policies is to prioritise those needed to reflect changes in legislation and or work practices.
- 3.2 The aim of the review was to simplify the content where possible, removing any unnecessary information and ultimately making them more user friendly for managers and employees to understand and follow them.
- 3.3 The table in Appendix 1 gives an overview of all the proposed changes for each policy.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Officers have updated the policies attached to this report to reflect current legislation and good practice but also to make them much more user friendly and attractive for existing and potential employees. For these reasons officers recommend the committee approves the revised policies.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Unions are consulted on the policies.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To continue with the existing policies however officers have rejected this as the policies would not reflect current legislation or the Council's objectives of being an attractive, modern employer.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 In order to mitigate risk it is important that the Council operate with up-to-date policies. The update to these policies are anticipated to be minor and will be managed within existing budgets, as is currently the case.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Lock Strategic Finance Business Partner,
leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 227098

Legal Implications

- 7.2 This is in accordance with the programme for reviewing policies. There are no legal implications.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager,
shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,

Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no risks arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:

Natasha Barnes, CSC Service Delivery Manager, 01295 227965
natasha.barnes@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no EDI implications arising from this report.
- 7.5 Officers have considered EDI implications in suggesting changes to the policies to ensure the council meets its statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act and the commitments in its equalities framework 'Including Everyone'. The policies also allow for some flex so they can be adapted to suit the situation and specific circumstances.
- 7.6 Furthermore, the policies are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit for purpose so any future EDI implications can be captured and mitigated against.

Comments checked by:

Natasha Barnes, CSC Service Delivery Manager, 01295 227965
natasha.barnes@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

- 7.7 There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report

Comments checked by:

Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 01295 221748, jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

N/A

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

N/A

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 – Outline of changes to each policy
- Appendix 2 – Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Appendix 3 – Armed Forces and Reservists Policy

Background papers

N/A

Report Author and contact details

Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources

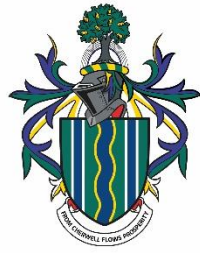
01295 221549

Claire.cox@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Outline of changes to each policy, November 2023

Document	Changes
Recruitment and Selection Policy	This policy is brand new and aims to reinforce the roles and responsibilities for all involved at all stages of the recruitment and selection process.
Armed Forces and Reservists Policy	Refreshed and updated to ensure correct payment rates, up-to-date Employees Assistance Programme details, and a general tidy-up.

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Recruitment and Selection Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Recruitment and Selection Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	1.0
Date of implementation	2 November 2023

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
Personnel Committee	1 November 2023

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 1st November 2026 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision

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2	Diversity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility	4
3	Disability Confident Scheme	4
4	Roles and Responsibilities	4
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1. **Introduction**

- 1.2 Cherwell District Council recognises that the most valuable resource in the organisation is its workforce and aims at all times to recruit the applicant who is most suited to the particular vacancy to ensure the success of the organisation now and in the future.
- 1.3 A fair and robust recruitment and selection process is always undertaken to ensure selection is based on the most suitable candidates being employed, in terms of behaviours, skills and knowledge, in order to maintain a motivated workforce delivering high quality services in line with the Council's objectives, values and aims.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all employees and potential employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.
- 1.5 This policy may be amended at any time following consultation with trade union and subject to agreement from the Personnel Committee.

2. **Diversity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility**

- 2.1 As part of our commitment to ensure the best person for the job is successful, it is important that our recruitment is inclusive and accessible at every stage of the process. From drafting the job description to making the appointment decision, the recruitment process must be conducted in a fair way that is non-discriminatory and that ensures equality of opportunity. This means that recruitment should be based on evidence-based merit and not be influenced by the protected characteristics of the applicant.

3. **Disability Confident Scheme**

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council is a Disability Confident Employer. Disability Confident is a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. Within recruitment, this means that any applicant who has met the essential requirements listed on the person specification must be invited to interview for the role. If you have not shortlisted someone who has disclosed a disability, it is important you have a record of why they did not meet the essential requirements in case feedback is requested.

