

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 15 October 2018

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): W Dick, J Wallace, R Beadle, D Bradford,
L Caffrey, M Charlton, D Duggan, P Foy, J Green, S Green,
M Hall, M Henry and B Oliphant

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): T Graham, J Kielty, N Weatherley and K Wood

CR2 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meetings held on 25 June and 10 July 2018 respectively be approved as a correct record.

**CR3 PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE PLAN:
UPDATE ON THE REFRESH OF THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report to provide an update on progress made in relation to the implementation of the Council's Workforce Plan.

The Council's workforce strategy and plan were agreed in 2015. The purpose of the strategy is to make sure that the Council has a workforce that can support delivery of the sustained transformation necessary to achieve the services our residents want and need, services which provide value for money, are fit for purpose, flexible and customer focussed.

The report provides a full update for members on work undertaken since October 2017 under the 6 key themes within the strategy. Some key points were highlighted to the Committee:

Leadership Development for Leadership Team

There is currently a small working group looking at refreshing the Leadership Development Programme.

Upskilling the Workforce

An upskilling event took place on 4 October which was aimed at upskilling across all levels of the workforce. The Council is also continuing to develop e-learning modules to encourage learning in a convenient and efficient way. Learning is currently available in areas such as management, health and safety, equalities and diversity, ICT and finance. Over 800 modules have been completed during 2017-18

year by Council employees.

Mentoring and Coaching

A mentoring and coaching framework has been developed with the Leadership Team being trained as mentors. The aim is to support capacity building for managers and employees.

Apprenticeships

The Government's changes to the apprenticeship scheme took effect from April 2017. The changes introduced a public-sector apprenticeship target. The Council's target was 2.3% of the workforce (160 employees) on an apprenticeship on an annual basis. The Council has not drawn down all of the apprenticeship levy. From April 2017 to March 2018 the Council had 95 apprentices. From April 2018, 49 new apprenticeships commenced, these are a mixture of current employees who are upskilling and new recruits to the Council.

In an attempt to boost this number and increase the drawn down on the apprenticeship levy, briefings have taken place with Leadership Team and managers. Employees have also been invited to participate in personal consultations to find out more about apprenticeship opportunities. 14 staff attended for one to one discussions with a further 9 having a telephone discussion.

The Council has faced a number of challenges including:

- The lack of available standards and training providers, resulting in the continuation of traditional academic qualifications rather than apprenticeships
- The essential requirement for all apprentices to demonstrate English and Maths and GCSE level when some staff already have degrees and other professional qualifications
- The requirement to spend 20% of time "off the job" in training and the impact this has on service delivery
- Insufficient providers completing the procurement process as they have failed to provide the required assurances in relation to health and safety and/or safeguarding matters
- Insufficient providers in the region to deliver the apprenticeship programme the Council requires
- Providers in the region cancelling or deciding (sometimes at a very late stage) not to run apprenticeship training due to insufficient numbers of learners to form viable cohorts

NEREO have been invited to look at this issue and officers have been working with apprenticeship providers to address the problem.

Recruitment and Retention

The Council has agreed to adopt the TUC's Great Jobs Agenda which consists of six themes, each with a description of why it matters, along with what the TUs want employers to do and what they want politicians to do. The themes include having a

voice at work, fair and decent pay and learning and progression.

Pay Recognition and Reward

77 employees have been recognised for their long service in the last 12 months. Research has found that there is a direct correlation between employee engagement/how people are managed and their attitudes and behaviour, with business performance. Engaged employees are happier, healthier and more fulfilled and they are more motivated and deliver better business performance. Employee workshops have been held, with the general consensus being that employees just want a simple thank you rather than pomp and ceremony.

Pay Protection

The Council is committed to ensuring that any negative impact in respect of changes to the workforce is minimised and employees continue to receive some level of protection if such changes affect their pay. Balanced against this is a requirement to consider affordability and the financial pressures the Council face. The Council's Pay Protection policy has been reviewed to ensure these principles continue to apply.

Review of the Flexi-time Scheme

A review of the Council's flexi time scheme has been undertaken to make sure it remains fit for purpose and reflects best practice for both employee work-life balance and to meet the needs of the Council.

Implementation of a car leasing salary sacrifice scheme

As part of the employee benefits scheme the Council is considering offering a car leasing salary sacrifice scheme. Proposals will be brought to Cabinet and Council in the near future.

Low Pay

The Council is committed to addressing the issue of low pay and moving towards the UK Real Living Wage rate whilst being mindful of the impact this may have on other areas such as schools and the Council's ability to trade.

