



Agenda

Meeting: **Personnel Committee**
Date: **10 June 2021**
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.

Due to current social distancing guidelines, only 6 seats are available for members of the public at meetings in the Council Chamber. These seats will be reserved for those speaking or participating at the meeting, and the remaining available seats will be given on a first come, first served basis.

Members of the public are encouraged to view the meeting online if they are not to address the meeting. Meetings will be streamed live to the internet, and can be viewed at: <https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. Further information on attending council meetings can be found at [Advice for public attendance](#)

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);
 - 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 4 February 2021.

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

4. **Appointment of the Joint Staff Consultative Panel 21/22**

To appoint Members to the Joint Staff Consultative Panel for the municipal year 21/22. Membership must include the Leader of the Council and 1 member from each political group.

5. **HR Annual review 2020/21 (Pages 7 - 78)**

This report presents a review of the HR function over the last financial year 2020-2021.

6. **Gender pay gap reporting (Pages 79 - 88)**

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

7. **Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 (Pages 89 - 100)**

This report presents a revised pay policy statement for 2021/22 for approval and recommendation to Council.

8. **Report of the Head of Paid Service (Pages 101 - 106)**

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: Zoom - remote meeting

Date: Thursday, 4 February 2021

Present: Councillors Mrs Ann Berry, Danny Brook (Vice-Chair), Nicola Keen, David Monk (Chairman), Tim Prater and Rebecca Shoob

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Susan Priest (Chief Executive) and Andrina Smith (Chief HR Officer)

Others Present:

6. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

7. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 were submitted, approved and will be electronically signed by the Chairman.

8. **Employer supported volunteering policy**

The report presents a new policy to the Personnel Committee which is designed to provide our staff with the opportunity to undertake volunteering activities within our district.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Danny Brooks and

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note Report P/20/07.**
- 2. To approve the introduction of the Employer Supported Volunteering Policy.**

(Voting: For 6; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

9. **Pay Policy Statement 2021/22**

The report presents the pay policy statement for 2021/22 for approval and recommendation to council.

Proposed by Councillor Danny Brooks
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Ann Berry and

Resolved:

1. **To receive and note Report P/20/08.**
2. **To recommend to council that it approve under S38(1) Localism Act 2011 the Pay Policy Statement appended to the report for 2021/22.**

(Voting: For 6; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

10. **Removal of the essential user allowance**

The report provides the committee with a proposal which removes the essential car user allowance and associated mileage rates for all staff (as per the commitment reached in the 2016/17 pay settlement), but also ensures that the few members of staff who do travel extensively across the district on council business are not heavily impacted in a negative way.

Proposed by Councillor David Monk
Seconded by Councillor Danny Brooks and

Resolved:

1. **To receive and note Report P/20/09;**
2. **To remove the essential car user allowance on a phased 3 year basis with mileage reimbursed at HMRC rates from 1 April 2021;**
3. **To rename the current Cash Alternative Scheme as the Car Allowance Scheme from 1 April 2021.**
4. **To introduce a new level to the Car Allowance Scheme from 1 April 2021.**

(Voting: For 6; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Agenda Item 5

Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

This Report will be made public on 2 June 2021

Report Number **P/21/03**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 10th June 2021
Status: Non-executive Decision
Head of Service: Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer

SUBJECT: HR ANNUAL REVIEW (2020/2021)

SUMMARY: This report presents a review of the HR function over the last financial year 2020-2021.

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/21/03.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The HR Service has now been back in-house at Folkestone & Hythe for 9 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 has undergone a period of change as a result of the transformation programme. A decision was taken early on in the programme that HR would not be affected until the rest of the organisation had been through the process; this was to enable the team to appropriately support other managers leading their teams through change. The Organisational Development (OD) team was largely unaffected by transformation as much of their work comes from external organisations, however the HR team saw a reduction in 1FTE with the deletion of the HR Manager post plus in addition the 1FTE role of HR Assistant transferred across to the Case Management team in Corporate Services 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 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 are developing and widening 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 were already working flexibly from home whenever possible prior to the national lockdown in March 2020 and therefore the team have successfully managed to maintain service levels over the last 15 months whilst the civic centre has been closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. CASEWORK

- 3.1 During 2020/21 the HR team have supported the following cases:
 - 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 members 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.

While not formal cases, the team have supported a number of managers and staff with targeted actions and short-term performance improvement plans following the Behavioural Assessment process.

3.2 As a comparison, during 2019/20 the following cases were dealt with:

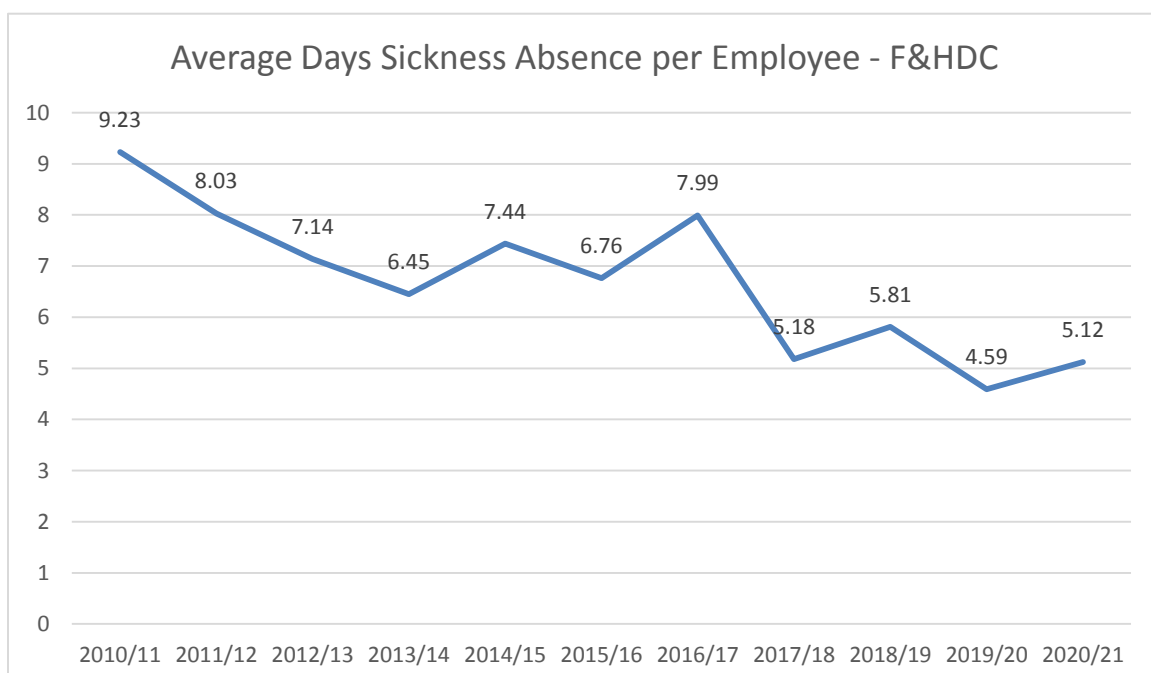
- 8 disciplinary cases resulting in 1 verbal warning, 6 written warnings, and 1 final written warning. Under section 4.4 of the disciplinary procedures a penalty can be agreed outside of a disciplinary hearing if the employee is in agreement. Seven of the eight case numbers mentioned above were issued in this way.
- 1 capability cases resulting in the members of staff leaving before the process concluded.
- 0 grievances was raised during the year.

3.3 These figures show a decrease in the number of disciplinary investigations for minor misconduct. 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.

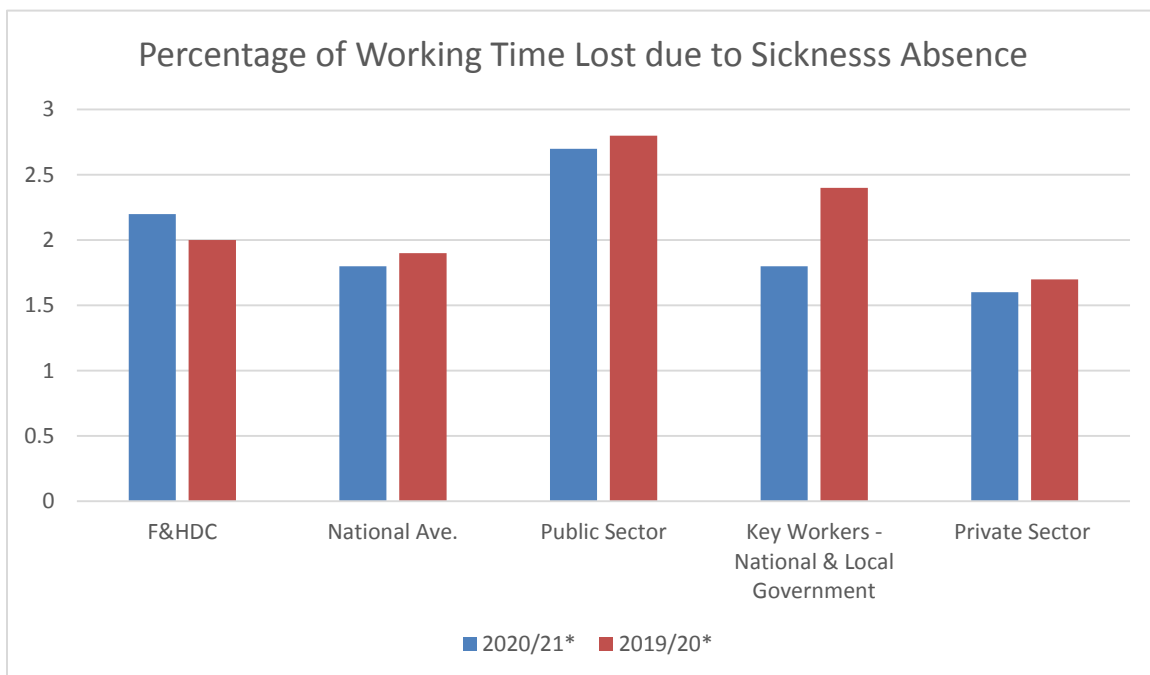
4. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 In 2020/21 there was an average of 5.1 days sickness absence per employee (based on an average headcount of 415). During the year, 2.2% of all working time was lost due to sickness absence.

4.2 Despite the impact of the pandemic, sickness absence rates at the Council continue to be relatively low in comparison to previous years:



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, such as temporary closures, operating at reduced capacity, the furloughing of staff and shielding, have had a deep impact on businesses, the UK labour market and the validity of this as a comparative measure of data; as there were fewer people actively working over the last year there would therefore be fewer people taking days off because of sickness or injury. 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 and therefore utilised for comparative purposes here:



Source: [Office of National Statistics](#), March 2021
*Comparisons made with 2020 and 2019 data

Nationally, a reduction in sickness absence rates has been reported across all sectors over the past year. While the virus may have led to additional sickness absence, measures such as furloughing, shielding, social distancing and increased homeworking may have reduced other causes of sickness absence nationally. Differences in how Covid-19 related absences have been reported amongst employers may have also had an impact on these national statistics.

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 in the last year as the Council’s headcount increased in line with 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

4.5 Over the past year we have experienced a reduction in short-term absenteeism (absences of less than 4 weeks) and the average number of days lost to short-term sickness cases is the lowest since 2014/15.

Absences relating to Covid-19 were the most predominant cause of short-term sickness absence at the Council last year. While minor illnesses (such as colds and flu, headaches, nausea, diarrhoea etc) are traditionally the biggest reason for sickness absence across the country, it is clear that Covid-19 has significantly contributed to absence levels in the majority of organisations.

4.6 While we may have experienced a reduction in short-term absenteeism, we have seen a rise in long-term sickness absence cases over the past year. 10% of absences were long-term and this equated to 64% of the total time lost due to sickness.

As with 2019/20, the biggest reason for long-term absence over the past year was mental ill health and stress, which accounted for nearly half of our long-term sickness cases (13 of the 27 cases recorded). Covid-19 and the pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on the mental health of individuals and overall 42% 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 and the CIPD continue to report mental health and stress amongst the most predominant cause of long-term absence across the country.

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.

- 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 communications and bi-monthly podcasts.
- Making pro-active welfare calls to all managers and selected individuals throughout the pandemic (c50 calls made and multiple issues related to desk set up and wellbeing resolved).
- Developing a team of mental first aiders.
- Virtual HR “drop in” support sessions.
- 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.
- Health and wellbeing activities including Zen yoga classes (which have continued remotely), free swimming at Hythe Pool and discounted gym memberships available through the council’s reward platform, ‘F&H Rewards’.
- 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.
- 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 An outcome of the 2017-2020 Corporate Plan, under ‘delivering excellence’, was to have sickness absence at less than 7 days per employee per year. This was consistently achieved throughout the lifetime of that plan.

4.9 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 reduced absenteeism:

- A robust absence monitoring system. The line manager notifies the generic HR email address when an employee is absent from work. This notification includes the reason for absence and the expected duration of the absence. The email address is monitored daily, 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 also a specific session on effective absence management and supporting staff health & wellbeing as part of the 2020/21 Manager Development Programme.
 - 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 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 restrictions and the volume of remote workers, staff were reimbursed the cost of private 'flu vaccinations in 2020/21.

