



Agenda

Meeting: **Personnel Committee**
Date: **16 June 2022**
Time: **2.00 pm**
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone**

To: **All members of the Personnel Committee**

The Committee will consider the matters listed below at the date, time and place shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public.

Members of the Committee who wish to have information on any matter arising on the agenda which is not fully covered in these papers are requested to give notice prior to the meeting to the Chairman or appropriate officer.

This meeting will be webcast live to the council's website at <https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>.

Please note there will be 37 seats available for members of the public, which will be reserved for those speaking or participating at the meeting. The remaining available seats will be given on a first come, first served basis.

Although social distancing measures have now ended, all attendees at meetings are kindly asked to wear face coverings, unless they are addressing the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 3 - 4)**

Members of the Council should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);

Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

Contact Jemma West – 01303 853495
Email: committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or download from our
website
www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 6)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2022.

4. **Appointment of JSCP**

To appoint Members to the Joint Staff Consultative Panel for the municipal year 22/23. Membership must include the Leader of the Council and 1 member from each political group.

5. **Gender Pay Gap reporting (Pages 7 - 16)**

This report outlines the council's statutory obligations regarding the publication of gender pay gap data and provides the data for this reporting year.

6. **HR Annual Review (2021/2022) (Pages 17 - 68)**

This report presents a review of the HR function over the last financial year 2021-2022.

7. **Report of the Head of Paid Service (Pages 69 - 74)**

This report is from the Chief Executive in relation to the adequacy of resources across the Council.

Declarations of Interest

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)

Where a Member has a new or registered DPI in a matter under consideration they must disclose that they have an interest and, unless the Monitoring Officer has agreed in advance that the DPI is a 'Sensitive Interest', explain the nature of that interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a DPI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation permitting them to do so. If during the consideration of any item a Member becomes aware that they have a DPI in the matter they should declare the interest immediately and, subject to any dispensations, withdraw from the meeting.

Other Significant Interest (OSI)

Where a Member is declaring an OSI they must also disclose the interest and explain the nature of the interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a OSI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation to do so or the meeting is one at which members of the public are permitted to speak for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter. In the latter case, the Member may only participate on the same basis as a member of the public and cannot participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter and must withdraw from the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI)

Where a Member does not have either a DPI or OSI but is of the opinion that for transparency reasons alone s/he should make an announcement in respect of a matter under consideration, they can make a VAOI. A Member declaring a VAOI may still remain at the meeting and vote on the matter under consideration.

Note to the Code:

Situations in which a Member may wish to make a VAOI include membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items; where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person; or where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position. It should be emphasised that an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI.

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Minutes

Personnel Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Thursday, 14 April 2022
Present	Councillors Mrs Ann Berry, Ray Field, Nicola Keen and David Monk (Chairman)
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Danny Brook, Councillor Tim Prater and Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Officers Present:	Ellen Joyce (Democratic Services Trainee), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Andrina Smith (Chief HR Officer) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)

19. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Keen made a voluntary declaration in respect of all agenda items as she was a union branch officer at Kent County Council.

20. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

21. **Update on F&H Rewards**

The report presented an update on the F&H Rewards platform which is available to all staff and Councillors.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Berry,
Seconded by Councillor Keen; and

RESOLVED:
That report P/21/08 be received and noted.

(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

22. **Pay Policy Statement 2022/23**

The report presented the revised pay policy statement for 2022/23 for approval and recommendation to Council.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Berry,
Seconded by Councillor Keen; and

RESOLVED:

1. That report P/21/09 be received and noted.
2. That it be recommended to Full Council that under S38(1) Localism Act 2011 the Pay Policy Statement appended to this report be approved for 2022/23.
3. That it be recommended to Full Council that Part 5/5 of the Constitution (Personnel Committee Terms of Reference) be updated at section 3.1(c) to state 'to make recommendations to Council on the appointment of Chief Officers as defined in Part 2/27 para 11.1.2(a)'.

(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

23. **Performance Framework for the Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team**

The report proposed minor updates to the performance framework for the Chief Executive and members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

Proposed by Councillor Keen,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Berry; and

RESOLVED:

1. That report P/21/07 be received and noted.
2. That the updated performance framework for the Chief Executive be approved from April 2022.
3. That the updated performance framework for members of the Corporate Leadership Team be approved from April 2022.

(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

This Report will be made public on 8 June 2022

Agenda Item 5

Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

Report Number **P/22/01**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 16th June 2022
Status: Non-executive Decision
Chief Officer: Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer

SUBJECT: GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING

SUMMARY: This report outlines the council's statutory obligations regarding the publication of gender pay gap data and provides the data for this reporting year.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Personnel Committee is asked to note the contents of the report set out below.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report P/22/01.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires employers with 250 or more staff to publish statutory gender pay gap data every year. The council is required to undertake and publish 6 different calculations that display and help explain any gender pay gap.
- 1.2 The statutory calculations are:
- a) Gender pay gap as a mean average
 - b) Gender pay gap as a median average
 - c) Gender bonus gap as a mean average
 - d) Gender bonus gap as a median average
 - e) Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses
 - f) Proportion of men and women in each quartile pay band

The data resulting from these calculations appear in section 2 of this report.

- 1.3 The council is required to publish this data on its own website and on a dedicated government website annually. The salary data for this year is based on the mandatory snapshot date of 31st March 2021 and needs to be published by 30th March 2022.

The HR Senior Specialist completed the review of our data during February 2022 which was followed by a report to the Corporate Leadership Team. The council's data was then uploaded to the government's website ([click here](#)) and the Council's website ([click here](#)) during March 2020.

- 1.4 While the Council must upload data onto the government website in a standardised template, we can choose how to publish our data on our website. In order to make the data both accessible and understandable, the council has published an accompanying narrative and highlighted key elements in a co-ordinated press release.
- 1.5 This is the fifth year that reporting gender pay gap data has been mandatory so we are able to make some comparisons with our previous results.
- 1.6 The gender pay gap is different to equal pay. The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between the average earnings of men and women across an organisation. Equal pay relates to men and women receiving equal pay for equal work, which has been a legal requirement for nearly 50 years. The council is, of course, committed to diversity and equality of opportunity. Policies and procedures, such as the Recruitment and Selection policy and the job evaluation process, ensure we remunerate employees fairly and equally.

2. THE GENDER PAY GAP DATA

- 2.1 The gender pay gap is expressed as a percentage of men's pay. A positive percentage figure shows that, typically or overall, men are paid more. A negative percentage indicates that women are paid more.

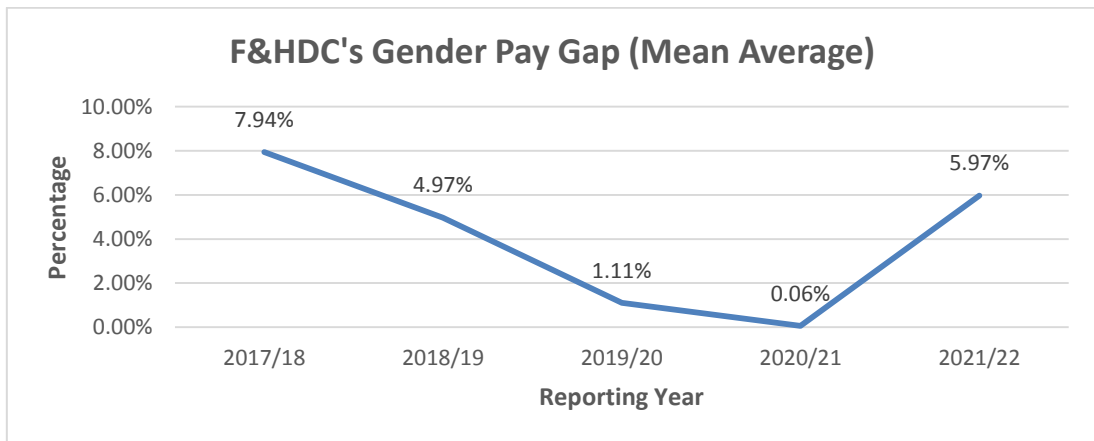
The council's average gender pay gap as at the snapshot date of 31st March 2021 is as follows:

2.1.1 **Gender pay gap as a mean average: 5.97%** (last year 0.06%)

This calculation shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women across the council is nearly 6%.

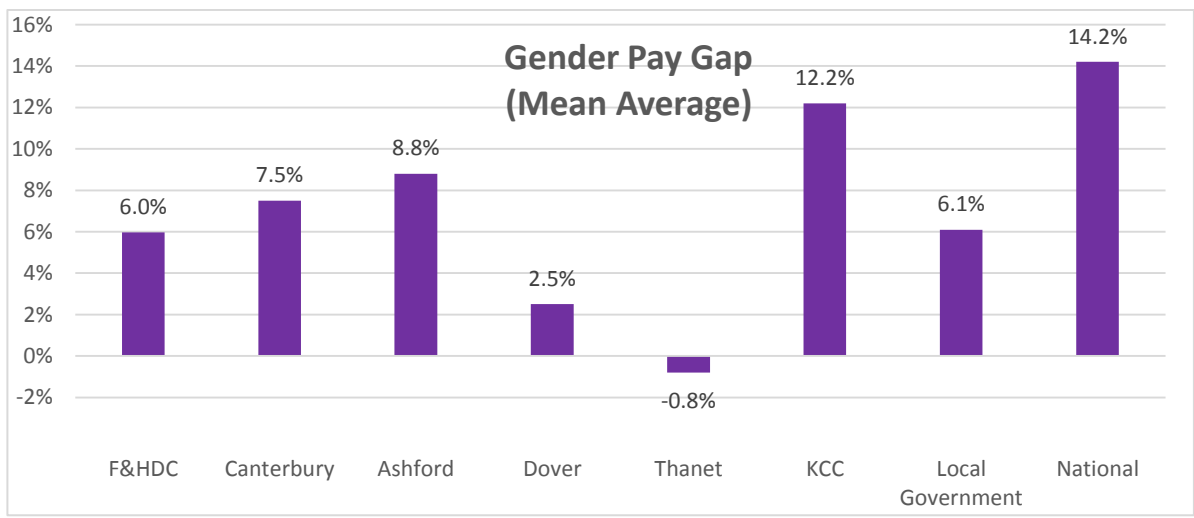
The average man earns £18.16 per hour whereas the average woman earns £17.17 per hour.

This calculation reflects an increase in the council's gender pay gap in comparison with previous reporting years; the reasons for which are considered in paragraph 3.2 below.



The most recent analysis undertaken by the Local Government Association reported the mean gender pay gap across all organisations as 14.2%, compared to 6.1% amongst local authorities.¹ While there has therefore been a change in the council's mean gender pay gap this reporting year, this calculation still compares favourably with national figures and is in line with sector averages.

The following specific comparisons relate to the most up to date data submitted by local authorities:



¹ Source: The Local Government Association [The Gender Pay Gap in Local Government 2019](#)

The mean average is useful because it takes into account the low and high earners and gives a good overall indication of the gender pay gap. However, very large or small rates of pay can 'dominate' and distort the calculation. By identifying the wage of the middle earner, the median calculation avoids this issue and is often considered a better representation of the typical difference in earnings.

2.1.2 Gender pay gap as a median average: 0.19% (last year -8.73%)

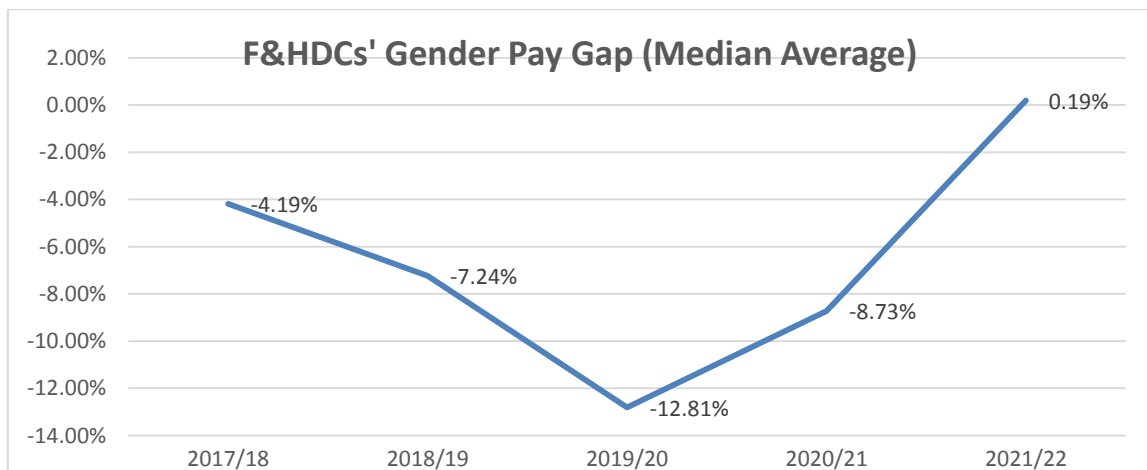
Using the median calculation, the difference between the average earnings of men and women working at the council is negligible.

If all the women working at the council were lined up in order of their hourly rate, then the middle woman (the median) would earn £15.61 per hour. The median man earns £15.64 per hour.

The median calculation is often considered a better representation of the typical difference in earnings as very large or small rates of pay can distort a mean average. The median therefore is ordinarily utilised by publications and is the figure that is widely reported in the press.

