



COUNCIL – 24TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update of some of the major issues and challenges currently impacting on workforce capacity and to seek support for some initial proposals to provide additional resources into key areas.
- 1.2 The report includes a number of recommendations to Council that have been made by Cabinet, who received this report on the 19th October 2022.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Council, its staff and elected members have been attempting to manage a pandemic response, to maintain service delivery, to oversee the introduction of new services such as Caerphilly Cares, and to recover from the pandemic, while also seeking to transform the whole organisation and the communities it serves.
- 2.2 During the pandemic for example, the Council:
 - strengthened its Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme by bringing on stream ten Corporate Reviews
 - launched a £231m pound PlaceShaping Investment Programme
 - introduced a revised Regeneration Strategy
 - began the process of introducing five Regeneration Area Master Plans
 - introduced an Economic Recovery Framework
- 2.3 Since the pandemic, the Council has also found itself needing to resource and manage:
 - the submission of three Levelling Up Fund bids totalling £140m
 - the submission of a number of Shared Prosperity Fund bids totalling circa £35m (including Multiply)
 - the resettlement pressures associated with the War in the Ukraine
 - the impact of the cost of living increases on the Community
 - the impact of the cost of living increases on Council staff

- the fragility of the Social Care sector
- the covid recovery across our schools and communities

- 2.4 The sheer breadth and depth of the transformation and regeneration work the Council is now involved in, above and beyond regular service delivery, is proving to be a significant challenge. Add into this the wider challenges associated with global conflict, the impact of rising inflation, the progression of Welsh Government's wide-ranging Programme for Government, responding to the COVID-19 Enquiry and the development of a new Corporate Plan and it is clear that the Council's resource base is attempting to deliver against challenges of the size, scale and complexity never previously imagined.
- 2.5 With some of this work being required to provide much needed additional support to our communities as well as other facets having the potential to significantly transform and regenerate the social and economic landscape of Caerphilly and beyond, it cannot simply be parked or put on hold.
- 2.6 The Council has faced further capacity challenges as a result of sickness absence, the loss of experienced staff to retirement; officers thinking differently about their work / home balance; staff moving on to better paid jobs in other organisations as a result of certain skills now attracting greater premiums, as well as the removal of traditional barriers such as long and challenging commutes.
- 2.7 It is unrealistic to believe that the Council can deliver this additional work 'on top of the day job' while also dealing with the ongoing pandemic response and unprecedented workforce capacity issues.
- 2.8 This report seeks to highlight the challenges being faced, sets out the potential impacts of increased expectations and diminished capacity, highlights the work already being done as well as putting forward some specific proposals to bring additional resources into core areas and functions as a foundation upon which to try and address current pressures.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Council is asked to:
- 3.2 Note the Cabinet decision to develop and recruit a new internal recruitment team in accordance with the funding arrangements set out in 8.1-8.3
- 3.3 Note the Cabinet decision to appoint a Cost of Living Co-ordinator as detailed at paragraph 5.51.
- 3.4 Agree Cabinet's recommendation to:-
- create an additional post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive spot salary of £139,044 i.e. the mid-point between the Chief Executive spot salary and the maximum of the Director salary range. This will need to be adjusted when the national Chief Executive pay award is agreed.
 - create an additional post and designate as Deputy Section 151 officer at Hay Grade B.

- 3.5 Agree Cabinet's recommendation to allocate the budget to support the new posts as detailed in paragraphs 8.1 – 8.3 and specifically note that the proposals will not result in any additional financial resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Council, like all other public sector organisations, is currently facing many challenges which are impacting on the workforce and its overall capacity to meet the expectations placed upon it.
- 4.2 It is important Members are aware of these pressures and what the Council is trying to do to address them in order to ensure that services can continue to be provided to the public.
- 4.3 The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet have both previously received and supported the recommendations set out within this report.

