

Name of meeting: Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date: 10th September
Title of report: Update on the People Strategy
Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on the People Strategy Programme and the People Strategy refresh.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Not applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Rachel Spencer-Henshall 26th August 2020
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Not applicable
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Graham Turner 26th August 2020

Electoral wards affected: Not Applicable

Ward councillors consulted: Not Applicable

Public or private: Public

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Our vision is to have great people with the right skills, mindsets and behaviours, working well together to achieve our shared outcomes for Kirklees; our People Strategy supports us to do this.
- 1.2 This paper provides an update on the progress to date on the delivery of the People Strategy (2017 – 2020) and on our approach to the People Strategy 'refresh'. It sets out our ongoing commitment to staff and provides an update in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and the recovery framework.
- 1.3 This report builds on the 3 previous reports to this Committee that have provided updates on the wellbeing, development and attraction themes of the People Strategy.
- 1.4 The People Strategy and Programme is driven by People Services, with regular monitoring and governance through the People Strategy Programme Board, Stakeholder Steering Group and Modern Organisation Board.

2.0 Background

2.1 The People Strategy

- 2.1.1 The People Strategy was launched in November 2017, providing a specific people 'lens' to organisational thinking around how we will work in Kirklees to realise our Kirklees vision and outcomes, a copy of the original strategy is at Appendix 1. In 2018, the original 8 workstreams were brought together into 3 themes; the purpose of this was to consolidate and simplify the work ensuring it was a cohesive strategy. The 3 themes were wellbeing, development and attraction all 3 themes have previously provided updates to this Committee.
- 2.1.2 In 2020, a refresh of the People Strategy was due. To pave the way for this, we worked on establishing a more rigorous governance structure around the programme of work. At an operational level, to manage pace, risks and dependencies appropriately, we formed a monthly programme board made up of operational leads from key projects within the People Strategy; to provide independent check and challenge, we established a quarterly Stakeholder Steering Group made up of key stakeholders from across the organisation representing areas such as services, schools, staff networks and trade unions; and for accountability, there is a direct monthly report through to the Modern Organisation Board.
- 2.1.3 Prior to the pandemic a detailed engagement programme was planned to inform the refresh, however, as we entered a period of lockdown, we had to adapt our approach. That adapted approach has drawn upon a significant amount of intelligence gathered from learning that has taken place as a result of the pandemic. In particular we have taken account of the work that has taken place on inequalities, the Recovery Framework and Corporate Plan refresh and we have also analysed data from staff surveys as well as drawing upon intelligence from a number of smaller, focused staff engagement sessions.

In this report I have provided an update on the 'refresh' and in particular, how we are shaping our People Strategy from the learning we have gained during the pandemic.

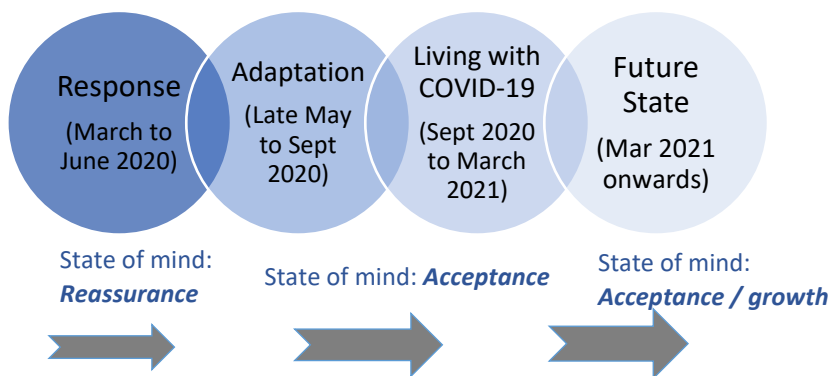
2.2 The Recovery Framework

2.2.1 Our recovery framework has been designed to outline how the Council will approach our ongoing response and recovery from Covid 19, at an organisational level as well as setting out how we will work more closely with citizens and partners within a more complex system.

