

Name of meeting: Corporate Scrutiny Panel

Date: 21st March 2022

Title of report: Update on the People Strategy and Recruitment Challenges

Purpose of report: To update Corporate Scrutiny Panel on the People Strategy programme of work and the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges facing the Council.

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?	N/A
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No
Date signed off by Strategic Director and name	Rachel Spencer-Henshall – 10 th March 2022
Is it also signed off by the Service Director Finance?	Eamonn Croston – 4 th March 2022
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft – 4 th March 2022
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Paul Davies

Electoral wards affected: N/A

Ward councillors consulted: No

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered: Yes

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive an update on:
- the People Strategy programme of work
 - ongoing recruitment and retention challenges and actions taken to mitigate those challenges

2.0 People Strategy Programme Update

2.1 Refreshed People Strategy

2.1.1 The Council's People Strategy was due to be refreshed in 2020. Work began on undertaking the refresh prior to the pandemic, however, once the pandemic hit, the work was paused. This pause gave us the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the pandemic, what we had learnt from it and how this might impact on our people and ways of working going forward. It also gave us the opportunity to closely align the strategy to the Council Plan and our 9 outcomes.

2.1.2 Our refreshed People Strategy was soft launched at Kirklees Leadership Forum in January 2021 and further details are attached at Appendix 1. A full launch of the strategy will take place this month.

2.1.3 At the heart of the refreshed People Strategy are the Council's values and behaviours, these link to our vision and 4 key outcomes.

Our vision is that:

We will achieve our shared outcomes through people with the right skills, values and behaviours working in partnership in our places

And our 4 key outcomes are:

- To have highly skilled, flexible and engaged people
- To have effective and compassionate leadership
- To be an inclusive employer of choice
- To have healthy and well people

2.1.4 'Pledges' have been developed to support our outcomes and these will continuously be brought to life through storytelling, case studies, videos, etc.

2.2 People Strategy Programme of Work Overview

2.2.1 Supporting the achievement of our People Strategy is an ambitious programme of work; this work grew as we took on more and more learning from the pandemic and started to think about new ways of working and how we could enable our workforce of the future.

2.2.2 This project scope creep put pressure on capacity to deliver outcomes and so in September 2021, a programme assurance review was undertaken. The purpose of this review was to understand if the

programme would deliver appropriate outcomes, on time and within budget. There was also a review of governance arrangements.

2.2.3 Key findings of the assurance review were as follows:

- 19 individual concurrent pieces of work were in flight (a combination of business-as-usual activity, work packages and projects) without clear prioritisation.
- People Services capacity to deliver project activity was a significant risk and there was the potential to miss opportunities to realise economies of scale.
- Programme scope was not stable.

2.2.4 As a result, the People Strategy Programme Board approved the recommendation to rationalise the volume of concurrent activity by prioritising strategic projects that deliver outputs that will inform and provide the foundations for concurrent activity, merge activity working towards the same high-level objective, remove business-as-usual activity from the scope and baseline the programme scope.

2.2.5 Additional resource was identified to ensure timely progress of the reprioritised activity; this meant that the overall completion date and outputs/benefits remain unchanged. The programme has now been sequenced in the following phases:

- Phase 1 Setting the foundations - October 2021 to June 2022
- Phase 2 Responding to organisational need - July to December 2022
- Phase 3 Transition to business-as-usual and lessons learned - January to March 2023

2.2.6 The following key documents are attached to provide supporting information about the programme:

Appendix 2 - An overview of the refreshed governance arrangements
Appendix 3 – The 'big picture' (p.1) and programme summary (p.2)
Appendix 4 – A 12-month roadmap of activity

2.3 Key Project Updates

2.3.1 There are 11 projects in Phase 1 of the programme (see Appendix 2, p.2). Of these, the Stress Prevention/Management project and the Workforce Development - Digital Upskilling project are currently in the discovery and definition phase where data is being analysed to ensure the interventions identified directly impact the causal factors.

2.3.2 The remaining projects, set out below in themes, are in the delivery phase:

Outcome 1 - Highly Skilled, Flexible and Engaged People

i) Workforce Planning

The workforce planning project is one of the most critical projects in our programme of work; whilst it will not address the immediate recruitment and retention pressures and challenges, it will ensure that we have a rigorous and systematic workforce planning approach embedded across the organisation to give us longer term assurance about having the right people and skills in place to provide services of the future to our communities.

Priming workshops for managers have been developed and are being piloted with a range of services; these will be rolled out across the organisation by the summer. The workshops focus on:

- What is workforce planning?
- The benefits of workforce planning
- Understanding your current and future workforce through data and insight
- Labour market challenges
- Apprenticeships and support into employment schemes

The priming workshops are designed to engage managers in the workforce planning process, stimulate creativity and provide impetus for further activity. The initial workshops will be followed up by a range of targeted support ranging from signposting and information to more focused workshops which will support managers to fully identify future needs and build their own bespoke workforce plans.

Recognising that this is a priority project that needs to move at pace, we have invested in bolstering and accelerating this activity through recruiting additional and experienced resources who will join the workforce planning team at the start of May.