5. THE REPORT

Recruitment

- 5.1 The Council is currently facing recruitment and retention challenges across the whole organisation in many service areas and unfortunately, the services affected seem to be under increasing demand in accordance with the national picture. This is by no means a specific challenge to Caerphilly.
- 5.2 In July 2022, the Local Government Associations Head of Workforce, Naomi Cooke, delivered a speech to the LGAs annual conference. In the speech, Naomi referred to "*a crisis of recruitment in local government*" and therefore "*a crisis in capacity*". According to the LGA, over half of Councils report having insufficient staff to run all services normally.
- 5.3 The LGA also report that over the last ten years every other part of the public sector has grown more than local government, which has, in fact, lost about 40 per cent of its workforce
- 5.4 It isn't just in the local government sector, however. In a survey of 5,700 businesses for its Q2 2022 Quarterly Recruitment Outlook, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) found that three in five businesses (61%) were currently looking to find staff, while 76% reported recruitment difficulties, dropping just two percentage points from Q1 (78%).
- 5.5 The fact that these challenges are not unique to Caerphilly means that any interventions introduced by the Local Authority to resolve issues it is experiencing will impact on the ability of other Local Authorities to recruit and retain staff. In essence, the more successful the Council is at addressing these challenges, the more acutely those challenges will likely be felt by our partners and neighbours.
- 5.6 Members will be aware that the introduction of Single Status in Local Authorities saw the end of nationally agreed salary ranges for groups of staff, except for Teaching staff who have their own nationally agreed terms and conditions.

- 5.7 Some Council services are also affected by competition from the private sector, for example, I.T., Engineering, Social Care and Construction. The demand for staff in these disciplines has massively increased during and since the pandemic, as have the salaries that the individuals with these skills can now attract.
- 5.8 Whilst the opportunities for agile working can assist some Council services, they can also cause problems in others, as people who were perhaps previously unwilling to travel long distances for work can now look further afield for employment without the need to travel at all in some cases.
- 5.9 For Members information, the headcount as at the close of each of the last five financial years is detailed below:

Date	Headcount	FTE Headcount
31.03.18	8,682	6,318.69
31.03.19	8,533	6,256.64
31.03.20	8,402	6,141.56
31.03.21	8,296	6,124.17
31.03.22	8,348	6,245.04

- 5.10 The table above shows a reduction over the last five years, in the Council's overall headcount and "Full Time Equivalent - FTE" headcount. Whilst it firstly appears a relatively small reduction, these staff numbers are heavily supported with the use of agency staff, as a consequence of the difficulties experienced with recruitment at this time. Consideration must also be given to the volume and complexity of the challenges we are now facing and that it is being stretched over a workforce that has not changed significantly over recent years.
- 5.11 The workforce age profile of the organisation is as follows:

Age Group	Female	Male
Under 20	78	78
21 – 30	759	356
31 – 40	1436	434
41 – 50	1653	507
51 – 60	1613	605
61 – 65	407	190
66 +	162	69
Total	6108	2239

- 5.12 Despite the perceived difficulty in recruitment and retention, Members can be assured that the Council is still making successful appointments. The details of internal appointments and progression for the previous three financial years is set out below:

	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
New starters	765	500	864
Internal transfers	1,514	1,040	1,487
Total appointments	2,279	1,540	2,351

Of course, internal transfers and promotions, often subsequently create further vacancies which require further recruitment and selection processes. Naturally this places additional pressure on recruiting managers and People Services.

- 5.13 To complete the picture, the details of the leavers from the Council for the previous three financial years is detailed below:

	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
Leavers	873	597	765

- 5.14 Heads of Service have been working proactively with People Services to attempt to overcome some of the challenges within their services by utilising some of the opportunities already available to the Council. These include:

- workforce planning
- the appointment of Apprentices
- considering run through grades
- review of contracts and hours
- introducing market supplements.

- 5.15 These alone will not, however, help the Council to overcome this national recruitment and retention crisis. It is also worth noting that market supplements are also traditionally only supposed to be used as a temporary measure.

- 5.16 The Council is reviewing its recruitment processes and has begun to make steps to better position the Council as an employer of choice and also to improve the overall experience for prospective candidates. Listed below are some of the areas of improvement currently being progressed:

5.16.1 **Modernising our recruitment** – new application form and portal designed and launched; new web pages created; videos developed to profile the Council, its service areas and the opportunities available.