2.2.2 It offers a response to the national approach to recovery and takes account of the national stages as set out by government. But it is fundamentally a local response; it focuses on our priorities and our commitment to working in ways that reflect the strengths of our diverse communities so that we build a more inclusive society and economy.

The framework shapes our planning work throughout four phases, which will be fluid in a rapidly moving environment, and occur at times concurrently:

- Response
- Adaptation
- Living with Covid 19
- Future State



The Recovery Framework provides a backdrop to the refresh of the People Strategy.

2.3 Our Council Plan

2.3.1 Our Council Plan refresh provides an update on our ongoing commitment to achieving our shared outcomes and puts tackling inequalities front and centre of the plan. In particular, the plan highlights the values that we have seen at play during our response to the crisis.

2.3.2 As we reflect on our response to the pandemic, what stands out is how staff and citizens have shown kindness to each other, they have been generous, considerate, flexible and inclusive and there is a real sense of pride in Kirklees. As we refresh the People Strategy we will harness this, focusing on

our relational approach and emotional intelligence to foster wellbeing, creativity and productivity.

- 2.3.3 We will also continue to reflect on the achievements we have made over the past few months, learning from those achievements and taking pride in the work we do.

3.0 Our Learning from the Crisis

- 3.1 From observing behaviours and talking to staff during the crisis, we have learnt so much about what is important to us and how this can shape our People Strategy going forward. Almost overnight, we saw 4,000 staff start to work from home, completely transforming their working arrangements; we saw 2,500 staff come forward and volunteer their skills to help in our communities many of whom carried out work they had never done before and we saw our front line workforce tirelessly and selflessly continuing to deliver essential services to our citizens. We saw kindness, inclusion, flexibility and a pride in working for Kirklees. We saw our extraordinary staff teams adapting to new roles and ways of working, whilst dealing with business continuity pressures and community uncertainty as well as dealing with family and financial worries.
- 3.2 As part of the work to inform the refresh, I have highlighted some key examples of our reflections and learning from the crisis:
- Skills analysis – within a week, we were able to capture staff skills and capacity from 2500 workers across the emergency response areas that enabled us to deploy these flexibly to meet critical needs. This has laid the foundations for us to develop a powerful talent management tool that captures the skills and capabilities of the workforce that will support career flexibility and effective workforce planning.
 - Wellbeing – this became more important than ever, whether supporting the wellbeing of staff to work from home or assuring the safety of staff who were continuing to deliver front line services. Employee Healthcare provided support through vlogs, blogs, newsletters, bi-weekly wellbeing bulletins, daily webinars, etc. to ensure staff were aware of all the support available. The service continued to provide ongoing counselling, physiotherapy, etc. through virtual means when needed so staff support did not cease. We need to plan how to further target support for staff wellbeing as we all learn to live with the virus in the longer term.
 - Recruitment – this did not stop and during lockdown we successfully implemented the new recruitment system and put in place extra support to enable virtual recruitment processes to happen. This has given us experience and insight into how we can improve the attraction and recruitment of staff in a virtual way.
 - Learning and Development – this did not stop and we quickly adapted our approach so that things like apprenticeship learning could continue online.

We also quickly mitigated a skills gaps identified from 4000 staff working at home and by working in partnership with Kirklees College, we delivered online training sessions to staff on the use of MS Teams. We are now building on this to find creative ways of delivering other learning and development opportunities to continue to support workforce skills gaps.

- Economic Recovery – we have a big part to play in Kirklees economic recovery and the crisis has highlighted a clear link with how the local community can access further education through apprenticeships. We will use the People Strategy to set out plans as to how we will support this.
- Digital inclusion – the crisis has highlighted more than ever how digitally excluded many of our front-line workers are and how important it is for us to address this if they are going to be truly engaged. We will accelerate our plans to achieve a solution to achieve this outcome.

