

TITLE OF REPORT: Case Study – the Workforce Plan

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee's views on the progress being made on implementation of the Workforce Plan.

Background

1. The Council's Workforce Strategy and Plan were devised and implemented in 2015 with the aim of ensuring we have a workforce that can support delivery of the sustained transformation necessary to achieve the services our residents want and need – services that are cheaper, fit for purpose, flexible and customer focused.
2. Essentially what we need to achieve is the right people with the right skills and behaviours working in the right jobs.
3. The Workforce Strategy is based on a number of themes – skills and behaviours, recruitment and retention, pay, reward and recognition, wellbeing and engagement and performance and change. There is a detailed delivery plan for each of the themes within the Workforce Plan.
4. The Workforce Plan has recently been refreshed to reflect the work that has already been undertaken and to ensure it continues to be relevant and appropriate. It will be continually developed in order to respond to both the future direction and shape of Council groups and services and the workforce implications resulting from the ongoing transformation agenda.
5. A key focus of the work undertaken in the last year has been to ensure that all managers, including Leadership Team, are supported to develop their skills to ensure they are providing a strong, ambitious, responsible and resilient leadership culture which enables them to lead and manage change proactively and at pace. In addition to this, our approach to employee engagement has been strengthened and terms and conditions reviewed. Detail of the activities undertaken to date are shown in Appendix 1.
6. This report will focus on providing an update on the work that is currently being undertaken.

Learning & Development (L&D) Framework

7. A key priority is to have an engaged and empowered workforce, equipped with the right skills and knowledge to deliver the best possible outcomes to our customers and confident in the responsibilities they have. To support this and respond to concerns in

the last two employee surveys of inconsistent and unfair management, a learning and development framework was introduced as a one-stop shop for managers and employees to access information on courses and other resources to support their development.

8. A range of mandatory briefing sessions were also implemented for managers to equip them with skills to deal with HR issues such as recruitment and selection, dealing with capability and competency issues, undertaking an investigation and managing sickness absence. To date approx. one fifth of managers have attended these sessions, and feedback has been very positive. However, further work will need to be undertaken to ensure that remaining managers attend these sessions.
9. We are currently working on a way to measure the effectiveness of the managers' briefing sessions.

Revision of the Appraisal & Development (A&D) process and Competency Framework

10. Performance management is identified in the workforce strategy as critical in ensuring we focus on the right things and that any issues around employee performance can quickly be addressed.
11. A&D is an established tool that can help all employees to perform at their best and access the right support and development. However, the employee survey in 2016 highlighted that only 47% of employees across the Council had an A&D in the 6 months prior to the survey and that managers not dealing with underperformance' was an issue that was affecting the morale of other employees. To address this and ensure a stronger approach to performance management of employees, the A&D process and the competency framework have been redesigned.
12. The revised framework is much simpler and has been developed in consultation with employees at various levels. The aim is to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to meet regularly with their line manager to discuss their performance, development needs and aspirations; they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, are supported to be at their best, are able to meet ongoing challenges and deliver the best possible outcomes for Gateshead.
13. The framework not only focuses on setting work priorities and development objectives, but also now contains a performance rating. The performance element is about rewarding employees who are performing well and getting employees to perform at their best. Managers are expected to review an employee's performance and development against their agreed work priorities, targets and competencies on an ongoing basis throughout the year.
14. The Council's Competency Framework has also been revised in line with the new A&D process and is vastly simplified from its previous version. The framework clearly identifies the competencies that employees at every level are expected to display in their job role.
15. The Council launched the revised A&D framework in April 2017, setting a deadline of the end of June for the completion of all A&Ds. However, it was recognised that this deadline was quite tight, so it was extended until the end of the summer. A report run

in early September showed that only 27.73% of A&Ds had been recorded as being completed across the Council.

16. It was agreed that A&Ds were mandatory for every employee, therefore, work is ongoing to identify in those areas where A&Ds haven't been recorded, whether they have in fact been completed and / or not recorded and the reasons for this and also whether there are any issues preventing the A&Ds from being completed or information entered into iTrent.
17. Work is also underway to devise a method for collating the information from A&Ds on what learning and development is needed for employees so this can be built into the workforce plan. Once the method has been agreed, this will be piloted in a few services to ensure it is appropriate.
18. A questionnaire was also issued to all staff to gather some feedback on the revised process and framework and to date we have had 89 responses. This feedback will be used to review the process and framework to see if any changes are needed.
19. The A&D process is also being reviewed in light of the Council's approach to talent management as well as the refresh of the Strategic Plan which could result in revised objectives for employees. In light of this review the performance rating of employees will no longer take place in December 2017. It is likely that performance ratings will be implemented from January 2019 onwards. This will give further time to review processes, make any necessary changes and then embed the new performance rating element.

