



Finance, Assets, Investments and Recovery Committee

7 FEBRUARY 2024

REPORT TITLE:	Workforce Overview 2021-22, 2022-23 & 2023-24
REPORT OF:	Jonathan Stephenson, CEO & Head of Paid Service
REPORT OF FOR:	Information only

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an organisational overview of workforce information and data in respect of Brentwood Borough Council (BBC).

The report provides information with regards to resource levels (by Directorate) and provides an overview of the health of the organisation, using data available to include regional and national benchmarking.

This report includes data up to 31 December 2023.

SUPPORT ING INFORMATION

1.0 ORGANISATION OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The organisation structure is split across 9 directorates which are each overseen by a Director as part of the One Team strategic partnership with Rochford District Council (RDC).
- 1.2 The current head count for Brentwood employees is 238.
- 1.3 The current FTE is 223.1 for 2023-24. In 2022-23 the FTE was 235.4. in 2021-22 the FTE was 244.7.
- 1.4 Appendix A, provides details of the employee numbers (FTE & Headcount) within each directorate and service areas, employed directly by Brentwood Borough Council.

2.0 RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & TURNOVER

2021-22 Overview

- 2.1 In 2021-22, 26 officers joined the council.

2.2 In 2021-22, 19 officers left.

2.3 Reasons for leaving the organisation 2021-22.

Reason for leaving	Number of staff	Percentage of leavers
Resignation	14	73%
Retirement	3	16%
Other reason	2	11%

2.4 The turnover rate for 2021-22 was approx. 7%.

2022-23 Overview

2.5 In 2022-23, 22 officers joined the council.

2.6 In 2022-23, 33 officers left.

2.7 Reasons for leaving the organisation 2022-23.

Reason for leaving	Number of staff	Percentage of leavers
Resignation	26	79%
Retirement	2	6%
Redundancy	3	9%
Other reason	2	6%

2.8 The turnover rate for 2022-23 was approx. 13%. This was higher turnover rate than a typical year due to a higher level of resignations. This is likely to be an outcome of the Covid pandemic and changes to people's personal lives.

2023 Overview (1 April – 31 December 2023)

2.9 In 2023-24, 13 officers have joined the council.

2.10 In 2023-24, 21 officers have left the organisation.

2.11 Reasons for leaving the organisation 2023-24.

Reason for leaving	Number of staff	Percentage of leavers
Resignation	12	57%
End of fixed term contract	2	9.5%
Retirement	5	23%
Other reason	2	9.5%

2.12 The turnover rate for 2023-24 is currently at 8%. This is the figure is up to 31 December.

3.0 SICKNESS ABSENCE

3.1 All employee sickness absence is reported via our Human Resources system iTrent by Line Managers.

- 3.1 All employees have a return-to-work meeting upon return from any period of absence.
- 3.2 Sickness triggers are met when absences reach the following;
- 3 separate episodes in any rolling 6 month period (short term)
 - 6 working days absence in any rolling 12 month period (short term)
 - 4 weeks (20 days) or longer continuous absence (long term)

Short Term Sickness

Definition: Short term absence: up to 20days/one calendar month (in working days).

- 3.3 In 2021-22, the number of working days lost to short term absence was 740, an average of 3.02* days per employee. The highest number of days lost to short term was 176 due to COVID or COVID related absence, followed by 118.81 days for cold/coughs.

In 2022-23, the number of working days lost to short term absences was 1303.5, an average of 5.5* days per employee. The highest number of days lost for short term sickness in 2022-23 was 344 days by COVID and COVID related absences followed by 251 days for cold/coughs.

The absences stated are due to 310 recorded short term absences, 200 of which were for operational services.

This places BBC in the lower quartile of the Maximum for All local authority districts in East of England from data currently available (3.4, Table 1) through the national LGA Benchmarking data base “LG Inform”.

**Formula -Short term sickness Absence (FTE days per employee) is calculated by taking the total number (457) of days absence (short term) over financial year and dividing by the average number of FTE over the financial year*

- 3.4 **Table 1** – LGA Benchmarking - Short term sickness

Short term sickness absence - FTE (from 2019/20 to 2021/22) for England

Period	Sickness absence, short term (FTE)		
	Days per FTE		
	Minimum for All local authority districts in East	Mean for All local authority districts in East	Maximum for All local authority districts in East
2019/20	no value	no value	no value
2020/21	1.4	2.1	4.3
2021/22	3.4	4.4	6.2

Source:
Local Government Association

- 3.5 In 2023-24, the number of working days lost to short term absence is currently 807, an average of 3.61* days per employee, up to 31 December. 115 days have been lost due to Gastrointestinal followed by 108 days due to cold/coughs.

Long Term Sickness

Definition -Long-term absence: over 20 days/more than one calendar month (in working days).

3.6 In 2021-22, the number of working days lost to long term absence was 456 (1.86**) impacting 11 members of staff. 155 days was lost to anxiety/depression impacting 3 members of staff, followed by 92 days to reasons recorded as 'other'.

In 2022-23, the number of working days lost to long term absence was 1557 (6.62**). This places BBC in the higher quartile of the Mean for All local authority districts in East of England from data currently available (3.6, Table 2). This information has been gained through the national LGA Benchmarking data base "LG Inform". 2022-23 saw 28 members of staff being absent on long term sickness. The highest number of days lost for long term sickness in 2022-23 was 270 days due to Anxiety/Stress followed by 244 days due to Injury's / Fractures.