3.3 We have also learnt from our monthly wellbeing pulse surveys, for example our first survey highlighted that financial wellbeing is becoming an area of concern for our workforce. Our second and third surveys are focussing on rewards and benefits and digital inclusion and we will continue to learn from these so that we can shape the detail of our People Strategy and better target resources to where they are most needed.

3.4 In addition, we are continuing to learn from virtual staff engagement sessions such as the 'Good to See You' sessions as well as the more focused sessions that have been taking feedback on areas such as effective induction and leadership and development. Again, this learning is informing our refresh.

4.0 The People Strategy Refresh

4.1 Building on the original People Strategy and our subsequent reflections and learning as set out above, we have started to reshape our strategy and programme of work. The draft programme overview and high level plan are attached at Appendices 2 and 3 and are shaped into the following areas:

- Culture change (covering People Strategy Refresh, Values and Behaviours, 'Staff Space' and Inclusion and Diversity)
- Employee Wellbeing (covering Early Intervention and Prevention – understanding root causes, Wellbeing Champions, Staff benefits and the implementation of a new wellbeing system to support further transformation)
- Workforce Planning (covering Creating a Flexible Workforce, Apprenticeships, Leadership Enhancement and Development and Induction.)

4.2 One key piece of work around the refresh of the strategy is how it looks and feels. Our ambition is that it will be a visual People Strategy, a 'plan on a page' that shows the staff journey through great recruitment, fantastic development, wraparound wellbeing support and dynamic career options. We want it to come to life for our people so that it is visual, simple and engaging. Work is already underway with colleagues in our Communications Team to develop this.

4.3 Culture Change

4.3.1 Culture is in the fabric of everything we do. Our approach to the People Strategy will help to enable and embed culture change by reinforcing what matters most to us – our values and behaviours - and supporting relational and restorative ways of working. Our ongoing work on embedding coaching and mentoring, restorative practice and visible leadership across the organisation will continue and will underpin our culture change ambition. In addition, inclusion and diversity is at the heart of everything we do in the People Strategy and the recent work on inequalities has helped us to prioritise a number of specific projects within our People Strategy programme to achieve maximum impact and successful outcomes.

4.3.2 Whilst over the past couple of years we have made great strides in improving workforce engagement, intelligence and communication, the recent crisis has highlighted that we still have a way to go to ensure all our staff have a voice, feel included and are engaged with effectively; in particular those staff who are not digitally enabled. Current methods of engagement with our dispersed workforce rely upon manager networks and hard copy staff newsletters to places of work and home addresses. To address this, we have recently scoped out the 'Employee Portal' or 'Staff Space' project. This aim of this project is to ensure that all our workforce, in particular our front-line, dispersed workforce have access to the same information and support as our online workforce. The project is currently at the discovery stage and we have started to engage with staff to understand what technology is available to them and what digital platforms would support two-way engagement. The next stage is to work with IT colleagues to scope and design an effective digital solution that we can rollout across the workforce.

4.4 **Employee Wellbeing**

4.4.1 Throughout the pandemic the focus on employee wellbeing has become more important than ever and we have targeted significant resources at supporting the 4000 staff who have been working from home. This support has included being able to access daily webinars on a variety of wellbeing topics, a fortnightly wellbeing bulletin with tips on how to stay healthy whilst working from home and the ability to continue to access self-referral support such as counselling, physiotherapy and healthy eating active lifestyle services on a virtual basis. There have also been hard copy newsletters out to the dispersed workforce and cascade messages via their line management to signpost them to the same support.

4.4.2 The greatest insight into the wellbeing of our workforce and how we can support staff through the current crisis has been through the Pulse Surveys. Our first survey (Pulse 1) which closed at the end of June focused on how staff were generally feeling as a result of the pandemic; the second survey which closes at the end of August is focusing on reward and benefits and the third survey in September will focus on digital inclusion. The outcome of the