Talent Management

20. In a climate of such uncertainty and where new skills are becoming more and more critical, we all recognise that understanding where and how to develop employees is critical to the Council's future.
21. One of the key priorities of the workforce plan is that all employees should have the opportunity to learn and develop. Therefore work is ongoing to develop an approach to talent management which is based on the idea that everyone has more potential than is currently being realised and the need to maximise that potential. The approach will demonstrate investment in all employees and will build on the revised A&D process.
22. We want managers to have conversations with all their employees, either during the A&D process, or as part of regular catch ups or 1:1s, to discuss what learning and development is available to them. The aim is to ensure that we provide opportunities for all employees to develop, that we maximise talent both collectively and individually and make everyone feel valued and motivated.
23. Development opportunities may well be different for members of the same team but we need managers to tailor opportunities to an individual's circumstances as it is highly likely that every single member of the workforce will have skills that are not being used to full potential.
24. This approach is intended to support the A&D process in order to identify and put rigorous development plans in place for people to ensure that talent is recognised

and supported in a way that is clear but demonstrates the commitment to nurture people in a way that is stretching but fair and consistent. It is not intended to be a shortcut to promotion. It will simply be an approach that helps define development plans and ensures managers take this part of their responsibility seriously.

25. The approach seeks to be inclusive – it gives us an opportunity to demonstrate investment in all employees. It's not about the chosen few, the elite or the upper echelons of the organisation and it's not about succession planning.
26. It will be important to have mechanisms in place to identify those "hidden gems" who work in front line services as they may have less regular access to a manager because of working patterns and team numbers, so arrangements need to be considered to ensure these people do not fall through the net or miss out because of their working circumstances.
27. It may be more time intensive to understand and develop talent in large teams or where the work is very similar, but it's important that everyone knows and understands that the Council will be taking their skills and career development seriously. We will need to ensure that everyone knows what opportunities are available so that they can initiate conversations as well as be on the receiving end.
28. In terms of the process, the first step will be an initial conversation as an extension to the A&D process. Managers within a service would then come together discuss findings so that there is a degree of moderation to help ensure fairness and consistency. This helps avoid actual or perceived favouritism, and helps identify strengths and weaknesses and gaps across the team. Stage 2 would then be the actual development conversation with the employee.
29. Work is ongoing to confirm exactly how this framework will be embedded into the A&D process and also what development opportunities there may be for employees and how we ensure they are put in place i.e. identifying what task and finish groups and stretch projects are available for employees to be involved in or secondment opportunities.
30. There is a need to think carefully about implementation and training to ensure that the approach and toolkit are widely understood and supported and that managers are able to determine the right development initiatives. It will be vital that arrangements are in place to moderate results so that the approach is applied fairly and consistently.
31. Talent Management champions have been identified for each group. These Service Directors will be responsible for ensuring that talent management is embedded within their service and for promoting this approach.
32. A cabinet report will be going in the near future to establish talent management as part of the overall HR framework. It is anticipated that training would then be rolled out between October and December.

Mentoring

33. Mentoring is identified in the Workforce Plan as an initiative to build management/ leadership capacity and to support employee development within the Council.

Mentoring is a form of training, learning and development which is long term and aims to develop capability and potential in the role.

34. Work is ongoing to further develop the Council's mentoring scheme which is available to all employees to access. The aim of the mentoring scheme is to provide employees with the opportunity to work with someone who can support them to learn or develop faster than they might do alone. Mentoring is useful for an employee who has been promoted or moved to a different role as it provides targeted support, guidance and advice from a more senior colleague with greater overall experience and expertise in a specific area or in an employee's area of work. The mentor provides insight and guidance helping employees to achieve desired goals.