5.16.2 **Market position** – the Council is trialling a new approach to social advertising; has procured recruiter membership with market leader LinkedIn; has trialled targeted recruitment campaigns for front line posts; has run and attended community recruitment events.

5.16.3 **Apprentices** – the Council has committed recurrent funding for the ongoing recruitment of apprentices and in many cases Heads of Service are growing the number of apprentices by matching this funding form core budgets; strengthened partnership working with Careers Wales and schools.

5.16.4 **Caerphilly's offer** – HR & the Employment Teams are working together to consider how to provide more placement opportunities across the Council that could lead to employment opportunities.

5.16.5 **Recruitment consultant** – the Council has recently trialled the use of a Recruitment Consultancy for a Head of Service post. The trial has given significant insight into the private sector approaches associated with modern recruitment and selection as well as some of the tools and techniques that increase the likelihood of identifying and ultimately employing high quality candidates. Not only has the Council appointed, where it had failed to do so previously but the experience has also given the Council additional insight into

the needs of prospective candidates and the strategies that need to be deployed to positively engage potential recruits.

- 5.16.6 **Exit Survey Process** – the exit survey process has been reviewed and automated in order to increase the number of exit interviews being undertaken, provide trend analysis and benchmarks, as well as provide higher quality insight into why employees are leaving the employment of the Council. Any emerging themes and context can then be used to refine the recruitment, selection and retention processes even further.
- 5.16.7 **Payline Assessment** – exploratory work is underway to assess the pay and grading structure to consider whether the Council's salary ranges are competitive.
- 5.16.8 **HR Policy Refresh** – HR policies are also being reviewed to ensure that our terms and conditions are supportive to recruitment and retention wherever possible. These will be presented in a separate report for consideration.
- 5.17 It is too early in the process to state whether these refinements will make a significant difference but clearly, doing nothing is not an option. The whole matter of recruitment and retention will be subject to continuous review and modernisation and be adaptable to external pressures whilst remaining a safe process.
- 5.18 Members should be aware that it is unlikely that the Council will be able to successfully recruit to all vacant posts and retain all staff due to the national crisis, but it must continue to do all it can to differentiate itself and position itself at the leading edge.

Proposal: Development of an Internal Recruitment Team

- 5.19 As stated, the Council, along with other public sector bodies across the UK is facing a number of recruitment and retention challenges. More traditional methods of recruitment such as placing job advertisements in relevant trade journals or local newspapers are no longer delivering high numbers of quality candidates and, in some cases, no candidates at all.
- 5.20 It is important from a business continuity perspective that the Council develop a leading edge approach to recruitment and selection that maximises its chances of securing the appointment of high quality candidates into roles, especially critical roles, while keeping the very best interests and values of the Council at the centre of the new approaches.
- 5.21 For the reasons set out above Cabinet has approved the appointment of a specialist internal Recruitment Team. The Team will focus on marketing and promoting the organisation to prospective candidates; make use of commercial recruitment tools to identify individuals that meet the Council's needs and engaging potential candidates about the benefits of coming to work for Caerphilly. The Team will also promote more widely the opportunities that exist within the Council across Social Media and other professional channels, as well as hosting local recruitment events across the Borough on an ongoing basis.
- 5.22 The Team will strengthen further the relationships with key partners such as Careers Wales, our schools, local colleges and Universities to engage and encourage prospective applicants as well as developing tailored opportunities to join the

Council. The Team will also operate a dedicated 'recruitment hotline' where prospective applicants could discuss possible employment options in the Council rather than just ring about a job that is already advertised.