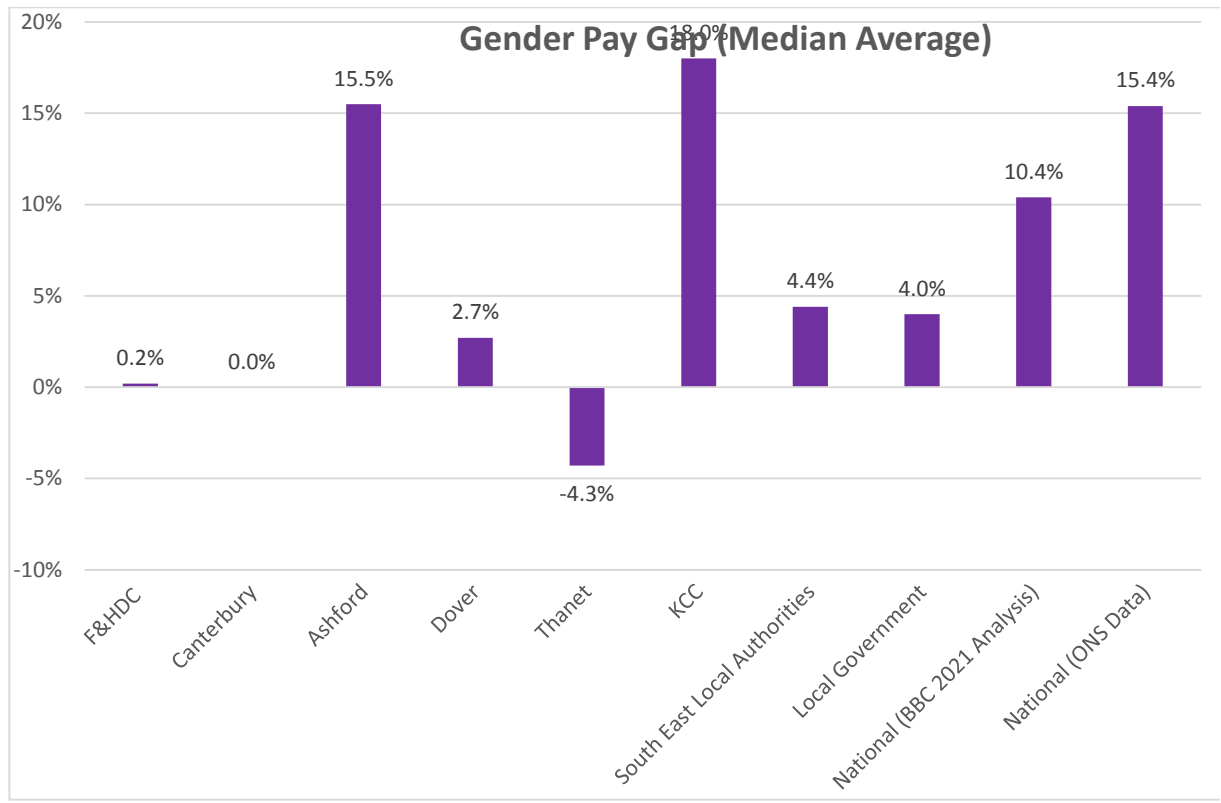
The reason for the difference in mean and median calculations is considered in paragraph 3.3 below.

This calculation also represents a narrowing gender pay gap in comparison to last year's report.



2.1.3 The most recent analysis undertaken by the Local Government Association found a median Gender Pay Gap of 4% across local government, while [BBC News reported](#) a gap of 10.4% nationally and 9% amongst organisations involved in "Public Administration" in October 2021. The most recent data from the [Office of National Statistics](#) estimates a national median gender pay gap of 15.4%. While based on different data sets, this does provide a useful comparison between the organisation and the current national picture.

As above, the following comparisons are made with the latest data available:



2.2 The council is also required to calculate and publish figures relating to bonus payments in the 2020/21 financial year. While the council’s Pay Policy states that there is no provision for bonus payments, the gender pay gap legislation defines “bonus pay” as referring to any remuneration that relates to performance, whether this is discretionary or contractual. As the Corporate Leadership Team are able to make a one-off discretionary honorarium award to employees that demonstrate an exceptional level of performance, such payments have been determined as meeting this definition of “bonus pay”.

This interpretation of what constitutes “bonus pay” has been consistent with all previous reporting years and is made clear in our publications.

During the period between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, 38 staff (16 men and 22 women) received one-off honorarium payments that have been included in the calculations below. The majority of these honorariums related to work undertaken by staff as part of the Covid-19 response.

2.2.1 **Average bonus gender pay gap as a mean average: 3.61%**

This is significantly less than the figure of 21.88% reported last year.

The mean average one-off honorarium payment made to women in the period was £379.55. The average payment to men was £393.75.

2.2.2 **Average bonus gender pay gap as a median average: 50.0%**

The median one-off honorarium payment made to women in the period was £250 whereas the median payment to men was £500.

In the previous reporting year the volume of honorariums was significantly less, but of a higher value to individuals. The median was £1,000 for both men and women and we therefore reported a gap of 0%.

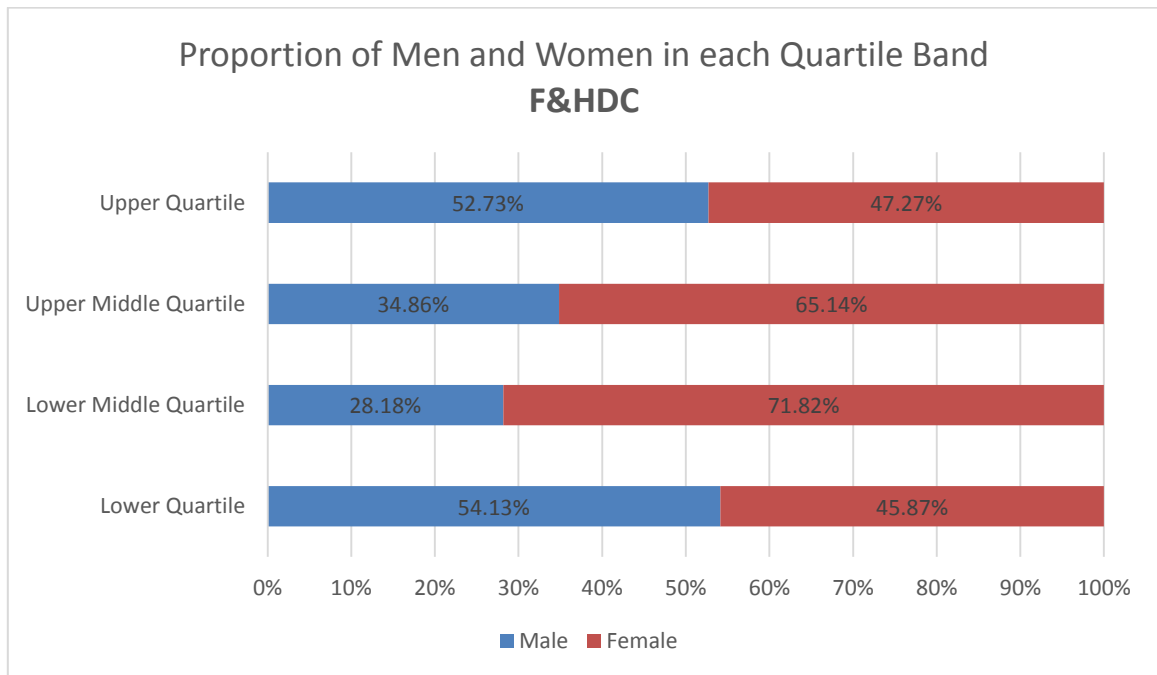
2.2.3 Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses:

The purpose of this calculation is to indicate how much more likely male employees are to receive a bonus payment when compared to female employees (or vice versa).

8.47% of male employees received a one-off honorarium when compared to 8.59% of female employees.

2.3 The chart below shows the proportion of males and females when divided into four equal sections based on their hourly rate. The lower quartile represents the lowest paid 25% of council staff and the upper quartile contains the highest paid 25%.

2.3.1 Proportion of men and women in each quartile pay band



3. SUPPORTING NARRATIVE

3.1 The Difference Between the Mean and Median Averages

The chart above helps to explain the difference between the council’s mean average (5.97%) and median average (0.19%) figures reported in paragraphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.

The council employs more women than men. 58% of staff included in these gender pay gap calculations are female. This is rather typical in local government and on average leads to a higher proportion of women in all pay quartiles across the sector. However, at Folkestone & Hythe the distribution of men and women is more uneven. The majority of women (60%) are concentrated in the middle pay quartiles, while the majority of men (63%) are counted in either the lowest or highest pay bracket.

The male domination of the upper pay quartile helps to explain a mean average that shows, overall, men are paid more than women. Indeed, 31% of male employees are in this highest earning bracket when compared to 21% of women.

However, the large proportion of males amongst our lowest paid quarter, coupled with a female domination of the middle quartiles, has resulted in the median male and median female being found in roughly the same place on the pay spectrum.

3.2 The Increase in the Mean Average Gender Pay Gap

Last year we reported a reduction in our mean average gender pay gap. This year we will be publishing an increase. When considering the reason for this it is important to note that due to the organisation's size a relatively small amount of individual changes to employees or posts can have a seemingly large influence on average figures and the data reported. Significantly, this is the first reporting year since the introduction of the council's Housing service. The amount of posts included in these calculations has increased by 20% in comparison to last year, a large scale change to headcount that has undoubtedly had an impact on our staffing demographic and this year's data.

We have 50 additional females included in the data this year compared to 24 additional males. How such changes have impacted on our pay quartiles has also been quite disproportionate. We have seen a slight increase in the proportion of males in our top two pay categories in comparison to last year. Conversely, we have seen a more significant increase in females amongst our lower pay quartiles.

3.3 The Reduction in the Median Average Gender Pay Gap

Median averages are generally more useful in indicating the 'typical' situation and publications and news outlets tend to focus on this figure, which shows that the council has a negligible gender pay gap. While the changes to headcount discussed in paragraph 3.2 undoubtedly has an impact on our data, the council has taken numerous actions to reduce the gender pay gap and continues to take such actions to reduce it further. These actions are outlined in paragraph 3.4 below.

Paragraph 2.3.1 highlights the distribution of males and females across the pay quartiles. Around a third (32%) of all male employees have been counted in the lowest pay quartile. A significant proportion (32%) of the staff that appear in this lower pay quartile work in the council's Grounds Maintenance department or maintenance teams, the vast majority of which are male. The ratio of males to females is ordinarily higher in manual roles and attracting women into these positions is a noted national challenge. Strategies the council is implementing to increase diversity in this area include creating gender neutral job titles.

3.4 The data continues to indicate a correlation between working hours, gender and the pay quartiles. Overall, 22% of the posts included in the calculations are part time, the majority of which (86%) are undertaken by female staff. A significant proportion (61%) of these part-time posts appear in the middle of the pay spectrum, where the majority (60%) of females have been counted. Indeed, the Office of National Statistics consistently reports that women fill more part-time jobs and that this is generally less well paid than full-time work.

With this correlation in mind, the councils has introduced and will continue to support initiatives to increase gender diversity within the upper pay quartile.

- The council's agile working culture encourages flexibility in working hours and location.
- Prior to recruiting externally or seeking candidates for promotion, the council carefully considers whether working hours and locations can be flexible and, if the post is full time, whether it could be undertaken on a part-time basis. This is then clearly stated on the advert in order to remove such barriers and increase diversity in recruitment and promotion activities. Job sharing options are also considered.
- It is recognised that working part-time can impact on the ability to attend training courses, which may then impact on career progression. The council therefore considers its training programmes carefully in order to reduce barriers to development. A range of flexible development opportunities are available, including coaching, mentoring, in house training and formal qualifications. When considering our training courses we put on shorter courses or split over different days to enable part-time staff to attend. Since the start of the pandemic learning and development activities have taken place remotely, which increases accessibility even further as sessions can be recorded and viewed at any time.
- The council also runs training courses and provides dedicated support aimed at helping managers understand the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and ensure fair, non-discriminatory and consistent processes are followed in matters such as recruitment and promotion.
- In order to reduce the gender pay gap further, the council offers supportive options for those returning from maternity leave and encourages greater sharing of caring responsibilities through raising awareness of benefits and initiatives such as Flexible Working, Shared Parental Leave and Tax-Free Childcare.

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

- 4.1 Legal Comments (NM) – There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report other than those already clearly stated therein.
- 4.2 Finance Comments (LW) – There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 Equalities Comments (GE) – This report demonstrates Folkestone & Hythe District Council's continued commitment to equality and diversity. There is no Equality Impact Assessment required.

5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting

Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer
Telephone: 01303 853405
Email: Andrina.Smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Ritchie Bennett, HR Senior Specialist
Telephone: 01303 853693

Email: Ritchie.Bennett@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

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Agenda Item 6

Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

This Report will be made
public on 8 June 2022

Report Number **P/22/03**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 16 June 2022
Status: Non-executive Decision
Head of Service: Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer

SUBJECT: HR ANNUAL REVIEW (2021/2022)

SUMMARY: This report presents a review of the HR function over the last financial year 2021-2022.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report set out below.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report P/22/03.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The HR Service has now been back in-house at Folkestone & Hythe for 10 years following a period of out-sourcing to the East Kent HR shared service. This report is written to give Committee members an annual overview of the service and the HR developments that are in place to support managers in achieving their council objectives.
- 1.2 A report is presented to the Personnel Committee on an annual basis in order for members to be satisfied that the HR team is appropriately supporting the council.

