

SUBJECT:	Human Resources Update
REPORT OF:	Bob Smith, Chief Executive
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1. Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on:

- Staff turnover and sickness absence within the Councils
- Key HR projects

RECOMMENDATIONS

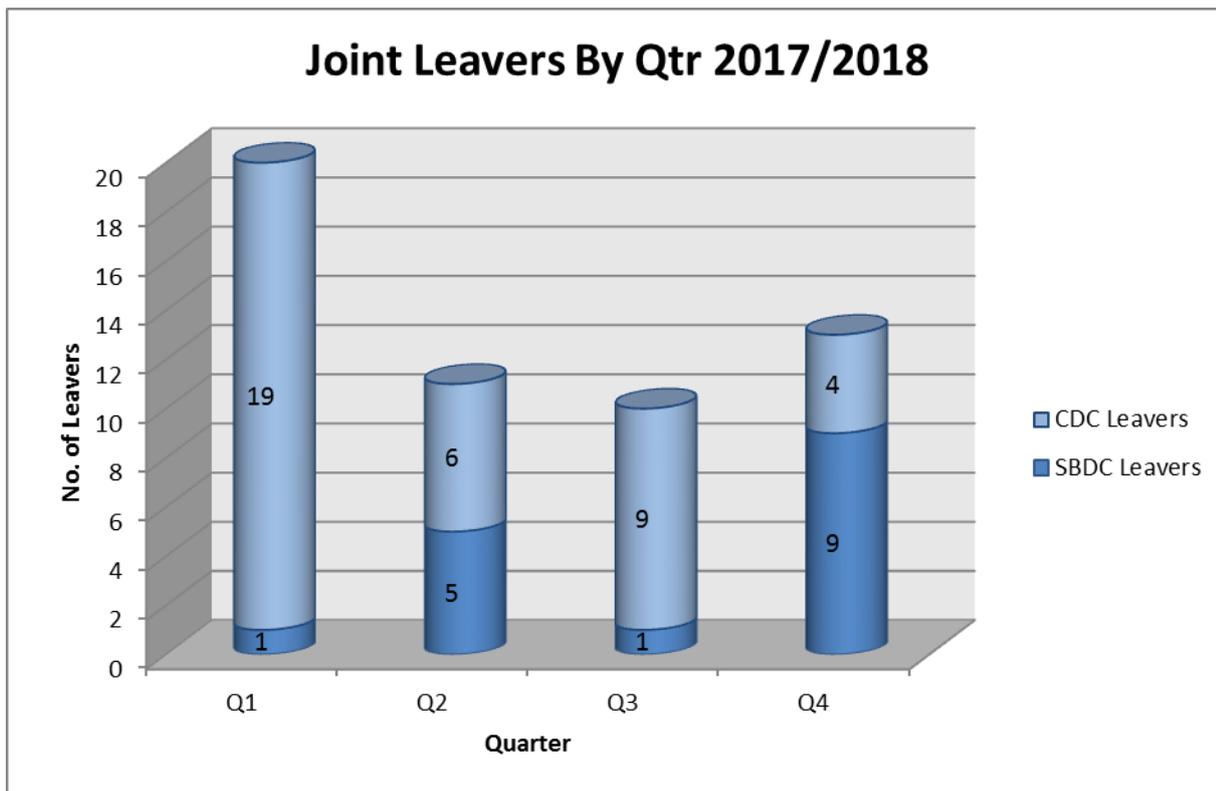
1. **The Joint Staffing Committee is asked to note the report.**

2. Content of Report

2.1 Leavers Figures 2017/18

2.1.1. The chart below shows the number of leavers in the year 2017/2018 by Qtrs. Please note the high Chiltern figure for Qtr1 reflects 10 cleaners TUPE transferred to Derwent FM. These figures also include staff who have retired.

Going forward the year 2018/2019 figures will be reported on jointly.