Themes and gaps identified in this project at service, directorate and organisational level will inform phase two of the programme (e.g. workforce development, retention and attraction strategies).

ii) Front line workforce future ambitions

The impetus for this project was specifically highlighted as a result of the pandemic and is looking at further clarity on the organisation/individual's expectations for the future working practices of front line workers. This will inform the development of the My Space, digital upskilling and flexible ways of working (Timewise) projects

iii) My Space

The My Space portal project is focused on the development and delivery of a secure Employment Engagement Portal for the frontline workforce (approximately 3500 employees) to allow for enhanced connectivity with the organisation utilising their own personal device – computer, smart phone or tablet. The current focus is a campaign to encourage an increase in take-up. The front-line workforce project will inform the developments required.

iv) Flexible ways of working

Working in partnership with Timewise and Locala, this project will seek to put flexibility at the heart of work, in particular front-line work. We are working towards Timewise Flexible Employer accreditation by the summer, with assessment and development of an action plan against the five flexible employer pillars: leadership, flexible working options and policy, manager capability, employer brand & talent acquisition, inclusive career paths and progression and social responsibility and advocacy.

v) Workforce Development

In Phase 1, there are 2 projects under workforce development; these involve re-procuring a Learning Management System (LMS) and developing a formal Wellbeing Champions network.

The contract with the incumbent LMS supplier expires on 30 June 2022 and in line with Contractual Procedure Rules we could not extend further. Following a period of due diligence, we have confirmed our new provider and implementation of the solution will be completed over the next few months. The new system has additional functionality plus a catalogue of 250 e-learning courses was included in the successful bidder's tender; this will result in a saving of circa £20k, as the existing e-learning contract has not been renewed.

The existing Wellbeing Champions network is being strengthened and formalised, with standard training and development put in place, clarity on the role developed and a governance structure established. Wellbeing activities have a positive impact upon the organisation's productivity, retention and absence levels. It is therefore critical that we channel more resources and dedicate more time to cultivate a physical and emotionally resilient workforce, who have the support of well-trained champions.

Outcome 2 - Effective and Compassionate Leadership

vi) Performance Management and Appraisal

Pre-pandemic, a corporate approach was developed and was at the point of being rolled out, however, the learning from the pandemic presented us with an opportunity to reflect on whether that approach was still fit for purpose. This project will therefore include a review of the evidence and assumptions that the new approach was based on and consideration of whether the conditions have changed to determine if the new approach continues to be valid. The outcome of the review will inform the next steps these are likely to be either re-design of the solution or proceed to rollout the solution across the organisation.

Outcome 3 - An Inclusive Employer of Choice

vii) Project Search

Our Project Search interns are currently undertaking their first work rotations out in service areas; we have had a successful first term review and are currently planning for the next intake of interns who will join us in the summer, alongside planning pathways for permanent employment for the existing cohort.

viii) Inclusive organisation

Throughout autumn 2020, a series of employee listening circles with a focus on race, racism and inequalities were undertaken. The output of these listening circles has been supplemented with additional quantitative research. In response to these findings, we have identified opportunity to improve the experiences of employees whose characteristics are protected as per the Equality Act 2010, with a specific focus on the following areas:

- Understanding the factors that influence an employee's experience within the current organisational grievance and disciplinary process.
- Support promoting diversity at all levels of the organisation and ensure that employees from diverse backgrounds progress at proportionate rates.
- Ongoing development of colleagues around the theme of inclusion by creating a shared understanding of inclusion, build confidence and skills (with an initial emphasis on cultural competence/confidence to support anti-racism) and enable ongoing learning in this area in line with restorative principles.
- Development of a series of quantitative and qualitative approaches, tools and measures to help us evaluate, understand and track the impact of inclusion activity as it is delivered throughout the organisation – and, importantly, continue to provide feedback on lived experience and how it feels to work in Kirklees.

2.3.3 The programme has an overall rating of amber. This is reflected by delays from Covid related pressures, in particular the frontline workforce future working piece of work; this has had an impact on other dependent programme activity. There have also been some setbacks to the Learning Management System re-procurement. In addition, the most significant risk has been capacity to lead project activity, this is being mitigated through the approval of additional resources to support the programme. It is therefore expected the risk will reduce once staff are in post.

3. Recruitment and Retention Challenges

- 3.1 National and local challenges relating to recruitment and retention continue and we are now in the midst of what is being described as the toughest labour market for 50 years. The number of UK job vacancies in October to December 2021 rose to a new record of 1.247m, an increase of 0.462m from the pre-pandemic level recorded in January to March 2020 (ONS); there has also been an increase in economic inactivity, especially in the 50-64 age group and it is estimated that there are 1m fewer people in the labour market since pre-pandemic (IES) [Where are Britain's missing million workers? - BBC News](#)
- 3.2 Adding to this, the anticipated improvements due the end of the furlough scheme have not materialised and the governments [Way to Work Campaign](#) has yet to be widely realised.
- 3.4 Levels of pay continue to be challenging; this was specifically highlighted at a recent national pay meeting with the LGA and also at a Kirklees HR Partnership meeting attended by representatives from the Council, the further and higher education

sectors, the health sector and the third sector. All partners reported feeling under pressure to increase levels of remuneration against the backdrop of an increasing cost of living. Of note is the fact that the local government pay award for April 2021 has only recently been settled (1.75%) and national negotiations have yet to begin on the April 2022 pay award; this will mean an inevitable significant delay in a local government pay increase, adding even more pressure to our local pay challenges when set against an expectation that average pay rises will be around 3% in 2022 ([The CIPD labour market outlook survey](#)). There are also upward trends in rates of pay for agency staff in an increasingly competitive market.

