

# AGENDA

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**Meeting:** STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE  
**Place:** The Kennet Room - County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN  
**Date:** Wednesday 5 July 2017  
**Time:** 11.00 am

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Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 713035 or email [roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225) 713114/713115.

This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)

**There will be a training session starting at 10.00am in the Kennet Room on the following areas:-**

- **HR&OD delivery model and People Strategy**
  - **Policy development and the role of Staffing Policy Committee**
  - **Resourcing and social media**
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## **Membership:**

Cllr Allison Bucknell  
Cllr Tony Jackson  
Cllr Richard Clewer  
Cllr David Jenkins  
Cllr Andy Phillips

Cllr Ricky Rogers  
Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE  
Cllr Hayley Spencer  
Cllr Tony Trotman

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## **Substitutes:**

Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe  
Cllr Peter Evans  
Cllr David Halik  
Cllr Mike Hewitt  
Cllr Jon Hubbard

Cllr Bob Jones MBE  
Cllr Gordon King  
Cllr Ian Thorn  
Cllr Ian McLennan

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## **RECORDING AND BROADCASTING NOTIFICATION**

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## **PART I**

### **Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public**

1 **Apologies for absence**

2 **Minutes of Previous Meeting** *(Pages 7 - 12)*

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2017. (Copy attached)

3 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of disclosable interests or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

5 **Public Participation**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public.

#### Statements

If you would like to make a statement at this meeting on any item on this agenda, please register to do so at least 10 minutes prior to the meeting. Up to 3 speakers are permitted to speak for up to 3 minutes each on any agenda item. Please contact the officer named on the front of the agenda for any further clarification.

#### Questions

To receive any questions from members of the public or members of the Council received in accordance with the constitution.

Those wishing to ask questions are required to give notice of any such questions in writing to the officer named on the front of this agenda no later than 5pm on **Wednesday 28 June 2017** in order to be guaranteed of a written response. In order to receive a verbal response questions must be submitted no later than 5pm on **Friday 30 June 2017**. Please contact the officer named on the front of this agenda for further advice. Questions may be asked without notice if the Chairman decides that the matter is urgent.

Details of any questions received will be circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting and made available at the meeting and on the Council's website.

6 **Appointment of Sub-Committees**

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) agree the size, and
- (ii) appoint the members and substitute members (up to four for each Party Political Group) to each of the following Sub-Committees:
  - (a) **Senior Officers' Employment Sub-Committee** – previous members being Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Bob Jones MBE & Cllr Stuart Wheeler. (Substitute Members: Cllr Desna Allen, Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr John Smale, Cllr Tony Trotman.)
  - (b) **Appeals Sub-Committee** – previous members being Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr David Jenkins & Cllr Stuart Wheeler. (Substitute Members: Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Philippe, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr John Hubbard, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Mark Packard & Cllr Ian Thorn.)
  - (c) **Grievance Appeals Sub-Committee** – previous members being Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Mike Hewitt & Cllr Gordon King. (Substitute Members: Cllr Peter Evans, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Mark Packard, Cllr Ian Thorn & Cllr Tony Trotman.)

Under Paragraph 2.4.1 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, it is a requirement that at least one member of the Senior Officers' Employment Sub-Committee should be a member of the Cabinet when it discharges its function to dismiss and take disciplinary action against certain categories of officer in accordance with the officer employment procedure rules. Accordingly, it is recommended that a second Cabinet member be appointed to this Sub-Committee either as a member or as a substitute member.

7 **Professional Qualification Learning Loans Policy and Procedure** (Pages 13 - 26)

A report by the Associate Director, People & Business is attached.

8 **Quarterly Workforce Report: January - March 2017** (Pages 27 - 34)

A report by the Associate Director, People & Business is attached.

9 **Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee is due to be held on

Wednesday 6 September 2017 at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

10 **Urgent Items**

Any other items of business which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered as a matter of urgency. Urgent items of a confidential nature may be considered under Part II of this agenda.

**PART II**

**Items during whose consideration it is recommended that the public should be excluded because of the likelihood that exempt information would be disclosed**

None

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## **STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE**

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### **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2017 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Allison Bucknell (Chair), Cllr John Smale (Vice Chairman), Cllr David Pollitt, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute), Cllr Peter Evans (Substitute), Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Desna Allen (Substitute) and Cllr Glenis Ansell

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#### **13 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mike Hewitt (Who was substituted by Cllr Peter Evans), Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE (who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman) and Cllr Bob Jones MBE (who was substituted by Cllr Desna Allen).

#### **14 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

##### **Resolved:**

**To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 January 2017.**

#### **15 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

#### **16 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- (1) Wiltshire Council named best Council to work for in Great Britain** The Chairman was delighted to announce that Wiltshire Council had recently been named the best council in the country to work for, according to one of the fastest growing jobs and recruiting sites. The accolade came from Glassdoor, a website that held a database of millions of company reviews, salary reports, benefits reviews and interview reviews. The site compiled a list of the top councils based on reviews of current and former

employees with Wiltshire Council coming out on top, ahead of other councils such as the London Borough of Camden, Leeds City Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

- (2) **UNISON Branch Secretary** Sue Anderson had held the position of UNISON Branch Secretary since Wiltshire became a unitary authority in 2009. Sue was due to leave the Council at the end of March 2017 and Mike Osment had now been elected uncontested to the position. Mike would be seconded from his current role of Youth Offending Team Worker and would be taking over the branch secretary role in April 2017.