***Formula -Long term sickness Absence (FTE days per employee) is calculated by taking the total number of days absence (long term) over financial year and dividing by the average number of FTE over the financial year*

3.7 Table 2 - LGA Benchmarking - Long Term Sickness

Long term sickness absence - FTE (from 2019/20 to 2021/22) for England

Period	Sickness absence, long term (FTE)		
	Days per FTE		
	Minimum for All local authority districts in East	Mean for All local authority districts in East	Maximum for All local authority districts in East
2019/20	no value	no value	no value
2020/21	1.2	3.2	5.9
2021/22	2.4	4.4	8.3

Source:
Local Government Association

3.8 In 2023-24, the number of working days lost to long term absence is 1006, affecting 16 officers. The highest number of days lost for long term sickness so far in 2023-24 is from Anxiety/stress depression/other psychiatric illnesses at 457 days, affecting 4 officers, 3 of which who have since returned to work or left employment. 215 days is from Cardiac & Circulatory as the second highest impacting 3 officers. There are currently 6 officers absent due to long term sickness and all are being supported through the Sickness Absence policy.

4.0 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

4.1 All employees have access to an Employee Assistance Programme. The programme is hosted by VivUp. It is a confidential service though data is shared regularly to demonstrate the usage of the programme by BBC staff.

4.2 Between January – December 2023, VivUp's online portal was accessed 20 times, with telephone contact made on 8 occasions and 24/7 telephone counselling support accessed on 2 occasions.

5.0 ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

5.1 Occupational Health is available to all staff. This is more commonly used to support sickness absence and facilitating return to the workplace, however, it is also used outside of the sickness process when required to support employees.

- 5.2 17 officers employed by both RDC and BBC are qualified Mental Health First Aiders and are available to support and signpost employees when needed.
- 5.3 Online sessions have been held for all employees focussing on Change & Resilience.
- 5.4 In person Quarterly Staff Briefings have been held over the last 22 months providing an update on the One Team partnership, accommodation, strategic and departmental updates.
- 5.5 The annual staff survey was undertaken in February 2023 and results shared with all employees. 31% of the workforce responded across both RDC and BBC with 4 key themes emerging: communication, resources, workloads and OneTeam. Regular updates are shared regarding these themes as highlighted in Appendix C.
- 5.6 A pulse survey was undertaken in December 2023 with focus on the 4 key themes as mentioned in 5.5. 83% reported to have good communication with their manager. 65% confirmed they have the resources to undertake their role. 55% reported a manageable work load with a further 18% neither agreeing or disagreeing with this point. 93% confirm they know how to access support if needed.
- 5.7 OneYou conversations were launched across both organisations as part of the One Team integration. Good feedback has been received from both employee and Line Managers and will assist in developing these employee/manager discussions moving forward.
- 5.8 The organisation encourages the use of Able Futures (<https://able-futures.co.uk/>), and time is also provided for employees to attend sessions they provide. This is a confidential programme run by the DWP providing workplace mental health support.
- 5.9 A number of other wellbeing initiatives are available to all staff including winter flu jabs and eye tests.
- 5.10 Employee Benefits are available to all RDC officers via VivUp, including a Cycle to Work scheme.

6.0 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 CLT hold monthly informal workplace 'Tea and Talk' sessions which employees are encouraged to attend.
- 6.2 All employees are given the opportunity to shape the agenda in advance of Quarterly Staff Briefings, submit questions in advance, and ask questions during each session. The sessions are promoted as two-way sessions with the opportunity for employees to gain corporate information, but also to participate in the briefings by asking questions and commenting on the information gained.
- 6.3 All staff are encouraged to work from the office/place 2-3 days per week and meet with work colleagues and CLT. This is part of the organisational principles agreed by all employees post COVID.
- 6.4 Staff are encouraged to join the 'Staff Voice' Group to engage with projects and events across both organisations.
- 6.5 Weekly corporate newsletter is sent to all staff and copied to all members to provide weekly updates, celebrate successes and provide information on key corporate activities.

- 6.6 The inaugural One Team Annual Staff Conference was held in June 2023. Following employee feedback and the success of this first event this will be an annual event for all employees with the 2024 date recently agreed for June 2024.
- 6.7 Health and Wellbeing initiatives are offered to all staff, including organised lunchtime walks, social events, book swaps.
- 6.8 One You conversations are encouraged monthly and encourage conversations around wellbeing.

7.0 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1 A programme designed for '*Aspiring Managers*' is underway for the third year running. This course is aimed at new managers and employees aspiring to be a manager. The opportunity is offered to staff, who complete an application form for selection. This is for staff from both BBC and RDC.
- 7.2 Senior employees and managers are encouraged to apply for the District Council Network National Staff Development Programme which is held annually. The programme runs for 12 months with 1 employee being selected to represent BBC on the programme each year. This year 4 employees have been selected across the partnership.
- 7.3 CLT support a number of other external development programmes as sponsors to our employees who are successful in gaining a place on these national programmes, such as *Solace Springboard Leadership Programme*, *Amplify Development*, *Leading Greater Essex* run by Essex County Council *Programme* managed by Solace.
- 7.4 The One You conversations encourage employees to express their development needs and ambitions, so they are captured and considered as part of the annual organisational development needs of the organisation.
- 7.5 Service area specific training and development e.g. Professional Qualifications. Examples are in Planning, Human Resources and Finance.
- 7.6 Apprenticeship scheme for both Apprentices employed and existing staff. Currently 3 apprenticeships underway.

8.0 REWARD AND RECOGNITION

- 8.1 5 additional days annual leave is gained following 5 years' service.
- 8.2 The above are due to be reviewed in line with the One Team partnership to ensure consistency across the partnership for all employees.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A** Directorate & Service Area Overview by Headcount and FTE
- Appendix B** CLT One Team Structure
- Appendix C** Staff Survey themes, implementations and future plans