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 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 through sections 6, 7 and 8 below.
- 5.2 In March 2020, the OD & Engagement Team were all required to work from home due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. The team were redeployed over several months in various areas of the council (particularly Communications and the Social Response team) and focused on staff well-being. In April 2020, 46 Well-being calls were made to staff and 37 staff contacted re: issues raised in our well-being survey (mostly home office set up) and resolved.
- 5.3 In January 2019, our OD team agreed with Thanet District Council, Canterbury District Council and Dover District Council that we would be the training provider for their management and business administration apprentices and undertake learning and development work for them. During 2020/21 this work brought in £121,000 of income into the council. The cost of additional staff brought in to support with the delivery of these contracts 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 (the team develop managers, deliver training, and run apprenticeships to make sure staff perform well) 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 (based on the learning needs analysis that was completed in July 2020). It is now all delivered online. The majority of sessions are an hour long, with some longer, as needed. Topics covered have included:
- July: Managing during a global pandemic and beyond
 - July: Your role as a manager in driving internal communications
 - August: Human Psychology during a pandemic and the impact of government communications
 - September: Information Access in Local Government
 - October: HR Forum (Health & Well-being; Resourcing; Managing Performance)
 - November: Coaching and Mentoring
 - November: Motivating & engaging your teams
 - December and January: Political insight - working with Councillors
 - December: Medium Term Financial Strategy, Financial systems & processes
 - December: Information Access in Local Government.

This year, we have also run an in-house coaching qualification (ILM L3 Award in Effective Coaching) for 5 managers, who are all now qualified coaches and able to offer coaching sessions to the wider staff group.

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

- 6.3 Over the course of the 2020/21 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:
- May: Conflict Management Skills x 2
May & July: Preparing for your Behaviour Assessment
September: Personal Resilience & Managing Change
November: Conflict, Time Management, and Customer Care
December, January & February: Practical Presentation Skills

In addition, we have commissioned training on other areas of cross-organisational interest, such as Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour and Mental Health First Aid.

- 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 Another key, cross-organisational area for the OD & Engagement Team has been supporting the Customer Access Strategy. The team set up and facilitated a working group (now handed over to the Director of Place) and delivered multiple training sessions and internal communications pieces to support the implementation of this important strategy.
- 6.6 Technical training priorities this year focused on enabling us to deliver our services virtually and continue to drive high standards in our business as usual work. Courses have included:
- April-May: Zoom Training for staff and Councillors (multiple, in-house sessions)
 - October: Skype for Business Training (in-house)
 - October: Staff Hub Training (in-house)
 - January: Writing Good Business Cases (ModGov)
 - January: Encrypting Documents (in-house)
 - December & March: Report Writing (ModGov)
- 6.7 Role-specific professional development enables us to deliver the Corporate Plan and this year have included:
- Finance – ACCA qualification; Housing Finance; Closedown; Collection Fund.
 - Case (Corporate) – Introduction to National Non-domestic Rates; HRA Account; Freedom of Information (FOI).
 - HR – TUPE, TAQA (Training, Assessment & Quality Assurance); CIPD module on Sickness Absence.
 - Legal – apprenticeship training course for trainee.
 - Procurement – CIPS qualification.
 - Revenues and Benefits – Mental Health & Autism (for the Vulnerability Team); Housing Benefit Subsidy Training.
 - Community Safety – Resolve.
 - Grounds Maintenance – equipment training.
 - Property – RICS fees & annual Kent RICS conference.
 - Private Sector Housing – Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.
 - Housing: Chartered Institute of Housing (bitesize).
 - Environmental Protection: Dog handling, Anti-Social Behaviour.

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 have also offered live online training on key statutory topics such as Prevent & Radicalisation (November). In 2020/21 we reviewed our e-Learning provision and have selected a new supplier to enable us to include courses on Safeguarding (Adult and Child), Modern Day Slavery and Climate Change. This new e-learning platform was launched in May 2021.

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 the 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 the team offer, we have had 3 officers complete (all with distinction) and have 10 officers currently undertaking a Management Apprenticeship which also involves studying for an ILM Level 3 Diploma for Managers qualification and as we are an ILM Centre we are able to deliver this ourselves. This is a year-long programme and helps develop our talent pipeline in terms of developing aspiring managers. All participants are at different stages as we have had staggered start dates for this course. For several months of 2020, there was an interruption in study due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, but study resumed online for those able in June 2020. Several learners have had to pause their study as they are working on issues related to COVID-19. We are now supporting people in an individual way to work at their own pace. 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.

We also have 4 officers undertaking our in-house Level 3 Apprenticeship in Business Administration, having started in September 2020. We also have 2 members of staff studying for a Learning & Development Practitioner Apprenticeship.

6.11 Where appropriate we continue to use external training providers to support apprentices; we have recently signed one officer up for a Project Management Apprenticeship and are exploring other opportunities in the areas of Housing and Finance.

6.12 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 2019, we decided to benchmark ourselves against other organisations and strive for best practice using the Best Companies survey (used by hundreds of UK businesses and not for profit organisations).

7.2 In July 2020, we undertook a baseline survey to understand where we needed to concentrate our efforts in terms of the survey criteria. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that we had already achieved a '1 star' or very good level of employee engagement. We then put in place an action plan to address key areas of feedback.

We enhanced clarity of vision, leadership visibility and highlighted some of the Council's key projects in our communications amongst other things. In March 2021, we undertook the full, formal survey which will see us ranked against other not for profit organisations in the UK. We already know at this stage that 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).

- 7.3 Our internal Communications and Engagement strategy is a key document in enabling our ambitions to be a great place to work. Activity is aligned to the 8 factors of engagement (as described by Best Companies). This is delivered via various, currently online, channels:
- Weekly emails with links to videos and intranet articles (Daily emails during lockdown and in the run up to Christmas)
 - Staff briefing (every 2 months)
 - Podcasts (every 2 months) focusing on officers from a variety of teams
 - Connection events: Chai There (monthly), Connect (for people feeling isolated) (bi-monthly), New Starters' Forum and New Managers' Forum (quarterly)
 - Other events (ad hoc) e.g Bingo, Games, Improv, Quiz Time, Hum that Choon.
- 7.4 We ensure strong two-way communication with our people through a variety of interactive workshops and focus groups, e.g Corporate Plan focus groups and the Civic Centre relocation working group. We also regularly survey staff to gain their input and shape our approach. This year the following surveys have been carried out:
- April: Staff Well-being survey
 - May: Recovery survey
 - July: Best Companies pulse survey
 - August: Staff Check-in survey
 - October: Grounds Maintenance engagement survey
 - November: Civic Centre Relocation survey
 - December: ICT survey
 - March: Full Best Companies survey
- 7.5 As well as our usual induction events, the OD & Engagement Team had the additional task of on-boarding almost 70 new Housing staff in October 2020. This was all done remotely and involved multiple events, as well as organising a programme of training activity, including:
- Induction day
 - Join John Q&A sessions
 - 'Meet the wider leadership team' session (including Portfolio Holder).
 - New Manager Induction for Housing Managers
 - Housing Leadership Team team-building event
 - Housing Management Team team-building event
 - Multiple Housing Skills workshops on various topics.
- Feedback from the new recruits was that they felt welcomed, informed and valued.
- 7.6 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 Development Management, the Place Directorate Management Team, Case Management, and the Corporate Leadership Team. We have also supported meetings of the wider management team, 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 (albeit online). 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 corporate induction (which we have updated with a new induction video) and our behaviour framework. This year, we have launched a new E-cards service, making it easier for staff to recognise one another for displaying our values at any time of year.
- 8.2 In January 2021 we awarded the first Employee of the Year award that we introduced this year to recognise a single individual who has relentlessly demonstrated our core values. The winner was Andrew Rush (Communities, Regulatory Services & Contract Management Lead Specialist), nominated by one of his team members, who had shown himself to display our values consistently in spite of a very challenging year responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

9. STAFF BENEFITS PLATFORM

- 9.1 For several years now staff have been able to benefit from some locally sourced discounts with businesses within the district, a privilege discount card with MacArthur Glen Designer Outlet in Ashford and wider discounts via the CSSC scheme (Civil Service Sports Council) where for a small fee each month staff could access English Heritage sites at a reduced rate along with discounts locally and nationally for cinema tickets, theatre trips and sporting activities.
- 9.2 In August 2018 we launched a new online staff benefit scheme called F&H Rewards in conjunction with Reward Gateway enabling staff to access a wide range of online and high street shopping instant discounts or cash back opportunities including supermarkets, general retailers, holidays, insurances, cinemas and restaurants. This remains an extremely popular reward platform with our staff.



- 9.3 Since the launch approximately 87% of staff have been active users of the scheme – with the majority of discounts continuing to be obtained in the supermarkets, Halfords, B&Q, Currys PC World and cinemas. The scheme was also opened to councillors during 2019/2020.
- 9.4 Part of the F&H Rewards Scheme offers a salary sacrifice option to staff using the ‘Cycle to Work’ scheme where they can order a bicycle (and equipment) worth up to £1,000 which is paid by the council upfront to the relevant store with the staff member repaying the amount over 12 months through the payroll system which enables tax savings of between 32-42%.

Despite the pandemic and national lockdowns, this has remained a relatively popular part of the scheme and we are currently in the process of increasing the amount that can be applied for to £1,500 to enable staff more opportunity to purchase electric bikes.

- 9.5 A further development of the F&H Rewards Scheme will be a new element – SmartTech. This is run by Currys PC World and operates as a way for staff to purchase white goods and electronics up to the value of £1,000 at 0% interest with monthly deductions over a 12 month period through the payroll system. We have flexibility within this option to enable a higher value and/or longer repayment schemes however in the first instance it was felt more appropriate to have a lower value and to mirror the 12 month repayment that exists within the Cycle to Work scheme. We are aiming to launch this part of the platform within the next 4-6 weeks.
- 9.6 The F&H Rewards platform also has a ‘wellbeing centre’ enabling staff to access our Employee Assistance Programme (provided via BHSF), healthcare cashplans, healthy recipes and meal plans, discounted gym memberships, advice on mental health issues and also impartial financial advice. These pages of the platform are regularly accessed by a number of staff and regular health promotions are publicised to all staff as part of our internal communications strategy.

9. PEOPLE STRATEGY

- 9.1 As part of the transformation programme, work was undertaken to devise a new People Strategy for the council. Over the last 24 months the strategy became embedded within the council framework and underpins not just the transformation programme but all of our people related activities.

The 2019 People Strategy can be seen at **Appendix B**.

- 9.2 The 6 main themes of the people strategy were:



- 9.3 A comprehensive review of the strategy was undertaken and discussed at Continuous Improvement Board in April 2021. A snapshot of the review and actions that have been undertaken can be seen in **Appendix C**.
- 9.4 The HR team are very proud of the work that has been completed over the last couple of years, particularly as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns had a minimal impact on the service delivery whilst we also focused on supporting the council with its response to Covid-19 ensuring that resources were appropriately redeployed, the effect absences were having on service areas, wellbeing calls, ensuring staff had the appropriate resources to be able to work from home etc. and also monitoring and promoting opportunities for staff to have the Covid-19 vaccinations.
- 9.5 Transformation
- 9.5.1 Throughout 2019/20 and 2020/21 the Chief HR Officer and HR Project Officer have continued to support the transformation programme.
- Stages 1 (Corporate Services) and 2 (External Services) of the transformation programme were completed successfully prior to March 2020. However Stage 3 (Development Management, IT and Communications) and Stage 4 (HR & OD) were completed during lockdown. Regular meetings led by the Chief HR Officer have also taken place with the branch Unison chair and regional Unison officer with the option for the regional GMB officer to also attend to ensure that the unions are kept up to date with progress towards the completion of transformation.
- 9.5.2 The stages of restructuring outlined above were carried out with minimal compulsory redundancies and a few voluntary redundancies. There were no appeals against the process at any point over the last 2 years.
- 9.6 Behavioural Competency Framework



9.6.1 Following on from the work outlined in section 10 of the HR Annual Review 2019/20 (report P/20/01) throughout the transformation programme we assimilated the vast majority of staff into new positions with no competitive process. However, we made it very clear throughout the process that we would still expect all staff to undertake a behavioural assessment focusing on relevant behaviours for the role with the outcomes being used to design a personal development plan for each member of staff providing them with the opportunity to improve on certain behaviours should the need arise. This is enabling us to embed a high performance culture across the council.

9.6.2 By the end of the 2019/20 financial year all staff within stage 1 of the transformation programme had undertaken a behavioural assessment led by their manager and supported by a member of the HR team.

9.6.3 After a short break whilst everyone adjusted to using Skype or Zoom for meetings, from May 2020 the staff who were part of stages 2, 3 and 4 completed their assessments by the end of 2020.

9.6.4 In addition, the staff who transferred to the council from East Kent Housing in October 2020 also had a behavioural assessment at the start of 2021.

9.6.5 During the 2020 calendar year all selection interviews that took place had at least half the questions taken from the bank of behavioural competency interview questions and as a result after approximately 3 months of employment each member of staff worked with their line manager to devise a development plan based on their interview and their work in that first 3 months.