2. HR STRUCTURE AND SERVICE

- 2.1 The HR team went live with its new structure based on the operating model set out under the transformation programme on 1st April 2021 following consultation with the affected staff. Whilst the Organisational Development (OD) team was largely unaffected by transformation as much of their work comes from external organisations, the 1FTE HR Assistant role was transferred to become a Case Officer within the Corporate Services Case Management Team due to the majority of their tasks being transactional and process driven. Job titles were updated across the whole team to mirror the move to levels of Specialist. The current HR Team structure can be seen in **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 The team are still embedding the case management approach into our processes with the support of the ICT & Digital team to enable many routine queries to be dealt with via the Staff Hub directly by a Case Officer trained in HR tasks. Due to the original HR Assistant that transferred having a period of maternity leave, other case officers have been trained and we are now starting to see some resilience developing which supports the move to case for routine tasks such as recruitment, absence monitoring and some payroll tasks. This work is likely to continue over the next 12 months or more as further processes are reviewed and improved to identify more efficient ways to provide our service to the council.
- 2.2 Overall, the service continues to maintain a Business Partner approach to supporting managers. This enables a greater understanding of the council's service areas particularly for the two HR Specialist roles as they continue to develop and widen their generalist knowledge, however the team do also provide generalist advice across the whole business.
- 2.3 The HR Senior Specialist and Specialists continue to have monthly meetings with their Assistant Directors and Chief Officers along with some Lead Specialists to discuss a standing agenda of HR items, including recruitment, absence management, casework, restructuring and corporate developments. They will also attend the relevant managers meetings within the service areas when required. The OD Lead Specialist, HR Senior Specialist and HR Specialists each have a monthly 1-2-1 with the Chief HR Officer. The HR team also have a weekly team brief to share knowledge, discuss casework and receive corporate information.
- 2.4 The HR team have continued to work flexibly over the last year, attending the office when required for certain tasks and in addition coming in to the office on a Wednesday each week to enable further interaction and knowledge sharing.

3. CASEWORK

- 3.1 During 2021/22 the HR team have supported the following cases:

- 6 disciplinary cases resulting in 1 verbal warning, 1 first written warning, 3 final written warnings and 1 summary dismissal. Under section 4.4 of the disciplinary procedures a penalty up to and including a final written warning can be agreed outside of a disciplinary hearing if the employee is in agreement. Five of the six case numbers mentioned above were issued in this way; the exception being the summary dismissal which was the result of a formal disciplinary hearing.
- 2 capability cases which resulted in one member of staff leaving before the process concluded and the other was dismissed on the grounds of ill health capability.
- 0 grievances was raised during the year.

While not formal cases, the team have supported a number of managers and staff with targeted actions and short-term performance improvement plans using our behavioural framework.

3.2 As a comparison, during 2020/21 the following cases were dealt with:

- 5 disciplinary cases resulting in 1 verbal warning and 4 written warnings. Under section 4.4 of the disciplinary procedures a penalty can be agreed outside of a disciplinary hearing if the employee is in agreement. Four of the five case numbers mentioned above were issued in this way.
- 2 capability cases resulting in one member of staff leaving before the process concluded and one was dismissed with no appeal lodged.
- 1 grievance was raised during the year which was not upheld. There was no appeal to the outcome.

3.3 Whilst these figures do not show much of a change in terms of the number of cases dealt with, when considered against the increase in staff numbers over the last 18 months it is in effect a decrease in percentage.

For information, our average headcount over the last 3 years has increased from 363 (2019/20) to 415 (2020/21) and is now 460 (2021/22).

The continuation of the use of section 4.4 to enable warnings to be issued and recorded without the need for a formal hearing continues to reduce the amount of time being spent on formal hearings and the associated preparation time unless the case is particularly serious or complex in nature.

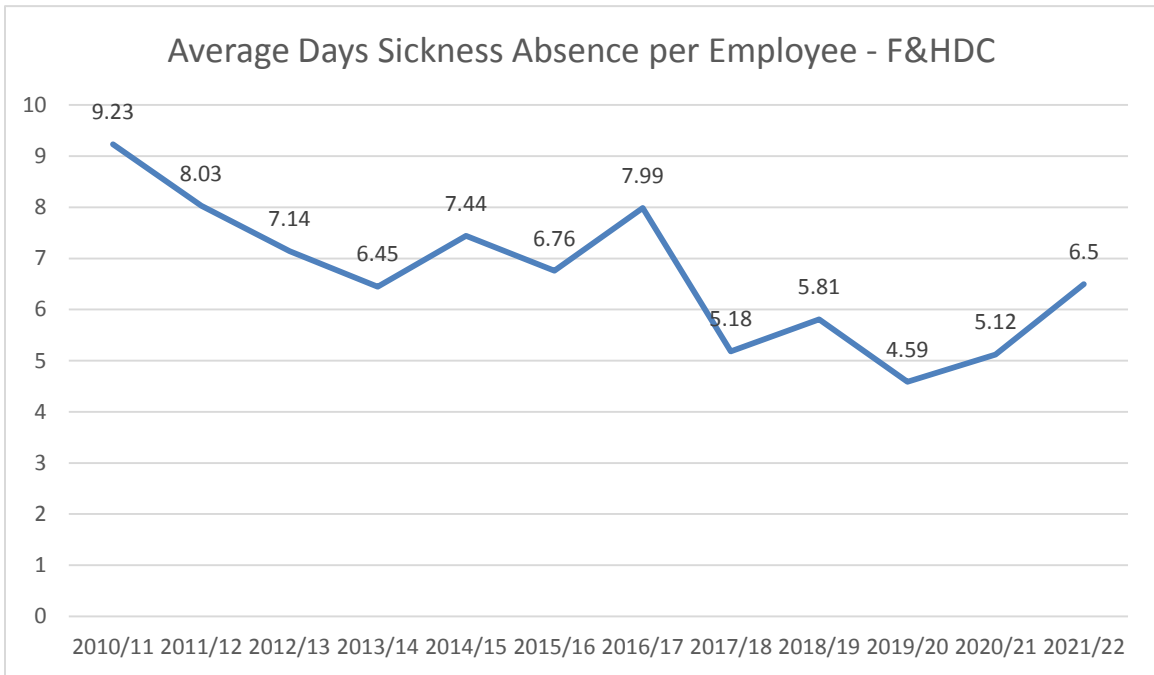
3.4 In addition, the HR team have supported the following restructures across the organisation:

- Grounds Maintenance
- Print & Post Room

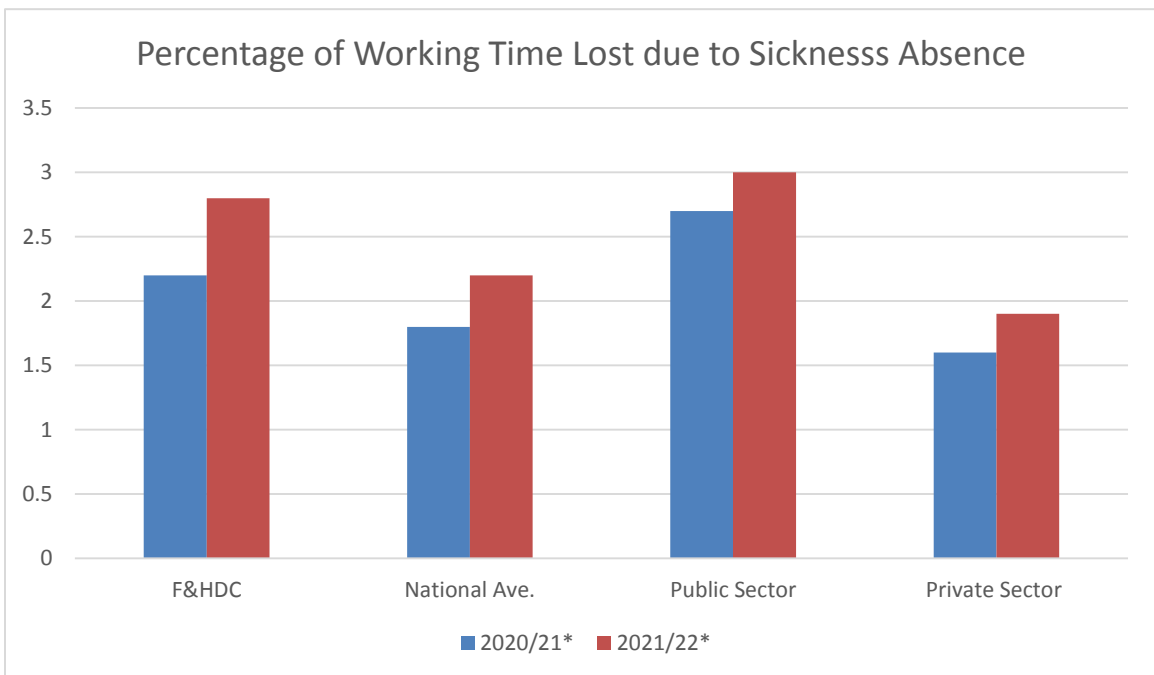
4. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 In 2021/22 there was an average of 6.5 days sickness absence per employee (based on an average headcount of 460). During the year, 2.8% of all working time was lost due to sickness absence.

4.2 This represents an increase in sickness absence levels in comparison to last year. The pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on sickness absence and, as presented in paragraph 4.3 below, absence rates have increased not only at F&HDC but across the UK. Sickness absences rates at F&HDC remain under the average for the public sector.



4.3 Measuring absence rates in terms of the “average number of days per employee” is a widely used formula across different sectors and has previously enabled comparisons to be made using data collected by professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). However, the pandemic and associated measures have had a deep impact on businesses, the UK labour market and the validity of this as a comparative measure of data in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. While we therefore need to be cautious with data comparisons, using the percentage of working time lost due to sickness absence is the measure least impacted by the pandemic measures, is utilised by the Office of National Statistics, and is therefore used for comparative purposes here:



Source: [Office of National Statistics](#), April 2022
 *Comparisons made with 2021 and 2020 data

Nationally, an increase in sickness absence rates has been reported across both private and public sectors over the past year. The effects of the pandemic have undoubtedly had an impact on this sickness absence data though. While Covid-19 may have led to increased absences, measures such as furloughing, social distancing, shielding and increased homeworking helped to reduce other causes of sickness and, nationally, absence rates actually fell to a record low in 2020. However, the reduction in these measures, coupled with new Covid-19 variants, have led to a rise in sickness absence across the country in 2021 to above pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, these national figures represent the highest sickness absence rates recorded in the UK in over 10 years.

While sickness absence rates in the private and public sectors both rose by 0.3 percentage points in 2021, sickness amongst public sector workers have consistently been higher than private sector workers. There are several factors that may cause this, including the types of work undertaken in the public sector.

4.4 Since the 2014/15 annual report the HR team have provided a breakdown of sickness absence figures in terms of long-term and short-term cases.

Long-term absence is classed as four weeks or more.

The instances of absence and amount of days lost to sickness will be influenced by fluctuations in staffing levels, particularly over the past two years as the council’s headcount increased in line with the introduction of the new housing service. The average number of days per employee column therefore gives the most accurate indication of the relative impact that short or long-term absences have had on the organisation.

“Days lost” refers to the amount of working days lost to sickness absence.

“Ave. days” refers to the average amount of days sickness absence per employee.

Year	Short-Term Absences			Long-Term Absences		
	Instances	Days Lost	Ave. Days	Instances	Days Lost	Ave. Days
2014/15	425	1031.5	2.72	36	1788	4.72
2015/16	349	1016.89	2.65	33	1562	4.06
2016/17	375	985	2.62	29	2021.5	5.37
2017/18	345	951.5	2.58	18	957	2.60
2018/19	258	675	1.87	30	1424	3.94
2019/20	294	879.5	2.42	16	787.5	2.17
2020/21	250	768.5	1.85	27	1355	3.27
2021/22	454	1372.5	2.98	34	1630.5	3.54

4.5 Over the past year we have experienced an increase in short-term absenteeism (absences of less than 4 weeks). The average number of days lost to short-term sickness cases is at the highest since the HR team have reported data in this format in the Annual Report.

Absences relating to Covid-19 were the most predominant cause of short-term sickness absence at the council last year. It is clear that Covid-19 has significantly contributed to sickness absence levels at F&HDC and nationally. Covid-19 accounted for nearly one in

four of all occurrences of sickness absence in the UK in 2021¹ and the council has experienced a more significant increase in shorter-term sickness as a consequence. Minor illnesses (such as colds and flu, headaches, nausea, diarrhoea etc), traditionally the biggest reason for sickness absence, were the other principal causes of short-term sickness absence.

- 4.6 We have also continued to experience a rise in long-term sickness absence cases. An increased headcount (2021/22 was the first full financial year since the introduction of the Housing Service) would, however, be expected to have some impact on number of cases reported this year. Overall, 7% of absences were long-term and this equated to 54% of the total time lost due to sickness.