- 5.23 Beyond this, the Team will further develop and modernise the Council's Recruitment web pages, streamline the application process, be proactive and outward facing in its approach to recruitment as well as mirroring the skills and disciplines typically employed by sector leading recruitment consultants.
- 5.24 With the organisation short of the capacity it needs to deliver even existing services as well as seeking to provide the platform for whole borough regeneration and transformation and the wider global challenges being faced, a dedicated internal recruitment team as referenced above, will enable the Council to seek out and attract a wide range of skilled and experienced candidates to the organisation.
- 5.25 The Council has recently piloted some of the approaches that will be central to this new team in terms of its recruitment of the Transformation Manager (Commercial and Investment) and a strong field of candidates were available for shortlist and interview with a successful appointment ultimately made. These new methods have also delivered recent gains in areas that have historically proven challenging in terms of recruitment such as IT.
- 5.26 Initially, the structure that would be required to support this concept, supplemented by existing resources within the HR team to deal with the appointment process, evaluations, etc would be as follows:

Recruitment and Selection Manager x 1	Grade 12
Principal Officer (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 10
HR Officer (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 8
HR Assistant (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 6

- 5.27 The total costs estimated in accordance with existing HR grades and oncosts would circabe £320k to secure this new team. In order to enable the Team to take advantage of commercial recruitment tools, the Team would also require additional budget for LinkedIn Premium, as well as a range of additional options around advertising, recruitment material, events, etc. That would mean a total investment of an additional £358k per annum to establish the Team and also provide the necessary supporting tools.

Statutory Capacity

- 5.28 The Council has three main statutory roles: the Chief Executive, as well as the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. Of these three statutory roles, only the Monitoring Officer has an appointed Deputy.
- 5.29 At differing points over the last twelve months, the Council has found itself without two of its Statutory Officers at critical times, and over what proved to be extended periods.
- 5.30 The absence of designated deputy positions for those two key statutory roles have emerged as risks that have been brought into sharp focus during these periods with the officers that would ordinarily act up not having the constituted statutory authority to do so in the absence of the post holders.

Deputy Chief Executive

- 5.31 Under Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is the role of the Chief Executive, formerly known as the Head of Paid Service, to ensure that all the authority's functions are properly co-ordinated as well as organising staff and appointing appropriate management.
- 5.32 The Chief Executive has the following functions and areas of responsibility, although this list is not exhaustive:
- Overall corporate management and operational responsibility (including overall management responsibility for all officers);
 - Provision of professional advice to all parties in the decision making process;
 - Responsibility for a system of record keeping for all the Council's decisions;
 - Responsibility for promoting and maintaining probity in all of the Council's activities;
 - Representing the Council on partnerships and external bodies as required by Council or by statute;
 - Acting as co-ordinator in Emergencies;
 - Be the Electoral Registration Officer and the Local Government Returning Officer and to be empowered in relation to all electoral matters;
 - Be the proper officer for all statutory purposes unless otherwise determined by this constitution;
 - Be able to exercise all the powers delegated to the Corporate Directors unless there is a legal or professional impediment;
 - Take urgent decisions in respect of either an executive or non- executive function which is considered necessary to protect the interests of or for advancing the business of the Council. In those circumstances, the Chief Executive is authorised to take urgent decisions following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the relevant portfolio holder in respect of executive matters and the Chairman (or Vice Chairman) of Council or the relevant committee in respect of non-executive functions. All urgent decisions will be reported to the next appropriate meeting of Council, Cabinet or the relevant committee;

Proposal to Create an Additional Post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive

- 5.33 The Council is seeking to appoint a permanent Deputy Chief Executive Officer as an additional post on the establishment. This will enable the Council to address the risk of not being able to meet certain statutory requirements should the appointed statutory officer be unavailable. It will also provide a much needed and dedicated resource that can lead the significant, cross cutting challenges facing the organisation and its surrounding communities at present, such as the cost of living crisis, and climate change.
- 5.34 The total cost of the appointment inclusive of on costs would be subject to agreeing an appropriate set of duties and responsibilities and would need to be agreed by Members. Based on the existing range, it is anticipated that the costs would be circa £189k including on costs.

Deputy Section 151 Officer

- 5.35 Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (c.11), the Council has a duty to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. The Council does this by appointing a Section 151 Officer. The Section 151 officer must be a qualified accountant belonging to one of the recognised chartered accountancy bodies.
- 5.36 The Section 151 Officer is a statutory role and has overall responsibility, subject to any instructions given by the Council, for determining the system of accounting control and the form of the published accounts.
- 5.37 The Section 151 Officer has a number of statutory duties, including the duty to report any unlawful financial activity involving the authority (past, present or proposed) or failure to set or keep to a balanced budget.
- 5.38 The Officer appointed under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 also has overall responsibility for providing financial advice on all budgetary and accounting matters affecting the Council's corporate financial affairs. In the case of Caerphilly this officer is also the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer.
- 5.39 The role and responsibilities of the S151 Officer are extensive and integral to the strategic management of the organisation as a whole. Some of the responsibilities of the S151 Officer cannot be delegated and without an appointed deputy the Council's abilities to meet its statutory requirements can be impacted.

