

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Employment Committee
Date:	19 th June 2025
Subject:	HR Management Information: SBC overall; <i>to include update on progress of Workforce Strategy</i>
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley: CEO MD Commissioner Annabel Scholes: Executive Director of Corporate Resources
Contact Officer:	Bal Toor: HR Director
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – HR Management Information slide deck. Appendix 2 – Workforce Strategy

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 Further to the previous Employment Committee on April 15th, 2025, where our HR Management Information (MI) pack was endorsed by Members, we are now providing an updated pack, which also includes our progress against the actions as set out in the Workforce Strategy.
- 1.2 The HR MI data is presented at all SBC level however it should be noted this information is tailored to each Executive Director area and shared by the HR Business Partner at their DLTs each month. The progress against the Workforce Strategy is higher level, given this document was launched in the business on May 14th, 2025. It is anticipated, that for the Employment Committee in September 2025, a comprehensive update will be provided; to include quarterly trends for the HR MI.

Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to note and provide any feedback on the data contained in Appendix 1. Please also note Appendix 2 which was approved at the previous Employment Committee but provides a baseline for delivery over the next two years.

Reason: The pack will provide more trends at the next Employment Committee in September however the presentation of the pack at this committee illustrates how HR utilises the approach to maintain a targeted approach to all HR deliverables.

Commissioner Review

"Slough's HR function, its workforce culture and its leadership and managerial disciplines are showing signs of improvement albeit from a very low base. Given where Slough is starting from it is understandable that it will take time to reach the standards members wish to see and the public has a right to demand."

Commissioners have encouraged the organisation to work towards a high performance culture. This will involve recognising good work when it occurs and taking action to remove the drivers of poor performance. The current workforce strategy seeks to build a base line of respect within the council. Its next iteration will need to more clearly focus on tackling substandard performance.

In areas where the data has not been collected in sufficient detail or quantity (e.g. exit interviews) members should be wary of leaping to conclusions. They should also be cautious about explanations put forward in the report when the evidence for those explanations is thin or absent."

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1. The Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 sets out our purpose, our approach and our strategic priorities; to achieve any of these, we need a high performing workforce who have a culture that supports them to thrive. The HR Metrics provide us with the ability to monitor our progress and ensure our deliverables are meeting required expectations and outputs. This data is presented to each Executive Directorate and therefore supports the HR officers to partner the business appropriately.

Options considered

This paper does not require any options, as the HR MI pack was agreed and endorsed at the April committee as a standing item.

Background

The HR MI pack now contains a section updating Employment Committee on the progress against the newly published Workforce Strategy. The Workforce Strategy was developed in response to staff feedback gained by the People Poll 2024, and LGA equalities peer review. As a reminder the main findings of both reports are presented below:

People Poll 2024 Themed findings	LGA Equalities Peer Review Themed findings
Leaders who communicate a clear vision	Leaders are committed to advancing equality, with inclusivity at the core of any change. Ensure representation (for disability and ethnicity) at senior level is increased.
Building a safe environment where staff feel listened to	Strengthen the employee voice and role of the network. Promote the equality objectives.
Greater collaboration between teams	Establish an equalities board with representation across SBC
Recognition for contributions	Share Workforce strategy with staff and ensure staff understand ambitious to improve.
Equity of opportunity: staff feel they are developing skills	Ensure Council develops succession plans and grows its own.
Equity of opportunity: staff feel they are supported to progress	Leaders are committed to advancing equality and for the Council to widen the lens of how it views equality beyond race, ethnicity and religion. Improve declaration data but don't wait for full declaration rates to act.

Key matters for committee to consider are:

- Recruitment and retention and permanent / interim mix – we recognise the need for a blend of permanent and interim staff at SBC however the committee is asked to note the progress on reducing our reliance on interims through the permanent recruitment of staff to replace interims.
- Market supplements and honorariums – a number of staff are in receipt of additional payments to reflect market conditions or additional responsibilities. We are currently completing our annual review of market supplements.
- Leavers and exit interviews – exit interviews remain relatively low in number, making it harder to create meaningful trends at this stage. Although the focus on culture and pay remains a contributing factor to people leaving SBC. We recognise that given the Council's proximity to neighbouring London Boroughs, we struggle to compete with their offer. However, our offer of market supplements is offered for some of our specialist and hard to fill roles. Supplements however are reviewed annually and cannot be offered on appointment as a permanent feature of the contract.
- Sickness – the Council's sickness absence is above the Civil Service annual average of 7.8 days per FTE. We recognise for certain directorates levels of sickness based on the nature of the work are linked to length of sickness. The primary cause of employee absences within the organisation is stress and mental health-related issues. Notably, the RHE directorate, specifically the Environment & Highways team, reports the highest sickness rates across the council. This trend is not uncommon in operational areas, where the nature of the work, often outdoors and physically demanding and can contribute to increased physical and mental strain.
- Leadership: 90% of our staff completed an annual appraisal with their staff, this is 15% improvement on last year and 75% improvement on the year(s) prior to 2023. Our focus is now on supporting managers to utilise the Cornerstone platform for recording all 1:1s.
- Workforce Strategy: this was launched in May 2025 Whilst progress will be presented on a quarterly basis, Members are asked to note achievements in the following areas; establishment of better HR MI for all ED areas, progress on CLTs commitments as a result of the staff survey; namely publication of the topics discussed at their monthly assurance meetings and broadening our relationships with local schools and Universities to attract a wider a broader set of prospective employees.

Link to Statutory Equality Objectives

The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice.

As part of meeting its statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council has developed and published 6 equality objectives. There are 2 objectives that are specifically related to the workforce:

Objective 4: The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing best practice

Objective 5: The council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major commissioned services) reflects the community it serves/local labour market.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report although it is important to note the improved MI for the council will support the management and oversight of one of our most important investments, our people.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The effect of the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 is noted below.

The reporting of equality data and taking any necessary action based on this data supports an approach which should also guard against any employment claims under the Equality Act.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Currently the Corporate Risk register details a risk regarding our 'Failure to Attract, Retain & Engage with Our People', this MI pack helps us focus HR and cultural initiatives to address this in a more detailed and transparent way.

3.4 Environmental implications

None

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 The council is committed to being an inclusive employer and meeting its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and s.149, the Public Sector Equality Duty. Monitoring of workforce profiles and other key workforce metrics by equality groups, within regular management information reports, is the foundation of this analysis. A key issue remains the incomplete diversity declarations, but this is recognised in the report and actions are being taken to improve these rates to enable more detailed future analysis of HR metrics.

3.6 *Workforce implications:*

3.6.1 This information is vital to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team discussion regarding the progress of the workforce strategy but also relevant to each Executive Director's leadership meeting, ensuring the HRBP offer strategic partnering to support directors in addressing any areas of concerns (such as negative exit interviews or lack of succession planning).

4. Background Papers

None