The Committee recorded its thanks to Sue Anderson for her hard work and commitment to her role of UNISON Branch Secretary and wished her every success for her future. The Chairman offered to write to Sue Anderson conveying the Committee's thanks and best wishes and also to Mike Osment inviting him to the first meeting of this Committee, after the forthcoming Local Government Elections, to explain his role.

17 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present or councillors' questions.

18 **Delivering the Business Plan - December 2016**

The Committee received a workforce report, excluding fire, police and school staff, for the quarter ended 31 December 2016, concerning:-

- Staffing levels
- Sickness absence
- New health and safety RIDDOR related injuries
- New disciplinary, grievance and absence cases
- Voluntary staff turnover
- Employee costs
- Additional financial information
- Employee diversity

The Committee noted that the headcount across Wiltshire Council had decreased since the last quarter by 26 employees (-0.5%), with the figure now standing at 4,657.

Sickness rates had remained at a constant level of 2.1 days per FTE. It was noted that stress/depression/mental health/fatigue was the reason for the highest number of FTE days lost for long term absences (913.11 FTE days), whereas for all absences cold/flu and other infections had the highest total of FTE days lost (995.81 FTE days). Cold/flu and other infections was the top reason for absence for 9 of the 14 directorates.

The Committee was pleased to note that the number of new disciplinary cases opened in the quarter had decreased to 15, which represented a decrease of 2, there were no new grievance cases opened in the quarter.

The use of agency staff had decreased during the quarter with Wiltshire Council using the equivalent of 117 full time employees through Comensura agency.

It was pointed out that there had been a small increase in the casual wage bill (an increase of £53,507 to £484,733) which was due mainly to the use of external school improvement advisors.

Members were informed that the format of the current report template was being examined in order to provide more meaningful information to both Members and also to Managers. Members were asked to give some consideration to this and send any suggestions for improvements to the Chairman. The following initial suggestions were made:-

- Monitoring of recruitment campaigns, such as social worker and planning officer campaigns.
- Monitoring of sickness and the ability to quickly highlight any sudden changes in order to provide early intervention where necessary.

**Resolved:**

**To note the contents of the report.**

## 19 **Staff Survey 2016**

The Committee received a power point presentation setting out the corporate results of the Staff Survey 2016.

The headline results of the 2016 Survey were as follows:-

- Employee Engagement Index increased to 58% (from 56% in 2014)
- Fully engaged staff increased to 31.7% (from 29.5% in 2014)
- Fully disengaged staff reduced to 1.2% (from 2.1% in 2014)
- Staff survey response rate increased to 65.7% (from 60% in 2014)
- Appraisal completion rates increased to 59% (from 55% in 2014)

It was pointed out that after studying the responses and comments received the following four corporate priorities had been identified for development:-

1. Learning and development opportunities
2. Resources
3. Visibility of senior management
4. Communication

During discussion, Members recognised the need to encourage those staff who had not participated to complete the survey form in future. It was pointed out that local government benchmarks were used and Members appreciated being consulted before the survey form was finalised.

**Resolved:**

**To note the results of the 2016 Staff Survey and the key priorities arising.**

20 **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of this Committee was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 17 May 2017 at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

However, as this date was the day immediately after the Annual Meeting of the Council, when members would be appointed to this Committee, the Clerk was requested to investigate if it might be possible to bring forward the date of the next meeting to possibly late April.

**(Note: Subsequent to this meeting, arrangements were made for the date of the next meeting to be brought forward to Wednesday 25 April 2017, starting at 10.30am.)**

21 **Urgent Items**

The Chairman was of the opinion that the following matter should be considered as a matter of urgency because it could not wait to be considered at the next meeting.

22 **Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved:**

**To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute No. 23 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.**

23 **Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Discretions Payment of Deferred Benefits**

Consideration was given to a confidential report from the Associate Director, People & Business in which the Committee was asked to consider a request from a former employee for early release of deferred pension benefits held in the Local Government Pension Scheme on compassionate grounds.

After discussion,

**Resolved:**

**To agree to the early release of the former employee's deferred pension benefits, as set out in the report, on compassionate grounds.**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.45 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713035, e-mail [roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## **Professional qualification learning loans policy and procedure**

### **Purpose of the report**

1. To present a new professional qualification learning loans policy and procedure to enable employees to access an interest-free learning loan to undertake a professional qualification that supports their career aspirations and development.

### **Background**

2. Wiltshire Council provides a learning and development offer which is available to all employees and includes a wide range of learning opportunities via a variety of learning methods. The learning and development budget is predominantly used for the provision of statutory and mandatory training, core skills and management development.
3. Historically there has been some limited use of the learning and development budget to fund professional or other qualifications but we are also aware that some services have funded staff to do complete qualifications. Both routes have led to inconsistent practice and therefore there have been issues about equality and fairness in terms of who can access this financial support.
4. The apprenticeship levy provides an opportunity to address funding of professional qualifications in a number of cases but we recognise that some staff will want to complete qualifications that are not supported by an apprenticeship framework and this policy is intended to provide them with a facility to complete a qualification and seeks commitment from the staff to invest in their own career development.
5. The professional qualification learning loans policy and procedure aims to support employees who will be required to self-fund the cost of a qualification and may not have the means to pay all of the cost of the course upfront.
6. With the current budget constraints placed on service areas this enables employees to invest in their own development with support from the council and still enable them to continue to gain qualifications and develop their career.

### **Main considerations**

7. Professional qualifications are vocational qualifications and are usually linked with a profession and are designed to help you improve and develop relevant skills for a particular career path.
8. If employees wish to undertake a professional qualification the following options will be considered prior to the agreement of a learning loan.
  - Can the qualification be covered by an apprenticeship arrangement?
  - Can the qualification be funded by the service area? (Funding could be available if the service have appointed the employee in a trainee post and the difference in salary budget is then used to fund the qualification).