Pulse 1 survey is at Appendix 4 and in the main, the survey highlights that whilst staff are generally happy with their working arrangements, there are at least 30% of staff who are worried about their financial wellbeing. This intelligence enabled us to undertake a targeted piece of work to raise awareness and signpost staff to financial wellbeing support. As part of the surveys we also ask questions about personal circumstances and protected characteristics; because of this we are able to analyse the results through different lenses. We have been particularly interested in analysing the impact on staff who are represented through our staff networks, such as working carers. For example, based on Pulse 1 Survey, 582 staff identified as have caring responsibilities and from the data we have gathered, we can identify that on average, these individual have higher anxiety, stress and Covid-19 worries than those without caring responsibilities. This intelligence has enabled us to run targeted focus groups with representatives of the staff networks (working carers, BAME, YEN, LGBTQ and Wellbeing Champions) so that we can specifically focus our efforts on what will have the most impact on improving outcomes for these groups of staff.

2020 also saw the beginning of the Network Chairs Meeting which provides an opportunity for all Network Chairs to meet every month and share cross-network advice, development opportunities and challenges they face. This unites the networks with one voice that feeds into the People Strategy, Inequalities Action Plan and Inclusion and Diversity hub. In the next 12 months the Working Carers network are looking to re-launch, working closely with the Young Employees Network and we will shortly be issuing a communication to the networks and to staff and managers to encourage individuals to join the networks and dedicate work time to their success.

- 4.4.3 Ensuring that we recognise and reward staff appropriately and at the right time is also a key part of staff wellbeing, especially as we try and keep staff engaged and motivated through the crisis. As we listen to staff and learn from the pandemic, we have been focussing our initial resources on short term benefits to consider how we might provide immediate rewards. This activity has included better promotion of our existing benefit offers as well as the development and promotion of a staff benefits booklet. In response to the Pulse 1 wellbeing survey, we have also improved signposting to financial support and promotion of our Credit Union partners, who have excellent savings and loans schemes.
- 4.4.4 We also delivered 'Thank you' packs to keyworkers during the pandemic and have continued to promote and support our 'High Five' awards. Building on these, we are currently asking managers to nominate staff who have gone above and beyond during the crisis to receive a special prize donated by a sponsor organisation. These prizes include a spa break, afternoon tea and beauty vouchers. In the longer term, we are looking to refresh the wider staff benefits package to ensure it is tailored to the needs of the individual and will work with staff and stakeholders to develop a scheme over the coming months.

4.4.5 Wellbeing Champions are essential in challenging stigma and changing the way employees think and act about mental health in workplaces. They are at the forefront of encouraging a culture in which it is safe for employees to say “I’m struggling”, “I’m working too much” or “I need support” in the workplace without the fear of negative consequences whether real or perceived. We are currently strengthening the Wellbeing Champions role. We are working closely with the Champions and our learning and development colleagues to redefine the role, create a toolbox of wellbeing techniques and ensure that there is a programme in place to support the ongoing learning, development and supervision of our Champions.

4.5 Workforce Planning

4.5.1 The Covid crisis has demonstrated how incredibly flexible our workforce have been and also how flexibly we need to be as an organisation to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities. We have embraced this and seen significant and successful outcomes. Building on this work, we are currently looking at how we might flexibly deploy skills and staff across the Council; we are currently piloting a project in Adults focussing on identifying and collating the skills of those within the workforce who are unable to undertake their substantive role due to vulnerability and how we might invest in their development and upskill them to take on alternative work. This pilot will form the early foundations of a strength-based approach to talent management to support development across the workforce. Further developments continue at pace and include the automation of deployment activity to improve the experience of staff awaiting deployment and the development of targeted attraction techniques to support and encourage applicants from under-represented backgrounds.

4.5.2 Following the implementation of the new recruitment system in May this year, we have seen recruitment continue at pace during the pandemic with a quick and ready shift to conducting online interviews. This has been embraced and we have seen success across all areas, including schools. There has also been positive candidate feedback on the application process with 96% rating their experience as good, very good or excellent. We have also continued to offer and recruit to apprenticeships, offering 32 roles from entry to post graduate level apprenticeships, supporting managers to flexibly adapt the recruitment and induction processes.