As with 2020/21, the biggest reason for long-term absence over the past year was mental ill health and stress, which accounted for 44% of our long-term sickness cases. Overall 34% of all time lost due to sickness absence has been classified as relating to “stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue”. There is a mixture of work and personal related cases and while the team work to get people back into work as quickly as possible such cases have to be handled appropriately, including ensuring sufficient recovery time, in order to enable an effective return to work. The prominence of this type of absence is not unique to Folkestone & Hythe; the CIPD recognise the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of individuals and continue to report mental health and stress amongst the most predominant cause of long-term absence across the country, particularly in the public sector.²

- 4.7 With this in mind, the council has implemented a number of measures to support employees in the workplace, proactively manage mental health and prevent stress related issues:

- Specific Learning & Development sessions focused on personal resilience, managing and reducing the causes of stress, and promoting well-being. This has included dedicated sessions on men’s mental health and the launch of the “menopause café”.
- Initiatives to reduce isolation and keep staff connected, including the virtual kitchen (“Chai There”), “Connect sessions” for those isolated at home, New Starters Forum, Armed Forces community staff group, weekly email and Teams communications, and bi-monthly podcasts.
- Developing a team of mental first aiders and promoting their role throughout the council.
- Virtual “drop in” support and wellbeing sessions, where an HR representative and mental health first aider are always available.
- Access to an online wellbeing centre, which includes a range of health and wellbeing advice and resources, and an Employee Assistance Programme available through F&H Rewards. Staff can access counselling services and specialist information and support on a range of personal and professional issues that could be affecting them in their work or their health and wellbeing generally, including financial, debt and legal advice.
- A range of resources and support on a dedicated health and wellbeing intranet page, including access to ‘My Wellbeing’ which provides staff with a weekly programme of information aimed at improving overall well-being.

¹ Office for National Statistics: [Sickness Absence in the UK Labour Market 2021](#).

² Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: Health and Wellbeing at Work 2022.

- Health and wellbeing activities including free swimming at Hythe Pool, discounted gym memberships available through the council's reward platform 'F&H Rewards', and initiatives organised and supported by the Civil Service Sports Club.
- Utilising our occupational health providers and resources such as HSE risk assessment questionnaires to understand the causes of stress and take targeted actions to mitigate these effectively.
- Promoting flexible working options and other policies that may support work/life balance and those with caring responsibilities.
- Undertaking staff surveys, which can help us identify both team and organisation-wide issues and assess the positive steps taken to address these.

4.8 In addition to the initiatives outlined in paragraph 4.7, a number of other measures are in place to ensure that we continue to support health and wellbeing and reduce absenteeism:

- The council's agile working culture supported staff who were required to self-isolate to continue working if they were well enough to do so.
- A robust absence monitoring system is in place. The line manager immediately records the absence, cause, and expected duration on the Staff Hub, ensuring swift interventions from the team.
- As the expected duration of absence is included in the notification HR can monitor the undertaking of return to work interviews, which form an integral part of effective absence management. If HR have not received a copy of the return to work interview as expected reminders are sent to the line manager to ensure they are completed.
- There are clear absence triggers in place and the HR team provide dedicated and focused support to managers, including attending return to work interviews, if there is a cause for concern. At these meetings supportive measures may be discussed that enable the employee to return to work earlier than otherwise anticipated or, in the case of frequent absenteeism, attend work on a more regular basis. If appropriate, it is made very clear to the employee that if their absence(s) continue then we may take the decision to withhold occupational sick pay and formal processes may also be instigated.
- Absence data and cases are reviewed with relevant Directors, Assistant Directors, or Chief Officers as appropriate on a regular basis.
- Alongside a case management approach and providing focused support to line managers, HR also provide general training on absence management as part of the manager induction process. There was a specific Management Development Programme session on effective absence management and supporting staff health & wellbeing in March 2021, with the next scheduled for November 2022.
- Occupational Health services continue to be utilised and through increased contract monitoring, focused KPIs and closer working relationships, we believe we have overseen an increase in quality of medical advice and effective support received in recent years as a consequence. The contract provider changed in January 2022 and these increases in quality and effectiveness are anticipated to continue as a result.
- The HR team continue to promote the council's Employee Assistance Programme available through F&H Rewards.
- The HR team have continued to work with other external organisations and sources of support, such as Access to Work, and relevant internal departments to improve health and wellbeing and support absence management. For example, Health and Safety have undertaken home workstation risk assessments remotely and specialist equipment has been redistributed or provided effectively and where necessary.

- The Council has historically offered staff free 'flu vaccinations at the Civic Centre. Due to pandemic restrictions and the way in which we are all working now, over the past two financial years staff have been reimbursed the cost of private 'flu vaccinations.

5. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The focus of our small OD and Engagement Team is to enhance organisational effectiveness. This is achieved through several areas of our People Strategy, with the primary focus being: Learning and Development, Workforce Engagement and the recognition element of Reward and Recognition. Each area will be taken in turn.
- 5.2 The OD Team delivers work for other East Kent Councils, including apprenticeship delivery and running training and development courses and coaching. During 2021/22 this work brought £100,302 of income into the council. The cost of additional staff brought in to support with the delivery of this work has been covered with this income and our approach has given the OD Team greater resilience, economies of scale, and a wider range of facilitators to appeal to different personalities. Working with other councils has meant that our staff have benefited from a more diverse learning environment, sharing best practice in management with participants from other local authorities. Feedback from the councils we are working with has been resoundingly positive and we have been fostering a deeper sense of community between F&HDC and our neighbouring authorities.

6. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 Our Learning and Development offer is comprised of general skills development (we develop managers, deliver training, and run apprenticeships to help ensure staff perform well reach their potential) and technical skills development (we make sure the Council is compliant, appropriately skilled and that the professional skills training budget for the whole organisation is well-managed).
- 6.2 Our Management development programme has, as usual, been updated to reflect the development needs of people managers. It is now all delivered online. The majority of sessions are an hour long, with some longer, as needed. Topics covered have included:
- April 2021: Performance Management and the Council's Competency Framework
 - May 2021: Prioritising and Delegating
 - June 2021: Formal HR Processes
 - July 2021: Political Insight Q&A
 - September 2021: Recruitment and Selection
 - October 2021: Mental Health Awareness for Managers
 - November 2021: How to have effective 121s and delivering good feedback
 - November 2021: Report Writing (including Climate Impact statement)
 - December 2021: Helping your team members manage their workloads
 - January 2022: Power and Personal Presence
 - January 2022: Political Insight Q&A
 - February 2022: Unconscious Bias & Cultural Diversity Awareness
 - March 2022: Menopause Awareness for Managers

OD & Engagement also offer managers ad hoc support and coaching with specific people management-related issues.

6.3 Over the course of the 2021/22 year we have offered a variety of online development opportunities for staff at all levels. The OD & Engagement team have run 60-minute to half-day sessions on:

April 2021:	Managing Conflict
May 2021:	Personal Resilience; Time Management; Phone-based Customer Contact; Mental Health First Aid
June 2021:	Phone-based Customer Contact; Supporting Vulnerable Customers
September 2021:	Presentation Skills Practice
October 2021:	Personal Resilience; Train the Trainer
November 2021:	Mindfulness at Work; Men's Mental Wellbeing
December 2021:	Managing Stress in the Workplace
January 2022:	Measuring & Improving Wellbeing; Personal Resilience

6.4 Following each development session, a review is undertaken to evaluate the success of the topic. Workshops are evaluated based on the extent to which participants felt that they have increased their competence and confidence in the topic area of the workshop. In general, the majority of participants reported that the workshops have increased their competence and, to a lesser extent, their confidence which develops as they begin to put into practice what has been learnt during the sessions.

6.5 In addition, we have commissioned training on other areas of cross-organisational interest, as follows:

May 2021:	Designated Officers for Safeguarding training
June 2021:	Staff Hub training; Modern Day Slavery; Introduction to Tackling the Climate Emergency
July 2021:	Excel for Beginners
September 2021:	Advanced Excel; iTrent (payroll system) for non-managers
October 2021:	Whistle-blowing, Anti-Fraud and Corruption Training

6.6 Role-specific professional development enables us to deliver the Corporate Plan and this year have included:

- Finance – CIPFA courses
- Case (Corporate) – HRA; Business Rates; Recovery & Enforcement
- Democratic Services - ICO Certificate; Committee Services Administration, AEA Elections Foundation, Personal Admin Qualification; Monitoring Officer; Governance & Law; Constitution
- ICT – Advanced Business Objects, Salesforce Developer; Apex coding
- Strategy Policy and Performance - RTPi; Safeguarding; CIPS; Legislative Updates
- HR – L7 CIPD qualification; L3 L&D Practitioner
- Legal – apprenticeship training course for trainee
- Procurement – CIPS qualification
- Revenues and Benefits– Introduction to Welfare; Universal Credit; Debt Advice; Benefits & Mental Health; Shelter; IRRV Council Tax; Housing Benefits Info; GovPD; Money Advice Trust; Gendered Intelligence
- Grounds Maintenance – various equipment training courses: Confined spaces; Pumps crew; Cots cemeteries/Shoring; Mini digger; Dumper; Rotary ride on mower; Cylinder ride on mower; Strimmer; Hedge cutter; Pedestrian mower; All terrain vehicle

- Estates & Assets – RICS - Landlord and Tenant; Introduction to Freehold Covenants; Introduction to Valuation;
- Planning & Development: – Legal Updates; RTPi CPD; Flooding ; Viability
- Economic Development - Professional certificate in Economic Development from International Centre for Parliamentary Studies
- Case (Place) - Parking & Licencing
- Hythe Pool - NPLQ
- Customer Services - Complaints Handling
- Private Sector Housing – Fire Safety; Electrical Safety; Hoarding Awareness; HMO Licensing/ Inspection
- Housing: Housing Options and Allocations Update; Managing Temporary Accommodation; Working with vulnerable homeless households; Working with Private Sector Housing; Affordable Housing delivery
- Environmental Health – ABC Food Law subs; Animal Welfare Qualification; CIEH Practitioner Programme
- Environmental Protection - RIPA, PAC, B-Tec Level 2

- 6.7 Chief Officers, Assistant Directors and Corporate Directors are also offered coaching and bespoke training courses provided by respected organisations such as universities, Roffey Park Institute and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).
- 6.8 E-Learning modules have been promoted to all staff in order to comply with our duties for providing relevant Health & Safety and statutory training. We are continually improving our system and in November 2022 are looking to introduce Manager Dashboard functionality to enable Managers to track the completion rates of those in their teams.
- 6.9 With the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2016/17 Personnel Committee agreed to focus on apprenticeships. As a council, we decided to become an accredited Apprenticeship Training Provider, so that we can deliver our own apprenticeships and draw down on Apprenticeship Levy funds to pay ourselves to do so. This has the dual benefit of bringing in an income to the council and allowing us to carefully tailor our courses to meet the specific needs of local government. Apprentices are either trained by us in-house or access relevant courses with external training providers.
- 6.10 In terms of the specific apprenticeships we offer, we have 12 officers currently undertaking a Management Apprenticeship which also involves studying for an ILM Level 3 Diploma for Managers qualification (we are an ILM Centre so deliver this ourselves). Four of these learners started in January 2022, the others started a year before and are nearing completion of the course. This is a year-long programme and helps develop our talent pipeline in terms of developing aspiring managers. To enhance their development our management apprentices have taken on additional management and cross-training responsibilities as well as shadowing budget managers (where they don't manage a budget themselves) to learn the basics of budget management.
- 6.11 We also have 4 officers undertaking our in-house Level 3 Apprenticeship in Business Administration, having one of whom started in January 2022, the others in September 2020.
- 6.12 Where appropriate we continue to use external training providers to support apprentices; we currently have officers undertaking a Solicitor Apprenticeship (with Associated degree); a Junior Content Producer (in Communications); a Planning Apprenticeship (with associated Masters); a Level 4 Project Management Apprenticeship; an IRRV

Apprenticeships (Revenues and Benefits) and Chartered Institute of Housing Apprenticeships. This is an economical way of funding training as it is funded from our apprenticeship levy account and when this is used up, 95% of the course fees are funded by Central Government.

- 6.13 We are also engaged in developing future local talent. This is done through engagement with schools/ education facilities and through Central Government's Kickstart programme (supporting young people who are unemployed).

Our work with schools has included:

- Work experience placement - July 2021: Turner School Work experience & Kent University work experience
- Talks in schools - November 2021: Diversity & Inclusion Talk for Year 9 at the Turner School; March 2022: Officers and Councillors attended a number of "Talk Folkestone" events at a range of Turner Schools - primary and secondary.
- Careers events - November 2021: Panel discussion on careers in Local Government for Kent University; November 2021: Careers in Local Government talk for Year 8 at Folkestone Academy; February 2022: Talk with Business Studies students at Folkestone College

Our support for the Kickstart programme (see section 11 below for further information) has involved a comprehensive employability support package for the 5 F&HDC employees on the programme, including:

- Workshops in project management and time management
- Career and wellbeing coaching
- Employability workshops (career decisions, CV writing, interview skills, mock interviews).

- 6.14 In addition, we are currently exploring options to fund school leavers/ graduates to do degree or masters level apprenticeships in areas of the organisation that require additional succession planning. This would give local people the opportunity to do a degree or masters that is funded by our apprenticeship levy whilst learning on the job. This represents an evolution of the Grow Our Own scheme that we ran from 2015 to 2019 and enables us to reduce costs by using government funded apprenticeships that have now been made available at university level.

- 6.15 Councillors have points of contact within the HR team and Committee Services team in order for them to be able to request any individual training or conferences. Councillors also have a specific page on the Learning Zone of the staff intranet. All training presentations are uploaded after each session has taken place to enable those who could not attend to view the materials.

7. WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1 A key part of our role in OD & Engagement is to drive employee engagement, which has been proven by numerous studies to drive organisational performance. In March 2021, we undertook the full, formal Best Companies engagement survey (used by hundreds of UK businesses and not for profit organisations) which saw us ranked as number 4 in their category for 'not for profit bodies' in the UK. The survey showed that we have attained a '2 star' or outstanding level of employee engagement (the maximum rating is '3 star' or world

class level of engagement). We held a Best Companies Celebration event in May to involve all staff in hearing the results announcement live.