4. **Armed Forces Community Covenant**

- 4.1 To further support the pledges in the Council's Armed Forces Community Covenant; and to make a positive contribution to help ex-Armed Forces personnel (veterans) make the transition to civilian life the Council is committed to ensuring that ex-armed forces personnel are not disadvantaged as a result of their service. Veterans of the armed forces will be guaranteed the offer of an interview, provided that:
 - The armed forces was the veteran's last long-term employer and where no more than three years has elapsed since they have left
 - The veteran meets the essential criteria
 - The veteran is in a position to take up employment within a maximum of 12 weeks following the offer of employment being made

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Recruitment is an expensive exercise and the Council places great value in getting it right first time.
- 5.2 In house training will be provided by Human Resources to ensure managers are appropriately trained and understand what is required of them.
- 5.3 The recruiting manager –
- Confirm budget is available for this role.
 - Produce a job description and advert that is in line with the Council's template and at an appropriate grade.
 - Raise a recruitment form (via HR/Payroll system) that outlines requirements of the recruitment campaign.
 - Shortlist candidates.
 - Plan and manage the interview process.
 - Give verbal offer to successful candidate(s).
 - Prepare and deliver the induction and onboarding programme.
- 5.4 The Assistant Director/Corporate Director–
- Review the recruitment form.
 - Approve the job vacancy or give feedback as to why approval hasn't been granted.
- 5.5 Human Resources department-
- Provide advice and support at every stage of the process.
 - Review recruitment form at Vacancy Management meeting.
 - Process recruitment form and advertise role internally and or externally as directed.
 - Signpost shortlisting documents to recruiting manager.
 - Issue the formal conditional offer to the successful candidate(s).
 - Request references.
 - Carry out pre-employment checks (eg right to work, Disclosure and Barring Services pre-employment medical check).
 - Issue contract of employment.
 - Set up new starter on HR/Payroll system.
- 5.6 Recruitment panel members –
- Shortlist candidates (at least two panel members).
 - Compile interview questions to ask candidate and decide if any other assessment is required.
 - Interview (at least two panel members).
 - Record interview notes of answers provided by candidate.
 - Decide on successful candidate.
 - Be able to offer feedback if requested.
- 5.7 For Senior appointments the recruitment process will be led by the Personnel Committee supported by Human Resources.

6. Vacancy Identification and Analysis

- 6.1 Before recruitment takes place, a review of the vacancy will be undertaken by the manager with consideration given as to whether the vacancy should be filled in the same way or whether the job should be designed differently i.e. change of duties, updated to suit changing business needs, amendments to qualifications, change to the number of hours / working pattern.
- 6.2 Where the manager recognises that due to current market conditions / recruitment incentives are required they should be considered at this stage (for example, market supplements). See the Council's Market Supplement Policy for more information.

7. Job Description and Person Specification

- 7.1 All posts will have a job description and a person specification which will be reviewed by the manager prior to any recruitment to ensure that it is up to date, fit for purpose and an accurate reflection of the post.
- 7.2 Copies of the job description and person specification will be available to applicants when applying for vacant posts and all selection and assessment will be completed against these documents.
- 7.3 Some posts at the Council are determined as 'politically restricted', as defined by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This means that the post holder is restricted from standing for, or holding, elected office. Please see the Council's Politically Restricted and Politically Sensitive Posts Policy for more information.
- 7.4 Posts are subject to a job evaluation process in order to determine the grade of the job. The Council uses the GLPC and Hay job evaluation schemes.

8. Vacancy Approval Process

- 8.1 All vacancies (permanent/temporary/agency) will undergo a robust approval process, this process involves the recruitment manager seeking the approval from their Corporate Director in the first instance via a recruitment form available on the HR/Payroll system. Once approved this form will then be considered at HR's Vacancy Management meeting. Provided the vacancy is approved the recruiting manager can proceed to the advertising.
- 8.2 The vacancy approval process has been modified for the use of agency Waste Collection Loaders and LGV Driver/Loaders due to the need for covering unforeseen absences at short notice. For agency workers within these roles, a recruitment form will not be required. Agency usage will be monitored.

9. Advertising

- 9.1 All externally advertised posts will be displayed on the Council's website under a section specifically for jobs at the Council. Where appropriate and cost effective, posts will also be advertised via the Council's social media pages, online jobs boards and relevant specialist publications in order to maximise the chances of attracting the best quality and most suitable candidate.