9.6.6 Therefore by the end of the 2020/21 financial year, every member of staff will have a personal development plan based on their assessment with the exception of grounds maintenance and Hythe Pool. The team are currently discussing with the relevant managers the best way to ensure our behavioural framework is embedded within these teams day to day work.

9.6.7 Looking forward the next stage to further embedding our behaviours will be to design, write and implement different selection exercises and methods that will enhance our recruitment and selection processes and 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 Skype will remain a preferred option.

9.7 People Strategy 2021-2024

9.7.1 Work has already begun on a refreshed People Strategy for 2021 – 2024 which will align not only with the new Corporate Plan, the Customer Access Strategy and also the Carbon Action Plan. Whilst the themes remain largely the same, we have adapted them slightly to ensure wellbeing is adequately referenced as well as agile working.



The draft of the new People Strategy 2021-24 can be seen at **Appendix D**.

9.7.2 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.

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 draft People Strategy, a new Agile Working Framework has been developed which takes steps towards making this a permanent feature in the way in which we operate. The first three months from July 2021 (subject of course to the government's roadmap) will be very much a test and learn phase where we will take feedback to ensure that the framework benefits not only staff, but also our residents continue to receive high quality services.

The draft of the new Agile Working Framework can be seen at **Appendix E**.

9.8 Best Companies 2021

9.8.1 As noted in section 7.2 above, in April 2021 the Council was awarded a '2-star' rating for outstanding employee engagement by Best Companies. This marked a big improvement from the pulse survey in July 2020 where we were rated as a '1 star' organisation.

9.8.2 Before moving on from the People Strategy section of this report, the final outcome of the Best Companies has to be mentioned. Whilst the outcomes were not divulged until recently at the end of May 2021, the survey itself that the outcome was based upon took place in March 2020 and therefore the results should form part of this report.

At a live virtual event on 21st May 2021, we were informed that we had achieved the following results:



More specifically, we were awarded 4th in the national Top 10 Best Not for Profit Bodies to work for and 57th in the Top 100 Companies in the South East – this is a significant achievement for the council and reflects on the incredible amount of work undertaken by the HR & OD team over the last 2 years to support the organisation to achieve this award.

10. PAYROLL

- 10.1 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
- 10.2 The payroll service continues to run in a very efficient manner between the two councils. This is clearly demonstrated by the smooth transition of the East Kent Housing staff onto the council payroll in October 2020 with 100% accuracy following a substantial amount of planning by the HR team to ensure that the structural hierarchy was correct and all personal information was checked.
- 10.3 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’.

11. HR SERVICES IN 2021/22

- 11.1 Some of the work already identified for the team during the 2021/22 year includes:
- Further development of the behavioural framework to embed competency based recruitment and selection activities including developing a range of selection and development methods which link to our values and behaviours as well as assessing knowledge, skills and experience;
 - Support to the project covering the new Customer Access Point and future relocation of the Civic Centre, leading on the changes that will directly affect our people;
 - Reviewing the technology that exists to further enhance the ways in which we can best continue supporting the council’s objectives;
 - Development of additional employee benefits to enhance reward & recognition;
 - Supporting the continued development of the case management approach to ensure there is greater resilience and flexibility in how we deploy our people; and
 - Continuation of the ILM internal and external delivery.

In addition, following the Covid-19 pandemic and periods of national lockdown the HR team are working to support the senior management team in enabling staff to continue working successfully from home whilst feeling supported and part of a wider team across the council as the civic centre looks to reopen in July 2021, in line with the draft Agile Working Framework.

12. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS / POLICY MATTERS

12.1 Legal Officers Comments (AK)

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12.2 Finance Officers Comments (CS)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

12.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (ASm)

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

13. 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:

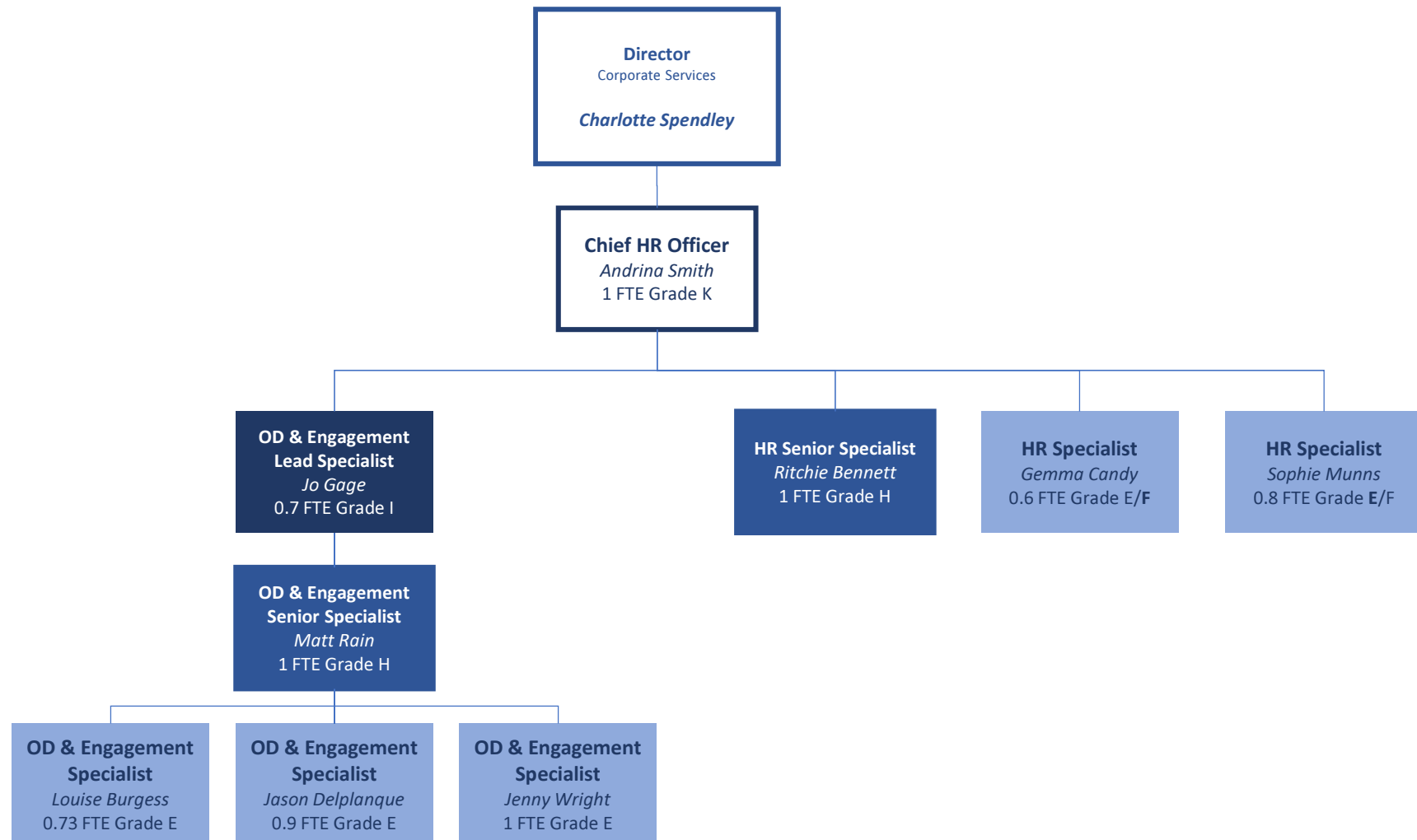
None

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – HR & OD Team Structure Chart
Appendix B – People Strategy 2019
Appendix C – Review of the People Strategy
Appendix D – Draft People Strategy 2021
Appendix E – Draft Agile Working Framework

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HR & OD Structure Chart



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PEOPLE STRATEGY

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

June 2019



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STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

- We will work with our businesses and communities to promote and invest in our assets – a beautiful coastal district with great connections to London and Europe.
- We want to develop a thriving economy for our residents and attract new people; supporting activities to develop jobs, homes and healthy living.
- We will design our services from our customers' perspective and use technology to best effect.
- We will use the next two years to work together with customers and staff to further modernise the council so we achieve our ambitions and continuously improve the way we do business.



TRANSFORMATION

The council is undergoing a 2 year transformation programme through to March 2020 and continuous improvement thereafter, with the aim of developing a council that is efficient and fit to serve its community and meet the aspirations of residents in the context of reduced resources.

Over the next 2 years the project will establish a new working model that aims to:

- **Improve service delivery**
- **Improve resilience**
- **Improve efficiency**

In the last 12 months a set of design principles were developed by staff and endorsed by Cabinet members:

- Focus on the customer
- Fewest steps for the customer
- Keep customers informed
- Digital by default
- Resolve first time
- Collect less and tell us once
- Use skills and expertise effectively
- Efficient working
- Use technology to ensure compliance
- Real-time measurement to improve
- Supporting customers to do more
- Proactively prevent and shape demand

PEOPLE PERSPECTIVE

The Council's Digital Strategy will form a key part of the Council's transformation project by helping to transform and improve the way in which our people work as well as the customer experience. In order for the council to move towards technological solutions that support service delivery, resilience and efficiency it is important to consider our people, their teams and the changing working environment that they will be part of in the future. Supporting our digital ambitions whilst supporting and enabling our people and teams to continue to perform at their best is our priority.

Expectations are changing (both in terms of our expectations of our people and their expectations of us) and to enable that change a new focus on behavioural competencies has led to a framework based around our existing core values:



Our leaders and managers will 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 throughout and beyond the transformation programme and stimulated by the opportunities that the changes will bring. Our people will be treated with respect and integrity and will be encouraged to maximise development opportunities that arise from the changes.

Ultimately, we need and expect a shift in our culture, whereby working and thinking flexibly will be our norm with people who are willing to learn new skills, able to contribute ideas, be innovative and influence decisions. We will become an organisation of commercially-aware and technologically-enabled employees who rely on customer insight and 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 the ambitious transformation programme. We will do this in a number of ways:

- Our focus will be on aligning developments and decisions impacting people to the Council's transformation objectives and corporate priorities
- Our resourcing 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
- 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 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.

PEOPLE STRATEGY THEMES



Structure & Roles

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

Where are we now?

The council has operated within a traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical structure which can lead to service area silos and decision making is often referred up the hierarchy. Job descriptions exist for virtually every role and are extremely detailed with evaluations carried out via the NJC scheme.

What will we do in the future?

- 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.
- Develop flexible, generic job descriptions supported by role families.
- Implement a flatter hierarchy that encourages matrix working and is designed to empower people to make appropriate decisions at the appropriate level.
- Support the introduction of technology with training & development programmes that enable and encourage working in a flatter hierarchy.
- Build flexibility into how we deploy our people.
- Enhance our job evaluation system with detailed local conventions.

Workforce Engagement

Engaging our workforce is key to enabling effective two-way communications and aiding retention

Where are we now?

Over the last 2 years our employer net promoter score has dropped from -27 to -36 which is symptomatic of the uncertain backdrop at the start of transformation. However we have maintained a strong working relationship with the trade unions and increased our focus on internal communications & engagement with the annual engagement survey leading to clear action planning to continuously improve engagement. In addition, the staff recognition scheme has been well received and gained support to continue plus a new reward scheme, F&H Rewards, has just been launched to enhance the benefits on offer to our people

What will we do in the future?

- 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 rewards, recognition and benefits 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 & 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.

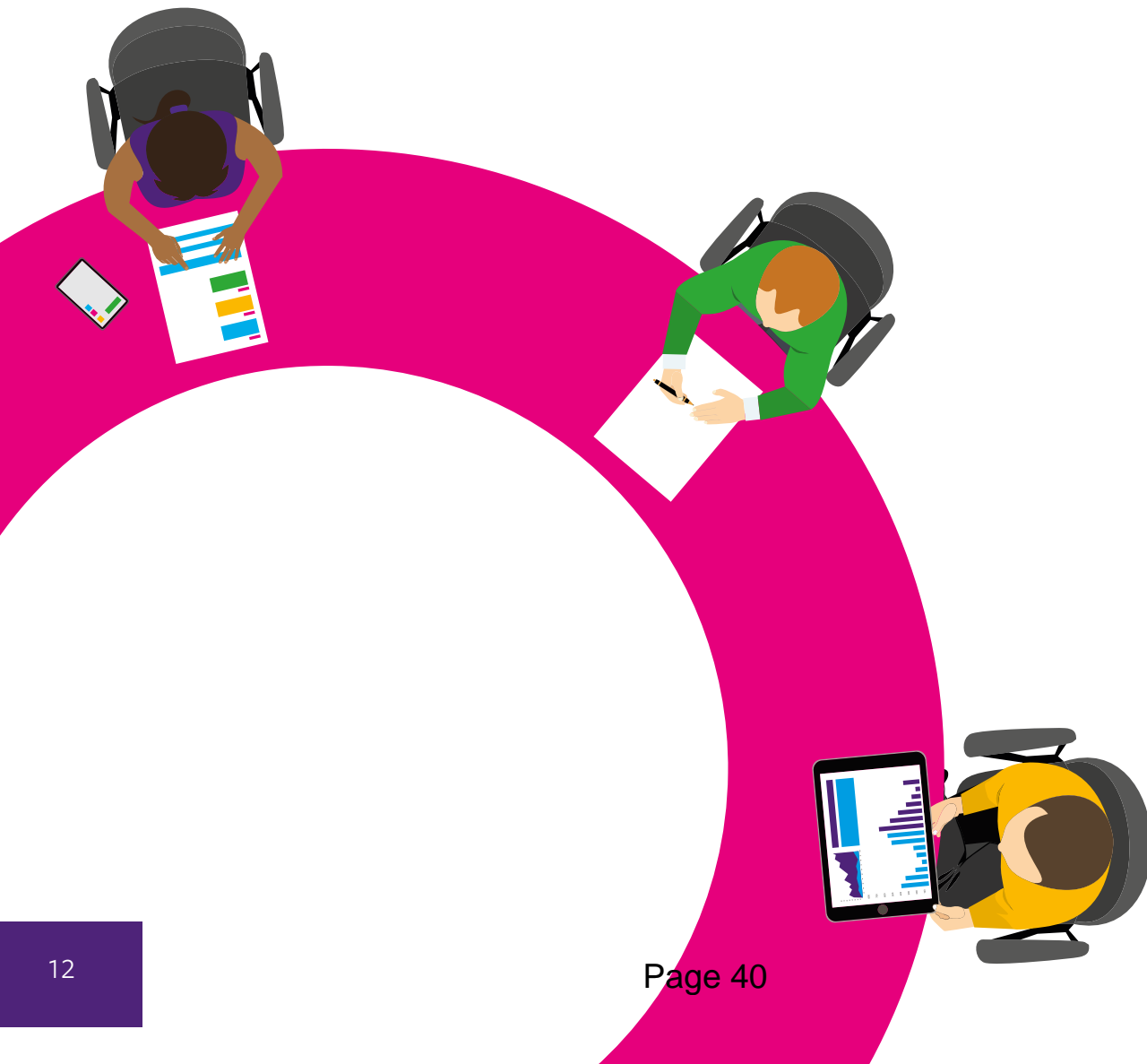
Where are we now?

