

Staff vacancies and the well-being of Council staff

14th January 2026

Report of Chief Officer – People and Policy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide members with an update on staff vacancies, the well-being of Council staff and how the Council are to fill vacancies

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That Budget and Performance Panel consider the update on vacancies and staff wellbeing

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present information relating to a. staff vacancies and the approach to managing these and b. staff well-being

2.0 Vacancies

2.1 As of December 2025, the Council had 44 vacant funded posts as follows:

2.1.1 Environment and Place

22 vacant posts

17 at Salt Ayre Leisure Centre, 3 in White Lund Depot and 2 at Williamson Park. These posts are either a. in the recruitment process or b. purposely being held pending review. None of these posts are hard to fill.

2.1.2 Sustainable Growth

3 vacant posts

1 in Markets currently in the recruitment process, 2 in the Engineering team on-hold as part of a business case for a proposed restructure.

2.1.3 Planning and Climate Change

1 vacant post in Regeneration currently under review with consideration being given to re-designating within the service.

2.1.4 Resources

1 vacant post in Finance in recruitment process

2.1.5 17 in Housing and Property. All of these posts are either in recruitment process or pending.

3.0 Recruitment

3.1 Whilst a review of current vacancies does not indicate inherent recruitment challenges, the aim of People Plan (appendix 1) deliverables is to ensure that Lancashire City Council is an employer of choice to support recruiting and retaining talent. The Council has a Recruitment and Retention strategy (appendix 2) which was approved by People and OD Committee on 28th November 2024. This strategy guides the on-going approach to recruitment and there are a number of associated activities that have been delivered to date.

These include; revamped recruitment pages, attendance at jobs fayres, collaboration with local schools and colleges, increased social media posting / Indeed, collaboration with Lancashire Councils and LGA national recruitment programmes, streamlined recruitment processes (digitalisation) to make on-boarding easier and quicker for employee and manager, employee benefits platform, new role profiles, Real Living Wage accreditation and continuation of hybrid working.

3.2 An Inclusive Recruitment strategy (appendix 3) was approved at People and OD Committee on 20th November 2025. Lancaster City Council is committed to inclusive recruitment, and this strategy is an important component of ensuring that we recruit and retain staff.

3.3 A Workforce Inclusion strategy and action plan (appendix 4) was approved at People and OD Committee on 10th July 2025. This is another important component of our approach to recruitment – and supports the notion that everyone should have equal access to employment, training and development on merit alone.

3.4 In July 2025 Workforce Planning was launched and has been piloted in People and Policy. The aim of this activity is to:

- Align people and roles with council priorities and future services
- Understand risks and pressures on workforce supply and capability
- Ensure we can attract, develop, and retain the skills we need, especially in relation to critical roles
- Make better-informed decisions on resourcing (looking at routes such as apprenticeships), restructuring, and redeploying staff
- Make savings where possible against vacant positions that are seen as “declining roles”

This will be rolled out to all service areas early 2026.

4.0 Wellbeing of staff

4.1 The current wellbeing strategy was launched in 2022 and will be reviewed and refreshed in 2026. There are a number of activities that support the wellbeing of staff:

- Wellbeing service action plans
- Workforce planning referred to in 3.4 and service planning to ensure resources are adequate to meet demand
- An active Wellbeing and Inclusion staff network and Staff Ambassador group to be relaunched
- Encourage teams to get out as per Volunteering policy
- Mental Health First Aiders (policy approved at People and OD on 21st November 2023). Training to be refreshed in 2026.
- Annual conversations have a wellbeing objective
- Wellbeing passports to be refreshed
- Lancaster People Manager essentials training included wellbeing support available

- A network of counsellors, and support in the form of physiotherapy, Occupational Health, and signposting to other organisations to support all employees, through the absence management process and otherwise.

4.2 Annual workforce data shows us that the organisation has made clear progress in reducing sickness absence over the past financial year, with the average number of FTE days lost per employee falling to 8.78 which is the second lowest absence rate out of all Lancashire local authorities. This equates to a drop of 13.5%, and reverses the increase seen in 2023/24. It suggests that strategies around employee wellbeing, early intervention, and proactive absence management are delivering tangible results. Stress and depression is no longer biggest reason for absence. Turnover remains between 14-15% and well below the 2023/24 peak of 18.5%.

4.3 Early 2025 a Staff Survey was carried out and the highest scoring themes from the recent found that staff:

- Feel that they do useful work
- Have the opportunity to be independent in the way work is delivered
- Feel able to share issues with colleagues
- Have clear vision of what is expected of them
- Plan to stay in the employment of Lancaster City Council

Staff survey action plans have been developed which support the wellbeing of our staff.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The People and OD team continue to proactively work with the senior leadership team, Members, staff, managers and Trade Unions to ensure that recruitment challenges are addressed and the wellbeing of our workforce remains a priority.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

There is no impact. Should actions be proposed as a result of this paper, then impact assessments will be carried out in relation to those specific actions.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

There are no resource implications arising from this report. However, should actions be proposed as a result of this report, then it is expected that the Human Resources team would be responsible for progressing those actions, and would need to review capacity when considering timescales alongside other priorities.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – People Plan

Appendix 2 – Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Appendix 3 – Inclusive Recruitment Strategy

Appendix 4 – Workforce Inclusion Strategy

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