

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 17 October 2016

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)
Councillor(s): J Wallace, R Beadle, M Charlton, S Green,
B Oliphant, M Ord, Bradford and M Henry

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): P Foy, L Caffrey, T Graham, J Green and
M Hall

CR19 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2016 be approved as a correct record.

CR20 MATTERS ARISING

It was confirmed that Councillors are now automatically signed up to receive the 'Gateshead Now' emails.

It was confirmed that the free Wi-Fi in the centre of Gateshead has been tested and is now working.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

CR21 CASE STUDY - WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The Committee received a report outlining the progress being made on the implementation of the Council's Workforce Plan.

The Workforce Plan supports the delivery of the Workforce Strategy which was approved by Council on 16 July 2015.

To develop the plan, work was carried out to identify the Council's existing skill base and to assess future need. This involved all services completing a questionnaire to provide a council-wide picture of capability and skills. The assessment has shaped the detail and timeframes included in the plan and has helped to clarify both corporate and service priorities.

The aim of the plan is to ensure that the Council possesses a workforce that can deliver on the Council Plan and Vision 2030.

The plan sets out the projected activity, when and how it will be delivered, who it is targeted at and the resources required to deliver it under each of the five themes. It

will be continually developed in order to respond to the future direction and shape of Council groups and services.

The report detailed the activity to date and next steps against the themes of: Skills and Behaviours; Recruitment and Retention; Pay, Reward and Recognition; Wellbeing and Engagement; and Performance and Change.

The report also highlighted the challenges associated with delivering the outcomes.

The Committee participated in a demonstration of the newly created Learning and Development section of the Council's Intranet. These new Intranet pages bring together all of the resources available to employees to help them access Learning and Development opportunities. Also provided are tools to support the induction; and appraisal and development processes.

Some members of the Committee expressed disappointment with the 41% turnout in the 2016 employee survey and queried whether there are any patterns or variances by Directorship or Service area.

It was noted that the employee survey turnout was slightly increased from last year and that the Chief Executive has requested Service Directors to look at ways of increasing turnout. Within Communities and Environment, the provision of hard copy surveys resulted in an increase in responses being received.

It was clarified that employees who receive financial support to undertake certain accredited courses are expected to repay the costs, if they leave the employment of the Council within an agreed timeframe. It was commented by one Councillor that some Local Authorities seek to recover costs if employees leave within a four year period and therefore this Council could look to increase its recovery period.

It was clarified that Councillors can access the employee discounts.

Concerns were raised about the identification of aspiring future leaders solely by line managers. It was commented that the employee/line-manager relationship is vulnerable and therefore employees may feel their opportunities are being limited.

The proportion of staff identified as aspiring future leaders was queried. It was commented that service directors should have this information.

It was clarified that if employees were to feel that they were not being considered for opportunities by their line manager, they could raise their concerns with their Service Director. However, it was noted that employees would not know whether they had been identified as a future aspiring leader and that Service Directors may not hold this information.

Concerns were raised that employees may be demotivated by the restrictions on development opportunities as shown in the Workforce Plan Development Matrix. This point was noted and it was agreed that the matrix be reviewed for accuracy.

The Committee was pleased to note that the iTrent system will enable the accurate

monitoring of completion rates in respect of Employee Performance and Development Reviews, therefore addressing the issues identified by the employee survey.

The Committee was pleased to note that the employee surveys also capture qualitative feedback, which is then examined.

The age profile of the workforce was reported and concerns were raised about the issues associated with an aging workforce.

The range of courses available was praised and it was suggested that they be more widely advertised and sold to the public and partners. It was queried whether some of the learning and development opportunities are available to Councillors, such as dealing with difficult situations.

It was requested that future updates identify the proportion of employees identified as aspiring future leaders and of those the numbers who have undertaken learning and development opportunities. Future updates should also provide the raw data in respect of the employee survey so that the Committee, as part of its monitoring role, can collectively scrutinise the information.

It was previously queried in 2014 whether general improvements could be made to the Health Room. Linking to the theme of wellbeing it was queried whether this can be explored again.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the Committee was satisfied with the progress made in implementing actions from the Workforce Plan.
 - ii. That the Committee was satisfied with the effectiveness of the Workforce Plan in delivering the aims of the Workforce Strategy.
 - iii. That the Committee agreed to consider annual updates on progress.
 - iv. That future updates should detail the proportion of aspiring future leaders and of those, the numbers who have undertaken training opportunities. The raw data from the employee surveys should also be provided for scrutiny.

CR22 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Annual Health & Safety Performance Report was presented to the Committee, setting out performance during the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The report is structured to reflect Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and is split into a number of sections highlighting key issues for Councillors to be aware of.

The update provided: an indication of the effectiveness of the health and safety control measures the Council has in place, with evidence showing training delivered; details of progress towards meeting health and safety aims and objectives and; the number of accidents recorded.

It was highlighted in the report, that work has been undertaken in areas such as Asbestos Management, Contractor Management, Educational Visits, Fire Safety and Legionella Management.

It was commented that the financial environment within which the Council is operating will contribute further to work-related stress. It was queried whether general briefings on stress had been circulated to the entire workforce.

It was confirmed that leaflets have been made available for managers and employees but an entire workforce notice has not been circulated. The Committee noted that hundreds of employees have attended 'stress buster' sessions.

It was queried whether occupational health assessments could be triggered on notice of employees being absent due to stress, so that support is available early.

- RESOLVED: i. That the Committee was satisfied with the actions taken to maintain and improve the health and safety management system.

CR23 IMPLEMENTATION OF GATESHEAD VOLUNTEERS PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received the annual update on the implementation of the Council's Volunteer Plan 2013-17. The update was delivered by way of report and PowerPoint presentation.

The report provided information about: the number of volunteers; the types of volunteer roles; and the impact of volunteering in Gateshead's communities. The report also included case studies and priority areas for future action.

It was commented that the reported volunteering within the Jewish Community is well established and has been in existence for a long time but has only just been recorded by the management information system. It was suggested that students at Northumbria University's Business Clinics be invited to develop a new and improved management information system to assist with this work.

One Councillor highlighted that businesses are increasingly more likely to support community projects being headed by VCS groups. The opportunities presented by this should be recognised.

It was suggested employee volunteering could be increased by creating a link to the workforce plan, whereby aspiring future leaders and senior management are encouraged to undertake volunteering activity.

The Committee also proposed that a Councillor volunteering session or day be organised.

It was commented that volunteering opportunities should be linked to accreditation or qualifications.

The training directories developed as part of the workforce plan could be shared with VCS groups, to support capacity building within communities. It was also commented that volunteering opportunities could be included in the training directories as they provide learning and development opportunities to employees.

It was requested that the amount of funding secured by Gateshead VCS groups be calculated and reported to the Committee. This money is often spent within Gateshead and it was said that more funding could possibly be secured by groups in the borough providing support and advice is available.

There was a view that VCS groups' access to funding is becoming increasingly complicated and that grants are often secured by communities with greater capacity and existing resource.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the Committee was satisfied with the progress being made to implement the Volunteers Plan.
 - ii. That the future actions identified in the report be endorsed, with the inclusion of the actions identified by the Committee.

Chair.....