Proposal to Create an Additional Post & designate as Deputy Section 151 Officer

- 5.40 The Council is seeking to appoint a Deputy Head of Financial Services & Deputy Section 151 Officer as an additional post to address the risk of not being able to meet certain statutory requirements should the Section 151 Officer be unavailable for any reason. This will provide much needed additional capacity to the Financial Services functions and will also support the delivery of the Council's key priorities through the provision of sound strategic financial advice.
- 5.41 The post will need to be evaluated but the total cost of the appointment inclusive of on costs is estimated to be circa £108k p.a.

Sickness

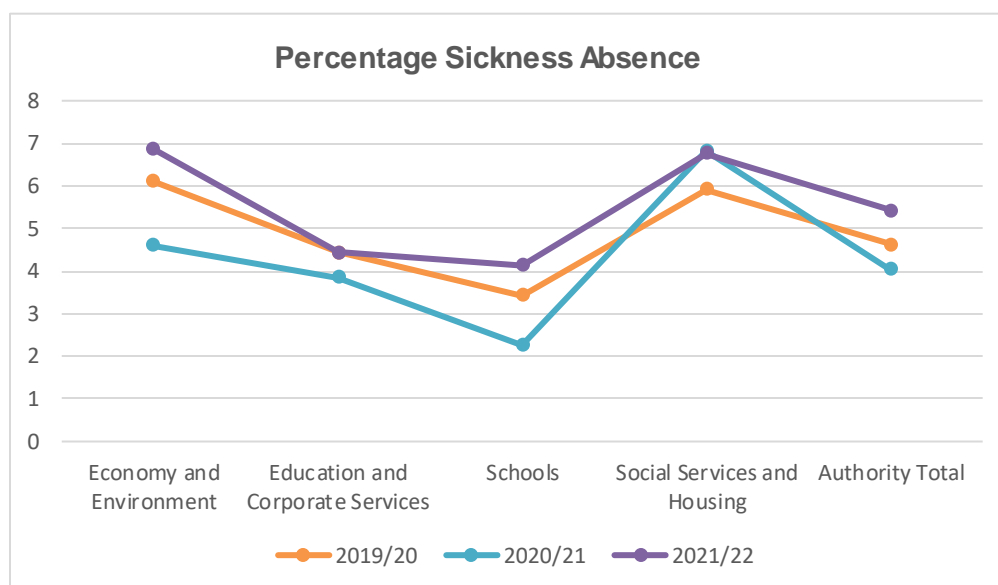
- 5.42 The Council's Managing Sickness Absence Procedure provides a structured framework to allow Managers to effectively manage sickness absence. The Procedure has also been adopted by all Schools. The purpose of the Procedure is to:
- Maximise employee attendance at work.
 - Support employees in returning to work in a timely manner.
 - Have a clear and agreed process for managing the sickness absence of all the Council's employees, which is applicable to all.
- 5.43 The following paragraphs provide an overview of levels of absence within the Council for the previous 3 financial years.

5.44 In 2021 / 22 the Council reported 14.12 days lost per full-time equivalent (FTE) Local Authority employee due to sickness absence including schools. The FTE days lost in 2020 / 21 were 10.0 and in 2019 / 20 were 11.98. Reporting Councils across Wales are reporting higher FTEs absence levels this year.

5.45 The table below provides the total percentage absence per Directorate for three financial years. Schools are reported separately for ease of reference for Members.

Directorate	% Sickness Absence		
	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
Economy and Environment	6.10	4.61	6.86
Education and Corporate Services	4.43	3.85	4.43
Schools	3.42	2.26	4.13
Social Services and Housing	5.91	6.82	6.76
Authority Total	4.63	4.03	5.43

This information is also provided in graph format below for Members.