2.1.2 An analysis of the reasons for leaving show that staff have left for a variety of reasons and there does not seem to be an underlying trend. It should be noted, however, that there were higher levels of staff leaving in planning than in other areas in Qtr4. A recruitment drive in planning has led to the successful filling of almost all vacancies. Work is now underway to agree a medium and long term recruitment and retention plan for the service area.

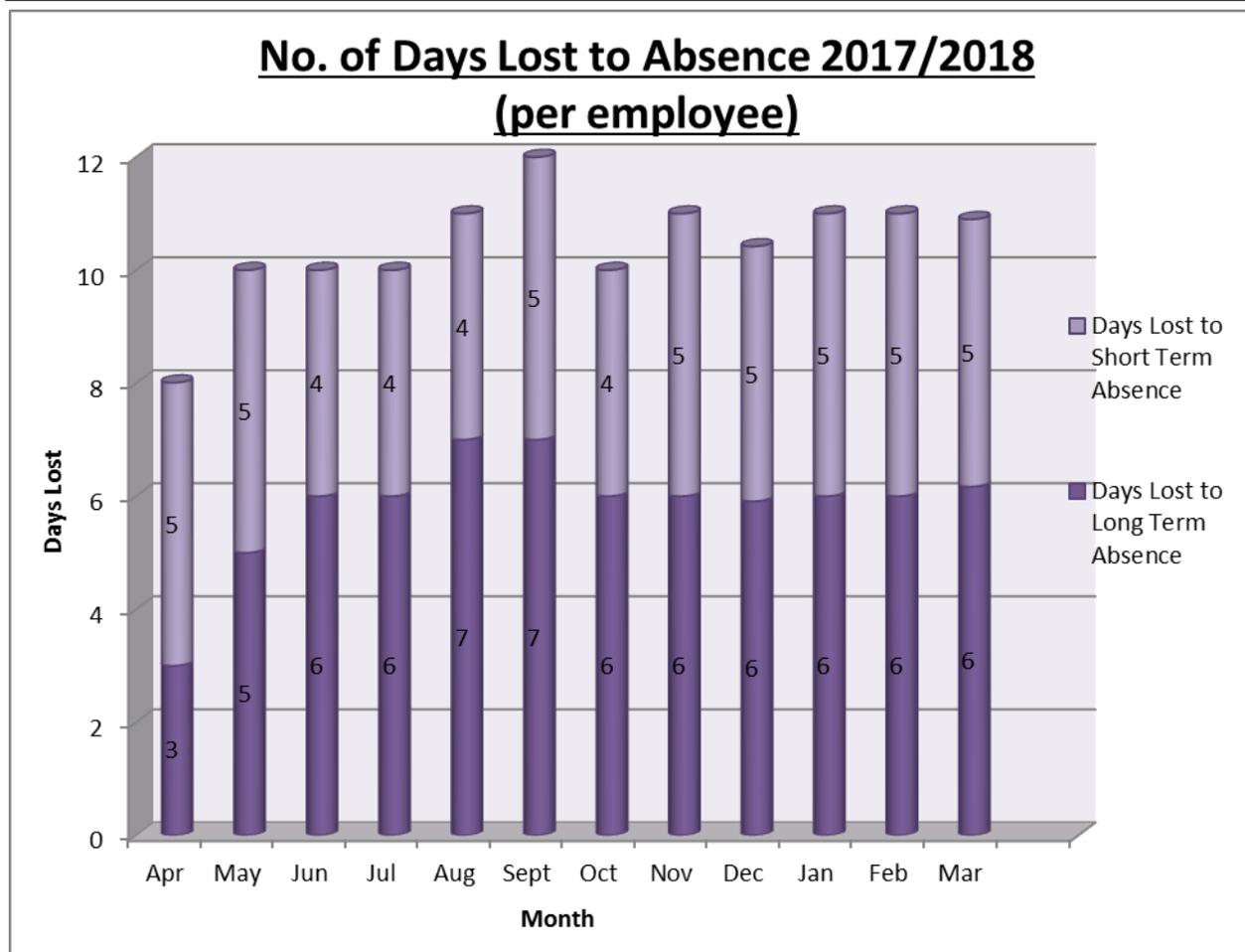
2.2 Recruitment Figures

2.2.1 Turnover rates are more meaningful if considered against the statistics of recruitment. Please see below the number of roles advertised for the year 2017/2018, the number filled and the average time to hire.