After a strong focus on employee engagement, we have sought to maintain our strong position, as well as target areas of specific need, such as ensuring technology requirements are met (primarily due to homeworking) and Mental Wellbeing. Using an insight-led approach, we have targeted these areas to gain input and shape our approach. This year the following surveys have been carried out:

- April 2021: ICT Survey
- July 2021: Mental Wellbeing Survey
- Oct/Nov 2021: Staff Check in survey

7.2 Our Internal Communications and Engagement and Wellbeing strategies translate insights from our employees into a series of actions. Activity is delivered via various, online, channels:

- Weekly emails with links to videos and intranet articles (this will transition to Teams channels as we embed this new communications platform). Emails were daily during December as we delivered the F&HDC advent count-down.
- Staff briefing (every 2 months)
- Connection events: Chai There (monthly), New Starters' Forum and New Managers' Forum (quarterly)
- Wellbeing events: Menopause café, wellbeing café and support for HR drop-in sessions
- Podcasts (ad hoc) focusing on officers from a variety of teams
- Other events (ad hoc) e.g. Bingo, Games, Quiz Time, Hum that Choon.

7.3 We ensure strong two-way communication with our people through a variety of interactive workshops and focus groups, e.g. the Civic Centre relocation working group.

7.4 The OD & Engagement team have also run online meetings and Away Days for teams to help them review progress and plan for the future. These have included sessions for:

- Independent Living Managers Team Building
- Housing Team integration sessions (to build relationships within Housing & wider organisation)
- Case Corporate Team Leader Team Building
- Housing United Team Building

7.5 We also help managers by facilitating meetings, both with the wider staff group, and with our residents, including:

- Waste meetings with staff (to navigate the challenges with collections)
- Waste & Recycling residents' panel facilitation (for staff)
- Climate Champions Staff forum
- East Cliff residents association engagement
- Landlord event webinar

7.6 We have also supported meetings of the wider management team (every 2 months), engaging Middle Managers in the organisation's strategic thinking and planning.

8. RECOGNITION

- 8.1 We have continued with the delivery of our recognition scheme. The peer-nominated scheme recognises those who have noticeably displayed behaviours aligned to our core values. The panel meets three times a year and small prizes are issued shortly afterwards. We also focus on embedding our core values through the online corporate induction and our behaviour framework. We continue to promote our E-cards service, making it easier for staff to recognise one another for displaying our values at any time of year. In addition to this, we recognise those officers who have dedicated significant years of service to the organisation with small tokens of appreciation.
- 8.2 In October 2021 we ran a special recognition for our Housing Service, to celebrate a year since they had come in-house. This was an opportunity to thank and motivate this new team who have worked so hard to deliver a brand new service.
- 8.3 In January 2022 we handed out the second ever Employee of the Year award that we introduced to recognise a single individual who has relentlessly demonstrated our core values. The winner was Jana Getliffe, Horticulture Lead Specialist, who had shown herself to display our values consistently and continually go above and beyond to make our district environmentally sustainable and look beautiful.

9. F&H REWARDS

- 9.1 At the last meeting of the Personnel Committee (14th April 2022), members were presented with a comprehensive report 'Update on F&H Rewards' – P/21/08 which can be accessed by clicking [here](#).
In future years, rather than presenting a separate report, an annual update on the scheme will be included in this report.
- 9.2 By way of an update since the report mentioned in 9.1 above, the Tusker car lease scheme was launched to staff on 25th April 2022 and in the first 3 weeks of running the scheme we have already had 2 members of staff order an electric car with several other members of staff also expressing a strong interest in the scheme over coming months. Tusker have confirmed that they will be attending the summer social planned for 1st July 2022 in order to further promote the scheme to staff.

10. PEOPLE STRATEGY

- 10.1 Since 2019, the People Strategy has become embedded within the council framework and underpinned not just the transformation programme but all of our people related activities. Following a review with the Continuous Improvement Board, a new strategy was devised and launched in 2021 aimed at supporting the council's objectives as we move forward with new ways of working following the pandemic.

The People Strategy 2021 can be found at **Appendix B**.

- 10.2 The 6 main themes of the people strategy are:



10.3 Behavioural Competency Framework

The framework continues to support our recruitment and selection process and has become embedded within performance management enabling managers to feel more confident in approaching behaviours as part of their 1-2-1s with team members.



Looking forward work is now underway to understand what additional selection exercises managers feel would enhance the selection process so that we can design, write and implement different selection exercises in order to provide more opportunity outside of a traditional interview for candidates to demonstrate their abilities and attitudes. Of course this will also naturally mean training managers in how to appropriately assess these types of exercises with the added consideration of whether some are face to face in the future or whether using media such as Microsoft Teams will remain an option.

10.4 Agile Working

As an employer, we continue to recognise the need to develop and encourage modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the business, whilst maintaining high levels of customer service and a good work life balance.

During the pandemic whilst the civic offices were closed we continued to listen and engage with staff and based on a significant volume of feedback there was a considerable evidence base to further support the advantages that come from agile working. As a result, in line with the People Strategy, a new Agile Working Framework was developed which took steps towards making this a permanent feature in the way in which we operate. The Agile Working Framework can be seen at **Appendix C**.

We re-opened the civic offices at the end of August enabling managers to book specified zones on the 1st and 2nd floor hot-desking space for their team to work together as well as individual desks for those that needed to access to the office for various reasons. Since that time we have sought feedback from staff (November 2021) which led to some changes being implemented in early 2022 and we have also asked for further feedback as part of the current staff survey.

Once the feedback from the staff survey has been considered and discussed at CLT we will update the Agile Working Framework if appropriate to ensure that it still accurately reflects our approach towards flexibility whilst maintaining performance.

10.5 People Strategy – progress against objectives

In addition to many of the activities already highlighted throughout this report, key activities are already underway to progress actions within the People Strategy including:

- The Agile Working Framework (see 10.4 above) remains a key focus to ensure that we are operating in the best way possible to maximise our performance as a council.
- Short term (6-12 months) secondments have actively been promoted across the council, for example the Refugee Resettlement Co-ordinator and Elections Officer posts, and an external secondment for 12 months has also been approved.
- The OD team continue to ensure mental health and wellbeing is promoted to staff and sessions are arranged covering relevant topics (eg men's mental health, menopause) and a team of mental health first aiders are in place following training with Mind.
- F&H Rewards continues to develop with the newest addition being the Tusker car lease salary sacrifice scheme which also supports the green agenda and the council's carbon action plan.
- The HR team have seen demonstrations of HR software that could enhance our ways of working in order to provide a more efficient service to the council, including

recruitment software, with the next step being consideration of how this can be taken forward more formally.

- Early discussions have taken place to shape a potential apprenticeship programme in identified areas to support succession planning due to an ageing workforce.

11. KICKSTART PROGRAMME

- 11.1 The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new short term jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. There will also be funding available to support young people to develop new skills and to help them move into sustained employment after they have completed their Kickstart funded job.

The funding covers the following:

- 100% of the [National Minimum Wage](#) (or the [National Living Wage](#) depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
- associated [employer National Insurance contributions](#)
- [minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions](#) (up to 3%)

Each placement also receives £1,500 funding towards PPE, uniform, equipment and training.

Participants had to be placed in employment by 31st March 2022 as the funding was only agreed until 30th September 2022.

- 11.2 As part of the scheme, Kickstart participants must be provided with support to improve their employment prospects to help them move into long-term sustained employment. This should include support with writing CV's/applications, interview preparation, careers advice and guidance.

Participants should also receive support to develop skills such as team work, organisation, communication, time management and training to develop skills to independently lead projects or as a team.

Grant funding may be used for these purposes or training and support can be delivered internally. Following discussions with the OD & Engagement Lead Specialist, the OD team designed a programme that matches the external provision that we have been supplied with plus we can currently offer a variety of e-learning on Learning Pool alongside the training sessions provided by OD.

- 11.3 Following a successful recruitment event hosted by the local Job Centre Plus in January 2022, 5 placements were offered to local unemployed people covering a range of roles. Three of the placements are within our Case Management teams learning office based skills, one is working within Grounds Maintenance as a Gardener and the final placement is learning skills as an Assistant Caretaker within our Housing Management service.

12. EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

- 12.1 In February 2021, Personnel Committee approved the introduction of the Employer Supported Volunteering Policy (see Report P/20/07 – click [here](#)) which allows staff up to 2 days paid leave per year to undertake individual (or potentially team based) volunteering activities which ideally should take place within our district.

12.2 Since introducing this policy, HR have processed 12 individual staff member requests and a team request. Several of the individuals have also submitted requests in both the 2021/22 year and already for 2022/23.

12.3 The volunteering activities have covered a number of initiatives including:

Wish Upon a Star

Conservation Day at the Romney Marsh Partnership (Romney Warren) x3

Conservation Day at Folkestone Warren (White Cliffs Countryside Partnership) x2

Conservation Day at Fort Burgoyne (White Cliffs Countryside Partnership)

Sandgate Primary School – using computers in the workplace

Sheltered Housing Scheme

Tree planting in Newchurch

Retained firefighter breathing apparatus training x2

Primary School Governor

Air Force Cadets – activity first aid qualification

We continue to publicise events such as Conservation Days through our regular engagement updates to staff and a further update will be provided to members at the next annual review.

13. PAYROLL

13.1 Following Cabinet approval in February 2014, Ashford Borough Council have provided our council payroll service and our election payroll. The delegation arrangement and service level agreement are reviewed annually by the Chief HR Officer and the Head of Personnel at Ashford.

13.2 The payroll service continues to run in a very efficient manner between the two councils. Performance is monitored on a monthly basis with any fall below 100% accuracy reported being investigated and appropriate actions taken.

East Kent Audit have carried out annual audit reviews of the payroll service and placed substantial assurance on the systems of internal controls in operation with no recommendations or actions, with one report stating that ‘the success...is reflected by there not being any payroll errors since the payroll went live in November 2014’. The most recent audit report from March 2021 confirms again that there was ‘no scope for improvement identified’.

14. PAY UPDATE

14.1 In December 2021 the pay negotiations were successfully concluded following meetings of the Joint Staff Consultative Panel and the subsequent staff ballot.

The pay award agreed was as follows:

2022/23

- Removal of Grade B Point 7 from the council pay scales. (Those staff who were held at Point 7 following the removal of Grade A in April 2020 will be held on Point 8 in

- future as a spot salary subject only to pay awards but not increments). This is to ensure compliance with the National Living Wage in the forthcoming years.
- £500 to be added to the salary points 8 - 10 within Grade B (which is equivalent to 2.6%).
 - 2.0% pay award to all salary points within FHDC's Grades C to L and the old EKH Grades D to N.
 - Increase in annual leave for those staff in Grades A to J who are currently on 24 days per year, to 25 days per year

2023/24

- £500 added to the salary points within Grade B (which is equivalent to 2.5%).
- 2.0% pay award to all salary points within FHDC's Grades C to L and the old EKH Grades D to N.

No pay award has been negotiated for Directors or the Chief Executive since June 2019.

- 14.2 As it currently stands, we would expect Unison to request to open pay negotiations for 2024/25 towards the end of 2023 or early in 2024.

Work is expected to commence within the HR team in early 2023 to start modelling any National Living Wage forecasts from the Office of Budget Responsibility. With the National Living Wage rising to £9.50 per hour in April 2022 and forecast to reach £9.97 in April 2023 and £10.33 in April 2024³ it is clear that we may need to review our current grading structure or identify ways to enable the National Living Wage to be complied with at the lower end of the pay scales in future years.

- 14.3 Whilst we are on local terms and conditions, we do still pay close attention to the national picture for local government and as such we are attending the South East Employers regional pay briefings (with the next scheduled for 21st June 2022) where the Local Government Association provide updates on the national negotiations. Nationally, authorities on national terms and conditions are facing issues more rapidly than F&HDC in relation to the National Living Wage and its impact on the lower points of the pay scales and therefore we are gaining early insight into ways in which we could approach 2024 and beyond.

15. HR SERVICES IN 2022/23

- 15.1 In line with the People Strategy, as well as continuing much of the work already highlighted throughout this report, some of the work already identified for the team during the 2022/23 year includes:

- Further development of the behavioural framework, particularly in relation to recruitment activities;
- Continued support to the project covering the future relocation of the Civic Centre leading on the changes that will directly affect our people;
- Reviewing and maximising the use of the technology that exists to further enhance the ways in which we can best continue supporting the council's objectives;

³ <https://obr.uk/faq/where-can-i-find-your-latest-forecasts/>

- Supporting the continued development of the case management approach, not only in terms of HR resilience and efficient but also to ensure there is greater resilience and flexibility in how we deploy our people; and
- Preparation towards the induction and training programme for members elected in May 2023.

16. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS / POLICY MATTERS

16.1 Legal Officers Comments (AK)

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

16.2 Finance Officers Comments (CS)

There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

16.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (ASm)

There are no specific Diversities and Equalities Implications arising from this report.

17. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Andrina Smith – Chief HR Officer
 Tel: 01303 853405
 Email: andrina.smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

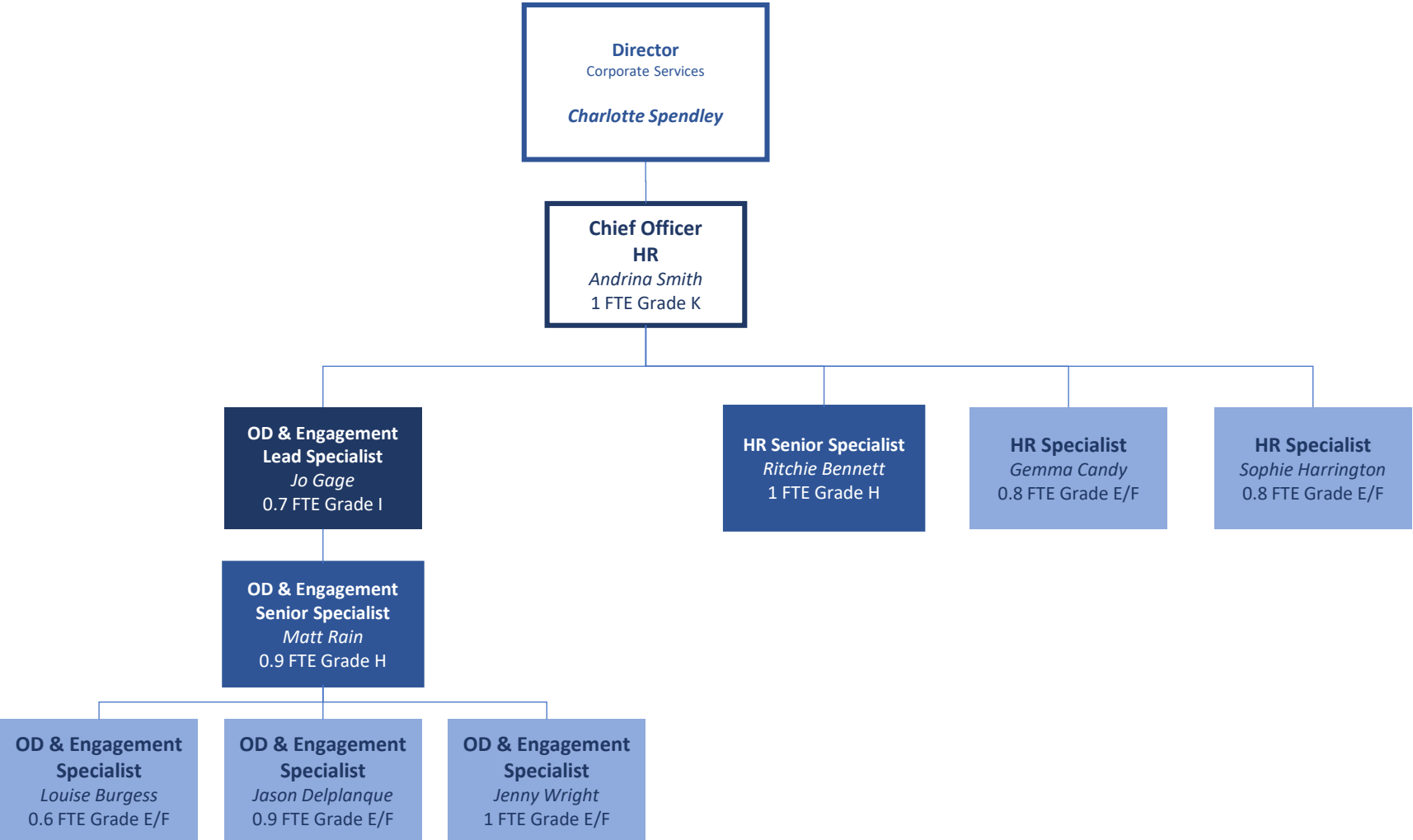
None

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – HR & OD Team Structure Chart
 Appendix B – People Strategy 2021
 Appendix C – Agile Working Framework

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Appendix A – HR & OD Structure Chart



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PEOPLE STRATEGY

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

2021 – 2024



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STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2030 'Creating Tomorrow Together' sets out the main strategic priorities over the coming years. There are four service ambitions within the plan underpinned by six guiding principles.



TRANSFORMATION

The council has undergone a two year transformation programme to March 2021 and is now entering into continuous improvement to further embed the steps already taken to develop a council that is efficient and fit to serve its community and meet the aspirations of residents in the context of reduced resources.

Our operating model was established to improve service delivery, resilience and efficiency based on 12 design principles developed by staff and endorsed by Cabinet.



PEOPLE PERSPECTIVE

Expectations continue to change (both in terms of our expectations of our people and their expectations of us) and as a result our focus remains on the behavioural competencies which has led to a framework based around our core values:

One Team

- Engaging Communication
- Working Together

Customer First

- Understanding Others
- Integrity & Ownership

Thinking Ahead

- Reasoned Thinking
- Always Improving

Performance Counts

- Making Time Count
- Constantly Building Skills
- Positive Mindset



Our leaders and managers role model and live these behaviours, inspiring and energising the council providing clear direction, purpose and support. Our style will be open and honest utilising coaching skills to give and receive valued feedback.

We want our people to feel supported, appreciated and valued beyond the transformation programme and stimulated by the opportunities that continuous improvement will bring. Our people are treated with respect and integrity and will be encouraged to maximise development opportunities that arise from the changes.

Ultimately, we continue to expect a shift in our culture, whereby working and thinking flexibly are our norm with people who are willing to learn new skills, able to contribute ideas, be innovative and influence decisions. We have become an organisation of technologically-enabled employees who welcome customer insight and use a test and learn approach to devise lean processes and approaches to our work.

OUR APPROACH

The people strategy has been created to support the Council's corporate plan and to enable us to achieve and support the ethos of continuous improvement. We will continue to deliver excellent HR and OD services through our business partnering approach, whilst exploring opportunities that will further enhance the service to recognise the changing workplace. We will do this in a number of ways:

- Our approach will build a workforce that is fit for the future
- Our council will become one of the best places to work in the area and be recognised as one of the best not for profit organisations to work for in the UK
- Our behaviours-led culture will generate, encourage and reward flexibility and innovation
- Our culture of flexibility and innovation will develop with people who feel supported and who have the confidence to challenge why we do things and the ability to implement digital (and other appropriate) solutions to make us more efficient
- Our People Strategy will be delivered by the Human Resources & Organisational Development team in partnership with our leaders, managers and people

Our People Strategy will be set out within six main themes that are underpinned by our culture. A separate detailed implementation plan is being developed which will set out clear actions, timescales and measures of success.

Our people strategy is set out across 6 main themes that are underpinned by our culture. In recent years, we have embraced agile working with many staff already equipped to work away from the office, however during 2020 this took on a whole new meaning as the lockdown requirements following the Covid-19 pandemic meant a swift shift from many staff still travelling to the office every day to a culture that is very much focussed on staff working remotely from home and out in the district.

With the agreement in principle by Cabinet in January 2021 to consider relocating the civic offices by 2023/2024 it is essential that we continue to build a culture that embraces a more agile smarter style of working developing more flexibility around when and where staff work.

There are a number of benefits in developing an agile working environment including: improved productivity, improved work/life balance and increased staff motivation, greater resilience, lesser impact on the environment and reduced absence levels. We are also mindful of employee wellbeing and will create opportunities for face-to-face contact to support good mental health, strong relationships and creativity.

It is important to recognise that all the themes are interlinked and they should not be viewed in isolation.

PEOPLE STRATEGY THEMES



Culture

The six people strategy themes are all influenced by the changing culture of our council. Our aim is to create a continuous improvement culture which supports our employees to continuously reflect on practice, identify what went well, what improvements need to be made and take action in order to work smarter and strive to be the best.

Throughout our people strategy we will actively support this cultural shift by ensuring we:

- promote a culture of accountability and collaborative team working by developing and supporting cross-organisational project teams
- actively engage and empower staff to act within a collaborative culture which encourages innovation and creativity
- review our core values to ensure they still fit with our new ways of working
- help our people to understand our values and behaviours and the expectations and responsibilities contained within them
- promote a test and learn, agile, iterative culture where staff are encouraged to learn from their mistakes, be adaptable and to learn new skills
- encourage an environment of mutual trust, transparent decision making underpinned by values-led leadership
- build on our constructive employee relations climate with trade unions and staff representatives within a clear and progressive policy framework
- review our internal policies and procedures to remove any unnecessary bureaucracy and encourage flexible / agile working practices for our service areas, providing managers with the discretion they need to manage their people with minimal intervention from HR
- Explore opportunities to develop an HR system to support smarter working

Smarter Agile & Flexible Working

Ensuring that within the rapidly changing world of work we are identifying and implementing the most appropriate organisational structures and working practices to meet demands.

Where are we now?

The council has shifted away from a traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical structure which led to service area silos to a flatter, more empowered operating model, incorporating flexibility wherever possible. All of our office-based staff are able to work effectively and flexibly from home.

What will we do in the future?

- Develop a modern and agile workforce with diverse and digital-focussed skill sets
- Play a key role in the development of plans for a new Customer Access Point and relocation of civic offices, leading on the changes that will directly affect our people (year 1)
- Empower employees to make appropriate decisions and deliver excellent services, using better technology to increase flexibility and efficiency
- Identify and implement posts that can be primarily agile or homeworking (using this USP to attract a wider pool of talent) (year 1)
- Promote flexible working across the wider workforce (year 1)
- Develop a new agile / smarter working policy to promote flexibility in when and where staff work in the future (year 1)
- Review our policies and procedures to make sure they recognise the need for agile / smarter working practices with appropriate document management controls (years 1-2)
- Encourage our management team to role model our operating model and smarter working arrangements, challenging behaviours that are not in line with our values

- Develop structures, policies and a culture that supports the council's Carbon Action Plan and greater efficiencies through reducing commuting and work related travel (longer term)
- Develop flexible career pathways and support development programmes & opportunities to support our people develop their careers with us
- Design jobs to reflect the benefits and impact of our digital investment and that enable people to apply their skills, knowledge and behaviours to the best effect
- Continue to develop flexible, generic job descriptions supported by role families (years 1-2)
- Support the further development of our technology with training & development programmes that enable and encourage working in a flatter hierarchy
- Create greater resilience through developing flexibility into how we deploy our people (years 1-2)



Employee Engagement & Wellbeing

Engaging our people is key to enabling effective two-way communications and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff

Where are we now?

In 2019, our employer net promoter score shifted from -36 (in 2018) to -8 (a vast improvement given that most organisations are pleased with a score of 0). We have further built on rising engagement levels by undertaking a Best Companies Pulse survey (in 2020) and developing and implementing an improvement plan in response to survey results. The Pulse Survey indicated that, as a council, we had ‘very good’ engagement levels, with some areas that scored ‘outstanding’ and a handful of teams with ‘world-class’ levels of engagement. In March 2021 we undertook the full Best Companies Survey and were advised in May 2021 that we had been awarded ‘2 stars’ for outstanding employee engagement and had been placed 4th on the Not for Profit Best Companies in the UK and 57th on the Best Companies to work for in the South East. By looking at the research-based 8 factors of employee engagement that Best Companies use we are able to use our 2021 survey results to design and deliver highly targeted interventions to continue to improve employee engagement and all the benefits that brings – better customer service, lower sickness absence, happier employees and greater innovation.

In addition, the staff recognition scheme continues to be supported and reflects our behaviours plus our reward scheme, F&H Rewards, continues to be developed. We know from our survey results that our staff are proud to work here, feel supported and recognised and feel able to speak up.

We have a range of Health and Wellbeing initiatives for our people, ranging from traditional but important benefits such as an Employee Assistance Programme as well as developing more innovative and pro-active “virtual kitchens” and forums. Our management development programme has wellbeing as a constant theme and our flexible working culture has supported the work / life balance of our people.

What will we do in the future?

- Build on the outcomes from the Times Top 100 Best Companies (Not for Profit) survey (years 1-2)
- Review and develop internal and external services available to staff to support their mental health and wellbeing (year 1)
- Work towards the government backed Mental Health At Work Commitment standards (longer term)
- Explore the opportunity to become a 'mindful employer' (longer term)
- Introduce an internal mental health first aid support network (years 1-2)
- Include mental health awareness as part of the corporate training programme (<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>) (years 1—2)
- Support employees' financial health through the provision of appropriate advice and benefits on our rewards platform (years 1-2)
- Continue to review and develop the staff benefits package in order to provide attractive features that help people feel valued
- Develop a scheme to allow employees to purchase additional annual leave (longer term)
- Promote coaching as a means to contribute to wellbeing in supporting people to achieve work/life balance, address loss of confidence and adjust to changing circumstances
- Refresh our approach to corporate and team inductions to welcome new employees including induction videos available before starting employment, accessible induction booklets and a new starter forum (year 1)
- Explore the opportunities within iTrent to further enhance our onboarding processes (years 1-2)
- Reiterate our commitment to developing strong working relationships with our recognised trade unions by signing new facilities agreements (years 1-2)
- Monitor the effectiveness of our volunteering policy and identify opportunities for volunteering that can be promoted across the council (years 1-2)
- Build on our flexible working culture to create greater options and opportunities for enhance work / life balance for our people
- Support managers to continue making FHDC a fun place to work where innovation is encouraged and collaboration with others becomes the norm

- Promote a healthy workplace and support our people to achieve a work-life balance that takes account of individual circumstances and life choices
- Recognise and value engagement and celebrate successes & achievements wherever found
- Ensure meaningful effective communications and more direct engagement with our staff on matters that affect them
- Continue to work in partnership with our trade unions and staff representatives to develop and evolve our approaches to staff engagement
- Continue to develop our reward and recognition offer for our people and teams to recognise exemplary behaviours
- Enable more social events to encourage & facilitate a vibrant culture
- Maintain open and honest dialogue with staff, seeking views, ideas and commentary and keeping them informed via a range of engagement surveys and pulse checks using the most appropriate channels

Recruitment and retention

Attracting, recruiting and retaining the best people is key to the future of the council and we will therefore develop creative approaches to attracting and retaining talented and capable people across all of our service areas.

