

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Countryside, Culture and Communities Select Committee
Date:	7 November 2022
Title:	CCBS (Culture, Communities & Business Services) Recruitment and Retention Update
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

Contact name: Jo Heath

Tel: 07545735629

Email: Jo.heath@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update members of the Select Committee on staff recruitment and retention against a background of recent events. The Select Committee requested a report on the impact of the pandemic and Brexit on staffing. As changes to the labour market cannot be directly attributed to the pandemic or Brexit, this report gives an overview of the currently position relating recruitment and retention of staff in the CCBS department. This against a background of the pandemic and Brexit but now, inflation and labour market shortages driven by a range of global events.
2. The focus of this report is on those Services that are under the Select Committee scrutiny namely Libraries, Countryside, Trading Standards, Coroners Service, Archives and Records, Registration and Hampshire Outdoor Centres, in the post pandemic period January to July 2022.
3. The report will highlight the actions that services within CCBS have undertaken to try and improve the recruitment and retention situation and to mitigate the risks to service delivery. Members are reminded that throughout the pandemic Cabinet received regular reports on service position and performance and this report does not seek to duplicate those reports. The regular reporting to Cabinet continues (next report is due on 18 October) to summarise the County Council's continuing recovery activities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic with an increasing focus on economic recovery.

Recommendation(s)

That the Countryside, Culture and Communities Select Committee:

4. Notes the current situation regarding recruitment and retention of staff in CCBS Services and the impact this is having on staff in post and on service delivery.
5. Supports the programme of activity and measures to improve recruitment and retention for services in the Department.

Executive Summary

6. Over the past year, post Pandemic and Brexit, there have been significant shifts in the labour market that have been felt by services in CCBS. This has had an impact on the wellbeing of staff in post and has affected service delivery. Managers have worked hard to keep this disruption to a minimum and to support staff.
7. Managers have been engaged in illustrating the workforce issues and in finding solutions to encourage greater response to recruitment campaigns working with and supported by HR colleagues.
8. Work has started on a workforce strategy for the department known as the CCBS People Plan. This will consider the whole lifecycle of the employee in the department with an initial focus on recruitment and retention.

Contextual information

9. There have been significant shifts in the labour market nationally since the start of the pandemic in February 2020. These effects are also being felt by Services in the Culture, Community and Business Services department, particularly with regards to recruitment and retention. One of the key indicators of this shift is the number of vacancies that services are struggling to fill.
10. The Office for National Statistics reports that nationally in May to July 2022, the total number of vacancies was 478,800 (60.2%) above the January to March 2020 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic level¹. This is across all industries with a record high of vacancies to every 100 employee jobs in most sectors reported earlier this year².

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/jobsandvacanciesintheuk/july2022>

2

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/february2022>

11. In May to July the total of 1,274,400 vacancies was slightly down on the all-time high of 1,299,000 in the previous quarter (March to May) and indicated the first fall in vacancies on the quarter since June to August 2020.

12. The reasons for this shift in the labour market are varied and include:

- Surging demand in new sectors (e.g., online retail, delivery drivers) therefore higher availability of low skill work with higher pay.
- Departure of thousands of the country's EU citizens, exacerbating labour shortages.
- People have turned to new careers whilst on furlough.
- Pandemic burn out and increasing mental health issues – increasing pressures on those remaining in post.
- Shifts in workers interest or appetite for work.
- Greater options to work more flexibly.
- A two year build up during the uncertainty of the pandemic when people were less likely to look for new jobs.

Recruitment and Retention in CCBS

13. The staffing numbers for the Services in CCBS that are for consideration by the Select Committee can be seen in the table below.

	Sum of Perm/Temp Headcount	Sum of Casuals Headcount	Sum of Headcount	Sum of FTE (exc. casuals)
Culture and Information Services	589	100	689	365.9
Archives and Records	20	2	22	16.5
Coroners Service	29	9	38	26.6
Libraries	382	88	470	234.3
Registration Service	131	0	131	63.7
Trading Standards	27	1	28	24.8
Natural Environment and Recreation	315	213	528	277.4
Countryside Service	225	151	376	193.5
Hampshire Outdoor Centres	90	62	152	83.9
Grand Total	904	313	1,217	643.2

14. An exercise at the end of June 2021 asked services to report on roles that were critical to the delivery of services that were proving hard to fill. This is not the sum total of the vacancies but provides an indication of the pressures for these services. It is worth noting that all these services, except for Hampshire Outdoor Centres are responsible for the delivery of

statutory services. The result showed a vacancy rate for critical roles of 18% in Countryside and 16% in Trading Standards.