The council currently operates traditional recruitment and selection approaches with an ad hoc approach to using social media and a lack of engaging internet presence to attract applicants. There has also been a piecemeal approach to recognising talent and retaining people. However, in recent years we have successfully operated the 'grow our own' programme, developed our apprentices and concentrated on internal secondments above external recruitment which has led to a relatively low level of turnover (14.4% in 2017/18).

What will we do in the future?

- Attract and secure the best talent with engaging and creative recruitment campaigns that reflect our ambitions, including fostering links with higher and further education institutions and local schools.
- 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.
- Integrate our behavioural framework into our selection and development processes.
- Develop the capability of our recruiting managers.
- Develop our induction approaches to accelerate the integration of new staff into the council.

- Develop clear succession plans for professional and strategic progression.
- Continually identify, grow and manage our internal talent in line with talent segmentation, succession plans and personal development goals providing appropriate career pathways.
- Continue to develop and promote our approaches to agile working.
- Identify secondments as potential development opportunities, both inside and outside of the council, to aid retention of our people.
- Develop ways to track investment in our people against our level of retention.
- Build our employer brand to reflect the organisation we're aiming to become.



Learning & 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, soft skills sessions, targeted sessions for middle management development with formal ILM Levels 3&5 Awards plus developing aspiring managers studying the ILM L3 Diploma. However, training and professional development is largely identified by service area managers rather than a strategic overview of our requirements based on corporate priorities.

What will we do in the future?

- 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.
- Support the sharing of knowledge and ideas through cross-functional teams.
- Ensure that our people have access to training that enables them to meet the expected standards in their roles by identifying learning needs gaps.
- Continue to introduce and embed the behavioural framework.

- 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.
- 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 brochure 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.



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 a traditional approach to appraisals which are not valued by many managers and their teams; in addition, some areas are reluctant to start formal capability actions and the culture of feedback varies between service areas. Some service areas are very target and metric led, but this is not consistent and pay progression is not yet linked to performance.

What will we do in the future?

- Drive a high performance team culture in which individual development and career aspirations are supported and aligned to our behaviours.
- Promote a healthy workplace and support our people to achieve a work-life balance that takes account of individual circumstances and life choices.
- Ensure that our approach to appraisal, reward, recognition and promotion is fair, transparent and understood by all.
- Develop a contemporary performance management framework, integrating our behaviours, which recognises high performers and also provides challenge and support.
- Introduce opportunities for 360 feedback linked to the behavioural framework.

Reward & 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 and acting up payments. Many roles have not been formally evaluated for a number of years and market supplements are not used consistently. 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?

- 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.
- Continually review and enhance the range of flexible benefits available to our people.

Culture

The six people strategy themes are all influenced by the changing culture of our council.

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

- Promote a culture of accountability and collaborative team working.
- Empower and challenge staff to achieve excellence.
- Actively engage and empower staff to act within a collaborative culture which encourages innovation and creativity.
- Help our people to understand our values and behaviours and the expectations and responsibilities contained within them.
- Encourage our people to be adaptable and learn new skills.
- Promote a test and learn, agile, iterative culture where staff are encouraged to learn from their mistakes.
- 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.

REVIEW OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

The People Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Chief HR Officer in conjunction with the Assistant Director – Strategy, Performance & Communications and the Head of Paid Service.



Recruitment and retention

Action	Update
<p>Attract and secure the best talent with engaging and creative recruitment campaigns that reflect our ambitions, including fostering links with higher and further education institutions and local schools.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>We are part of Kent Uni’s Employability Points scheme which promotes FHDC as an employer in return for us offering annual work experience placements (July 20).</p> <p>Work experience placements offered to students from Folkestone College and various other local schools (June 19).</p> <p>We highlight the benefits of working for the council and living / working in the district within job adverts. However, there is a clear opportunity to adapt this in light of changes to working arrangements and align to our Place campaign / locally distinctive guiding principle.</p>
<p>Design innovative ways to recruit traditionally ‘hard to fill’ roles in conjunction with area specialists, including identifying development pathways.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>We have recruited a Planner from Business Support and training them to degree/ RTPI level via the Apprenticeship levy.</p> <p>Recruited Legal Apprentice to train as a solicitor via the Apprenticeship Levy.</p> <p>We have created and recruited to Graduate Planner positions with a view to developing into Specialist positions.</p> <p>Secondments / internal opportunities continue to be utilised to help support and development and progression into roles.</p> <p>Retention payments in e.g. Planning used to attract and then retain people into hard to fill role.</p> <p>Use of market supplements to ensure salary is competitive – salesforce architect</p>
<p>Create flexibility within our pay and reward mechanisms to become more attractive and competitive in our recruitment.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>We have utilised existing mechanisms to support recruitment and retention. (e.g. greater use of Market Supplements, honorariums, retention allowances & agreements, grade reviews).</p>
<p>Integrate our behavioural framework into our selection and development processes</p>	<p>Competency based interview training rolled out to all managers and utilised in all cases. HR trained in writing</p>

APPENDIX C – ACTIONS FROM 2019 PEOPLE STRATEGY

<p>HR/OD</p>	<p>assessment exercises based on the Behavioural Framework. All staff have undertaken Behaviour Assessments resulting in a PDP (by Dec 20).</p> <p>Development activity in our L&D Brochure (launched Jan 21) is mapped to the Behavioural Framework.</p>
<p>Develop the capability of our recruiting managers.</p> <p>OD/ HR</p>	<p>See above, plus:</p> <p>Manager Development Programme: Recruitment and selection (competency-based interviewing) (1 hr): 10th September 2019.</p> <p>Further sessions on how to undertake behavioural assessments delivered in Feb and Nov 2020.</p> <p>Next management programme session on recruitment and selection scheduled for September 2021.</p>
<p>Develop our induction approaches to accelerate the integration of new staff into the council.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>A series of mini induction videos being produced by Feb 21 to enable a just-in-time approach to induction. New starters' Forum is held quarterly online to enable networking.</p>
<p>Develop clear succession plans for professional and strategic progression.</p> <p>OD/HR</p>	<p>Succession planning spreadsheets being completed in March 2021 and will inform training budget expenditure.</p> <p>BAs and resulting analysis will contribute to highlighting talent and developing careers.</p> <p>Transformational restructures have considered progression and competency frameworks are being developed in some specialist / harder to fill areas e.g. Planning, Building Control.</p>
<p>Continually identify, grow and manage our internal talent in line with talent segmentation, succession plans and personal development goals providing appropriate career pathways.</p> <p>OD/HR</p>	<p>Chief Officers and ADs have meetings with the OD & Engagement Manager twice a year to discuss their talent (top 10% of people with high performance, high potential, exemplary behaviours and ambition to do more). Discussions focus on retention and development plans for those individuals. Actions are taken forward as a result.</p>
<p>Continue to develop and promote our approaches to agile working.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Pandemic has provided the opportunity to enhance our approaches to agile working.</p>

APPENDIX C – ACTIONS FROM 2019 PEOPLE STRATEGY

	<p>It has been promoted through comms, messages from Susan, and in individual discussions.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to promote this further externally.</p> <p>Additional technology rolled out to enable lifeline to work from home rather than in the office</p>
<p>Identify secondments as potential development opportunities, both inside and outside of the council, to aid retention of our people.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Business Analysts a good internal example here.</p> <p>We are focused on providing an internal opportunity in the first instance, e.g. examples of people stepping up into Team Leader positions & Northgate PM role.</p> <p>External secondments have been limited.</p>
<p>Build our employer brand to reflect the organisation we're aiming to become.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Times Top 100 Employer ambition – Pulse Survey completed in July 2020. Competitive survey in March 2021.</p>

Structure and roles

Action	Update
<p>Develop flexible career pathways and support development programmes and opportunities to support our people develop their careers with us.</p> <p>OD/HR</p>	<p>L&D Brochure offers a variety of development opportunities for staff, with additional opportunities (based on business need) shared on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>Gender Pay Gap narrative highlights how flexible approach to development supports diversity. Introduction of Zoom sessions has assisted with this.</p> <p>Increase in career grade posts and competency frameworks noted above.</p> <p>Role families will continue to be developed throughout 2021</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Transformation restructures have been concluded.</p>
<p>Develop flexible, generic job descriptions supported by role families.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Transformation restructures have been concluded.</p> <p>Case Officer a good example of a flexible but generic role profile.</p> <p>There is some opportunity to develop generic specialist / lead officer role profiles - Role families will continue to be developed throughout 2021</p>
<p>Implement a flatter hierarchy that encourages matrix working and is designed to empower people to make appropriate decisions at the appropriate level.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Transformation restructures have been concluded.</p> <p>e.g. Management Team structure is flatter promotes greater empowerment and decision making at a Lead Officer level.</p>
<p>Support the introduction of technology with training and development programmes that enable and encourage working in a flatter hierarchy.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Staff Hub, Skype and i-trent training all delivered and ongoing, as well as MS Office packages.</p>

APPENDIX C – ACTIONS FROM 2019 PEOPLE STRATEGY

<p>Build flexibility into how we deploy our people.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Development of generic job descriptions, launch of competency framework, and cross training / development focused on behaviours support flexibility.</p> <p>Response to pandemic demonstrates flexibility.</p>
<p>Enhance our job evaluation system with detailed local conventions</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>No specific update – although you could argue that increased use of market supplements, honorariums, retention payments etc have enhanced the flexibility of our JE system.</p> <p>Local conventions will be designed through 2021 to reflect our approach to evaluating roles</p>

Performance

Action	Update
<p>Drive a high performance team culture in which individual development and career aspirations are supported and aligned to our behaviours</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>L&D brochure offers development opportunities for all, aligned to our behaviours. We also fund role-specific training and qualifications to enable professional development/ career progression. In addition OD supports teams with team building and away days.</p> <p>BA process has ensured all staff have a PDP aligned to behaviours.</p> <p>Numerous sessions on performance management and behavioural framework delivered to staff and managers. Next one scheduled for 9th April 2021.</p> <p>Also a feature of our “cultural induction” / new starters forum.</p> <p>Recent capability process highlighted importance of behaviours as well as ‘hard targets’</p>
<p>Promote a healthy workplace and support our people to achieve a work-life balance that takes account of individual circumstances and life choices</p> <p>HR/ OD</p>	<p>Online Zen Fitness on Tuesday lunchtimes</p> <p>Personal Resilience sessions held regularly every year.</p> <p>Wellbeing calls during the pandemic.</p> <p>Chai There - regular social event.</p> <p>Mental Health First Aiders.</p> <p>Support with home working, including home-office set up, promoting greater flexible working, initiatives for working parents.</p> <p>HR drop ins</p> <p>Support and information provided through dedicated section of intranet, F&H Rewards and introduction of Talkhealth.</p> <p>Promoted throughout Management Programme and New Starter forum.</p>
<p>Ensure that our approach to appraisal, reward, recognition and promotion is fair, transparent and understood by all.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Appraisal – BA sessions included a dedicated consultant who could offer support and objective consistency.</p> <p>Reward – JE process and other policies that have been utilised have been created with equality and transparency at the heart.</p>