9. If neither of these options are possible then a professional qualification learning loan can be considered, subject to the loan criteria being met.
10. A professional qualification learning loan will only be provided for completion of a professional qualification which supports career development within the organisation and is relevant to the employee's area of work or which would support a career change to another service within the organisation.
11. Employees applying for a professional qualification learning loan must have at least 26 weeks' continuous service and hold a permanent contract (or a contract which outlasts the duration of the qualification course).
12. Wiltshire Council will pay the course provider direct and recoup the amount paid via the employee's monthly net salary over the duration of the course.
13. The employee will be required to complete a learning loan agreement form stating their commitment to repayment of the loan. If the employee leaves the course, leaves employment with Wiltshire Council, or is made redundant, they are still committed to the repayment.
14. The minimum professional qualification learning loan is £100 and any learning loan must not exceed a quarter of the employee's annual net salary.

#### **Environmental impact**

15. None.

#### **Equalities impact**

16. None.

#### **Financial implications**

17. The policy will require the short term outlay of Wiltshire Council funds to pay course providers. However, this will be recouped from employee salary over the duration of the course.
18. If an employee leaves and the Council is unable to recoup the loan, the outstanding amount will be invoiced to them. If the outstanding amount cannot be recovered, this will be charged to the service area budget.

#### **Recommendations**

19. That staffing policy committee approve the proposed professional qualification learning loans policy and procedure as stated above.

**Barry Pirie**  
**Associate Director People and Business**

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Report author: Laura Fisher, HR Consultant – Pay & Reward

**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**  
None

## **Wiltshire Council Human Resources**

### **Professional qualification learning loans policy and procedure**

This policy can be made available in other languages and formats such as large print and audio on [request](#).

#### **What is it?**

This policy outlines the arrangements for employees to access an interest-free professional qualification learning loan in order to undertake a professional qualification.

The qualification must be relevant to your job or career development, team or Wiltshire Council and must be through an accredited programme leading to a recognised qualification.

#### **Go straight to the section:**

- Who does it apply to?
- When does it apply?
- When does it not apply?
- Criteria and eligibility for a professional qualification learning loan
- Prior to requesting a professional qualification learning loan
- Application for a professional qualification learning loan
- Payment of the professional qualification learning loan to the course provider
- Repayment of the professional qualification learning loan
- Commitment and obligations
- Leaving Wiltshire Council
- Professional fees and related occupational costs

#### **Who does it apply to?**

This policy applies to all Wiltshire Council employees unless a separate contractual policy applies to a transferred employee to whom separate TUPE terms and conditions of employment apply. This policy does not apply to teaching and non-teaching staff employed in maintained schools or academies.

#### **When does it apply?**

Professional qualification learning loans will apply where employees meet the eligibility criteria set out below and wish to make a request for a professional qualification learning loan arrangement in order to complete a professional qualification.

Any professional qualification learning loan must be made in relation to a study programme that is relevant to improving your effectiveness and performance in the organisation, now or in the future, and must be accredited by a professional body.

### **When does it not apply?**

Professional qualification learning loans will not apply to apprenticeships in line with the apprenticeship policy and procedure.

Professional qualification learning loans will not apply if you are being funded by Wiltshire Council to study for a qualification deemed mandatory in line with the learning and development policy and procedure.

Professional qualification learning loans will not apply if a service appoints a trainee and uses the difference in salary budget to fund the professional qualification.

Professional qualification learning loans will not apply for any training course or programme of study which do not meet the criteria as set out below.

### **What are the main points?**

Professional qualifications

1. In order to apply for a professional qualification learning loan you must be studying for a professional qualification. Professional qualifications are vocational qualifications and are usually linked with a profession and are designed to help you improve and develop relevant skills for a particular career path.
2. Examples of professional qualifications which are relevant to the council include (but are not limited to):
  - Accountant
  - Solicitor
  - Social Worker
  - Planner
  - Building Control Surveyor

3. There can be varying levels of professional qualification within a profession to include a certificate, diploma, degree and post graduate degree. You may apply for a professional qualification learning loan to access a course at any of these levels.

#### Prior to requesting a professional qualification learning loan

4. If you wish to undertake a professional qualification the following options will be considered prior to the agreement of the payment of a professional qualification learning loan:
  - Can the qualification be covered by an apprenticeship arrangement?
  - Can the qualification be funded by the service area? (Funding could be available if the service have appointed you in a trainee post and the difference in salary budget is then used to fund the cost of the qualification).
5. If neither of these options are possible then a professional qualification learning loan can be considered, subject to the loan criteria being met.

#### Criteria and eligibility for a professional qualification learning loan

6. To be eligible to make a request for a professional qualification learning loan, you must have:
  - a permanent contract with Wiltshire Council or a contract which outlasts the duration of the programme of study you wish to apply for.
  - at least 26 weeks continuous service with Wiltshire Council on the date the request is made
7. If you are on a temporary or fixed term contract, your professional qualification learning loan application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the monthly repayments can be met.
8. Your request for a professional qualification learning loan must be in relation to gaining a professional qualification that supports your career development within the organisation. It must have relevance to your area of work and improve upon your skills.
9. A professional qualification learning loan may also be applicable where you wish to gain a qualification which would aid changing career to another service within the organisation.

