

Report of Director, Environments & Housing

Report to Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services)

Date: 20 January 2014

Subject: People Plan indicators – Waste, Environmental Action, and Parks and Countryside Services

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Introduction

The People Plan reporting has been streamlined over the last 12 months to focus on reviewing performance against five key measures: a) Staffing numbers (FTEs); b) Agency spend; c) Overtime spend; d) % Appraisal completion; d) Sickness absence (no. of days per FTE).

The Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) has requested a report on the People Plan indicators for three service areas within the Environment and Housing directorate:

- Waste
- Environmental action
- Parks and Countryside

This report summarises performance against the five People Plan indicators for these three service areas as at 30 November 2013.

2 Staffing Numbers (FTE)

In line with the directorate as a whole, requests for permanent staff to leave through the Early Leaver Initiative (ELI) are considered on a case by case basis and approved where significant savings can be achieved. Many of the posts in the three service areas are

frontline posts which cannot be deleted through the ELI scheme. In addition, some recruitment has still been required where vacancies arise through normal staff turnover.

The November 2013 FTE position is shown in the following table:

	Position as at 30.11.13	Position as at 31.10.13	Position as at 31.3.13	Comment
Waste	459	457	414	Increase in FTEs largely due to replacing agency staff with employed staff and net position following internal moves between Waste and Environmental Action
Environmental action	474	477	481	Decrease largely due to net position following internal moves between Waste and Environmental Action
Parks and Countryside	554	543	541	Increase largely due to intake of apprentices

3 Agency spend

	Position as at 30.11.13	Position as at 31.10.13	Total spend 2012/13	Comment
Waste	£42,478	£51,575	£989,276, or approx. £82k per month	Monthly total significantly below monthly average for previous year
Environmental action	£3,477	£4,112	£289,479, or approx. £24k per month	Monthly total significantly below monthly average for previous year
Parks and Countryside	£6,540	£5,530	£86,391, or approx. £7k per month	Monthly total significantly below monthly average for previous year

The table above shows that for October and November 2013, the Commensura monthly agency spend for all three services is lower than the average monthly spend for 2012/13. It is recognised that some agency cover may be needed to manage temporary variations in workloads and to cover short-term staffing absence (agency staffing is typically a more cost effective way of covering temporary resource requirements than relying on overtime payments to existing staff).

Some staff have already been employed to replace agency staff, notably in Waste, resulting in an increase in staff numbers (FTEs) and a decrease in agency spend. This work is continuing during 2013/14.

The Parks and Countryside service are implementing a 'seasonal working' arrangement, whereby working hours are aligned with service needs to give shorter working weeks during winter hours and longer working weeks during summer months. It is envisaged that this will reduce the need for agency and seasonal hours in future.

4 Overtime spend

	Position as at 30.11.13	Position as at 31.10.13	Comment
Waste	£155,627	£183,381	Overtime spend has decreased in Nov13 compared to Oct13. Q1 figures are lower than Q2 as they incorporate accruals from 2012/13, and the Q2 figure includes overtime worked to provide holiday cover in the summer months
Environmental action	£56,938	£80,373	As above
Parks and Countryside	£34,732	£54,269	As above

Overtime spend in all directorates is an area where the council wishes to make significant reductions in spend. Work is underway to review the proportion of overtime that is being worked to cover genuine vacancies, with a view to recruiting employed staff (at a lower cost than overtime rates). Increased emphasis is also being given to encouraging flexibility of job roles to enable staff to work across similar roles more flexibly and so reduce the reliance on overtime/agency spend.

5 Appraisals - % completion rates

The full-year appraisal cycle runs from 1 April to 30 June, and the mid-year review cycle runs from 1 October to 31 December each year. At the time of writing the % completion rates for the mid year reviews completed by 31 December 2013 was not available, and so a verbal update will be given at the Scrutiny Board meeting. For full year appraisals, completion rates were as follows:

- Waste: 78.2% reported, although in practice significantly more appraisals were completed but problems were experienced with recording these via the new Performance and Learning (PAL) electronic system
- Environmental Action: 97.7%
- Parks and Countryside: 99.8%

6 Sickness absence

Historically sickness levels have been high in these three services. For example, in 2005, the average number of days per FTE were approximately 21 days for Refuse, 23 days for Street Cleansing, and 15 days for Parks and Countryside. The current sickness absence levels for the three service areas are as follows:

	Position as at 30.11.13	Position as at 31.10.13	Previous year sickness absence per FTE 2012/13
Waste	12.61	12.17	11.76
Environmental action	9.05	9.05	9.63
Parks and Countryside	9.96	10.10	9.6

Work continues to manage absence levels, particularly in the context of reducing the use of agency and overtime which has been used to cover sickness absence. For example, a significant proportion of sickness absence in Waste is due to musculoskeletal problems and a pilot programme is underway to target specific interventions, including proactive and reactive physiotherapy services. The impact of this programme will be evaluated and considered as to whether it may be appropriate for other heavily manual services within the council.

7 Conclusion

This report has presented an analysis of the five People Plan measures for the Waste, Environmental Action and Parks and Countryside services within the Environment and Housing directorate. A significant amount of work has been carried out across all of the People Plan areas, where this work has been led by the service management teams working with effectively with supervisors, staff and the trade unions. Staffing numbers have been managed carefully in the context of the overall council-wide position to reduce FTEs over the next three years, and agency spend has continued to decrease. Work is also underway to achieve a decrease in overtime spend over the coming months.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.