9.2 Some vacancies may be advertised internally for current employees of the Council only to apply. Typically, this will be in circumstances where the Council feels that there are current employees who have the required skills, knowledge, and experience to fulfil the post or where there is a restructure or employees are potentially at risk.

9.3 Agency workers will be advised of any internal vacancies.

10. **Applications**

10.1 All applications for recruitment campaigns that are administered by Human Resources must be received on the standard online application form which can be accessed via the Council's website. Applicants who require reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process due to disability can outline these on the application form or can contact Human Resources to discuss their needs further if required.

11. **Selecting candidates**

11.1 All shortlisting, interview and candidate selection panels will consist of a minimum of two people. The number of individuals on a selection panel may vary depending on the type and nature of the vacancy, however, the choice and number of panel members should be considered carefully in relation to the vacancy. The panel should consist of appropriate individuals who have an interest in the appointment and are able to make an informed decision on selection (for example the line manager of the post; individuals with specific knowledge of the skills of the post or stakeholders).

11.2 Panel members must declare an interest and/or withdraw from the process if a family member or someone personally known to them applies. This will also apply if a panel member feels that there is a conflict of interest due to prior involvement which could be seen to affect their objectivity. In these circumstances further advice should be sought from Human Resources.

11.3 Wherever possible the same people should serve on the selection panel throughout the entire process. This means that the same people who shortlisted applicants should be involved in the interview / selection process and should make the final decision regarding selection of the successful applicant(s). In circumstances where this is not possible, at least half of the panel should remain consistent and should be involved in both shortlisting and selection. For example, if two people completed the shortlisting, one of those must also complete the interview / selection process.

11.4 In line with the Council's constitution, the Personnel Committee are responsible for appointing the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors.

11.5 The confidentiality of all applications must be respected by all individuals involved in the recruitment process.

11.6 When applicants are notified that they have been shortlisted they will be informed whether written exercises or other relevant tests are to be used as part of the selection process. Reasonable adjustments will be implemented for any applicants that require them in order to participate in the selection process and applicants can notify Human Resources if they require adjustments.

11.7 An interview assessment form will be completed during the interview to ensure that each applicant has been assessed fairly against the role. Everyone involved in the interview process must take accurate notes to ensure they are able to score the responses to questions asked. The panel members will use these scores along with any other selection criteria to determining the candidate to be selected for appointment.

11.8 A number of additional techniques could be used as part of the selection process, and this could include (but is not limited to) assessment centres; scenario tests; written exercises; presentations. Managers should ensure that the assessment method(s) reflects the requirements of the role. When they are invited to take part in the selection process, applicants will be advised what assessment techniques will be used.

12. **Offers of employment**

12.1 The recruiting manager is responsible for notifying the successful candidate and making a verbal offer of employment. Any verbal offer will be subject to relevant pre-employment checks (see section 12 for more information).

12.2 Human Resources will request two references for successful external candidates, at least one of which should be the candidate's last employer or in cases of school leavers / graduates a reference from the school, college or university. In exceptional circumstances, one reference may be a character reference, but this must not be from a relative of the candidate.

12.3 Where references are received and determined as unsatisfactory by the Council, any offer of employment may be withdrawn. Alternatively, the Council may withdraw an offer of employment where, despite numerous attempts, they are unable to secure a satisfactory reference.

13. **Pre-employment checks**

13.1 In addition to satisfactory references, any offer of employment is subject to a number of pre-employment checks which include: -

- Evidence of eligibility to work in the UK as detailed in the Asylum & Immigration Act 1996.
- Occupational Health pre-employment questionnaire and any relevant medical checks.
- Sight of original certificates for qualifications.
- Any relevant safeguarding checks, such as a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check.

13.2 Depending on the nature of the post, a basic criminal record check; standard or enhanced DBS check or police vetting may be required. The advert will clearly indicate if a check is required, and this will also be detailed on the job description / person specification. More information to progress the relevant check will be provided to the successful candidate once an offer of employment has been made.

13.3 If any of the required pre-employment checks are not successfully completed any offer of employment may be withdrawn.