15. These figures do not illustrate the whole story across the Department. The pressures created by vacancies along with Covid related illness has resulted in the occasional closure of services. For example, since 1st April, libraries have invoked business continuity plans on 9 occasions to either close or cancel planned events/activities due to staff shortages linked to vacancies and staff sickness. This has a significant knock-on effect on the public using those services- if they make a journey to use a library only to find it unexpectedly closed, they may be disinclined to visit again. In addition to the 9 closures, Managers regularly step in to cover shifts to keep buildings open; meaning that they are unable to do their own work unless they extend their working day.
16. There have also been significant impacts on the workload and wellbeing of existing staff. For example, in Hampshire Coroners Service, each Coroner's Officer has a set number of cases assigned to them. The Chief Coroner's guidance for a model coroner's area suggests that this number should be around 24 cases per officer. Although case numbers in Hampshire have been high, they were reducing. However, officers are now holding approximately 94 cases each due, in large part, to the reallocation of cases from officers leaving the service. Not only does this have significant service implications for families of the bereaved, but it also causes significant stress and anxiety for officers who have large and unmanageable workloads.
17. Catering staff at the Country Parks have been in short supply and this led to a reduction in the menus at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECP), it has caused delays to the opening of the Cedar Rooms at Royal Victoria Country Park, and increased costs as agency staff were needed. The Parks have done everything they can to keep catering facilities open with only a few closures e.g., café at Manor Farm, kiosk at QECP, where there are other catering outlets available.
18. In January and February this year targeted events were held with the Senior Management Group and Heads of Service within the Department to better understand the recruitment and retention issues. It was clear from these discussions that services across the department were experiencing similar problems in retaining staff and recruiting to vacancies. Managers reported on the negative effect this was having on remaining staff and on their ability to deliver services. The national context of the labour market was discussed along with more specific reasons for the difficulties in recruitment and retaining staff.

19. The key themes relating to recruitment in CCBS were:

- More organisations introducing attractive packages including flexible working, remote working, family friendly schemes. The pandemic has illustrated how work can be undertaken in diverse ways and therefore more organisations realising that they can be more flexible in the same way that the County Council has been for some time.
- There was a feeling that working for the local government is less attractive as national reporting presents an image of further cuts.
- Many roles across the services require staff to be present and therefore live in the county or nearby. The increase in cost of living and housing makes it particularly difficult to attract people to these roles.
- Our job adverts are not generating a satisfactory level of interest and a lengthy recruitment process means that we are struggling to respond quickly to gaps or to get people onboard in a timely manner.

20. The key themes relating to retention in CCBS were:

- Growth of jobs in certain sectors increasing the competition e.g., green jobs.
- HCC (Hampshire County Council) provide good training and development, but progression opportunities are limited so once staff are trained, they go elsewhere.
- Potential to earn more money in low skilled roles elsewhere e.g., catering staff.
- Limited data on reasons for exit to assist with workforce planning.

21. Following this a series of short-term actions were identified and in March 2022 a Heads of Service event was aimed at sharing some of the measures that Service colleagues have employed to improve recruitment, particularly of the critical, hard to fill roles.

22. These immediate actions include:

- Updating role adverts and using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote roles. LinkedIn profiles for Services have also been created to reach audiences looking for work.
- Including more information on the employee value proposition and the benefits of working for HCC and using existing staff to assist in explaining these benefits and the role through videos and other media. Video examples such as: [Join the Countryside catering team](#) - the benefits of working for the Countryside catering team [Ranger Diaries](#) - illustrating the role of an access ranger.

- Making the recruitment process more inclusive to broaden the market and attract a greater diversity of applicants. This has meant working with the HCC network chairs to ensure that the branding, imagery, and language are inclusive.
- Reviewing the requirements of the role and the design of the job in order to broaden the pool of applicants by focussing on transferable skills and flexibility.
- Reviewing the role itself and in some cases creating a lower grade role or apprenticeships with a view to growing our own. This also has implications for existing staff and managers who must spend more time inducting and training new recruits and delegating the workload differently.
- Producing a managers guide to recruitment to include inclusive language, hints, and tips on how to structure more engaging job descriptions and adverts, clarity on how to work with recruitment colleagues for best results.
- Improving the collection of information when staff exit the organisation to assist with understanding the factors influencing retention.

23. The issues regarding recruitment and retention are being experienced across all County Council Services. The Corporate Management Team have established a Strategic Workforce Board to respond to the immediate priorities concerning critical hard to fill roles and to work towards the production of a People Strategy. This includes 4 distinct workstreams and will engage with Departments through the HR business partners and directly with senior managers.

24. In addition to implementing the range of short-term actions CCBS is currently in the process of producing a People Plan that will consider the whole employee lifecycle and incorporate inclusion and diversity priorities and employee wellbeing. The initial focus is on recruitment and retention and will present a structured programme of Departmental activity and work that is being led Corporately.

Conclusions

25. Changes in the labour market coupled with Covid related illness and leave is stretching our services and having a detrimental impact on staff wellbeing and service delivery.

26. Actions are being taken at a Service, Departmental and Corporate level to try and mitigate the immediate impacts and plan for greater resilience in our workforce.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy, and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

This report is an information update for the Select Committee.