Wellbeing and Engagement

Throughout the year the Council's Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has worked jointly with the public health team and the communications team to promote health and wellbeing campaigns. The Council continues to maintain its 'continuing excellence' rating for the North East Better Health at Work Award. An employee needs assessment in November 2017 highlighted a number of health and wellbeing priorities for the Council's employees. To explore this further, 33 employees took part in a half day workshop, the initial results of which are displayed in the public area near Bewicks. Further work is on-going across 3 workstreams, to implement some of the suggestions.

Performance and Change

Corporate induction guidance for use by managers has been developed to support the introduction of all new employees at all levels to the Council. A corporate induction workshop has been re-introduced to compliment the induction guidance. This is delivered quarterly and includes input from the Chief Executive and a Councillor who provide corporate context. Feedback from the first event which took place in July 2018 was positive.

The Workforce Strategy and Plan is kept constantly under review, however, in light of the Council's revised Strategic Approach "Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives" it is important to review the workforce strategy and workforce plan to ensure they deliver what the Council needs. A review of the current plan and strategy is ongoing. Consultations with service directors are being undertaken and they will be challenged to think about their on-going and future workforce needs. The scheduling of revisions to the strategy and plan will be aligned with the considerations Services Directors are giving to how they will deliver services, linked to the requirement to make budget savings and consider more efficient ways of working.

It was queried if it would be possible to find out how much the Council is paying in terms of the levy and how much is being drawn down.

It was noted that Phillip Hammond announced some changes were to be made to the apprenticeship levy which would make things easier. It was queried whether the Council were aware of what these flexibilities might be. It was noted that the council are aware of changes being announced, however, the detail of the changes is not yet clear.

It was suggested that consideration be given to working with other employers in terms of providing a degree apprenticeship.

It was noted that officers could look at this option when they take the issue of apprenticeships. It was noted that the idea had been floated with the regional HR officers and there did not seem to be much appetite.

RESOLVED - (i) that the Comments of the Committee be noted in relation to progress on the actions arising from the plan and strategy
 (ii) that further updates on progress will be brought to Committee on an annual basis.

CR4 OSC - REVIEW - SCOPING REPORT - HELPING TO INCREASE SUPPORT/CAPACITY OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Committee received a report proposing the scope for the review on "Helping to Increase Support / Capacity of the Voluntary Sector, agreed by the Committee on 16 April 2018.

The Committee were advised that this is not intended to be a review of the overall

health and vitality of Gateshead's VCS, or its effectiveness, although the review may highlight some examples and practices that could be shared and developed further.

The review aims to:

- Establish the extent and nature of the types of support the Council currently provides to the VCS across a spectrum of service areas
- How this activity is resourced and coordinated
- Assess the effectiveness of this Council support in helping the VCS address the needs of Gateshead residents

The Council provide a wide range of support including:

- Financial support in terms of grants and cash contributions
- NNDR Charitable Rate Relief
- Advice and guidance both directly and through commissioned organisations such as Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service
- Commissioned work and contracts
- Sign posting, promoting, sharing and networking
- Community development and capacity building, including funding advice and project activities
- Promotion and development of volunteering opportunities
- The Gateshead Compact

The feedback of the Committee is sought on the scope and timeline of the review.

It is proposed that there will be several evidence gathering sessions as follows:

03 December 2018 – session will cover the analysis of the Council's role in and budget for supporting the voluntary sector and to consider evidence from voluntary organisations.

21 January 2019 – Evidence gathering session

04 March 2019 – Evidence gathering session

01 April 2019 – Evidence gathering session

June 2019 – Date to be confirmed – draft report for consideration

July 2019 – Date to be confirmed – final report for Committee to refer to Cabinet

Members of the Committee welcomed this review topic and there is a need to make sure that it is as thorough and comprehensive as it can be.

It was requested that all Councillors embrace this and contribute in full to the review.

It was suggested that the Community Foundation be invited to attend and opportunities for philanthropic giving be explored. It was also suggested that we

need to make sure they have enough links to us.

It was suggested that there could be potentially some really good examples to bring into the evidence gathering. It was suggested that one important piece of work is to map the organisations that are out there. It was also noted that there is a dwindling pot of money with dwindling staff resource. It was noted that grants and awards seem to see the same groups and the groups aren't capacity building and aren't becoming self-sustaining. It was suggested that there would be a lot to be gained from bringing groups together.

RESOLVED - (i) That the recommendations of the scope and timeline be agreed.
(ii) that the comments of the Committee with regards to what is included in the scope be noted.

CR5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN GATESHEAD

The Committee received a report from the Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service to provide an update on the current position within the service and highlighted some of the work which will be undertaken and to highlight some of the key and current issues facing the voluntary and community sector.