13.4 Applicants who are applying for posts that involve driving, particularly posts that require driving larger vehicles, will also be required to undertake additional medical / licence checks. Details of these checks will be provided as part of the recruitment process.

14. **Unsuccessful applicants and feedback**

14.1 Applicants who are unsuccessful at the interview / selection process stage will be notified via email by Human Resources and provided with the opportunity to receive feedback.

15. **Inaccurate or misleading information**

15.1 Where an applicant knowingly gives inaccurate or misleading information or withholds relevant information, this may be considered as grounds for withdrawing an offer of employment. Where the applicant has already commenced employment, the Council may take action under the Probation or Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

16. **Maintaining records**

16.1 All original applications, assessment sheets and interview / assessment notes for unsuccessful applicants will be stored by Human Resources for a period of six months after the assessment has taken place, after which time records will be destroyed.

17. **Complaints against the process**

17.1 Where a current employee of Cherwell District Council feels that they have been treated unfairly at any stage of the recruitment and selection process they may submit a grievance.

17.2 External applicants should raise a complaint using the Council's Complaints Policy and this should be raised within three months of the act or event which gave rise to the complaint.

17.3 In cases where a complaint is made by either an internal or an external applicant, Human Resources may immediately suspend any appointment to the post in question, provided no contractual obligation has been entered into with the selected applicant, whilst an investigation is undertaken.

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Armed Forces and Reservists Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
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DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	1 November 2023

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District Council.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 2 November 2026 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision

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1 Introduction

Cherwell District Council is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant which is our commitment to supporting the former and serving armed forces community (and

their families) to access public services fairly and help them to play a significant part in the local community.

The Council supports employees who are members of the Reserve Forces, and those who wish to join the Reserve Forces, as well as offering a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans. The Council recognises that many of the skills that reservists gain during their training are transferable to the workplace. The Council will assist reservists as far as possible. The Council accepts that these staff require time off for training to maintain their skills and readiness for deployment.

There are two main types of reservist:

- **Volunteer Reservists** - civilians recruited into the Royal Naval Reserves (RNR), Royal Marines Reserves (RMR), Territorial Army (TA) and Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAFR and RAuxAF).
- **Regular Reservists** – ex regular service personnel who may retain a liability to be mobilised depending on how long they have served in the Armed Forces.

2 Purpose

This policy has been written to clarify the mutuality of obligation between the Council and those employees who are reservists and to provide guidance to employees and managers to help them navigate the relevant processes.

3 Legal framework

In most instances an employer's relationship with a reservist member of staff should be like that of any other employee and is regulated by employment legislation.

However, there are areas where a reservist's status may affect the operations of the employing organisation. Legislation exists to define the rights and liabilities that apply to both parties.

There are two main pieces of legislation relating to employers and the Volunteer Reserve Forces:

- [The Reserve Forces Act 1996 \(RFA 96\)](#) which provides the powers under which reservists can be mobilised for full-time service.
- [The Reserve Forces \(Safeguard of Employment\) Act 1985 \(SOE 85\)](#) which provides protection of employment for those liable to be mobilised and reinstatement for those returning from mobilised service. Under this legislation an employer is guilty of an offence if it dismisses any employee who is a member of the reserve forces because they have been, or are liable to be, called up for military operations.

4 Notification of reservist status

In order for the Council to support reservists, we ask that new staff who are already reservists or existing staff who become reservists inform their line manager as soon

as possible that they are, or intend to become, reservists. This request is made to allow the Council to deal with the practical implications and reservists who do this will not be disadvantaged in any way.

Employees must register their membership of (or departure from) reserve forces with their line manager and email Human Resources who will keep a record on iTrent of all members of the reserve forces.

Reservists must also give permission for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to write to their manager directly. This system is called Employer Notification and is intended to ensure that the Council is aware of any employees in the reserve forces.

5 Leave for training

Training commitments vary but, in most cases, include:

- Weekly training – most reservists train at their local centre for around two-and-a-half hours, one evening per week.
- Weekend training – all reservists are expected to attend a number of training weekends which take place throughout the year.
- Annual training – a two-week annual training course sometimes referred to as ‘annual camp’. This may take place at a training establishment, as an attachment to a Regular Unit, a training exercise, or a combination of any of these. Training normally takes place within the UK, although each year some reservists train overseas.