APPENDIX C – ACTIONS FROM 2019 PEOPLE STRATEGY

	<p>Recognition – Scheme clearly communicated and based on nominations and panel review.</p> <p>Promotion – consistently utilised internal adverts as a means to ensure fairness and transparency.</p>
<p>Develop a contemporary performance management framework, integrating our behaviours, which recognises high performers and also provides challenge and support.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>All staff have been assessed against our competency framework and have a PDP based around our behaviours as a consequence. Leads to the opportunity to develop this further.</p>
<p>Introduce opportunities for 360 feedback linked to the behavioural framework.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>360 feedback is available to all and promoted in the L&D Brochure. Those doing the ILM L3 Diploma for Managers have 2 lots of 360 feedback incorporated into this programme.</p>

Reward and recognition

Action	Update
<p>Ensure our remuneration strategies recognise performance and rewards positive behaviours.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Nothing new introduced, but I would acknowledge a greater use of e.g. honorarium system that has e.g. rewarded positive behaviours and contribution during the pandemic.</p>
<p>Align our recognition scheme with the behaviours in order to recognise our people who demonstrate exemplary behaviours and values in their work.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Our Recognition Scheme recognises staff and teams who have demonstrated exemplary behaviours in their work. Three times a year staff can nominate one another based on their behaviours related to one of our 4 core values. In Jan 2021 we introduced the Employee of the Year Award, recognising an employee who has consistently gone above and beyond in all 4 core values.</p>
<p>Continually review and enhance the range of flexible benefits available to our people.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>F&H Rewards continues to provide a range of flexible benefits. This will be developed further in 2021.</p> <p>Staff surveys (including TT100) give us the opportunity to review and enhance. We have consistently seen aspects such as flexible working valued highly amongst staff, and this has been enhanced on a number of occasions over the past year.</p>

Learning and development

Action	Update
<p>Develop career pathways to enable long-term development, progression and succession planning.</p> <p>HR/ OD</p>	<p>Addressed above.</p>
<p>Review, evaluate and refresh our approach to leadership and management programmes ensuring they reflect our values and behaviours</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>The revised Manager Development Programme has a series of 15+ short sessions across the year, each mapped to our Behavioural Framework</p>
<p>Develop a pool of coaches and mentors to nurture talent and support performance.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>We are building a pool of qualified coaches through running an ILM L3 Certificate in Effective Coaching which started in October 2020. Some coaches will be up and running by April 2021.</p>
<p>Support the sharing of knowledge and ideas through cross-functional teams.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Transformational restructures have now been concluded. Cross functional teams have been created through case management and also in specialist areas. Regulatory Services and ICT & Digital Services good examples here. Integration of Housing service across the council.</p>
<p>Ensure that our people have access to training that enables them to meet the expected standards in their roles by identifying learning needs gaps.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>OD & Engagement Manager works with A.Ds and Chief Officers to plan the professional development of their teams and ensure this aligns to our strategic priorities. We also fund a number of professional qualifications centrally, making use of the apprenticeship route where possible to save costs.</p>
<p>Continue to introduce and embed the behavioural framework.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Competency based interview training; transformation competency-based interviews; L&D brochure; recognition scheme.</p> <p>Sessions have been run to support staff understand and prepare for their BA along with related manager sessions. Manager Programme had session on link to performance in Feb 2020 and April 2021.</p>

APPENDIX C – ACTIONS FROM 2019 PEOPLE STRATEGY

<p>Explore and implement options that align with the apprenticeship levy which will enable us to sponsor people through formal qualifications.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Levy-funded qualifications:</p> <p>Many (c15) managers doing ILM L3 Diploma for Managers</p> <p>2 staff doing C&G L3 Diploma for Business Administrators</p> <p>1 Legal Executive doing a Law degree.</p> <p>2 x OD & Engagement Officers doing a L3 L&D Practitioner Apprenticeship.</p>
<p>Provide our people with appropriate learning and development opportunities encompassing commercial awareness, innovation, digital awareness, procurement, commissioning of services and partnership working.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Commercial Awareness (incl procurement) (January 19)</p> <p>Digital Awareness: Encouraging Customers to Self-Serve (August 19)</p> <p>Salesforce and Skype for Business Training planned throughout the Transformation period.</p> <p>Using technology to enable culture change and cost savings (Nov 19)</p>
<p>Produce an annual learning and development brochure that outlines the opportunities available to our people to support them in the personal and professional development.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>L&D Brochure published and promoted in June 2019 and Jan 2021.</p>
<p>Produce an annual training plan that reflects our corporate priorities.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Annual training plan worked on with A.Ds and Chief Officers.</p>
<p>Provide appropriate training and development opportunities for our elected members and identify opportunities for co-training with officers</p> <p>HR/ OD</p>	<p>Extensive Councillor Induction planned and organised by the Chief HR Officer over May-August 2019.</p> <p>Relevant training opportunities for Councillors and Officers promoted as they arise.</p>

Workforce engagement

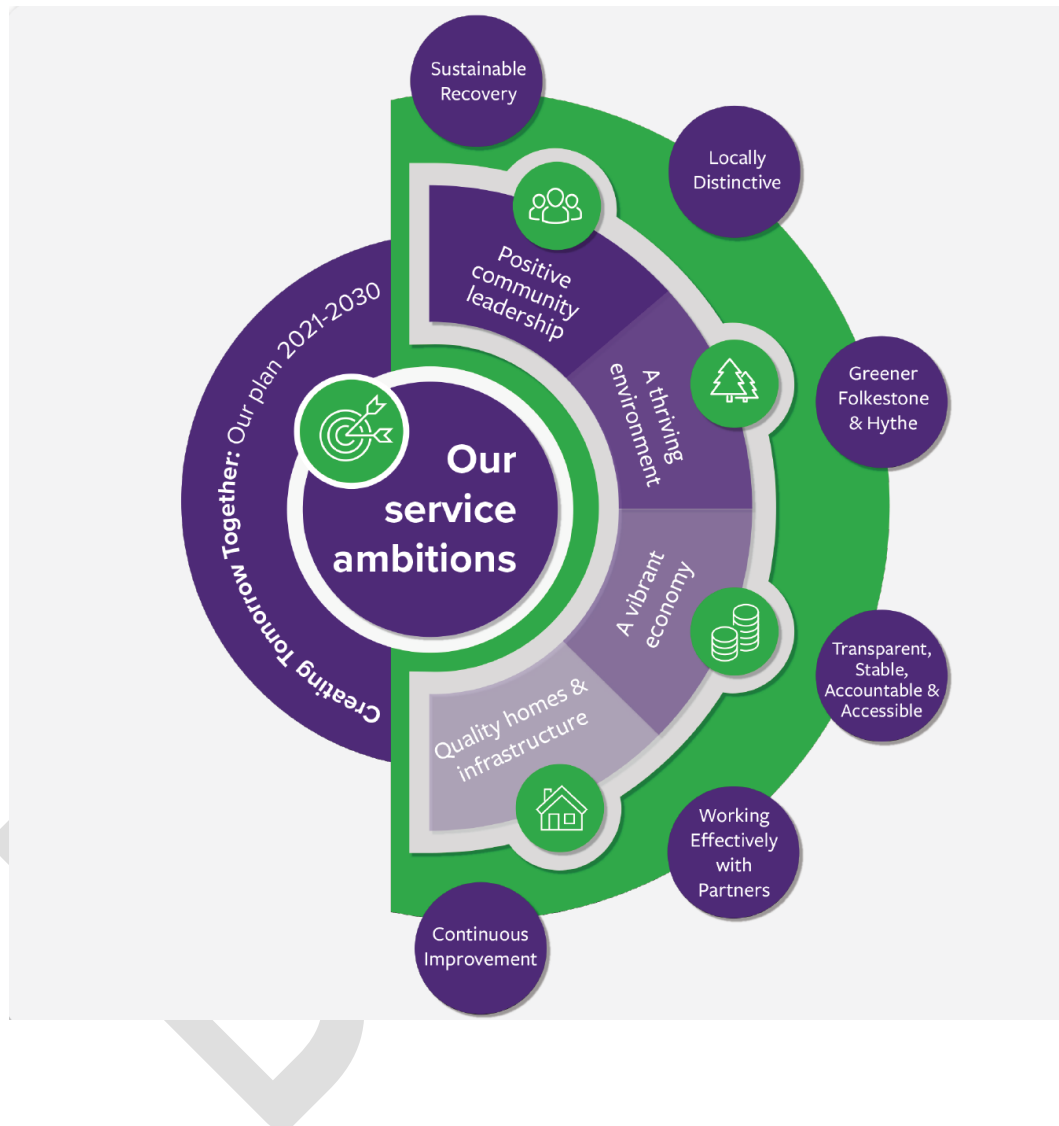
Action	Update
<p>Recognise and value engagement and celebrate successes and achievements wherever found.</p> <p>OD/HR</p>	<p>Weekly newsletter with audio and video content.</p> <p>Intranet Latest News articles have increased dramatically to several a month. These include celebrating successes and achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good news stories - External awards and nominations - Fundraising achievements - Social and Well-being offers
<p>Ensure meaningful effective communications and more direct engagement with our staff on matters that affect them.</p> <p>OD</p>	<p>Meaningful communication provided via email updates, staff briefings (online with Q&A), intranet news articles, and 6 monthly GM Newsletter for Grounds.</p> <p>Staff engaged on matters that impact them, e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff briefing topics - Staff social events - Office move/ location - Home-working
<p>Continue to work in partnership with our trade unions and staff representatives to develop and evolve our approaches to staff engagement.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>SCF continues to provide forum to understand and support engagement.</p> <p>Staff reps re-aligned to work areas to support this.</p>
<p>Continue to develop our rewards, recognition and benefits offer for our people and teams to recognise exemplary behaviours.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Ongoing recognition scheme.</p> <p>E-cards launched in 2020.</p> <p>Addition of Employee of the Year Award in Jan 2021.</p>
<p>Enable more social events to encourage and facilitate a vibrant culture.</p> <p>OD/HR</p>	<p>Summer Social (online in 2021)</p> <p>Christmas Activity</p> <p>Quiz and bingo</p> <p>Chai There - regular social event.</p>

Culture

Action	Update
<p>Promote a culture of accountability and collaborative team working.</p> <p>HR/ OD</p>	<p>Supported by Transformational restructures (“enabling structures”) and initiatives such as virtual kitchen, new starters forum, manager programme that enhance collaboration.</p>
<p>Empower and challenge staff to achieve excellence.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Team Managers have been given Times Top 100 survey data for their teams and support to enhance engagement in their areas.</p>
<p>Actively engage and empower staff to act within a collaborative culture which encourages innovation and creativity.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Help our people to understand our values and behaviours and the expectations and responsibilities contained within them.</p> <p>HR/OD</p>	<p>Behavioural assessments and related PDPs.</p> <p>Related sessions on launching the competency framework, preparing for and undertaking a BA, and links to performance management.</p> <p>An absolutely key part of new starters forum, which is effectively a “cultural induction”.</p>
<p>Encourage our people to be adaptable and learn new skills.</p> <p>HR/ OD</p>	<p>L&D Brochure and programme of activity.</p> <p>Supported by post Transformation restructures.</p>
<p>Encourage an environment of mutual trust, transparent decision making underpinned by values-led leadership.</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>Management sessions on performance management by output contribute to trust.</p>

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 2 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 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 6 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 we will 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 2-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 we will 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 & 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 we will 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 & 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 we will 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)

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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 we will 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 & 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 we will 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.

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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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The requirements and suitability of the role - The service(s) being delivered - The welfare of the employee
3.	Definitions
3.1	<p>Agile Working:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Agile working isn't about home working, it's about being where you need to be to do your job most efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.2	<p>Flexible Working:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.3	Hybrid Meetings:

	<p>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.</p> <p>The council is keen to promote this style of meeting rather than unnecessarily encouraging presence in the office.</p>
4.	Principles of Agile Working
4.1	<p>Agile working is about taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to modernising working practices and is based on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Manager's Responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<p><u>Employee's Responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<p>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.</p>
5.2	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>
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.

Document Control			
Date effective from	01 July 2021	Owner	Chief HR Officer
Approval Date	May 2021	Approval By	Continuous Improvement Board
Review Date	First review to take place in October 2021 (subject to the government roadmap) in line with the test and learn approach over a 3 month period		

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

This Report will be made
public on 2 June 2021

Report Number **P/21/01**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 10th June 2021
Status: Non-executive Decision
Head of Service: 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/21/01.

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 appears 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 2020 and should ordinarily be published by 30th March 2021. However, it was announced in late February 2021 that this deadline will be extended by six months due to the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HR Senior Specialist completed the review of our data during February 2021 which was followed by a report to the Corporate Leadership Team in March 2021. 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 fourth 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 over 45 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.