In May 2016 Newcastle CVS was invited to provide interim voluntary and community infrastructure support to organisations in Gateshead. Newcastle CVS provided a full service in Gateshead which finished on 31 July 2018 with a new contract starting in August 2018.

From 2016 – 2018 there has been formal contract performance monitoring, monthly meetings with commissioning officers and reports every six months to the Corporate Resources OSC. During this time there has been:

- Delivery of contracts – exceeding targets
- Active engagement in the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board, Gateshead Health and Care System Board, Deciding Together/Delivering Together and other health initiatives
- Publication of Gateshead specific reports – 'Doing Good in Gateshead' and 'GaN Canny'
- Development and Delivery of OurGateshead
- Active engagement in the Gateshead Awards
- Active engagement and dissemination of information on Gateshead Thrive/Anti Poverty Work
- Involvement in 2017/18 and 2018/19 Gateshead Council budget processes, including dissemination of information, organising meetings, writing a full response
- Regular meetings with councillors and Gateshead Council officers and partners active in Gateshead
- Extension of all written and digital materials to include Gateshead
- Development and delivery of the Gateshead Voluntary Sector Leaders Group
- Attendance and (appropriate) involvement at Gateshead Council committees, events

and initiatives

- Development of the Blue Stone Consortium, formerly the Gateshead Commissioning Exchange and Newcastle Consortium, to take on the Public Health England contract for Well Newcastle Gateshead.
- Engagement with funders e.g. Community Foundation (Tyne Wear and Northumberland) and Big Lottery highlighting the lower levels of investment in Gateshead.

Future services will include:

- Changes to the staff team - the Newcastle CVS support and development team is currently going through a programme of restructuring in order to deliver the new infrastructure contracts in Gateshead and Newcastle, within a reduced budget and offering a more generic service; in line with the contract requirements.
- Development and enhancement of networking opportunities for the voluntary and community sector, including a new Gateshead VCS network
- Delivery of a one-day event for Gateshead's voluntary and community organisations
- Newcastle CVS is currently consulting on a name change to reflect its position in Gateshead
- Newcastle CVS will change its governance structure in order that Gateshead organisations can become full members (rule change to be agreed at the CVS AGM on 12 November, to be held at St Mary's Heritage Centre, Gateshead)
- The new infrastructure service will be managed jointly across Gateshead and Newcastle by a single manager, separate workers and shared skills
- Greater engagement of external specialist providers e.g. The Media Trust, Association of Chairs etc
- Continuing development and promotion of the OurGateshead website
- Development, update and rewrite of the Gateshead Voluntary Sector Compact
- Annual key facts briefing for Gateshead
- Participation in Gateshead Council review of Information, Advice and Advocacy Services
- Engage in and respond to the Council's budget consultation process
- Development and coordination of a training programme for the voluntary and community sector. This programme to be developed in consultation with the Gateshead Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team
- Provision of a funding advice service to focus on raising awareness of non-public grant sources of income and revenue
- Representation of sector at key forums including the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board, Gateshead Community Safety Board, Gateshead Strategic Partnership Steering Group and others – either directly or by supporting others.
- Ensure the breadth and diversity of the voluntary and community sector is represented and reflected
- Provision and translation of policy information (local and national)
- Responses to emergent issues
- Provision of monthly sector news and advice email

Some of the key and current issues facing the sector include:

- The impact of welfare reforms (affects users, carers, volunteers and staff)
- Increasing levels of debt and poverty (affects users, carers, volunteers and staff)
- Reduction in council support – funding through contracts, grants and capacity
- Short term contracts with multiple extensions
- NHS moving to larger (and lower value) contracts which are not economic to run
- Changes in Big Lottery Funding – levels of funding, and Reaching Communities

- Reduction in access to social care and diversion to the voluntary and community sector
- Reductions in mental health services and diversion to the voluntary and community sector
- Governance issues for volunteer trustees and management committees
- Increase in service users and carers
- More competition for grants from Trusts and Foundations
- Recruitment and retention of staff (many voluntary organisations can afford only the legal Living Wage and minimum terms and conditions of service)
- Reduction in income generation – people can't afford the fees, charges, subs etc
- Cost pressures affecting all organisations – rental, utilities, inflation etc
- Increasing levels of loneliness and isolation as formerly free / low cost public services are removed or introduce charges
- Organisations that rely on donations have a poorer population to ask

The Committee thanked Sally for the tremendous work done on behalf of Gateshead, it was noted that there had never been so much confidence in the service we are being provided with.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

CR6 VOLUNTEER PLAN - ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee received the Annual Update Report with regards to the Volunteer Plan. The Committee has previously agreed that they should receive an annual update on the implementation of the Council's Volunteers Plan, now known as Helping Out.