10. The minimum professional qualification learning loan is £100 and the maximum professional qualification learning loan must not be more than a quarter of your annual salary (net).
11. In line with HMRC requirements, a professional qualification learning loan can be up to £10,000 per year and you would need to make alternative arrangements for any fees above this amount.
12. If your programme of study lasts more than one year, and the accumulation of professional qualification learning loans in repayment equate to above £10,000 per year you will be subject to Benefit In Kind tax on this amount.
13. The minimum professional qualification learning loan repayment period is 6 months. If you wish, you may arrange to re-pay the loan in one lump sum by contacting HR payroll administration.
14. The maximum professional qualification learning loan repayment period is the duration of the programme of study.
15. Any professional qualification learning loan must be paid directly to the course provider and cannot be paid directly to you.

#### Application for a professional qualification learning loan

16. You should investigate appropriate providers of the professional qualification to ensure that you understand the options available. This should include the costs, course content, entry requirements and arrangements for enrolment.
17. You must discuss your intentions with your line manager as any loan arrangement will require their approval (and the approval of your head of service).
18. You should also discuss with your line manager any arrangements for time to study in line with the time to train policy and procedure and how this may be supported.
19. You must complete the professional qualification learning loan agreement form and send this to your manager.
20. Your manager will consider your request against the professional qualification learning loan criteria, confirm their approval and submit this to your head of service for approval within 14 days.
21. Your manager and head of service must complete the professional qualification learning loan agreement form to confirm their approval of

the professional qualification learning loan before any payment can be made.

22. You must submit the completed professional qualification learning loan agreement form including your manager and head of service approval, along with an invoice from the provider and confirmation of your acceptance on the course to [policyandreward@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:policyandreward@wiltshire.gov.uk) no later than 6 weeks before payment to the provider is required.
23. If acceptance to the programme of study is subject to payment of funds, you must submit your confirmation of acceptance on the course to HR policy and reward no later than 2 weeks after payment. If confirmation of acceptance on the course will be later than this, you should contact HR pay and reward as soon as possible to discuss the arrangements.
24. You must ensure that all sections of the professional qualification learning loan agreement form are completed and supporting documents are submitted as failure to do so will delay the application and approval of the professional qualification learning loan.

#### Payment of the professional qualification learning loan to the course provider

25. On receipt of your professional qualification learning loan application, HR pay and reward will make arrangements to pay the course provider.
26. You must ensure that the invoice submitted with your professional qualification learning loan application for payment to the course provider is for Wiltshire Council and not an invoice to yourself.
27. Payment will only be made via invoice from Wiltshire Council to the course provider.
28. The professional qualification learning loan will be paid in one lump sum direct to the course provider.
29. HR pay and reward will confirm with you once payment to the course provider has been processed.

#### Repayment of the professional qualification learning loan

30. HR payroll administration will set up repayment arrangements to Wiltshire Council and confirm the details with you.
31. Repayments for the loan will be made from your monthly salary in equal instalments over the duration of the programme of study.

32. If during the repayment period HR payroll are unable to deduct the monthly amount from your net pay for reasons such as sickness, maternity/paternity or unpaid absence, the missing payments will be added to the remainder of the loan so that the payback period is extended.
33. In exceptional circumstances, if you work part time or are on salary point 28 or under, consideration may be given to extend the loan repayment period for a further 1 year so that the monthly repayments are more manageable. You should contact HR payroll administration on completion of the professional qualification learning loan agreement form to discuss these arrangements.

#### Commitment and obligations

34. By completing and submitting the professional qualification learning loan application and agreement form you are agreeing to payment of course fees by Wiltshire Council in the form of a loan with deductions from your salary (net) as repayment.
35. Once you have received approval for the professional qualification learning loan and payment to the course provider has been confirmed you are committed to the scheme.
36. Any professional qualification learning loan must only be used for course fees. You may not use the loan to cover other costs incurred such as travel or course books or other learning materials.
37. Any professional qualification learning loan must not be more than the actual costs of programme of study.
38. You must complete all payments for the professional qualification learning loan within the duration of the course and by completion of the course, unless in exceptional circumstances agreement has been made to extend the repayment period.
39. If you do not commence or complete the course and payment has already been made, you will be required to continue salary deductions to repay the outstanding balance of the loan arrangement. You may arrange to re-pay this amount in one lump sum by contacting HR payroll administration.
40. On completion of the course Wiltshire Council is under no obligation to make available a role taking into account the qualification or in any way alter your terms and conditions of employment. You will be able to apply for roles that meet your new skills and abilities as they arise.

## Leaving Wiltshire Council

41. If you leave Wiltshire Council you will be required to repay all outstanding balances of the loan from your final salary. If HR payroll are unable to deduct the full amount from your final salary you will be invoiced. You will be able to continue with your course but will need to make alternative arrangements to finance any future study.
42. If you are made redundant from Wiltshire Council, you will be required to repay all outstanding balances of the loan from your final salary.
43. If you move service areas during the loan repayment period, the loan repayments will continue. You should discuss with your new manager how your programme of study is to be supported in line with the time to train policy and procedure

## Professional fees and related occupational costs

44. As part of the programme of study you may be required to be a member of a professional body or association.
45. You are responsible for payment of your professional fees, memberships, registrations or subscriptions and the professional qualification learning loan may not be used towards this cost.
46. This also applies to the payment of practicing certificates and all other types of occupational licenses which are necessary for you to hold.
47. You may be able to claim tax relief through the HMRC on any professional fees and subscriptions you pay; further information is available on [HR Direct](#).

## Roles and responsibilities

### Employee responsibilities

48. To ensure that you read this policy and understand the criteria, commitments and process for a professional qualification learning loan arrangement.
49. To discuss your intention to apply for a professional qualification learning loan arrangement with your manager as soon as possible prior to requesting a professional qualification learning loan to ensure

arrangements are in place to approve the loan and to permit study time in line with the time to train policy.