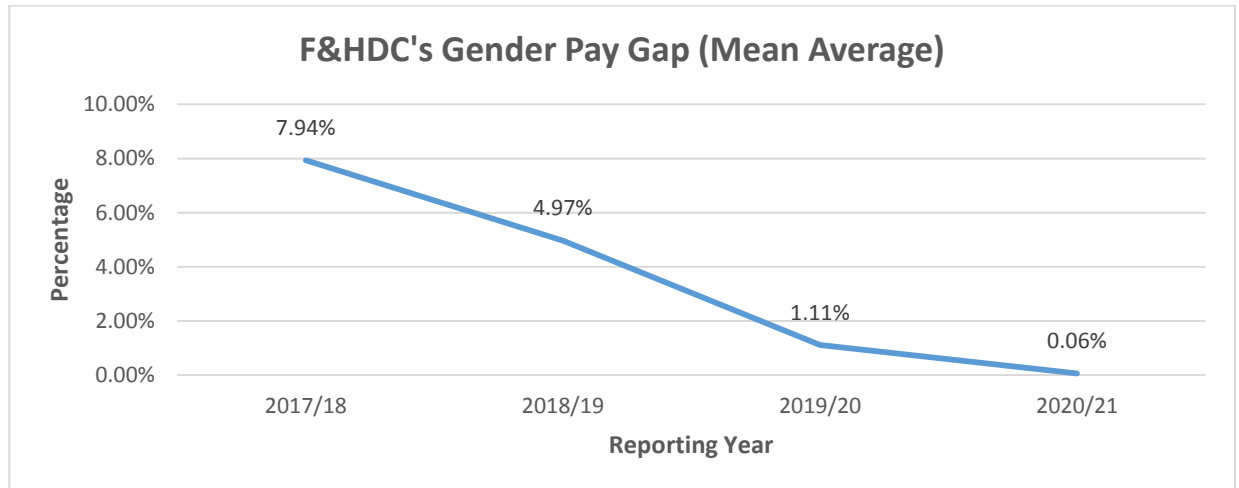
The council's average gender pay gap as at the snapshot date of 31st March 2020 is as follows:

2.1.1 Gender pay gap as a mean average: 0.06% (last year 1.11%)

This calculation shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women across the council are negligible.

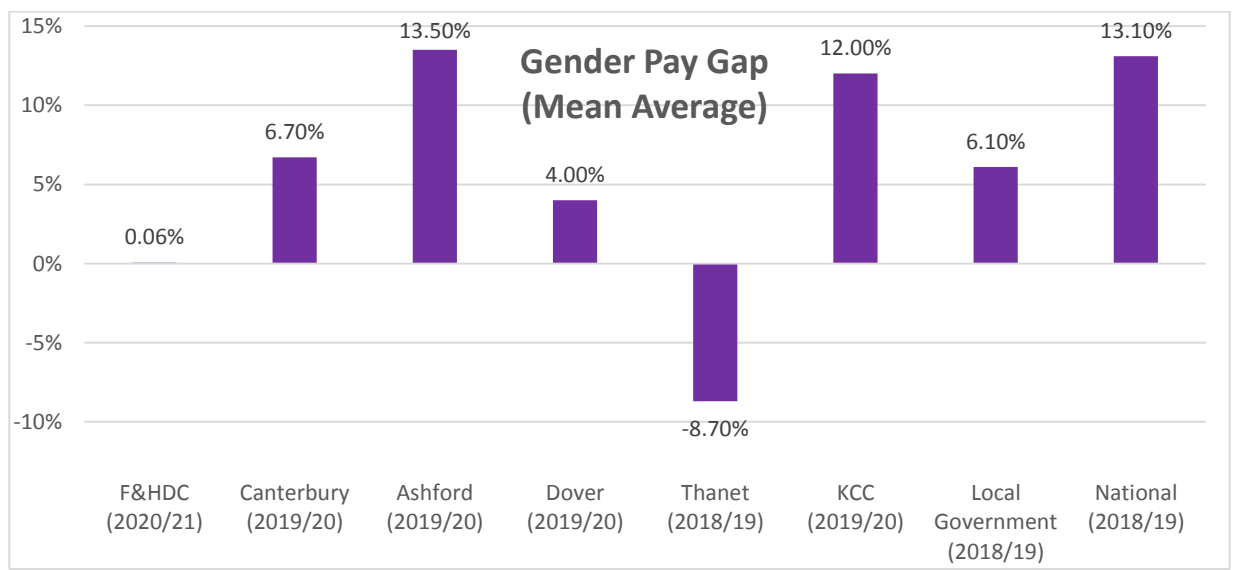
The average man earns £16.69 per hour. The average woman earns £16.68 per hour.

This reflects a continued reduction in the council’s gender pay gap in comparison with previous reporting years:



As we have not yet reached this year’s reporting deadline and the enforcement of gender pay gap reporting in 2019/20 was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we can only make national and sector wide comparisons with data sets from 2018/19. At this point the mean gender pay gap was reported as 13.1% nationally and 6.1% within local government. The council’s gender pay gap figures therefore compare favourably both nationally and across the sector.

The following specific comparisons are with the most recent data available:



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.

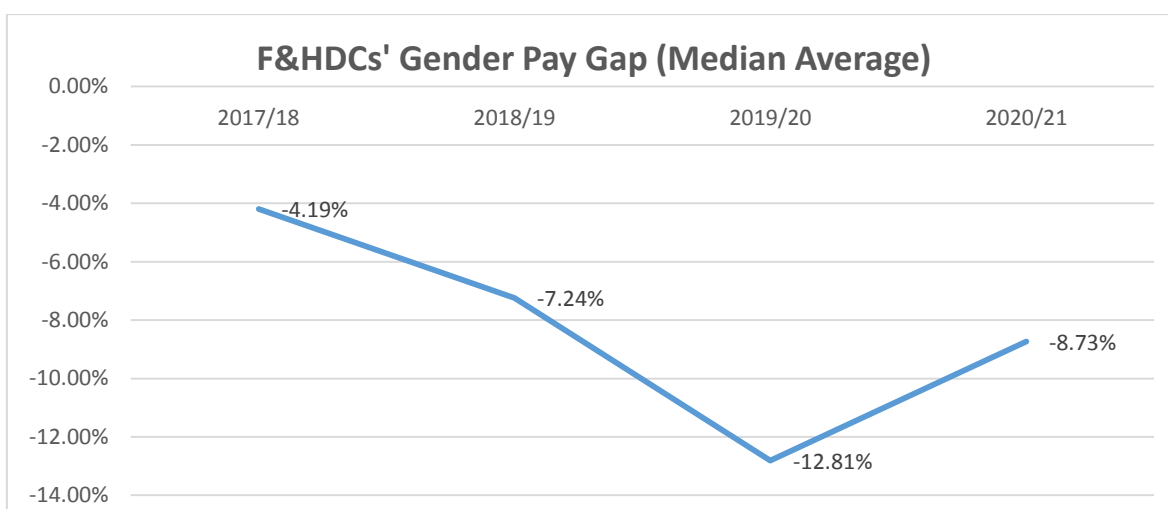
2.1.2 Gender pay gap as a median average: **-8.73% (negative 8.73)** (last year -12.81%)

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 £14.95 per hour. The median man earns £13.75 per hour. Using the median calculation, the average woman earns nearly 9% more than the average man.

Last year we reported a median gender pay gap of negative 12.81%. Just over a quarter of local authorities reported, like us, a median gender pay gap that showed women were on average paid more than men.

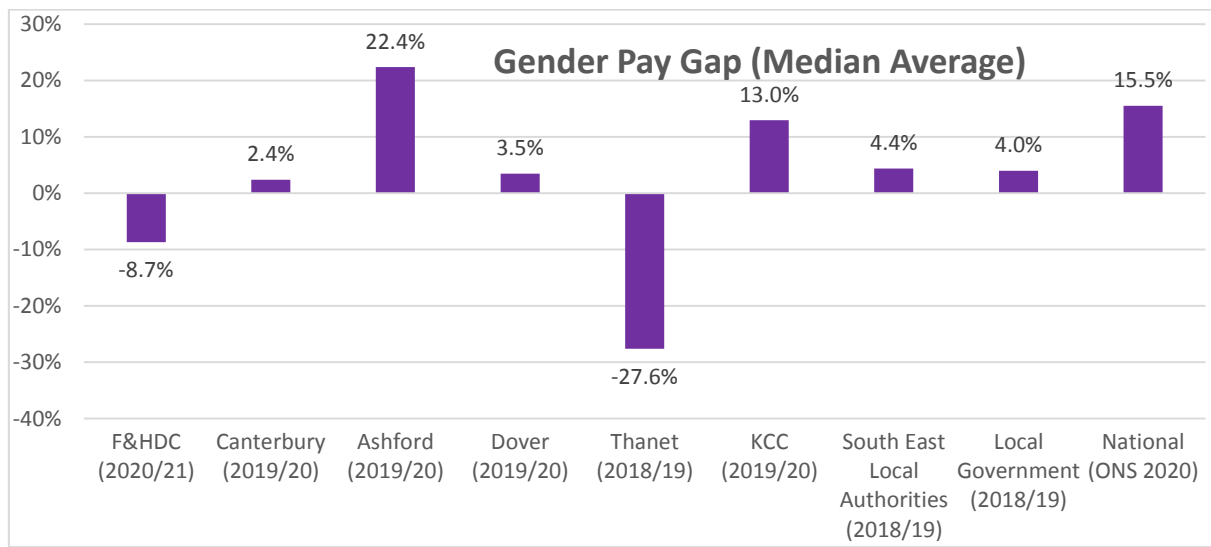
The median calculation is often considered a better representation of the typical difference in earnings as very large or small rates of pay can distort a mean average. The median is therefore ordinarily utilised by publications. The reason for the difference in mean and median calculations is considered in paragraph 3.1 below.

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



2.1.3 In 2018/19 the median gender pay gap was reported as 4% across local government, with just over a quarter of local authorities reporting, like us, a median gender pay gap that showed women were on average paid more than men. The most recent data from the Office of National Statistics shows a national median gender pay gap of 15.5%. 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 2019/20 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 2019 and 31st March 2020, six staff (three men and three women) received one-off honorarium payments that have been included in the calculations below.

2.2.1 Average bonus gender pay gap as a mean average: 21.88%

The mean average one-off honorarium payment made to females in the period was £833.33. The average payment to males was £1,066.67.

2.2.2 Average bonus gender pay gap as a median average: 0.0%

The median average one-off honorarium payment made to both males and females in the period was £1,000.

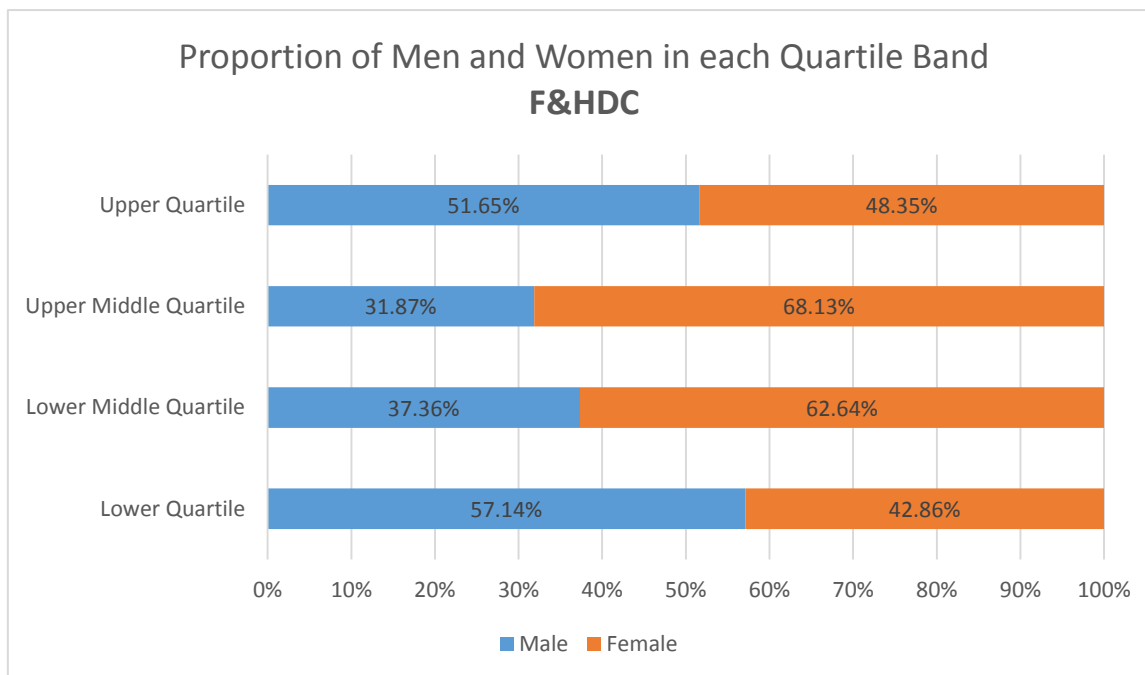
2.2.3 The proportion of men and women receiving bonuses:

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 (and vice versa).

1.83% of male employees received a one-off honorarium payment when compared to 1.44% of female employees.

2.3 The table 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; the upper quartile contains the highest paid 25%.

2.3.1 Proportion of men and women in each quartile pay band



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; the upper quartile contains the highest paid 25%.

3. SUPPORTING NARRATIVE

3.1 The Difference between the Mean and Median Averages:

The chart above firstly helps to explain the difference between the council's mean average (0.06%) and median average (-8.73%) figures reported in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3.