	No. of Positions	No. Filled	Average Time to Hire
Qtr 1	13	13	31 days
Qtr 2	16	15	40 days
Qtr3	19	17	30 days
Qtr 4	20	20	32 days

2.3 Sickness Absence Figures 2017/18

2.3.1 The table below shows a breakdown of the number of days lost due to absence per employee per month for the year 2017/2018 broken down into long term and short term sickness.



2.3.2 The Councils have a key performance indicator for absence which is a maximum ceiling of 10 days per employee. In 2017/18 this was exceeded which was largely due to an increase in a small number of employees on long term sick absences. But this was also affected by the Council’s practice to record staff as absent when undertaking phased returns to work. This practice has now been ended.

2.3.3 Short term absence is defined as “up to and including 20 working days absence” and long term absence is “over 20 working days absence”.

2.3.4 Indications are that sickness absence figures for 2018/19 have fallen. At the time of writing this report complete sickness absence data for Qtr. 1 was not available but I can report that in April 2018 and in May 2018 the number of days absent per employee, across the two Councils, was as follows:-

	April	May
Short-term	2.76	2.70
Long-term	3.00	3.60

2.3.5 In the last 6 months the HR team and line managers have made a concerted effort to manage sickness absence to ensure a robust and consistent approach is taken. Sickness absence monitoring has become a regular part of day to day management practice which

will help ensure that the approach taken is sustained over time. This includes the following:-

- The HR Advisers are holding regular meetings with line managers and Heads of Service to support them in monitoring absence and taking the appropriate action to follow the Sickness Absence Policy and to ensure staff are aware of the support available to help them achieve good attendance;
- HR Advisers are running workshops on “Promoting a Positive Attendance Culture” which all team leaders, supervisors and managers are required to attend. To date 70 line managers have signed up and feedback from these has been positive. One of the key objectives of the workshops is to inform managers of the steps in the policy they must take e.g.:-
 - conduct return to work interviews after every absence,
 - hold informal absence meetings when staff hit absence trigger points
 - move to the formal stages of the policy if attendance is not sustained or improved
 - agree attendance targets and monitoring periods.
- HR Advisers provide regular reports to Management Team on all sickness absence cases (informal and formal) so that these can be monitored at a senior level;
- Absence management is becoming a regular item on all managers/team leaders meetings;
- All managers and staff have been invited to attend a workshop on mental wellness run by MIND and this includes an introduction to the use of Wellness Action Plans.

2.3.6 At the same time as ensuring sickness absence is appropriately monitored and managed the Councils continue to put support in place for staff to help them maintain their own good health and well-being. This includes:-

- the use of occupational health services to get timely advice on how we can assist employees in returning to work.
- Undertaking risk assessments.
- Providing an Employee Assistance Programme.
- A range of health and well-being initiatives as part of the Health and Well-Being Statement and Action Plan e.g. MIND workshops.

2.4 CURRENT PROJECTS

2.4.1 Organisational Development: Values and Behaviour Framework

In the last 18 months our UGR Champions have been instrumental in running a range of activities aimed to reinforce our values and behaviours in our day to day working lives. For 18/19 they plan to create greater momentum and focus on their work by:-

- having a champion recruitment drive to fill the gaps where staff have left;
- running UGR awareness training for new staff;
- introducing more cross-team initiatives;
- focusing on the "customer focused" value.

The UGR champions reported that they continue to be enthusiastic about their role and are particularly keen to ensure that in the future they have a strong role to play in supporting in any future cultural change programme resulting from any Unitary decision.

2.4.2 Collaborative Working with the District Councils

We continue to meet regularly with our HR counterparts at Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale District Councils. We have developed a strong collaborative network and see the benefits of that in terms of sharing knowledge and policies and procedures e.g. GDPR plans, and also working together on projects e.g. shared coaching and mentoring across WDC and SBDC and CDC.