#### Line manager responsibilities

50. To consider requests for a professional qualification learning loan and to check that the details of the professional qualification learning loan follow this policy and procedure.
51. To agree study time in line with the time to train policy and procedure.

#### Head of service responsibilities

52. To consider requests for a professional qualification learning loan and to check that the details of the professional qualification learning loan follow this policy and procedure.
53. To make arrangements for study time in line with the time to train policy and procedure and to agree how this may be supported.
54. To understand that any defaults in repayment of the loan will be costed to the service area

#### HR responsibilities

55. To assist managers and heads of service in applying this policy and procedure.
56. To process payments to course providers in line with finance procedures.
57. To confirm payment of the professional qualification learning loan with employees and to make arrangements for deductions from salary.
58. To inform Finance of any loan arrangements and provide a copy of individual loan agreements.

#### **Frequently asked questions**

59. Can I use this scheme for any training course or programme of study?

You can only apply for a professional qualification learning loan to complete a professional qualification. In order to be deemed work

related, you must be able to demonstrate its relevance to your current work position or future employment with Wiltshire Council. It must also be through an accredited programme leading to a recognised qualification.

60. What if I experience issues with my course or course provider?

In the unfortunate event that you experience issues or have reason for complaint regarding your course, this will need to be taken up directly with your course provider.

61. Can my line manager decline my application?

Applications are subject to approval by your line manager and head of service in line with the criteria set out in the policy and procedure. If your application is declined for any reason, this will be discussed fully with you.

There is no right of appeal. However, if your circumstances change, and you feel that you now meet the criteria for a professional qualification learning loan (taking into account the reasons given for your previous application being declined), you may submit a new professional qualification learning loan application.

62. Can I apply for the scheme more than once?

Yes, as long as you have completed the payments on any previous course of study programme.

63. I have failed my course and have to retake. Can I apply for another professional qualification learning loan?

Yes. However in this instance, it is recognised that you may have more than one professional qualification learning loan in repayment at the same time. If this is the case, the sum of the professional qualification learning loans must not equate to more than £10,000 per year.

64. What if my course lasts for more than 1 year and requires payment in instalments rather than a lump sum?

Each instalment will be set up as a loan and you will therefore need to complete a professional qualification learning loan agreement and make arrangements for each instalment for the course. In this instance, it is recognised that you may have more than one professional qualification learning loan in repayment at the same time.

If this is the case, the sum of the professional qualification learning loans must not equate to more than £10,000 per year.

65. I have agreed a professional qualification learning loan for a 2-year course with fees for the 2 years paid upfront. What happens if I do not start the 2nd year of the course?

You will be provided with a professional qualification learning loan to cover fees for the 2 year course and repayments will be spread over the 2 years duration. You will be committed to repaying the remainder of the professional qualification learning loan through the monthly repayments. If you wish, you may arrange to repay this amount in one lump sum by contacting HR payroll administration.

66. What if I have a professional qualification learning loan and I now wish to reduce my hours?

If you reduce your hours, the professional qualification learning loan repayments will remain as originally agreed. However, in exceptional circumstances, please contact HR payroll administration to discuss how repayment of the loan can be achieved (i.e. a reduced monthly amount over and extended repayment period).

## **Glossary**

### **Benefit In Kind Tax**

Benefits in kind are benefits which employees receive from their employment but which are not included in their salary. Where benefits in kind are taxable, tax is paid on the taxable value of the benefit. HM Revenue and Customs defines this as the cash equivalent value.

For example, if you have a professional qualification learning loan arrangement which equates to more than £10,000 per year, you will pay tax on this amount.

### **Equal Opportunities**

This policy has been Equality Impact Assessed to identify opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups.

### **Advice and guidance**

If you require help in accessing or understanding this policy [or completing any of the associated forms] you should contact your line manager or trade union representative if you are a member.

If, due to the nature of your query, it is not appropriate to contact your line manager you should contact your head of service who will nominate an appropriate manager or colleague to help you.

See [guidance for managers – giving advice on policies](#).

### Further information

There are a number of related policies and procedures that you should be aware of including:

- Learning and Development policy and procedure
- Time to Train policy and procedure
- Apprenticeship policy and procedure
- There is also a national [Professional and Career Development Loans](#) scheme which offers a loan at a reduced interest rate

For further information please speak to your supervisor, manager, service director or contact your [HR case adviser](#).

|                     |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Policy author       | HR Policy and Reward Team – (LF) |
| Policy implemented  |                                  |
| Policy last updated | 22.06.2017                       |

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## Quarterly Workforce Report

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### Introduction

This is a new format for the existing quarterly workforce report which aims to raise awareness of the size and makeup of the workforce and of the issues that affect it. When appropriate it provides the opportunity to explore and discuss issues identified from analysis of the data arising from workforce transactions.