5.46 The table below provides the top 10 stated reasons for absence across the Council for the previous three financial years.

Top 10 Reasons of Absence for the Authority **Top 10 Ranking**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Personal Stress; depression; anxiety; neurasthenia; mental health; fatigue	1	1	1
Other musculo-skeletal problems	2	2	3

Stomach; liver; kidney and digestion inc. gastroenteritis	3	4	4
Infections inc. colds & flu	4	8	5
Injury	5	5	9
Back and neck problems	6	6	6
Chest and respiratory inc. chest infections	7	9	7
Work related stress	8	7	10
Neurological including headaches & migraines	9	N/A	8
Eye; ear; nose & mouth/dental to inc. sinusitis	10	N/A	N/A
Covid	N/A	3	2
Heart, blood pressure and circulation	N/A	10	N/A

- 5.47 Members will note that apart from the introduction of Covid as a reason for absence, the rank order of reasons has remained fairly consistent across the 3 years.
- 5.48 Within People Services, the HR team provides advice and guidance to Managers in relation to all aspects of people management. Listed below are some of the other areas of support that are currently in place:
- 5.48.1 **A dedicated Managing Attendance Team** to support Managers to manage absence effectively and consistently across the Authority.
- 5.48.2 **An Occupational Health Unit**, with Occupational Health Physician, Physiotherapist and Nurse expertise provided to support the management of sickness absence.
- 5.48.3 **A confidential counselling service** offered via Care First that can be accessed by all employees.
- 5.48.4 **An Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 24** is now in place which supports us to work with our employees to promote and facilitate good health and wellbeing, and to provide excellent services to those who need our support.
- 5.48.5 **A digital ‘Health Wall’** has been established featuring some of the links to organisations that provide expert information and advice for a number of health-related issues.
- 5.48.6 **Directorate Performance Assessments** also include sickness information broken down by Directorate and classified as either short term or long term which are kept under review by Senior Management on a cyclical basis.
- 5.49 Managing employee wellbeing remains a priority for Managers, but Members should be aware of the matters below that have resulted from the pandemic:
- Introduction of a new absence reason i.e. Covid and the many variants
 - Vaccinations and staff falling ill afterwards
 - Staff waiting much longer for NHS treatments

- The fit note process changed for a while where it was 28 days before they were required
- A Long Covid Protocol was introduced
- Managers may have had less time to attach to managing absences due to staff shortages and services needing to be provided to residents.

5.50 The Council's Managing Sickness Absence Procedure is currently being reviewed and will take account of any learning from the pandemic. Furthermore, officers are exploring an opportunity to bring in some further external assistance, seeking learning and potentially support from neighbouring local authorities where sickness levels are lower than in Caerphilly.

Cost of Living

5.51 Members will be aware that the UK has been experiencing a cost of living crisis since late 2021, caused predominantly by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases, which has been further exacerbated by recent tax increases, resulting in the fall in disposable incomes. This crisis is acutely affecting our communities and the need for targeted additional Council support is paramount. A separate report was presented to Cabinet on 26th September which set out our current position and presented a proposed package of additional support in order to guide and help our communities through these difficult financial conditions. The report also highlights that the corporate Cost of Living package of support, will be led by a recently appointed Cost of Living Co-ordinator.

5.52 The cost of living crisis is also affecting all of our employees financially in one way or another, leading to some making choices to stop working or to reduce their hours, which is impacting on recruitment and retention, which is already proving to be a significant challenge. The Council is naturally being asked by the Trade Unions to offer support to employees.

5.53 Since this report was first considered by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in September, Cabinet have agreed to support the introduction of the Foundation Living Wage with effect from September 22nd 2022, some six months earlier than required. Cabinet have also agreed to introduce the 'Joint Protocol Mileage Rates in Local Authorities in Wales' with effect from 25th September 2022, to provide a temporary increase in mileage reimbursements costs in the short term to address current market volatility in fuel rates. The 2022/23 pay award will also now be introduced in time for the November and December payrolls where agreed by the national bodies.