Coaching

35. Work is also ongoing to further develop the coaching opportunities available to employees. We currently have a list of executive coaches who are available to work with senior managers, however, there is a need to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to work with a coach if this will support their learning and development.
36. A pool of internal coaches are to be identified who can work with employees to support them to be the best they can be and aspire to the highest possible levels of performance. The coaches will support employees to develop their skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, leading to the achievement of organisational objectives.
37. This pool of coaches will be available to work with employees for a short period of time and will focus on specific development areas / issues and how to achieve specific, immediate goals or solve immediate problems or issues and improve their own performance. Coaches are not subject experts but will work with individuals to identify the answers to their own problems.
38. The pool of coaches will receive training in coaching and mentoring skills up to an accredited level 5 of ILM.

Apprenticeships

39. Following the Government's changes to the apprenticeship system which took effect from April 2017, including the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, the introduction of a public sector apprenticeship target and new apprenticeship standards to replace existing frameworks, work has been ongoing to scope the current and future demand for apprenticeships within the Council.
40. To meet the target, the Council is required to start 2.3% of the workforce (160 employees) on an apprenticeship on an annual basis.
41. The scoping work has identified demand for approximately 109 apprenticeship starts for 17/18 and a further 28 for 18/19 at an indicative cost of £105,800 in year 1 and £212,500 in year 2. The numbers include the anticipated progression of 17 existing Business Admin apprentices and 2 Teaching Assistant apprentices from level 2 to level 3. The Council's levy comes to an estimated £668,669 per year including

maintained schools, therefore, the costs of these apprenticeships will be met by accessing the Council's apprenticeship levy.

42. There may be further demand for apprenticeships in the future in some areas but services are not currently in a position to commit to apprenticeships.
43. Services are being encouraged to consider what scope there is for further apprenticeships in order to fully maximise the Council's levy. Consideration should be given to whether apprenticeships would: support succession planning within the service; enable existing employees to develop skills and competencies to support and improve service delivery and give managers, team leaders and supervisors the necessary skills and competencies to ensure effective management practice.

Employee Recognition

44. The Council wants to be able to retain and recruit a diverse range of talented people. Recognition is a fundamental part of this and has an important role to play in motivating and engaging staff.
45. We want to ensure that there's a culture in the Council where employees are praised for the good things they are doing. Work is therefore ongoing to develop an employee recognition framework which recognises and celebrates the good work and performance of our employees. Ensuring that employees are recognised will help to create a positive working environment.
46. Basic recognition should be part of every line manager's role, with as a matter of course, managers thanking employees for good work and contributions, and saying "well done" when it is merited, rather than commenting only on the negatives.
47. Recognition can range from a simple thank you from a line manager, to a more formal email or letter, to a more high profile presentation or award event. The framework will detail the managers' role in recognition and will detail the formal and informal tools that can be used to recognise the great things that employees are doing.
48. Employees are to be consulted on what recognition tools should and should not be included in the framework.

Terms and conditions

49. Terms and conditions continue to be a major focus. In order to ensure that the Council has modern and appropriate terms and conditions which are affordable and competitive, consideration is to be given to what extent, if any, premium rates of pay should be reviewed.
50. Over the last few years, operational reviews have been carried out by services to reduce or remove the reliance on premium rates of pay. However, there remains further scope to review operational practices in services to further reduce the reliance on premium rates.

51. These reviews should not simply focus on premium rates of pay, as it is clear from information provided regarding the unit costs of posts, that premium rates are just one element that is impacting on competitiveness and the sustainability of services.
52. Service Directors will therefore be undertaking further operational reviews to identify ways to reduce or remove the reliance on premium rates and to reduce the overall unit costs of posts. Employees and the trade unions will be fully involved in these reviews, along with HR & Finance.

Low Pay

53. The Council is committed to addressing the issue of low pay. A revised grading structure was implemented from 1 April 2016 to address the implementation of the National Living Wage (NLW), and move further towards the UK Living Wage.
54. Further options to address low pay and move further towards the UK Living wage have been developed, which also aim to address the issue of narrowing salary differentials at the lower end of the pay structure. However, before these are implemented it is important to assess the outcome of the 2018-19 pay negotiations, which will also identify what steps have been taken to review the NJC pay spine.

Employee Forum

55. A Council-wide employee forum was launched in the autumn of 2016 to further improve employee communication and engagement and to ensure that views from the front line are part of the decision making process.
56. Employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.
57. It is important that this forum is used to discuss corporate initiatives that will impact on employees to ensure that employees do not feel that workforce changes are being "done to" them rather than "done with" them.

Recommendations

The OSC is asked to

- (a) Give its views on the progress made in implementing actions from the Workforce Plan and its effectiveness in delivering the aims of the Workforce Strategy.
- (b) Consider further updates on progress on an annual basis.