The first section of the new report will give the key observations from the data that has been analysed for the quarter. This will be followed by a themed commentary which will provide a deeper analysis and insight into a specific topic that is current for the council. The indicators at the end of the report will give an instant view of selected trends over the last year to see the wider picture of what is changing in the workforce. We are proposing the following key themes to be chosen when most relevant and applicable:

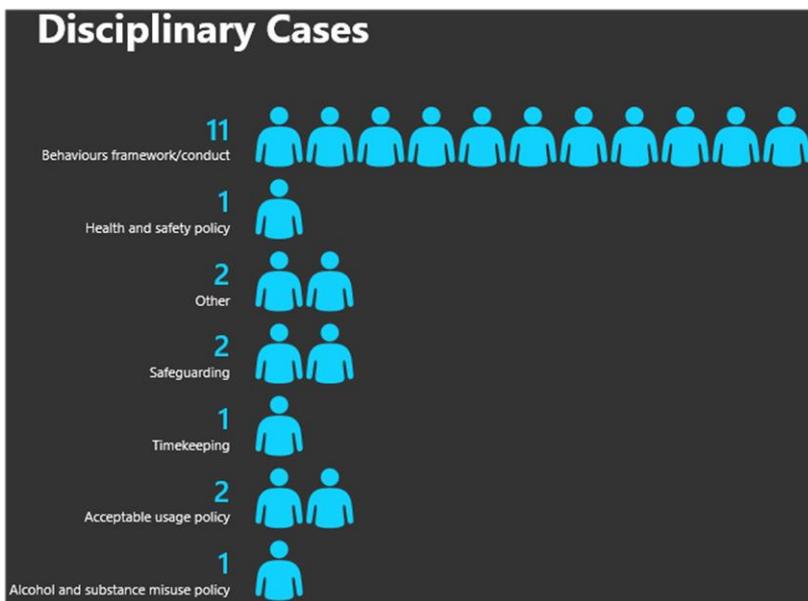
- Sickness absence
- Employee turnover
- Resourcing and recruitment
- Employee costings
- Apprentices
- Employee engagement
- Under25s/demographics
- Agency

## Quarterly Workforce Report

January – March 2017

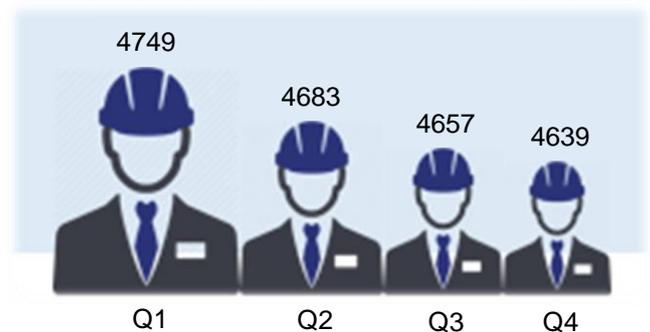


### Key Observations



The number of new disciplinary cases in this quarter has increased, with 11 new cases breaching the Behaviour Framework or Code of Conduct policies. The 2016 staff survey highlighted that 96% of respondents were clear on how they were expected to behave. HR business partners are working with services to address workforce issues when they arise. The updating and relaunch of the Behaviour Framework will help clarify what is expected from our staff in terms of behaviour and conduct with colleagues and the public and therefore we might expect that there will be a decrease in these cases.

Although there has been an overall decrease in voluntary turnover this quarter, the trend towards a reduced workforce continues to be significant. The reduction this quarter is mostly attributed to redundancies across the council with the largest number being in Finance due to restructures and employees coming to the end of temporary contracts.



Our reliance on agency staff to fill critical positions is significantly reducing. This acknowledges our resourcing strategy and the success of our social media campaigns to fill vacancies. The largest decrease was seen in Operational Children’s Services. Although Waste and Environment still have the most agency staff for short term demand and sickness/holiday cover, the number used has fallen this quarter and is due to our arrangement with Hills to cover all vacancies with agency staff.

**9472**

the number of days lost this quarter to absence

Wiltshire Council has seen an unusually large increase in days lost due to absence this quarter. Wiltshire Council lost 9472 days this quarter due to absence. On average over the last 4 financial years, Wiltshire Council saw a 6% increase in absence days in this quarter due to seasonal factors. Based on this trend we would expect our sickness absence rate for this quarter to be around 2.2 days lost per FTE, however it was 2.7, this is 23% higher than trends would suggest.

Back office functions were the most adversely affected by this seasonal influence, with People and Business and Legal and Governance seeing an increase of 72% and 89% respectively, or an additional day per quarter in both cases.

The highest absence rate across directorates at the council continues to be in Waste and Environment where work is being undertaken to establish reasons for the high absence and if there are any preventative measures we can put in place.

The council lost the equivalent of 146 working days (at a potential cost of £1.2m based on an average salary) in the quarter. This means 4.1% of the workforce capacity was not utilised. Where services would cover using agency staff this cost would increase by a further 25% to £1.5m based on an average cost for agency staff. Some services which can cover reasonable sickness levels within their establishment may not feel the financial consequences, however frontline services can find this significant pressure on already stretched budgets.

**“Wiltshire Council was underutilised by 4.1% [due to absences]”**



Electoral Services Capacity Utilisation

The team most affected by underutilisation through absence was Electoral Services whose establishment was underutilised by 12%, or to put it another way the service was running at 88% capacity. Absence rates of these levels need to be carefully managed, to avoid impact on services especially during peak demand.

Sickness reasons of ‘chest and respiratory’ and ‘cold/flu and other infections’ both saw significant increases in absences this quarter, which confirms the season has influenced absence.

**“Chest and respiratory and cold/flu and other infections both saw significant increases”**

There has also been a 38% increase in medium term sickness. Part of this has been a trend towards more ‘chest and respiratory’ and ‘cold/flu and other infections’ appearing in the medium-term sickness bracket. There is evidence that a virulent cold/flu strain was circulating during this period. Our figures suggest that the availability of the flu vaccine to staff did not stop our sickness figures rising for these reasons this year.

Medium term sickness is most prevalent in operational social care services (both adults and children’s) whose increased exposure to the public compared to office based staff may increase the risk of contracting viruses.