4.5.3 We used a social media campaign to highlight that ‘Kirklees is still hiring’ during the pandemic and this led to a significant increase in the number of applications for our jobs. For example, one Highways Operative role was shared over 600 times. Our modernised recruitment processes and social media interaction will help us to support recruitment and the future economic recovery in Kirklees. In this regard, we are already involved in the Economic Recovery Kirklees Youth Guarantee plans via a proposed new Kirklees-wide Apprenticeship Strategy. We have also progressed onto the appraisal stage for our European Social Fund Apprenticeship bid and, working with other anchor institutions, are leading on the project to support Kirklees employers,

including SMEs, to have better capacity to support apprenticeships. If successful it will bring £1.7M investment into Kirklees over a 3-year period.

- 4.5.4 To support reducing inequalities in Kirklees and to work towards a fair and equitable recruitment approach we are using our new recruitment system to introduce 'blind recruitment' from the end of September; this will ensure that no candidate personal information will be available to recruiting managers until a decision has been made to shortlist them. This is the first step in a wide range of recruitment related improvements that we have planned that will give our communities confidence that we are a truly inclusive employer, committed to improving the diversity of our workforce.
- 4.5.5 We are acutely aware of the importance of developing the onboarding/induction process to support cultural change within the organisation and the proposed approach will ensure an interactive induction system is in place for all new starters, movers and returners to the workplace, who may have been absent for several months. Induction will focus on Kirklees 'the place' and will represent a 'Kirklees Welcome' which includes our values, behaviours and expectations around equality and inclusion. We have developed a partnership with the University of Huddersfield to establish a working party of managers with an interest in induction. As part of this we are developing many different elements of the induction which includes a welcome session, workshops, videos and a supporting toolkit which will be implemented in the Autumn.
- 4.5.6 Tackling inequality is a priority within the work we are doing on Leadership Enhancement and Development. Working with BAME colleagues we have accelerated our plans to launch a cohort of BAME apprentices to undertake an ILM Level 3 in Leadership and Development, this will include wraparound support to ensure successful outcomes. Our accelerated approach aims to address under-representation in leadership roles and create a sustainable and genuine approach moving forward. The Programme will start in September. We are looking at a similar approach for the Level 5 development programme to ensure we invest in the development of BAME colleagues and improve opportunities for them to gain promotions into senior roles within the Council.

5.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 5.1 This paper has provided the Committee with an update on progress on the refresh of the People Strategy as well as set out details of work taking place in a number of the project areas. The aim is that we will finalise the updated strategy by the end of the year with a view to launching our refreshed People Strategy at the beginning of 2021.
- 5.2 We would welcome feedback from this Committee so that this can be incorporated into the programme of work to support the refreshed People Strategy.

6. Implications for the Council

- **Working with People**

Our people are the heart of our People Strategy and we know that one size does not fit all. Therefore, our strategy will focus on individuals, on putting people at the heart of decisions affecting them, and co-producing solutions. This will enable us to create positive and sustainable change.

- **Working with Partners**

Our People Strategy will look beyond our organisation; we will learn from others and collaborate with partners to ensure we get the best outcomes for our people.

- **Place Based Working**

Kirklees is made up of different communities and the diversity of our communities is one of our key strengths. Our People Strategy ensures that we engage with our communities and work with them to support them into employment. By using intelligence and information, we will allocate resources in the best way possible to achieve the best outcomes for residents. We will work with communities and local Councillors so we can prioritise local needs, based upon local intelligence and insight.

- **Climate Change and Air Quality**

Tackling the climate emergency, reducing emissions and improving air quality are key long-term priorities for the Council to improve the quality of life for our residents and create a borough that is healthier, more sustainable and fairer for everyone. Our People Strategy will support this when we look at matters such as staff benefits and ways of working and how our workforce can make a positive contribution to reducing our carbon footprint.

- **Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

There are no specific legal or financial implications resulting from this report. The key impact will be on people and on enabling better work and working lives for our people.

7. Contact officer

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8. Service Director responsible

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