Up to two weeks paid leave per year will be granted to attend the annual training. This is in addition to the employee’s normal annual leave entitlement. Certificates of attendance at annual training must be provided. Any additional training above the two weeks may be taken as flex-leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

No additional leave will be granted for weekly or weekend training.

Reservists must inform their manager of their basic training commitments and annual training period. Booking time off for training must be made as far in advance as possible and proof of annual training dates must be provided. The reservist is responsible for providing correct and timely information about training commitments and any other issues that may affect their normal work to their manager.

Line Managers will as far as possible facilitate work rotas to allow attendance for annual training and other training commitments, e.g., weekly or weekend training sessions. Permission will normally be granted where the notice exceeds one month. Permission once given will not be rescinded except in exceptional circumstances.

6 Mobilisation - background

Mobilisation is the process of calling reservists into full time service with the regular forces in order to make them available for military operations. The maximum period of mobilisation will depend on the scale and the nature of the operation and is typically no longer than twelve months.

Call-out papers for mobilisation are sent to the employer by the MoD (or, exceptionally, delivered in person by the reservist to their line manager). The

documentation includes the call-out date and the anticipated timeline. Whenever possible, the MoD aims to give at least 28 days' notice of the date that a reservist will be required to report for mobilisation, although there is no statutory requirement for a warning period prior to mobilisation. Employees must ensure their manager is aware of any possibility of mobilisation at the earliest opportunity.

A period of mobilisation usually comprises three distinct phases:

- Medical and pre-deployment training
- Operational tour
- Post-operational tour leave.

7 Mobilisation – employee and line manager responsibilities

If the reservist receives call out papers for mobilisation, they must inform their manager as soon as practicably possible.

Line managers will consider (in consultation with the relevant HR Business Partner) a request for mobilisation within 48 hours of the request occurring. If the normal line manager is unavailable, the request will be escalated to the next tier.

Line managers are expected to approve all mobilisation requests unless otherwise instructed by the relevant Assistant or Corporate Director who has first discussed the situation with the relevant HR Business Partner.

Once mobilisation has been agreed, line managers should do the following:

- Inform HR of impending mobilisation and first day of permanent military service, contained in the call out notice, so HR/payroll can adjust pay and benefits accordingly.
- Complete the consent form included in the call-out pack and any internal paperwork regarding mobilisation.
- Meet with the reservist employee to discuss mobilisation. This should include:
 - Handover of work
 - Return of any equipment
 - Agree employee benefits entitlements and required actions.
 - Keeping in touch - exchange contact details (e.g., email addresses) to enable both parties to do so. This will help with a smooth reintegration of the reservist back into the workplace. Next of Kin details should also be updated.

8 Mobilisation – applying for exemption / deferral / revocations

In all cases of mobilisation, the Council will release the reservist to report for duty unless there are exceptional circumstances, whereby the decision and reasoning will be explained to the reservist. In such circumstances the Council has the right to seek exemption, deferral or revocation if the reservist's absence is considered to cause serious harm to service delivery.

Definitions of 'harm' will vary from case to case, but may include:

- Loss of reputation, goodwill or other financial harm.

- Impairment of the ability to produce good or provide services.
- Harm to the research and development of new products, services or processes (which could not be prevented by the granting of financial assistance under sections 83 and 84 of The Reserve Forces Act 1996).

Details of how to apply for exemption are included in the call-out papers. The application must reach the Adjudication Officer within seven days of the Council receiving a call-out notice. If this timescale is not met, permission to make a late application will need to be obtained from the Adjudication Officer.

The reservist also has the right to apply for exemption or deferral if the call-out papers arrive at a difficult time.

If an unsatisfactory decision is received following the application for a deferral, an appeal can be made to the Reserve Forces Appeal Tribunal. Appeals must reach the Tribunal's Secretary within five days receipt of written notice of the decision.

9 Mobilisation – recovering the Council's costs

Financial assistance for employers in the event of an employee who is a reservist being mobilised is governed by the Reserve Forces (Call out and recall) (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2005. These cover additional costs above the normal earnings of the called-up reservist associated with replacing that employee.