# THEMED COMMENTARY

2028 – the number of days lost this quarter due to stress/depression/mental health/fatigue

2028 days is the equivalent of losing 31 full time staff in this quarter alone due to stress/depression/mental health/fatigue. This is an additional 513 days compared to last quarter, a 34% increase. This remains consistently the largest contributory reason for absence (at 31% of days lost) and was also the largest increase this quarter. Action has been taken to make managers more aware of mental health so we would anticipate seeing a reduction in these types of absences in future reports.

As a council, sickness absence has remained almost static over the last 6 years, seeing only a slight upward trend. This could be due to increased awareness of the need to input sickness into our SAP system or could be a genuine increase.

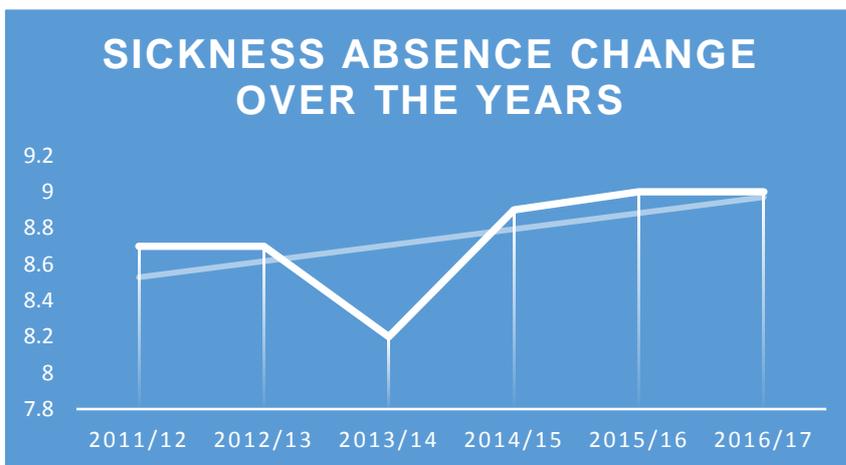
The figures presented in this report are reliant on the accuracy of the information provided by managers across the council. We are aware that some services consistently record low or zero sickness rates and that there is a degree of late reporting.

In this quarter, it was noted that 121 managers (with an average span of control of 7 staff) did not record any sickness in SAP. There is a high seasonal probability for sickness so it is likely that there will have been cases where sickness absence was not recorded. HR are working with services to address this.



We are currently exploring whether there is a correlation between levels of staff engagement and sickness absence. Initial analysis shows that the service area with the highest percentage of absence due to stress (business change performance and governance in the Adults Commissioning directorate), not only has a high employee engagement index score but also scores positively against staff survey questions that indicate situations which may lead to stress, i.e. unmanageable workload, long hours, poor work life balance or working conditions. Although in some isolated cases we might see an indication of possible causes of absence.

In the staff survey, almost half of the respondents in Safeguarding and Quality Assurance answered negatively to having satisfactory working conditions, whilst 1 in 4 absences in the quarter were due to chest/respiratory problems. We currently don't have enough information to know where the staff are based or what their specific problem with their workplace is, however it could be argued that the working conditions may be a contributory factor to sickness absence. This will be explored further with the head of service and occupational health/HR business partners.



In the Conference and Reviewing team 4 in 5 respondents did not agree with their workload being right for the time they have, whilst negative responses were also prevalent in questions such as having the right balance between work and home life (2 in 5) and having to regularly work excessive hours (1 in 2). This area also reported many absences due to work related stress (1 in 4 days lost) and 'other – unspecified'. Anecdotal feedback would suggest that there is potentially an issue in terms of burn out in some roles in the service which may be influencing their staff's health. More work will be done to explore the correlations between employee engagement and sickness absence.

**“The Bradford factor is a way of calculating actionable scores based on absence patterns”**

The Bradford factor is a way that companies can manage sickness in their workforce through a process of calculating a score based on absence patterns and provides a platform to find trigger points for sickness absence. It works on the principle that frequent short term absences are more disruptive to service delivery than intermittent long term absences as you can acquire additional or distribute current resource to cover a long-term absence, therefore scores are weighted due to frequency. There is ambiguity surrounding interpreting the scores however an example of trigger points and actions are shown below:

| Score            | Action                                   | No. of Wiltshire Council Staff who have hit these triggers this quarter |
|------------------|--|---|
| 0-50 points      | No action required                       | 1223  |
| 51 - 200 points  | Consider Issuing a Verbal Warning        | 123   |
| 201 - 400 points | Consider Issuing a First Written Warning | 28  |
| 401 - 600 points | Consider Issuing a Final Written Warning | 9   |
| 601+ points      | Consider Dismissal                       | 6   |

The Bradford Factor is not currently used within the council. Managers can choose to run trigger reports on sickness where employees exceed a certain number of days within a period, however at present the use of these reports by managers is not consistent and this could be due to manager awareness. Unlike the Bradford factor, there is no framework within the council to provide consistent outcomes based on an employee's sickness record. Whilst there are already measures in place to manage frequent or long term absence, the advisory team and occupational health to come up with some appropriate measures on an individual basis. However, measures based on the Bradford factor scores detailed in the table could be used to ensure a more consistent approach to how we deal with sickness absence. The table also details the current number of staff who would meet these triggers in the quarter.

Whilst there are a small number of employees where a pattern of sickness can be seen there is no service where this is prevalent, the 4 members of staff are spread between 4 different services and a split of reasons between things such as stress, muscular/skeletal, stomach, headache/migraine and no reason given. It is difficult to assess whether these are genuine reasons or whether there is a degree of apathy towards working Monday and this sample is too small to determine any correlation with employee engagement.