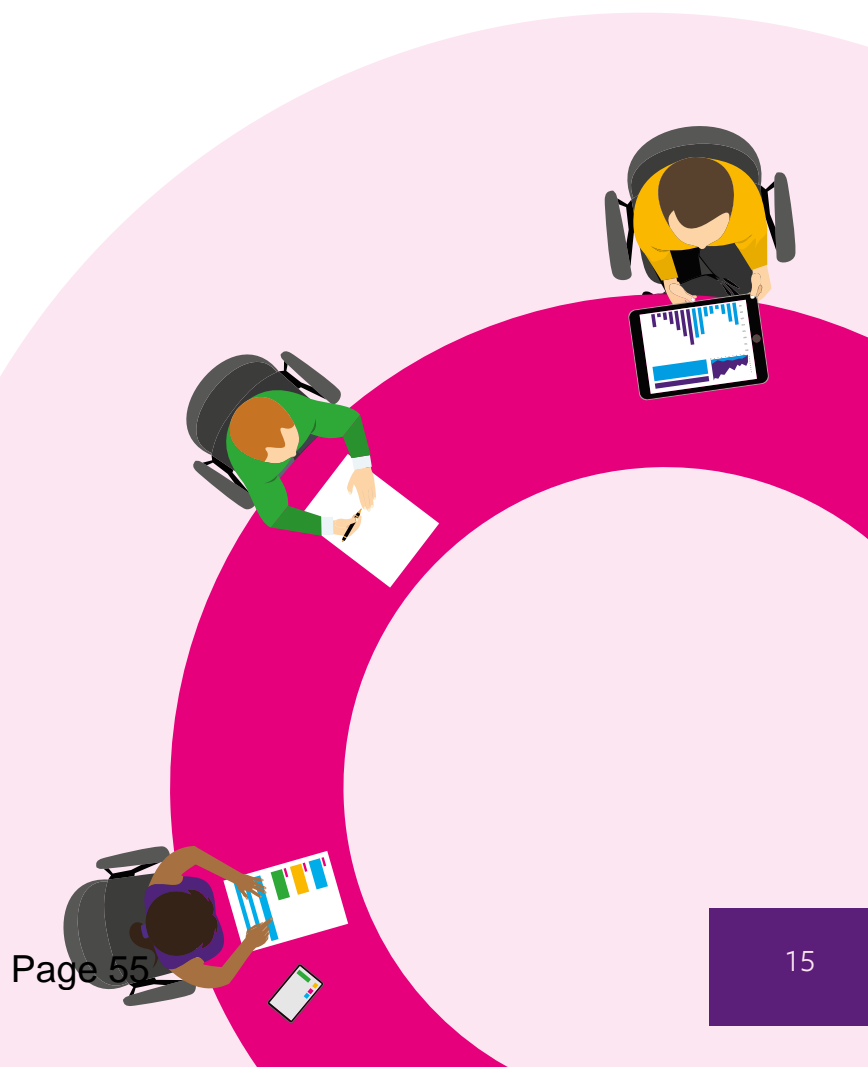
Where are we now?

The council has previously used traditional recruitment and selection approaches with an ad hoc approach to using social media and a lack of engaging internet presence to attract applicants. Since the pandemic however we have moved to virtual interviewing in the vast majority of instances and in addition moved to a more competency based approach to interviews which will further develop over time. In recent years we have encouraged internal secondments above external recruitment which has led to a relatively low level of turnover (8.54% voluntary turnover in 2019/20).

What will we do in the future?

- Review and update the recruitment and selection processes to reflect a modern flexible organisation, enabling the selection and retention of talented people with the right attitudes and skills that align with our digital strategy and customer strategy ambitions (year 1)
- Build our employer brand to reflect the organisation we are aiming to become
- Develop a range of selection and development methods which link to our values and behaviours as well as assessing knowledge, skills and experience (years 1-2)
- Continue to simplify transactional processes within the recruitment and selection activities (year 1)

- Establish effective and impactful on-boarding processes to welcome new employees that reflect our modern way of working (years 1-2)
- Consider opportunities to promote council careers in local schools, colleges and universities
- Review our strategic approach to apprenticeships and explore opportunities for ‘career trials’ where young people can undertake rotational posts across a number of teams (longer term)
- Continue to investigate and develop digital and remote recruitment and selection methods (years 1-2)
- Design innovative ways to recruit traditionally ‘hard to fill’ roles in conjunction with area specialists, including identifying development pathways
- Create flexibility within our pay and reward mechanisms to become more attractive and competitive in our recruitment
- Develop the capability of our recruiting managers (year 1)
- Develop clear succession plans for professional and strategic progression (year 1)
- Continue to develop and promote our approaches to agile smarter working
- Identify secondments as potential development opportunities, both inside and outside of the council, to aid retention of our people



Learning and development

The core strength of the council is in our people and therefore training, developing and supporting our people is absolutely crucial.

Where are we now?

There is currently a comprehensive offer to all our people via e-learning, technical and soft skills sessions, targeted management development with formal ILM and City & Guilds qualifications plus managers and aspiring managers studying the ILM L3 Diploma for Managers.

What will we do in the future?

- Recognise the changing skill requirements and develop people to meet the changing needs of our authority
- Ensure our people are best placed to take advantage of the career progression opportunities that arise
- Support employees with a development programme that reflects the behavioural framework and supports the corporate plan priorities (years 1-2)
- Investigate a 360-degree assessment process / system to support individual development (years 1-2)
- 360-degree assessments to be undertaken by all managers (longer term)
- Increase the number of e-learning and remote learning opportunities whilst retaining a balance of face to face learning opportunities once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted (years 1-2)
- Help and support staff to understand the choices they can make to reduce carbon usage and use more sustainable options in order to support the council's Carbon Action Plan by providing appropriate training (longer term)
- Encourage our leaders to attend action learning sets to support their coaching and problem-solving skills, as well as create peer support networks.

- Develop career pathways to enable long-term development, progression and succession planning
- Review, evaluate and refresh our approach to leadership and management programmes ensuring they reflect our values and behaviours
- Develop the management capabilities of our leaders and managers
- Develop a pool of coaches and mentors to nurture talent and support performance (years 1-2)
- Support the sharing of knowledge and ideas through cross-functional teams (years 1-2)
- Ensure that our people have access to training that enables them to meet the expected standards in their roles by identifying learning needs gaps (years 1-2)
- Continue to introduce and embed the behavioural framework (years 1-2)
- Explore and implement options that align with the apprenticeship levy which will enable us to sponsor people through formal qualifications
- Identify suitable entry points and develop our approach to apprentices and trainees to ensure that we identify and develop talent at an early stage, maximising the use of the apprenticeship levy
- Provide our people with appropriate learning and development opportunities encompassing commercial awareness, innovation, digital awareness, procurement, commissioning of services and partnership working
- Produce an annual learning and development offer that outlines the opportunities available to our people to support them in the personal and professional development
- Produce an annual training plan that reflects our corporate priorities
- Review the central and departmental training budgets to ensure appropriate budget allocation
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities for our elected members and identify opportunities for co-training with officers which reflect the service ambitions and guiding principles of our Corporate Plan (longer term)

Performance

With an ambitious corporate plan and its associated priorities, ensuring our people are driven to perform to the best of their abilities will be key to our organisational success with high performing teams.

Where are we now?

We have had a traditional approach to appraisals which are not valued by some managers and their teams; in addition, the culture of feedback varies between service areas. Some service areas are naturally very target and metric led which provides clear information relating to performance. Over the last 18 months the focus shifted towards behavioural assessments to support our transformation programme and now looking forwards the intention is to provide managers with the skills to bring appraisals and behavioural reviews together into 1-2-1 discussions and annual performance reviews which will focus on outputs.

What will we do in the future?

- Ensure performance management including the competency framework is embedded throughout the council (years 1-2)
- Build capability for manager confidence and competence in developing staff and managing performance in line with our behavioural framework and the need for an agile and technologically-minded workforce (years 1-2)
- Continue to develop the behavioural framework based on agile / smarter working and the council's values (years 1-2)
- Develop our performance management culture, process and systems that meets the needs of a modern, flexible and agile workforce and promotes regular high performance in line with our values and behavioural framework by encouraging regular developmental and performance conversations focussed on outcomes

- Drive a high performance team culture in which individual development and career aspirations are supported and aligned to our behaviours
- Ensure that our approach to appraisal, reward, recognition and promotion is fair, transparent, accessible and understood by all
- Develop a contemporary performance management framework, integrating our behaviours, which recognises high performers and also provides challenge and support

Reward and recognition

Attracting, recruiting and retaining the best people is key to the future of the council and in order to both recruit and retain we must therefore ensure that we have the mechanisms in place to recognise and reward our people appropriately

Where are we now?

Incremental progression through the pay grade is automatic with sporadic use of honorarium, acting up payments and market supplements. Many roles have not been formally evaluated for a number of years. The recognition scheme has forged a clear link to the corporate values. However there is a perception that our annual leave and some salaries are not competitive enough to match private sector companies or other local authorities

What will we do in the future?

- Develop a new pay and reward document that centralises all relevant information in one easily accessible place (year 1)
- Align our pay and reward offer, promoting it to current staff and ensuring it is a key part of our approach to recruitment and retention (year 1)
- Develop a strategic approach to succession planning in order to identify and develop our leaders of the future (years 1-2)
- Clear development pathways identified for staff with the capability to move into a people management role for the first time (years 1-2)
- Embed our approach to recognition, including the new Employee of the Year Award (years 1-2)
- Ensure our remuneration strategies recognise performance and rewards positive behaviours
- Develop our approach to reward and recognition to ensure that it is flexible and fair but supports the council's strategic aims whilst rewarding the highest performers

- Align our recognition scheme with the behaviours in order to recognise our people who demonstrate exemplary behaviours and values in their work (years 1-2)
- Continually review and enhance the range of flexible benefits available to our people
- Enhance our approach to job evaluation system with detailed local conventions (year 1)



REVIEW OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

The People Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Chief HR Officer in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Services and the Chief Executive. Progress against agreed actions will also be reviewed quarterly at meetings of the Continuous Improvement Board.



Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Agile Working Framework

'work is something we do, not somewhere we go'

1 Introduction

1.1 The council continues to recognise the need to develop and encourage modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the business, whilst maintaining high levels of customer service and a good work life balance.

1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic saw an unplanned overnight change for office based staff from being office-based with regular periods of working from home to becoming home-based agile workers. The last 12 months have clearly demonstrated the benefits of agile working in balancing work and home life whilst continuing to deliver high quality services to our residents.

The continued expectations set out in this document for agile working support the principles contained in the Corporate Plan 2021-2030 to continually adapt and improve whilst providing high quality service. In addition, linking with our Carbon Action Plan, over the last 12 months we have also identified a clear reduction in our carbon footprint and emissions, primarily due to the immediate change from many officers travelling to the office most days of the week to there being no daily commute which in turn has also led to a reduction in the costs associated with running a large office.

1.3 During the pandemic whilst the civic offices were closed we have continued to listen and engage with staff and based on a significant volume of feedback there is a considerable evidence base to further support the advantages that come from agile working making it a permanent feature in the way in which we operate.

2 Scope

2.1 This framework applies to all office based employees at any level within Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The nature and extent of agile working will vary according to the job role demands and as flexibility is at its core, it is difficult to apply a rigid set of rules around it.

2.2 The framework supports the sharing of office facilities and therefore no employee will have an office or workstation for their exclusive use. The office space available will prioritise the following uses:

- Meeting customers and partners with scheduled appointments;
- 1-2-1s and team meetings;
- Collaboration space;
- Training space; and
- To support an individual's wellbeing.

A booking system will be in place to assist managers reserve available space.

2.3 The ability to work in an agile manner is dependent on the following:

- The requirements and suitability of the role
- The service(s) being delivered
- The welfare of the employee

3. Definitions

3.1 Agile Working:

Agile working is the term used to describe how the council is empowering its employees to work flexibly from any location, whether it be a council building, within the community and partner / client sites or by varying degrees of home working and hot-desking.

Agile working isn't about home working, it's about being where you need to be to do your job most efficiently and effectively.

Agile working provides staff with more options with regards to where, when and how they undertake their roles by introducing an element of choice and allows staff to influence how they carry out their role by promoting varying levels of flexibility within the workplace. It is based on the concept that working is something we do rather than somewhere we go to.

Agile working is a flexible arrangement and therefore does not require a formal change to terms and conditions. It can be used in a number of ways – as a short term fix for a specific situation, a medium term arrangement for example during school summer holidays, or as a long term work-based methodology where teams always work on an agile basis.

3.2 Flexible Working:

Flexible working has been around for a long time and is now most commonly used in the context of working arrangements between employee and employer following a formal request to work flexibly as allowed by employment legislation. This requires a formal, more permanent change to working hours and would lead to a change in contract, for example an employee can formally request to reduce from full time working hours to 30 hours per week to enable caring responsibilities.

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working, not just parents and carers, as long as they have worked for the council for at least 26 weeks. A separate procedure applies to any requests for flexible working.