5.54 The Corporate Director Social Services and Housing is leading on the cost of living crisis for residents and employees and together with the Head of People Services is consulting with the Trade Unions with regard to the latter.

Conclusion

5.55 There are many factors affecting the workforce which may impact on the Council's ability to deliver services. Whilst the Council will do what it can to respond to some of these local challenges, it will clearly be unable to influence many of the national and global factors which have increased the complexity and scale of the challenges being faced by local government and the public sector as a whole.

5.56 If the Council is to remain resilient and responsive to these challenges, the acquisition of the additional capacity proposed within this report is required. This will go some way to addressing some of the workforce challenges being faced and provide extra resource to focus on the things that matter most to our communities and our organisation.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 It is assumed that the additional investment being sought will provide the capacity that enables the organisation to meet the expectations currently placed upon it but each intervention will also be monitored to assess impact and where necessary refine the approach.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been completed as this report provides Members with an update on matters impacting on the workforce.

7.2 The Council has in place policies to support matters such as recruitment, sickness absence, pay and grading and terms and conditions, etc. which would have been assessed at the time of agreement and take Equalities related issues into account.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The total costs of progressing the proposals set out in paragraphs 5.18 to 5.40 are as follows:

Internal Recruitment Team	£358k
Deputy Chief Executive	£189k
Deputy Section 151 Officer	£108k

Total: - £655k

8.2 There are currently 3 vacant Head of Service posts within the approved staffing structure as follows: -

Head of Business Improvement Services	£135k
Head of Education Planning & Strategy	£106k
Head of Prosperity	£135k

Total: - £376k

8.3 It is proposed that the budgets for the above three vacant posts are redirected to part fund the proposals set out in this report. This will leave a balance of £279k to be funded and it is proposed that this is met through a permanent virement from the existing Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay Budget.

8.4 It should be noted that the proposals in the report will not result in any additional resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The personnel implications are included in the report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 27th September 2022 and the comments from the Committee are detailed within paragraphs 10.2 – 10.13.
- 10.2 Following an introduction from the Chief Executive which provided further details on the options listed in the report's recommendations, the UNISON Branch Secretary offered her comments for Committee consideration. The union representative highlighted the reduction in staff numbers at Caerphilly County Borough Council over the 17 years that she had worked for the council. Members heard about the pressures faced by a significant number of employees as some vacancies were not filled due to austerity and vacancy management. It was outlined how an internal recruitment team was fully supported as it was necessary to attract the best candidates for new roles and the union requested regular progress reports on this matter. The Branch Secretary also welcomed how the proposals in the report were to be funded through the virement of existing budgets.
- 10.3 One Member requested a breakdown of the leavers table contained in 5.13 of the report. The Member also asked about the emerging themes of the exit survey process and for details on the current structure of the Council's recruitment team. The Head of People Services advised Members that a breakdown of leavers would be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting, analysis of the exit survey would need to be collated and then provided when the process had been in place for 3-6 months and that currently there was no specific dedicated recruitment team within Human Resources.
- 10.4 One Member queried the creation of new posts at the higher end of the salary scale whilst cutting front-line services. The Member also questioned the wisdom of not filling the 3 vacant Head of Service posts. The Chief Executive recognised the sensitivities outlined and advised Members that the priorities and pace for implementation set by Councillors and communities demanded greater capacity within the leadership structure. It was also highlighted that within the Council there were three statutory officers and that currently there was only a deputy for one of those positions.
- 10.5 One Member questioned the need to create two new posts to deputise for statutory officers. The Member also sought more information on the specific responsibilities associated with the new positions. The Chief Executive advised that there was not sufficient capacity within the Financial Services Team to designate Deputy Section 151 Officer responsibilities to. It was also outlined that if one of the three Corporate Directors were designated with Deputy Chief Executive duties, there would not be enough capacity at a leadership level to deliver the priorities at the pace demanded. Members were also given comparative details on the Corporate Management structure of other Local Authorities which were higher than the current leadership team at Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer advised Members that the role and responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer were set out in sections 5.35 – 5.39 of the report and that the proposed Deputy would provide resilience particularly during periods of absence. Furthermore, Members heard

how the Section 151 Officer needed additional support to deliver the Council's agenda at a time of significant financial challenges, and to ensure that sufficient strategic financial capacity was available to support the delivery of the Council's ambitious investment programme.