4 employees had 75% - 100% of their absences falling on a Monday

# QUARTERLY WORKFORCE Measures

Quarter ended: 31 March 2017

| Staffing Levels  |                 |                |              |                |       |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure  | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Trend |
| Headcount  | 4749            | 4683           | 4657         | 4639           | ▼     |
| FTE  | 3648            | 3615           | 3547         | 3527           | ▼     |
| Agency worker use (equivalent number of FTE's used during quarter) | 113             | 122            | 117          | 95.9           | ▼     |
| Ratio of managers to employees                                     | 1:9             | 1:9            | 1:9.9        | 1:10.2         | ▲     |
| FTE of managers  | 487             | 477            | 456          | 445            | ▼     |
| Number of redundancies made during quarter                         | 28              | 43             | 30           | 25             | ▼     |
| Ratio of starters to leavers (FTE)                                 | 1:1.1           | 1:1.1          | 1:1.4        | 1:1.1          | ▬     |

| Sickness Absence                 |                 |                |              |                |                |       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure                          | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Jan – March 16 | Trend |
| Working days lost per FTE        | 2.1 days        | 2.1 days       | 2.1 days     | 2.7 days       | 2.5 days       | ▲     |
| % of total absences over 20 days | 52.4%           | 54.5%          | 47%          | 42.9%          | 46.1%          | ▼     |

| Health and Safety RIDDOR related injuries    |                 |                |              |                |       |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure                                      | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Trend |
| No. of workplace incidents/injuries reported | 5               | 3              | 1            | 2              | ▼     |

| New Disciplinary, Grievance and Absence Cases |                 |                |              |                |       |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure                                       | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Trend |
| Disciplinary cases                            | 11              | 17             | 15           | 20             | ▲     |
| Grievance cases                               | 1               | 2              | 0            | 2              | ▬     |
| Absence cases                                 | 68              | 107            | 129          | 202            | ▲     |

| Voluntary Staff Turnover           |                 |                |              |                |                |       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure                            | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Jan – March 16 | Trend |
| % staff turnover                   | 2.6%            | 2.7%           | 2.4%         | 2.2%           | 2.3%           | ▼     |
| % <1 year turnover rate            | 5.9%            | 3.4%           | 4.8%         | 3.2%           | 4.5%           | ▼     |
| % Under 25's voluntary turnover    | 6.4%            | 6.3%           | 6.1%         | 1.9%           | 3.1%           | ▼     |
| Average leavers' length of service | 7.3 years       | 7.7 years      | 9.2 years    | 8.4 years      | 7.7 years      | ▲     |

| Employee costs                                   |                 |                |              |                |                |       |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure Relating to Quarter                      | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Jan – March 16 | Trend |
| Total paid in salaries to employees (non casual) | £26.05m         | £25.68m        | £25.68m      | £25.08m        | £25.86m        | ▼     |
| Total paid in salary to casual employees         | £0.41m          | £0.43m         | £0.48m       | £0.40m         | £0.39m         | ▬     |
| Total salary pay                                 | £26.46m         | £26.11m        | £26.16m      | £25.49m        | £26.26m        | ▼     |
| Total paid to agency workers                     | £1.43m          | £1.40m         | £1.43m       | £1.15m         | £1.55m         | ▼     |
| Median employee basic salary                     | £20,456         | £20,456        | £20,456      | £20,456        | £20,253        | ▬     |

**Why this is important:** Clear budgetary constraints mean that keeping track of this information is vital. Whilst we are seeing a reduction in contracted employees we may see some services using **alternative resourcing options on a more regular basis such as agency workers, consultants** or casuals. This information will highlight whether this is happening or not.

| Additional financial information   |                 |                |              |                |       |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure<br><i>(If the figure is negative a saving has been achieved)</i> | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Trend |
| Cost of sick pay   | £0.72m          | £0.69m         | £0.71m       | £0.85m         | ▲     |
| FTE change due to employee hour changes                                  | -5.8            | -15.0          | -4.9         | -6.2           | ▼     |
| Cost/saving of employee hour changes                                     | -£126,813       | -£343,335      | -£80,357     | £-165,370      | ▼     |

**Why this is important:** Sick pay amounted to £2,989,600 across Wiltshire Council during the 2016-17 financial year and therefore this is a substantial area of spend that should be minimised whenever possible. FTE changes indicate where services may be looking to employees to work more hours than they previously have done to cover gaps where a reduction in the headcount of employees has been made. It could also be an indication that services are adopting a more positive approach to flexible working.

| Employee Diversity         |                 |                |              |                |                |       |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Measure                    | April – June 16 | July – Sept 16 | Oct – Dec 16 | Jan – March 17 | Jan – March 16 | Trend |
| % < 25                     | 6.7%            | 6.8%           | 6.5%         | 6.7%           | 6.5%           | ▬     |
| % 55 and over              | 24.7%           | 24.7%          | 24.7%        | 24.9%          | 24.4%          | ▬     |
| % Female                   | 70.1%           | 70.1%          | 69.9%        | 70.0%          | 70.2%          | ▬     |
| % Part-time                | 42.6%           | 42.5%          | 43%          | 43.6%          | 42.9%          | ▲     |
| % Temporary contracts      | 6.4%            | 5.9%           | 5.5%         | 5.5%           | 7.3%           | ▼     |
| % Black or Minority Ethnic | 2.1%            | 2.2%           | 2.1%         | 2.1%           | 2.1%           | ▬     |
| % Disabled                 | 3.2%            | 3.2%           | 3.4%         | 3.6%           | 3.1%           | ▲     |

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