3.3 Hybrid Meetings:

Hybrid meetings describe meetings whereby some participants may be in one location (for example, a room at the civic centre) and others choose to join using technology from other locations.

The council is keen to promote this style of meeting rather than unnecessarily encouraging presence in the office.

4. Principles of Agile Working

- 4.1 Agile working is about taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to modernising working practices and is based on the following principles:
- Work takes place at the most effective location and at the most effective time
 - Managing performance focuses on customer service and results rather than presence
 - Flexibility becomes the norm rather than the exception
 - Employees have more choice about where and when they work, subject to business considerations
 - Space is allocated to activities, not to individuals and not on the basis of seniority
 - There is effective and appropriate use of technology
 - Employees have the opportunity to lead balanced and healthy lives
 - Business continuity can be maintained during severe weather conditions or travel disruption
 - Work has less impact on the environment
 - We trust everyone to do a great job
- 4.2 Working arrangements should always be agreed between the manager and employee to ensure that the arrangements are beneficial to the customer, the council and the employee. However, managers are encouraged to enable staff to maximise agile working opportunities.

To mitigate against unintended legal consequences for the council regarding work locations, the expectation is that our workforce will reside in the UK. Where alternative arrangements are sought, they will be considered by the manager and HR on an individual basis.

4.3 Manager's Responsibilities

- Ensuring that they comply with this framework and apply it effectively, fairly and consistently within their areas of responsibility;
- Ensuring that all employees are made aware of this framework and their responsibilities in relation to them;
- Ensuring that they discharge their duties in relation to health & safety for any employees who they are responsible for, including health & safety assessments, providing required equipment and acting on any areas of concern;
- Having joint responsibility with employees to come to an agreement on working in an agile way;

Appendix C

- Being flexible, open and constructive in relation to discussions and agreements about agile working whilst remaining focussed on the needs of the service;
- Agreeing appropriate contact arrangements for employees ensuring that they meet on a monthly 1-2-1 basis and hold team meetings regularly;
- Ensuring that defined performance objectives are set, focussing on customer service and results, and reviewed in line with performance management processes;
- Fostering a culture of trust in employees to carry out their jobs whilst working in an agile way.

4.4 Employee's Responsibilities

- Working within this framework in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate way;
- Having joint responsibility with managers to come to an agreement on working in an agile way that remains focussed on the needs of the service;
- Having a responsibility to comply with health & safety requirements and participate in / undertake appropriate risk assessments, carry out necessary actions to minimise risk and maintain a safe working environment reporting any hazards to their line manager and including reporting any defects that arise in the equipment provided;
- Ensuring that they can be contacted during their working hours by colleagues and customers (where appropriate) and ensuring that electronic diaries are up to date clearly showing their availability;
- Ensuring workspaces / offices are left in a clean and tidy condition after use;
- Actively engaging in personal development plans, review meetings and 1-2-1s as well as team meetings.

5. **Expenses and Personal Costs**

5.1 Printing is actively discouraged, but if there is a need to print anything it is expected that employees will generally use council facilities to minimise personal costs. This is particularly relevant for bulk printing or postage as this should be completed using the central print function at the council.

5.2 Employees working from their home will need to use their own broadband facilities and will not be reimbursed for doing so. It works on the same principle as getting to an office base – it's the individuals' expense. The same applies to increased energy costs arising from home working.

It is possible to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you are working from home on a regular basis. Please visit www.gov.uk for further information or click on this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>

6. **Office Base**

- 6.1 Very few posts will ever be designated as 'home based' and it is expected that it will only apply where the employee never needs to visit an office base or go into the community to work. The vast majority of employees will be given an office base to meet with colleagues and this base should be used for any travel claims.
- 6.2 It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit it in order to achieve the environmental benefits of agile working and hybrid meetings. Video conferencing is to be used in preference to travelling to meetings where feasible and appropriate considering the needs of the business.

7. Workspace and Equipment

- 7.1 Employees will be provided with the relevant equipment to enable them to carry out their job effectively.
- 7.2 Employees who have been provided with specialist equipment in the office as a result of workplace assessments, e.g. footrests, specialist chairs, keyboards etc. will not be provided with further such equipment to enable them to work from home. The equipment should be located where the employee will be spending the majority of their working time.
- 7.3 It is important that we respect the agile workspace and have regard for colleagues who could be sitting at the same space either later the same day or the next day. A 'clear desk' should be maintained and all employees should ensure that the workspace or office is left in a clean condition and that items moved or adjusted are returned to their original position.

8. Communication and Contact

- 8.1 All employees are provided with laptops with access to Skype so there is no reason why working remotely should be any different to working in the office. Agile working still means employees must be contactable in exactly the same way as if they were in the office.
- 8.2 Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between employees, line managers and colleagues. Regular formal and informal contact needs to be considered, however these do not need to be face to face. It is essential for regular team meetings to be held in order to develop and maintain relationships however the whole team does not necessarily have to be in the same location.
- 8.3 Electronic diaries are to be used fully at all times and they should be open for colleagues to view. Employees should ensure that all their contact details are up to date, including the publication of mobile phone numbers. This will help to ensure that employees are contactable during their working hours and also helps the council to ensure the health and safety of its workforce.

Appendix C

Document Control			
Date effective from	July 2021	Owner	Chief HR Officer
Approval Date	June 2021	Approval By	Continuous Improvement Board
Review Date	Next review to take place in July 2022 and then every three years (or earlier where there is a change in the applicable law or business requirement)		

Version Control			
Version	Type of Change	Date	Revisions from previous issues
1.0	New Framework	April 2021	First version of a new framework
1.1	Amended sections	May 2021	Second version of the draft framework
2.0	Minor amendments	July 2021	Approved version for publication
		December 2021	No updates following first review

This Report will be made
public on 8 June 2022

Report Number **P/22/02**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 16 June 2022
Status: Non-executive Decision
Head of Paid Service: Dr Susan Priest

SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE PAID SERVICE

SUMMARY: This report is from the Chief Executive in relation to the adequacy of resources across the Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Personnel Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report P/22/02.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Head of the Paid Service of the council is appointed under s3 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 1.2 The council has a duty under that act to provide the Head of the Paid Service “with such staff, accommodation and other resources as are, in his opinion, sufficient to allow his duties...to be performed” (s4(1)(b) of the Act).
- 1.3 It is therefore appropriate to formally report to the Council, via the Personnel Committee, on the adequacy of staff resources that the Council has provided in order to give assurances that they are sufficient to discharge the Head of Paid Service duties.

2. THE RESOURCES OF THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 Beyond the immediate day-to-day demands for high quality council services, the focus of resource has been placed on delivering key aspects of the Corporate Plan (Reports C/20/77 and A/20/10). Council helpfully made available additional resource during the year to accelerate matters (Reports C/21/32 and A/21/16). Elements of particular note since the last HoPS report include:
 - i. COVID-19 recovery - agile and innovative ways of serving our customers remains a priority and working relationships with key stakeholders (such as the NHS, DWP, KCC and our volunteers / partners of the Community Hubs), has deepened. This has placed us in a strong position as we responded swiftly to the recent demands in providing assistance to those fleeing Ukraine being hosted in the district. Additional resource has been made available to co-ordinate the council’s response to refugee settlement and to work alongside other partners to support those arriving and those residents hosting. Expectations are that these demands will continue to rise and the nature of support needed will change through the months ahead.
 - ii. Supporting residents – there has been growing evidence of increasing cost of living pressures and additional resource has been made available to respond on various welfare matters. Of particular note, and at the time of writing, over 26,000 households have received an energy rebate amounting to some £4m and this has drawn on resources across various council teams: customer service, corporate case management, revs and bens, comms and IT. Some of these activities were not planned and represented additional new activity pressures during the year. Cost of living pressures are expected to continue, potentially deepening further still, and new / additional interventions are being considered through, for example, the deployment of the council’s allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. While members have yet to formally consider such matters, expectations are there will be growing demands on the council’s resources, particularly those advising of benefits available and supporting the welfare of residents.
 - iii. Climate change agenda – additional council resources have been assigned and also secured from external sources to progress the council’s Carbon

Action Plan (Report C/20/76). A series of targeted projects are now underway and the level of general awareness and understanding of the subject matter and challenges ahead deepens within the council. Further significant pieces of work this year, e.g. the District-wide Carbon Plan (Report C/21/94), will provide a framework that captures, encourages and supports various actions across the district.

- iv. Delivering regeneration, housing and place-making projects – resource has been made available during the year to progress projects such as: Otterpool Park; Princes Parade; Folkestone Town Centre; Ship Street; Mountfield Road; and the HRA new build programme. Where possible external funding has been sought to bolster council resource and expertise.

3. THE FORWARD LOOK

3.1 The culture of the organisation generally remains positive and great efforts are made by the senior team to create a supportive environment. The three days of annual leave gifted to staff between Christmas and New Year in recognition of exceptional performance, as acknowledged in the Best Companies survey, was extremely well received and gave opportunity for staff to rest and recuperate. Staff surveys have continued throughout the year providing useful and rich intelligence on morale and associated staffing matters. As per the Chief HR Officer's report considered by committee, interventions are planned to ensure attention is given to this, for example, the staff summer social returns this year providing a much needed opportunity after two absent years for all teams to socialise. In addition, teams are returning to work periodically from the civic centre to ensure cross team and within team relationships remain strong.

3.2 There are however strains on certain teams and posts, which are a cause for concern, and these will be supported by the senior team. For example:

- a. There has been an increasing number of occasions when the council's unreasonably persistent complaining behaviour policy has been considered or applied and this represents a worrying trend. The impact of persistent questioning and complaining can be damaging, stressful for those dealing with the matters, and contributes to the fragility of certain teams within the council. There is a relentless expectation that access to information should be provided and a balance needs to be struck that addresses the transparency priority of the corporate plan while allowing council staff resources to progress matters efficiently.
- b. The demand for information on operational matters from elected members, as reported last year as an increasing trend, continues to remain high. This in turn is putting additional pressures on staff and advice will continue to be given so that the respective and significantly different roles of members and staff are understood; strategic and policy matters are where Members add value with operational delivery arising from those decisions the responsibility of officers. Relevant parts of the constitution (Parts 6, 8 and 9) are particularly pertinent and members' support is sought so that the Chief

Executive can ensure that responsibilities continue to be discharged effectively and efficiently in a supportive culture of mutual respect.

- c. There remain pockets of skill shortages as the labour market is tight and a number of vacant budgeted posts unfortunately remain unfilled. Targeted recruitment activities are taking place seeking to fill these gaps along with incentives to attract and retain talent, particularly those deemed to be at high risk of flight in teams carrying vacancies, with those under exceptional scrutiny, and those teams with high volume of work pressures.
- d. With an aging workforce in some teams, coupled with recruitment difficulties in those teams, succession management remains a focus of attention and this year will see additional trainee opportunities to 'grow our own' as per the Chief HR Officer's report which gives more detail. Strong relationships have been developed with local schools and a variety of activities are taking place to highlight opportunities and to encourage local school-leavers to join the council. At the current time three new entry opportunities have been created in IT, Finance and Building Control. The council's OD team, as an accredited apprenticeship training provider, is well placed to deliver these and other programmes.
- e. The volume of customer contact via telephone remains high and more remains to be done on channel shift to IT enabled self-serve allowing the council's telephone capacity to focus on those most in need of this method of contact and support.
- f. Demands remain high on the development management team to progress not only the volume of planning applications, but also to address the significance of planning applications such as Otterpool Park – most probably the largest single application to a district council in Kent for some considerable time. There is a shortage of planning capacity across the public sector but additional dedicated resource will need to be found to support this project, largely funded by the Garden Towns capacity monies received from DLUCH.
- g. The potential implications of announcements within the Queen's Speech and those Bills included in the legislative timetable for the coming year have yet to be fully appraised. Four significant Bills are: the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill; the Non-Domestic Rating Bill; the Social Housing Regulations Bill; and the Renters Reform Bill and these will contain much substance to be alive to. In addition other important Bills include: the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill; the Energy Security Bill; the Procurement Bill; and the Protect Duty Bill. These come on top of the implications arising from the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Environment Act 2021. The full extent of the implications on the council's policies, processes, systems and resource base is not yet fully understood.
- h. Finally, preparations for the local elections in May 2023 give rise to new demands and requirements on the Returning Officer and Elections team arising from the Elections Act 2022. New systems and processes will be worked through, planned and resourced this year.

- 3.3 In summary while there is a challenging agenda and a number of unknowns remain, such as understanding the full impacts of high inflation on our population and across our activities, the council's resource base is deemed adequate at this time. The senior team is alive to this assessment and will pursue external resourcing opportunities relevant in delivering the Corporate Plan to ensure that unnecessary cost pressures on the General Fund and HRA are avoided and that available resource is used most efficiently and effectively.

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (AK)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report.

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CS)

There are no direct financial implications and the resourcing pressures outlined within the paper are a matter of separate decisions to be taken where relevant by other committees of the council.

4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (ASm)

There are no specific Diversities and Equalities Implications arising from this report.

5. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer
Tel: 01303 853405
Email: andrina.smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

- Corporate Plan - Creating Tomorrow Together 2021-2030
Cabinet 24 February 2021 - C/20/77
Council 24 February 2021 – A/20/10
- Accelerating delivery of the council's Corporate Plan - use of Reserves
Cabinet 22 Sept 2021 – C/21/32
Council 29 Sept 2021 – A/21/16
- Carbon Action Plan and Carbon Footprint Study
Cabinet 24 February 2021 – C/20/76.

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