Gateshead Council has adopted the Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives, and this will supersede the current Council Plan.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/2 states that the Council will continue to seek to mitigate demand pressures within services by capacity building within communities, including where appropriate, work with partners and volunteers.

In April 2018 this Committee agreed the content of the Volunteers Plan Refresh. The plan offered a new set of commitments to support residents and community organisations in Gateshead to help each other out.

The original Volunteers Plan (2013) and refresh (2018) have helped provide a co-ordinated approach to volunteering in Gateshead. The plan was originally structured around key principles which aimed to support volunteers as well as organisations and services delivering volunteer opportunities.

Since the creation of the original plan in 2013 there are now 1978 residents registered with Gateshead to volunteer and increase of 1928. A conservative estimate is there could be as many as 8000 to 10000 volunteers helping across our communities.

Corporate volunteer days continue to grow in demand, with a total of over 80

individual organisations being offered tailored bespoke volunteer days supporting an estimated 2500 individual employee volunteers. The economic value to the Gateshead community is estimated at £160,955.

The Volunteer Plan and systems for the management of volunteering projects had remained largely unchanged since 2013 until the refresh. Therefore, some of the systems and processes that support the recruitment and retention of volunteers are now difficult to manage efficiently due to the increasing volume of volunteering requests and the capacity available to process the requests. It has also always been acknowledged that the Council's arrangements only cover a fraction of the volunteering that takes place across Gateshead.

Council officers have worked with Open Lab Newcastle and PACT Lab Northumbria to try and find ways to address some of the issues around recruitment and management of volunteers. One of the main findings from this and other research into volunteer recruitment is that an online system is required to provide appropriate support and alleviate some of the current constraints. The Team are now looking at the various off the shelf volunteer management systems that could be purchased to help improve efficiency and quality of the support.

In May 2014 Gateshead Council Employee Volunteering Policy was refreshed enabling employees to request up to 15 hours paid time to volunteer in Gateshead over a 12-month period. This needs to be matched by at least 15 hours pro rata of employee's own time. The scheme also allows employees to take part in taster sessions. Promotional activity will continue in 2018/19 with an aim to increase the number of employee volunteer days.

Throughout Gateshead there are many different informal environmental Friends of Groups (FOG) that support their local community with the maintenance and upkeep of Gateshead's open spaces and parks.

There are currently an estimated 40 FOGs in 2017. These groups all have their own individual aims and objectives as well as support needs. Development with these groups is supported by the Volunteer Coordinator for Countryside and Environment as well as the Development Officer for Volunteering. One of the recurring barriers for these group was around public liability insurance. As the volunteers making up the FOGs would be delivering activities within open spaces and parks (where there are likely to be members of the public) Public Liability Insurance is a necessity. This is not only to protect members of the public but also the volunteers themselves. A procedure has been established and developed with Gateshead Council to enable FOGs to register their volunteers and received tailored support around tasks within designated open spaces, receive equipment that is required, necessary training and any additional volunteers as well as any other areas of support identified.

A specific area of work which has been identified through recent work is volunteering and young people. Through work with organisations such as National Citizenship Service (NCS) and Tyne Wear Skills there is a strong need to develop some work and support to link young people with volunteering opportunities and projects that are available in Gateshead.

There are several priority areas for future actions which have been identified in the continued delivery of the Volunteers Plan:

- Create a new online management system to recruit volunteers, record volunteers, promote volunteer roles and match available volunteers to opportunities within Gateshead. The system will also need to generate specific reports to monitor volunteering.
- Continue promotion of the Employee Volunteering Scheme specifically group volunteer opportunities for teams of Council employees
- Create and deliver the volunteer programme supporting The World Transplant Games 17th – 24th August 2019 (listed in Appendix 1)
- Continue development work with corporate organisations around group volunteering and provide links to the voluntary sector
- Continued development of volunteering opportunities on OurGateshead and using the online resource as a space to share experiences and good news stories to illustrate examples of good practice
- Continued development work with local colleges and universities
- Development of young people and volunteering including Tyne Wear Skills and for example specific tailored projects for groups of young people including sixth forms and secondary schools as well as youth groups
- Continue to provide lead support for volunteering with the Voluntary & Community sector as well as for council service projects and roles.
- Specific support including a conference type event for Environmental Friends of Groups working with Street Scene Team.
- Continue working relationships with Trade Unions regarding the creation of further volunteering opportunities.

It was suggested that councillors and senior officers put themselves forward once per year for a particular piece of work.

It was suggested that the voluntary sector be linked with economic development for support.

RESOLVED - that the comments of the Committee be noted.

CR7 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report detailing the work programme for the municipal year 2018/19. The Committee were advised that there had been a couple of changes to the programme which had been highlighted.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the changes to the Work Programme

Chair.....