Our HR team had recently shared our plans to develop a "Change Ready Programme" for staff. Whilst there is uncertainty about what the changes will look like in Bucks irrespective of this change will always be part of our working lives and it is important that staff are able to cope successfully with change and indeed maximise the opportunities it can bring.

We have agreed with our district colleagues to start by running some half day workshops for staff across all the districts which will look at being "change ready". These will start in the autumn and staff will be able to attend the workshop at the district office most convenient to them.

2.4.3 Health and Well-Being

In May the Chief Executive launched our Health and Well Being Statement and annual action plan (see Appendix 1 and 2). This outlines our commitments as an employer to take a proactive approach to promoting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of our staff. The launch coincided with Mental Health Awareness Week and each day of that week we promoted different health and wellbeing initiatives e.g. the Cycle to Work scheme, the choir, "It starts with you" workshops delivered by MIND and mental health and debt. At the end of May half of the staff in the Council had signed up to the MIND workshops.

We have now set up a Health and Wellbeing forum which will:-

- Annually review the Council's Health and Wellbeing Statement and agree an action plan to support this, ensuring this is focused on the right areas and is sufficiently challenging to deliver tangible and sustainable health improvements.
- Decide how we are going to evaluate the success of any new health or wellbeing before it is introduced. Effective measures will help identify what is, or isn't, working.
- Review progress against the action plan.
- On an agreed cycle, review Council data such as rates and reasons for sickness absence, Occupational Health referrals, participation in Council health and wellbeing activities etc. and identify any areas or staff groups that may need more targeted health and wellbeing interventions.

2.4.4 **Apprenticeships**

We were expecting new degree-level apprenticeships in Town Planning to be available from September and anticipated recruiting new staff into this apprenticeship programme. However in May the government's Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) has, rather surprisingly, rejected the final stage of the proposed RTP1 apprenticeship plan. Therefore it is likely that there will be a delay in the launch of this apprenticeship scheme.

We are also eagerly awaiting the launch of the Level 4 Revenues and Welfare Benefits apprenticeship, which is expected to be available from late July. This apprenticeship should take around 18 months to complete. It is proposed to recruit new staff into the Revenues & Benefits team through this route.

We have had one existing member of staff begin an apprenticeship Finance, but unfortunately he has accepted a promotion at another Council so will soon be leaving our employment. We continue to explore opportunities to offer employee development through means of apprenticeship programmes.

2.4.5 **Implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy**

Please see separate item on the agenda for an update on the Customer Experience Strategy.

2.4.6 **Recruitment and Retention Plan – Planning and Economic Development**

The new Head of Planning and Economic Development starts his role in July and we will work with him to finalise a recruitment and retention plan. Although at the moment we have very few vacancies in the service area we do need to focus on the long term and consider how to retain staff and how to ensure we have staff with the skills and experience required for future service needs.

2.4.7 **Staff Survey**

Heads of Services have developed action plans for each of their areas. Overall the staff survey results were very positive and the focus has been on continuing to do what we do well and promote that better as well as looking at areas of improvement.

The staff survey working group is meeting up this summer. One idea it will be asked to look at will be to consider introducing a "Making a Difference Award".

2.4.8 **Management Development Programme**

The 2nd cohort of team leaders and supervisors are now half way through this course. The 1st cohort received their certificate at a celebratory event in May. To build on their skills and knowledge further development is being offered to these managers and they are also encouraged to continue to meet in their action learning sets to ensure they continue to develop and share their learning.

3. Consultation

N/A

4. Options

N/A

5. Corporate Implications

Good management of resources including employees leads to efficient and effective use of council finances and improved delivery of council services.

6. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Monitoring staff turnover, recruitment and sickness absences and ensuring all Council policies, procedures and practices are current, underpin the delivery of the Council's aims and management principles and ensure legislative compliance and best practice.

7. Next Step

Continue to monitor and update Committee Members on a quarterly basis.

Background Papers:	None.
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