The council employs more women than men. 55.5% of staff included in these gender pay gap calculations were female. This is rather typical in local government and on average has led to a higher proportion of women across all pay quartiles in the sector. However, at Folkestone & Hythe the distribution of men and women is more uneven. The majority of women (59%) are concentrated in the middle pay quartiles, while the majority of men (61%) are counted in either the lowest or highest pay bracket

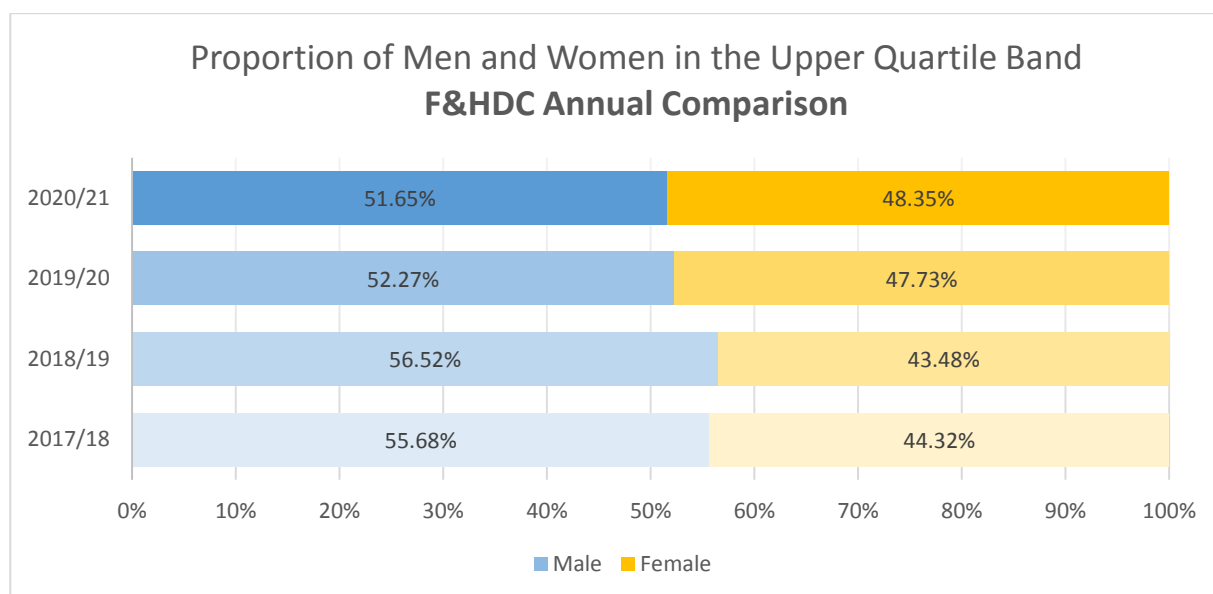
The male domination of the upper pay quartile helps to explain a mean average that shows, overall, men are paid slightly more than women. Indeed, 29% of male employees are in this highest earning bracket when compared to 22% of women. However, the large proportion of males found in the lowest pay quartile coupled with a female domination of the upper middle quartile has resulted in this mean average being rather negligible.

This combination has also resulted in the median female being found higher on the pay spectrum than the median male.

3.2 The Reduction in the Average Gender Pay Gap:

Our data over the past four reporting years shows an increase in the proportion of females within the highest earning bracket. The positive actions taken to support this

are considered in paragraph 3.4 below. This, coupled with an increase in the percentage of males in the lowest pay quartile this year, goes some way to explaining the reduction in the council's mean average gender pay gap.



3.3 Conversely, the proportion of females within the lower middle pay quartile (which encompasses Grade D-E type positions) has also increased in comparison to last reporting year, resulting in a narrowing of the council's median gender pay gap.

3.4 The council has taken numerous actions to reduce the gender pay gap and continues to do so in order to reduce it further. However, while the actions outlined below may have contributed to the reduction in our gender pay gap, 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 significant influence on average figures and the data reported. The manner in which the data needs to be calculated also means that where the quartile bands are drawn varies each year and that a small change to actual headcount may also have an impact on these percentage figures. While not included in this year's data, the introduction of the Housing service has impacted on the council's headcount and may have an impact on subsequent reporting years.

Paragraph 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 (37%) 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.

The data continues to indicate a correlation between working hours, gender and the pay quartiles. Overall, 25% of the posts included in the calculations are part time, the majority of which (81%) are undertaken by female staff. A significant proportion (60%) of these part-time posts appear in the middle of the pay spectrum, where the majority (59%) of females have been counted. The fewest amount of part-time roles appear in the highest pay quartile. This is reflective of the national situation though, with the Office of National Statistics consistently reporting 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 council has introduced a number of measures to increase gender diversity within the upper pay quartile:

- Even prior to Covid-19 restrictions working flexibly was encouraged, with the majority of staff having the ability to work flexible hours and in a range of locations including from home. This flexibility has increased even further since the data snapshot date of 31st March 2020.
- 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 data snapshot date (31st March 2020) learning and development activities have taken place remotely, which increases accessibly 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 Comment (GE) – This report demonstrates Folkestone & Hythe District Council's continued commitment to Equality and Diversity. 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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This Report will be made public on 2 June 2021

Report Number **P/21/02**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 10th June 2021
Status: Non-executive Decision
Chief Officer: Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer

SUBJECT: PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

SUMMARY: This report presents a revised pay policy statement for 2021/22 for approval and recommendation to Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report P/21/02.
2. To recommend to council that it approve under S38(1) Localism Act 2011 the Pay Policy Statement appended to this report for 2021/22.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All local authorities are required to annually publish, and present to Full Council for adoption, a Pay Policy Statement in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. Folkestone & Hythe District Council's Pay Policy Statement is proposed to be updated, adopted and published by the end of March each year.

2. PAY POLICY

- 2.1 The draft Pay Policy Statement for 2021-22 is attached as **Appendix A**. This is based on:

- The Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG)** Statutory Guidance Under Section 40 of the Localism Act, Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, published at February 2012,
- The Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Openness and Accountability in Local Pay: Guidance under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011 – Supplementary Guidance, published February 2013,
- Guidance from the Local Government Association.

** The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is now known as the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government however the guidance documents still bear the DCLG name.

- 2.2 The DCLG Guidance confirms that councils are not 'required to use the pay policy (statement) to publish specific numerical data on pay and reward' however it should be noted that the council is required to publish certain salary information under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency and by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
- 2.3 The Guidance further states that the Localism Act requires authorities to explain what they think the relationship should be between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and its employees who are not Chief Officers. The pay policy statement therefore explains the 'relationship' in terms of the grading systems used and by reference to the requirements set out in paragraph 2.2 above.
- 2.4 Paragraph 5 of the Pay Policy Statement was updated for 2021/22 in January 2021 to reference and provide clarity over the definition of 'chief officer' back to the Local Government and Housing Act 1998. This paragraph remains unchanged in the revised statement.
- 2.5 In January 2021, paragraph 38 of the Pay Policy Statement was updated to reflect the introduction of the exit pay cap at the end of 2020. In-between personnel committee recommending the Pay Policy Statement

to Council and a Council meeting taking place, the government notified public sector bodies that it was revoking the new regulations due to some unforeseen and unintended consequences that would arise if it was enforced. As a result, paragraph 38 has been re-written to mirror the paragraph used in previous years.

2.6 The changes outlined in 2.5 above are the only substantial changes made to the statement since its previous review by this committee in January 2021.

2.7 At the time of writing this report no further updated guidance notes have been issued by the MHCLG (DCLG), however should an update be issued that requires an amendment to the attached pay policy statement for 2021-22 then a revised statement will be presented to the Personnel Committee at a future meeting.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3.1 A summary of the perceived risks are as follows:

- No perceived risks

4. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS / POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report, relevant issues having been addressed in each of the report and the Appendix.

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CS)

Any financial implications arising from any reward strategy will need to be considered within the council's medium term financial planning process.

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:

None

Appendix

Appendix A – Draft Pay Policy Statement 2021-22

Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Pay Policy Statement – Financial Year 2021-22

Purpose

1. This Pay Policy Statement is provided in accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. This will be updated annually, or more frequently, i.e. by the end of March each year. Approval of the Pay Policy, and any amendments, will be made by resolution of the full council.
2. This pay policy statement sets out Folkestone & Hythe District Council's (FHDC) policies relating to the pay of its workforce for the financial year 2021-22. In particular the:
 - Remuneration of its Chief Officers
 - Remuneration of its "lowest paid employees"
 - Relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and the remuneration of its employees who are not Chief Officers

Definitions

3. For the purpose of this pay policy the following definitions will apply:
4. **Pay/remuneration** includes salary (for employees) or payment under a contract of services (for self employed), expenses, bonuses, performance related pay, as well as contractual arrangements involving possible future severance payments. Also, charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind, termination payments and increases in/enhancement of pension entitlement as a result of a resolution of the authority.
5. For the purposes of this Pay Policy, '**Chief Officer**' refers to the following roles within FHDC as defined within section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1988:
 - Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)* (statutory Chief Officer)
 - Director – Corporate Services* (non-statutory Chief Officer)
 - Director – Place* (non-statutory Chief Officer)
 - Director – Housing & Operations* (non-statutory Chief Officer)
 - Director – Transformation & Transition (non-statutory Chief Officer)
 - Development Director (non-statutory Chief Officer)
 - Chief Finance Officer & s151 Officer** (statutory Chief Officer)
 - Monitoring Officer*** (statutory Chief Officer)
 - In addition, Assistant Directors and those posts which report directly, and are directly accountable, to a statutory or non-statutory Chief Officer in respect of all or most of their duties.

* Members of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

** This role is currently undertaken by the Director – Corporate Services.

*** This role is currently undertaken by the Assistant Director – Governance and Law.

6. **'Lowest paid employees'** refers to those staff employed within grade B of the Council's pay framework. There are no staff governed by National consultation groups. This definition for the "lowest paid employees" has been adopted because grade B is the lowest grade on the Council's pay framework.
7. **'Employee who is not a Chief Officer'** refers to all staff who are not covered under the 'Chief Officer' group above. This includes the 'lowest paid employees' i.e. staff on grade B. There are no staff governed by National consultation groups.

Pay framework and remuneration levels

General approach

8. Remuneration at all levels needs to be adequate to secure and retain high-quality employees dedicated to fulfilling the council's business objectives and delivering services to the public. This has to be balanced by ensuring remuneration is not, nor is seen to be, unnecessarily excessive. Each council:
 - Has responsibility for balancing these factors;
 - Faces its own unique challenges and opportunities in doing so; and
 - Retains flexibility to cope with various circumstances that may arise that might necessitate the use of market supplements or other such mechanisms for individual categories of posts where appropriate.
9. FHDC will be transparent on pay rises including the publication, on the Council's website, of any above inflation pay rises. The size of the award paid to employee(s) should be commensurate with the work being rewarded. Advice and guidance is available to decision takers on this including with regard to equal pay provisions.

Responsibility for decisions on remuneration

10. It is essential for good governance that decisions on pay and reward packages for the Chief Executive and chief officers are made in an open and accountable way and that there is a verified and accountable process for recommending the levels of top salaries. FHDC will review the terms of senior appointments, to ensure value for money, including where arrangements could be perceived as seeking to minimise tax payments.
11. The pay for the "lowest paid employees" and "all other employees who are not Chief Officers" is determined by the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee comprises elected Councillors, and is formed in accordance with the rules governing proportionality and has responsibility for local terms and conditions of employment for staff within FHDC's pay framework.
12. FHDC's pay framework was implemented in 2007 and is based on:
 - Local pay determination for 'all other employees who are not Chief Officers', including those Assistant Directors who hold statutory positions; and
 - With effect from September 2015, local pay determination for Chief Officers who are members of the Corporate Leadership Team. The pay will be

determined by the Remuneration Committee comprising members of the Personnel Committee with external independent advice.

13. Full Council will be offered the opportunity to vote on salary packages, at the time of an employee's appointment, which are greater than £100,000 a year. Salary packages include the annual salary, bonuses, fees or allowances routinely payable to the appointee and benefits in kind to which the officer is entitled as a result of their employment.

Salary grades and grading framework for 'all other employees who are not Chief Officers'.

14. Grades are locally determined taking into account national guidance, with the grade for each role being determined by a consistent job evaluation process. This followed a national requirement for all Local Authorities and other public sector employers to review their pay and grading frameworks to ensure fair and consistent practice for different groups of workers with the same employer.
15. As part of this, FHDC determined a local pay framework and the overall number of grades is 11, grade B being the lowest and grade L the highest. Grade A on the pay framework was removed as part of the pay negotiations for April 2020. Grade L was introduced during the 2019-20 financial year following a benchmarking exercise with approval from Personnel Committee. Each employee will be on one of the 11 grades based on the job evaluation of their role. Employees can progress to the salary range maximum of their grade by annual progression and subject to assessment of their performance in the process.
16. Pay awards are considered annually for all employees with the exception of the Chief Executive and Directors, unless otherwise by agreement. These are developed using local pay determination in negotiation with the local Trades Unions and staff representatives. The last pay award to 'all other employees who are not Chief Officers' was made at April 2020.
17. The pay for the Chief Executive and Director roles is subject to local pay negotiation, with the most recent pay award being April 2017. However, following a benchmarking exercise, Personnel Committee approved new pay scales for these roles in June 2019.
18. For the Chief Executive and Directors, salary on appointment has regard to the relative size and challenge of the role and account is also taken of other relevant available information, including the salaries of comparable posts in other similar sized organisations.
19. The posts with a current salary package above £100,000 are the Chief Executive and Directors.