There are three types of award available:

- **One-off costs:** For example, agency fees, if a recruitment agency or employment agency is used to find a temporary replacement or advertising costs.
- **Recurring costs:** For example, overtime costs, if other employees work overtime to cover the work of the reservist [by the amount that such costs exceed earning of the reservists]; or costs of temporary replacement [by the amount that such costs exceed earnings of the reservist]. The maximum claim available is £110 per day (£40,000 per annum). Claims can be made for every normal working day that the reservist is away on service.

An application for one-off costs and recurring costs must be made within four weeks of the end of full-time reservist service. Details can be found in the Call-out pack from the MoD.

- **Training award:** If a returning reservist has to undertake additional training as a direct result of their mobilisation (routine training is excluded).

10 Terms and conditions during mobilisation

10.1 Pay

The MoD will assume responsibility for the reservist's salary for the duration of their mobilisation.

The Council will therefore suspend the reservist's salary during the period of mobilisation.

10.2 Continuous Service

Time spent away from work does not count towards continuous service, but continuity of employment is not broken where the reservist is re-engaged within 6 months of the end of their active service.

10.3 Pension

A reservist who is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) when called up is entitled to remain a member. The MoD will pay the employers pension contributions whilst the individual is mobilised, provided that they continue to pay their personal contributions.

10.4 Annual Leave

Where an employee is mobilised, this is treated by the Council as special unpaid leave. Reservists do not accrue annual leave whilst mobilised and on unpaid leave. Reservists when they demobilise will get a period of post-operational leave. Reservists will be continued to be paid by the MoD during this time.

Annual leave untaken up to the date of mobilisation may be carried over into the following leave year if necessary. The "up to a maximum of 5 days" rule associated with untaken annual leave being carried forward is waived in the case of a mobilised reservist.

10.5 Sick Pay

Reservists who become sick or injured during mobilisation will be covered by MoD healthcare arrangements (including pay) until they are demobilised. If the sickness or injury continues and this results in early demobilisation, the reservist will remain covered by the MoD until the last day of paid military leave. After this time the reservist will be subject to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy.

10.6 Redundancy

A reservist is not immune from a company restructure and can be included in a redundancy pool but must be treated equally to other employees throughout the process.

11 Demobilisation

Both the reservist and the Council have obligations under The Reserve Forces (Safeguarding of Employment Act) 1985 (SOA 85) regarding the return-to-work process.

11.1 Reservist – Demobilisation Return to Work Process

Reservists are encouraged to maintain contact with their line manager whilst mobilised and to notify the line manager of their last day of permanent service and when they intend returning to work.

The reservist is obliged write to their employer by the third Monday after their last day of military service making their request to return to work and suggesting a date which should fall within 6 weeks of their last day of full-time service. This letter

formally starts the return-to-work process

11.2 Employer – Demobilisation Return to work process

The Council has an obligation to reinstate the reservist, where possible to their former role, if not a mutually acceptable role on term and conditions no less favourable to than those prior to mobilisation.

Helping to ensure a smooth re-integration into the workplace will require consideration. Line managers should:

- Provide the returning reservist with an update on changes and developments in the organisation.
- Offer specific refresher training where it is sought or considered necessary.
- Where the job duties have changed since mobilisation, a period of skills training may be required to assist the reservist with new aspects of the job.
- If appropriate, encourage informal get together with colleagues before or soon after the return to work to prevent feeling of dislocation if this is sought.
- Discuss any health concerns. If there is concern that a reservist may be experiencing issues as a result of their deployment, then the reservist should be encouraged to seek advice either through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme or their own GP.
- Further sources of guidance and information can be obtained from [Defence Relationship Management](#) (DRM).

12 Spouses and civil partners of reserve and regular forces personnel

Managers should try to accommodate leave arrangements flexibly when requests are made. This needs to be done in the context of balancing business requirements and supporting individuals. A specific example of this would be to support military spouses by enabling them to take their leave at times which coincide with their partner's post-operational tour leave.

13 Disputes

Any disputes should be referred to the relevant HR Business Partner in the first instance. Employees may thereafter use the grievance procedure.

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