- 10.6 One Member asked if figures were available so that a comparison could be made between the model of using an external recruitment agency and having an internal team. The Head of People Services outlined how a recruitment agency had been used to fill one post and that the associated costs of using them would be circulated to Members. Members heard how suitable candidates for other posts within the Council would be missed if a recruitment agency was used on a post-by-post basis. The Member queried the use of only one recruitment agency. The Head of People Services outlined how a procurement process had been undertaken before engaging a recruitment agency and that the procedure had been costly and still required resources from Council staff, which then prompted the plans to develop an internal recruitment team.
- 10.7 One Member asked about the links to local colleges as part of the Workforce Development Strategy. The Head of People Services outlined how there were current links with external providers and that this had proved very beneficial when undertaking the recent recruitment for apprentices. Members heard how the proposed recruitment team would build on these existing links. The Member then asked about offering students work placements. The Head of People Services outlined how this was already happening and would be developed further in the future.
- 10.8 One Member queried why an honorarium could not be paid to officers to act-up and meet the statutory requirements of Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer on a temporary basis as required. The Member claimed that the Council had a shortage of staff at lower salary levels, and he could not support the proposed creation of the two new senior posts. The Chief Executive outlined how it was her professional opinion that additional capacity at a senior level was needed in order to deliver priorities such as positive intervention on the cost of living challenges and climate change at the pace demanded by Members. It was outlined how the organisation had not progressed during the recent leadership of an Acting Chief Executive as the Corporate Director given the temporary responsibility also had responsibility for a large Directorate. The Chief Executive advised that this was a choice for Members but outlined how it was her professional opinion that the Council was at risk of not meeting statutory requirements if this additional capacity was not put in place.
- 10.9 One Member thought that the report lacked a reshaped management model so that Committee Members could make a more informed opinion and queried how the associated services would be run in the future if the three vacant Head of Service posts were not filled as their budget had been redirected to fund the proposals under consideration. The Chief Executive gave Members an overview of the current responsibilities of the Corporate Management Team and outlined how priorities would be redistributed in the future if Members were minded to approve the proposed changes.
- 10.10 One Member advised that he could not recall the vacant Heads of Service posts being expressed as savings in previous budget reports but welcomed the virement of associated funding to the creation of the proposed new positions.

- 10.11 One Member raised questions on the part of the report relating to sickness absence. The Member requested a fuller breakdown including comparisons with other Local Authorities and also claimed that the data contained in the sickness/absence chart did not add-up. The Member also requested a breakdown of the oncosts highlighted in the salary range in section 5.34. The Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer advised that oncosts of 36% were paid on salary. Members were also informed that if the post is approved, the final salary will be a matter for Full Council to determine. The Head of People Services advised that the figures in the sickness absence chart were not simply calculated in a way that allowed them to add-up to the totals given and that more information would be provided on these calculations outside of the meeting.
- 10.12 One Member sought further information on the proposed recruitment team in regard to how the total number of 7 posts was reached and also the grading structure for these new positions. The Head of People Services advised that the number of team members was based on the potential workload of the Recruitment Team and that the grading structure reflected the duties and responsibilities for each post which would be set out in the specific job descriptions.
- 10.13 One Member commented on the impact of managing sickness better on delivering services and also queried the potential role of a Deputy Chief Executive. The Chief Executive outlined how additional capacity was needed to lead on the cost of living crisis, the climate change agenda, the Corporate Plan priorities and also helping to oversee the Place Shaping programme, for example. Members also heard how Audit Wales had played a monitoring role and had recognised the risks currently carried and believed that for an organisation the size of Caerphilly County Borough Council deputy statutory officers would be expected.
- 10.14 Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that recommendation 3.1 (iii) be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 6 for, 3 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972

Author: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Consultees: Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Cllr Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property Services
Cllr Lindsay Whittle, Leader of Plaid Group
Cllr Kevin Etheridge, Leader of Independent Group
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Members
Unison, GMB and Unite Trade Unions