'Chief Officers' who are Assistant Directors

20. Pay for Assistant Directors is within the main pay framework, at grade L, and they are treated in accordance with the arrangements detailed above for 'lowest paid employees' and 'all other employees who are not Chief Officers'. Pay is determined by the Personnel Committee in accordance with arrangements detailed

above for the 'lowest paid employees' and 'all other employees who are not chief officers'.

'Lowest paid employees'

21. Each "lowest paid employee" is paid within the salary range for grade B with due regard paid to the National Living Wage which was introduced in April 2016.

Allowances

22. There is no provision for bonus payments for the 'lowest paid employees', for 'employees who are not Chief Officers' or for 'Chief Officers'.
23. In addition to incremental progression, FHDC provides the following additional payment schemes to the main scheme for 'employees who are not Chief Officers' and Assistant Directors. These schemes include:
- When temporarily undertaking additional duties e.g. the full, or a proportion of, the duties of a higher graded post
 - Honorarium e.g. for exceptional level of performance
 - Allowances e.g. for additional hours, weekend and/or public holiday working, disturbance, eye tests, tools, telephone use, emergency co-ordination, first aid, car and standby
 - Additional and accelerated increments e.g. for exam success and consistent exceptional performance. This is subject to the maximum of the scale not being exceeded.
 - Childcare vouchers (for those enrolled in a scheme prior to October 2018)
24. FHDC provides a car allowance for Directors and the Chief Executive.
25. FHDC has the flexibility to introduce additional schemes if required and to respond to changing conditions in the employment market including skills shortage.

Other pay elements

26. 'Chief Officers' (Chief Executive and Directors) are performance managed differently from the performance management process applying to the 'lowest paid employees' and 'employees who are not Chief Officers'. This includes input from, and assessment by, identified FHDC Members.
27. Targets are set and performance against those targets is assessed. Chief Officers receive incremental progression until the top of their grade is reached. Where pay progression is considered, performance will be taken into account when determining whether any award will be made.

Charges, fees or allowances

28. Any allowance, or other payments, will only be made to staff in connection with their role and/or the patterns of hours they work and must be in accordance with the Council's internal Pay Policy statement which explains related procedure and practice.

29. The following charges, fees or allowances are paid to the Chief Executive: Election Duties including as Returning Officer, paid separately from salary payments. The Council's Returning Officer, who is also the Chief Executive, receives separate fees for local elections under S36 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. The Council has chosen to adopt the Kent Scale of Fees and Charges for local elections (see: [Cabinet decision and report](#) of 28 September 2011). The Returning Officer must not exceed the maximum fees and charges as laid down in the scale unless further approval is given by a decision of Cabinet or Full Council.
30. Employees receive Election Fees when participating.

Benefits in kind

31. The Council offers a discount at Folkestone Sport Centre Trust and a free swim at Hythe Pool.

Other Employee Benefits

32. The Council provides access to an Employee Assistance Programme which provides telephone and face to face counselling on a range of issues. The Council also has access to an Occupational Health Service which helps to ensure that employees are properly supported enabling a return to work following an absence as soon as possible.
33. An employee recognition scheme runs quarterly which recognises individual and team achievements across the council based on the core values plus a separate award for the employee of the year. In addition it also recognises long service with the first level of recognition at 5 years and then every five years thereafter. Employees recognised under these scheme receive a choice of vouchers or donation to charity.
34. Employees are able to register with F&H Rewards, provided by Reward Gateway, which is a voluntary online platform providing access to discounts for high street / online shopping, holidays, insurance and household goods.
35. As part of the F&H Rewards scheme, employees are able to participate in a salary sacrifice scheme for the purchase of bicycles under a 'Cycle to Work' scheme.

Pension

36. As a result of their employment, all employees are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. There are no locally agreed enhancements. With the exclusion of the Head of Paid Service responsibility, any such enhancements would be at the discretion of the Personnel Committee. In relation to the Head of Paid Service responsibility, any such enhancements would be at the discretion, and with the approval, of Full Council.

Severance Payments

37. We are required to publish:

- Our policy on discretionary payments on early termination of employment and our policy on increasing an employee's total pension scheme membership and on awarding additional pension (Regulation 66 of the Local Government Pension Scheme [Administration] Regulations 2008). These are covered in the Early Termination of Employment Policy which can be found on FHDC's website.
- Statements relating to remuneration. Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 requires an authority to formulate, review and publish its policy on making discretionary payments on early termination of employment.

38. Full Council will be offered the opportunity to vote on severance packages which are greater than £100,000. Severance payments may include salary paid in lieu, redundancy compensation, pension entitlements, holiday pay and any bonuses, fees or allowances paid. Bonuses may include any payment not normally paid to the employee and not formally identified within this document.

39. It is important that the Council has flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances as regards re-employing a former employee as a Chief Officer. If we re-employ a previous employee who received a redundancy or severance package on leaving, or if that person returns on a 'contract for services', or if they are in receipt of a Local Government / Firefighter Pension Scheme (with same or another local authority), we require that the requirements of the following are observed:

- The Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc) (Modification) Order 1999

And/or

- Relevant abatement.

40. It is the Council's policy that in normal circumstances a FHDC employee whose employment has been terminated on grounds of voluntary redundancy and/or voluntary early retirement and who has received a severance payment and/or early retirement benefits will not be re-engaged. In exceptional circumstances there may be a justifiable case for re-engaging such an employee but this may only occur following agreement by members of the Corporate Leadership Team.

New starters joining the Council

41. In our approach to appointments, particularly senior appointments, consideration is given to the value for money for the whole of the public sector. Consideration includes avoidance of arrangements which could be perceived as seeking to minimise tax payments.

42. Employees new to the Council will normally be appointed to the first point of the salary range for their grade. Where the candidate's current employment package would make the first point of the salary range unattractive (and this can be demonstrated by the applicant in relation to current earnings) or where the employee already operates at a level commensurate with a higher salary, a higher salary may be considered by the recruiting manager, with guidance from the HR department. This will be within the salary range for the grade. The candidate's

level of skill and experience should be consistent with that of other employees in a similar position on the salary range.

43. In professions where there is a particular skills shortage, and as a temporary arrangement, it may be necessary to consider a market premium to attract high quality applicants. With senior manager salaries, there can be scope for negotiation over the exact starting salary at the point of job offer, and a range of factors will be considered. The final decision as regards any discretion lies with members of the Corporate Leadership Team.
44. Where a senior (chief officer) new starter already receives a public sector pension, this will be declared on the FHDC website and relevant abatement implemented.

Relationship between remuneration of “Chief Officers” and “employees who are not Chief Officers”

45. We are required to publish pay related information. This includes the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency requirements to publish a Pay Multiple and information on senior salaries. The Pay Multiple is the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole authority’s salaries.
46. For the Statement of Accounts, Accounts and Audit Regulations and CIPFA Accounting Code of Practice requires us to publish:
 - Senior officer remuneration details on a post by post level
 - Disclosure of remuneration amounting to £50,000 and over in bands of £5,000
 - Exit package disclosures
47. Information on pay will be published on the FHDC website, as follows and by:
 - 1 June – the Pay Multiple figure and information on senior salaries
 - 30 September – the accounts as audited by the Council’s external auditors.

Conclusion

48. This pay policy statement, once approved by Full Council, will be published on the Council’s public website.
49. This statement is for the financial year 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022.
50. Full Council may, by resolution, amend this statement (including after the beginning of the financial year to which it relates). An amended statement will be published on the Council’s public website.

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This Report will be made public on 2 June 2021

Agenda Item 8

Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

Report Number **P/21/04**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 10 June 2021
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/21/04.

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 The council has now significantly concluded its council-wide transformation programme (report C/19/65 gives more programme detail) which implemented new staffing structures and systems. The emphasis shifted through 2020/21 to **continuous improvement** as a cornerstone of bringing about a significantly changed far more positive engaging culture at the council while remaining focused on addressing the needs of customers of council services.
- 2.2 The results of the council’s engagement programme are clearly remarkable, culminating in May 2021 with the council being awarded ‘Outstanding’ status following the Best Companies survey. Specifically members’ attention is drawn to the rankings of 4th in the national Top 10 Best Not for Profit Bodies to work for, and 57th in the Top 100 Companies in the South East; a significant achievement.
- 2.3 Moreover, improvements remain embedded in our approach to Customer Service Excellence as more ‘Compliance Plus’ designations were awarded to the council during 20/21. Again this is something to be proud of and remains a priority as we move to a new Customer Access Point (CAP), initially at the civic centre and then in Folkestone town centre, and in due course (subject to members’ decision) with the development of a smaller, more modern sustainable civic suite at Otterpool Park.
- 2.4 And of course both these significant aspects of organisation improvement were achieved simultaneously as the council responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Support for our residents and business owners, while responding to increased demands from tourists and emergencies throughout the year, deserve acknowledgement as they drew heavily on the available resources of the council and demonstrated both agility and focus. Many colleagues across teams went above and beyond expectations during 20/21 to ensure that the very best public services could be delivered swiftly and effectively.
- 2.5 This brief description gives an insight in to the positive, can-do culture that has now been created at the council; however there is no room for complacency. New major services changes, for example the waste collection

contract, or the significant increase in the volume of local tourists to our beaches etc., have been particularly challenging during the year and continue to place extreme pressures on some teams, many of which are small in size. There has also been increased job opportunities across East Kent through, e.g. the creation of Inland Border Facilities, which has led to increased staff turnover and skill shortages in some teams already under intense pressure. And the ability to sustain the pace of delivery is a concern within the current resourcing framework.

- 2.6 However, there remains a relentless focus on continuous improvement, innovation to test new ways of working, and operational enhancements where it is considered appropriate to test or adapt.

3. THE FORWARD LOOK

- 3.1 During this year, beyond the immediate day-to-day demands for high quality council services, the focus of resource will largely be on:

- i. **Recovery from COVID-19** which will continue to demand agile and innovative ways of serving our customers. Delivering against the new corporate plan provides the strategic framework for our COVID-19 recovery activities and embraces continued working with key stakeholders such as the NHS, DWP, KCC and draws on the excellence that has been established through the network of our volunteers and partners of the Community Hubs.
- ii. **Delivering the ambitious regeneration agenda** set by Members including projects such as: Otterpool Park; Princes Parade; Folkestone Town Centre, including a health centre at FOLCA; Biggins Wood; Ship Street; Mountfield Road; investment to support the climate change agenda; the council's housing estate renewal programme; and a significant expansion in the number of new affordable homes into our Housing Revenue Account, etc. The council has made a number of critical decisions that signal their strong support for the delivery of these major projects however there are some resource shortages which is currently preventing delivery at the pace members understandably wish to see.
- iii. **Communicating** effectively about our activities and the positive impacts arising remains a priority and, while recent improvements have been made, the senior team will continue to press the importance with all managers so that the central team is supported with input so that current, relevant information of importance to our residents and visitors can be done so with efficacy.

- 3.2 The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) of the council remains determined to deliver the decisions of members in the most effective and efficient way possible. Focusing on acute business demands while simultaneously encouraging our senior managers to horizon-scan in order to learn lessons from elsewhere, will need balancing as we progress through 2021/22 as demands are expected to remain high throughout the coming year.

3.3 Of particular note are evident strains on certain activities / teams, for example:

- the range and extent of demands on the development and regeneration teams highlights capacity concerns and skill shortages;
- our strategy team has struggled to secure additional expertise to advise colleagues and members across a range of low emissions / climate change matters;
- our finance team continues to face exceptionally challenging workloads with covid related demands while underpinning the delivery of major projects;
- our licensing and enforcement team is experiencing unprecedented levels of demands across its services;
- the volume of customer contact via telephone remains high and more remains to be done on channel shift to IT enabled self-serve;
- demands remain high on the development management team to progress the volume of new planning applications and an increasing number of enforcement cases; and
- the council's interface with the delivery of Otterpool Park Garden Town highlights that additional senior level capacity is needed.

3.4 However, as an overview of the challenges, this is not necessarily a unique picture to the council as there are wide-spread reports of particular skill shortages elsewhere across local authorities. The council's approach to agile ways of working, along with the improved reputation for being an engaging place to work, will positively support our recruitment endeavours that need to extend beyond our local geography and East Kent economy.

3.5 In addition to serving customers and progressing decisions made by council, the demand for information on operational matters from elected members has been an increasing trend. 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. Relevant parts of the constitution (Parts 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 trust and mutual respect.

3.6 In summary, the current level of resources deployed cannot sustain the delivery of activities at pace. In the context of the MTFs, CLT is exploring ways of deploying resources against the matters identified above and recommendations will be put before members in due course.

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)

Whilst this report does not make any specific recommendations that have financial implications it does focus upon the resource base of the council. As referred to in the body of the paper, changes in resource levels will need to be considered in the context of the MTFS and budget strategy and balanced with the demands placed on the council to deliver the Corporate Plan ambitions agreed with members. Specific proposals will be fully evaluated to consider how they can be funded as they are formally proposed.

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:

None

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