Activity to Date (by theme)

Skills and Behaviours

1. All members of Leadership Team completed a 360 degree appraisal to identify strengths and areas for development. Personal Development Plans should have been developed by each individual to work towards.
2. We have developed a number of schemes, tools and guidance to support senior managers' ongoing development. These include coaching opportunities, a mentoring scheme and revised guidance on the use of action learning sets.
3. Media training workshops have been provided for senior offices who may be required, at times, to appear before the media on behalf of the Council.
4. Weekly Leadership Team meetings have been initiated enabling the timely sharing of information and learning.
5. A Learning and Development framework has been developed on the Intranet as a one-stop shop for managers and employees to access information on courses and other resources and toolkits to support their development. Within this framework a matrix of training and development courses for all managers has been developed which includes those courses which are both essential and discretionary for managers to attend to ensure they have the necessary skills to manage and support their employees.
6. A programme of in-house workshops has been delivered to develop the skills of managers. We have also provided opportunities for development through fully funded accredited distance learning programmes enabling first line and middle managers to achieve a recognised management qualification. Managers have also accessed development opportunities through the Public Service Academy short courses and master classes programme.
7. We continue to provide a range of e-learning modules on Knowledge Net to support the development of management skills in areas such as project management, time management, coaching, mentoring, managing change, managing people and performance etc.
8. We continue to deliver a wide programme of training throughout the Council to address the learning and development needs of our employees.
9. We continue to promote and enlist employees onto our courses through our learning and development directories (available on the Intranet), promotional flyers, Council Info, target e-mails and the ITrent online booking system.

Recruitment and Retention

10. The Council's approach to recruitment and retention allowances has been reviewed and reflected in the current corporate Pay Policy.

11. A corporate recruitment and retention policy is currently being developed which will ensure the right policies and procedures are in place to balance retention with the need to recruit people with new skills and expertise.

Pay, Reward and Recognition

12. Terms and conditions continue to be a major focus. Work has been undertaken to:
 - Remove essential car user allowance from all posts
 - Remove protection of the working week so that all employees are working 37 hours or pro rata
 - Make changes to the Council's pay protection arrangements. 4 years protection will be retained however, the level of protection will taper over each year (100% protection in year one, 75% in year 2, 50% in year 3 and 25% in year 4). The changes will be implemented from 1 October 2017.
13. Work is ongoing to broaden the range of employee benefits available including Club Nissan giving employees up to 24% discount off new Nissan cars and the introduction of the Civic Service Sports College (GSSC) Staff Offers Scheme where employees can access a range of discount offers for leisure and sport activities, shopping and tourist attractions.
14. An employee benefits market place event took place in September 2016 which promoted the full range of employee benefits available. Further employee benefits market events will take place twice a year.

Wellbeing and Engagement

15. The 2016 employee survey took place. The turnout was slightly increased from 2015 with 41% of the workforce completing the survey. Analysis highlighted some positive trends and some areas that require further improvement. Service directors received the results relevant to their service areas and they and their managers should be working on action plans to positively engage employees and address areas of concern.
16. A range of courses have been delivered across the Council to ensure that the prioritised health and safety training needs of employees are met.
17. We have delivered a series of stress management courses for managers and stress buster sessions for employees to promote awareness of stress and how to deal with it.
18. We published a Stress Toolkit on the Intranet as a valuable information resource to provide managers and employees with guidance on how to deal with stress and promote wellbeing.
19. Courses were also provided for managers on managing and supporting employees with mental health issues and on managing employees' health and wellbeing.
20. We have developed a network of health advocates to promote health and wellbeing initiatives across the Council and delivered a range of information and briefing sessions to address issues around healthy eating, stress, smoking, drug and alcohol; misuse and physical activity.

21. We have developed a pool of Workplace Contacts to act as a point of contact for any employees suffering from a mental health problem affecting their work or anyone who feels that they are a victim of bullying and harassment in the workplace.
22. The provision of holistic therapies including Swedish massage, sports massage, reflexology and Indian head massage were reintroduced as part of the wellbeing at work agenda.
23. The Council's lead counsellor, Danny Halpin provided four sessions of mindfulness training to reinforce support that had been received by employees through the counselling service.

Performance and Change

24. The revised A&D framework was introduced in April 2017 including a performance management element. The completion of A&Ds will be monitored and regular reports submitted to SMG.