3.5 At a local level, some key points to highlight are that the Council is now starting to see labour turnover increasing as we recover from the pandemic (current turnover is at 9.1%); more positively, however, we are seeing the number of vacancies reducing and we are also starting to see the composition of our workforce shift to reflect a younger cohort of people.

3.6 In terms of some examples of the actions we are taking (over and above the People Strategy programme of work) to address our recruitment and retention challenges, these are set out below:

3.6.1 Hard to Fill Roles

Highways/Engineering

- A tiered approach to advertising which is now at Engineer level.
- Maximising the use of a variety of external media and internal communications and monitoring impact
- From April, introducing name blind CV functionality for applications to speed up the process and match candidate expectations.
- Established a number of market rate supplements
- Working with Department of Education Skills Development Manager and Kirklees College to develop a local T level trailblazer in civil engineering and potentially wider within Highways and Environment and Climate Change. This will build on our Virtual Work Placement programme where services with hard to fill roles used creative methods to inspire Year 10 students
- In early dialogue with colleagues in Economy and Skills about our engineering skills gaps with a view to exploring how we might work in partnership with the University on influencing their curriculum and supporting pathways into employment with the Council

Adult Social Work

- Established a Recruitment and Retention working group - looking at career structures and roles
- Established a recruitment sub-group looking at advertising – a new advert standard has been developed with the service and we continue to work on where adverts are placed to maximise audience.
- Introduced a pilot retention payment system to retain existing staff

Adult Social Care

- Refreshed adverts and undertaken a full review of the application process – this will be implemented in April to further speed up the process
- Continued use of videos on our new careers site to promote roles
- Utilising government campaigns to feature our jobs

- Encouraging managers to undertake joint recruitment exercises
- Working with the steering group to engage with young people.
- Funding membership of the 'blue light' discount card for staff up to Grade 7
- Maximising the sector based investment in advertising for social care roles through the government grant – led by In2Care

3.6.2 Apprenticeships and Support into Employment

Current Apprentices

We currently have 70 current apprentices including higher levels. Over the last 6 months 93% of our apprentices completing their training have moved into employment within the Council

Recruiting apprentices

Nearly 60 new apprenticeship vacancies will be advertised in March to coincide with the apprenticeship recruitment event at the John Smith's stadium. This planned recruitment covers a broader range of services (roles in payroll, IT, Library, youth work, digital marketing, finance, horticulture, customer service, business support, insurance, civil engineering, construction trades, teaching assistants).

Outreach activities planned for March to promote apprenticeships and encourage applications include drop-ins at various community venues and an outreach van to be piloted at Tesco's in Batley. In March we are also holding interactive workshops for our Kickstarters to promote our apprentice vacancies and support them to make good quality applications.

Kickstart

We have filled 79 Kickstart roles to date with 57 young people currently on the programme. From the 22 placements completed to date 50% have moved into jobs (this is a very positive outcome acknowledging the scheme is aimed at young people at risk of long-term unemployment).

Job destinations include entry level jobs in the Council, others have gained jobs elsewhere including as a trainee accountant, school-based role, call centre work and business support at WYCA.

There has been attendance at Job Centre Kickstart recruitment days (over 10 events) supported by People Service and service managers. This provided managers with an opportunity to promote their area direct to young job seekers. One example of success was in adult social care, where they filled 7 Kickstart roles.

National Apprenticeship Week

Throughout this National Apprenticeship Week (7-13 Feb), we highlighted how Apprenticeships are key to "Building the Future" of not just apprentices, but of businesses across the district. We are linking in with anchor institutions and other local employers via the (ESF funded) [Kirklees Apprenticeships For All project](#)

3.6.3 Levels of Remuneration

We are seeing an increase in business cases to support market rate supplements and retention payments to attract and retain staff as well as requests to review jobs through the grading process. We are currently looking at salary benchmarking and will

also explore how senior technical specialist roles are evaluated to ensure we are competitive.

3.6.4 Local Recruitment Events

At a Personnel Committee meeting in November 2021, it was agreed that we would reach out and engage with local communities to understand what skills they may be able to bring to roles within the Council and to adopt a fast-track system into employment, breaking down some traditional recruitment barriers. Whilst progress on this stalled due to the reintroduction of Covid restrictions in December and January, we have recently piloted attendance at the Ravensthorpe Women in the Lead event, which was a support event for women of South Asian heritage in North Kirklees. Through this event links have been made to promote the Council as an employer through Hopeful Families, S2R, The Opportunity Centre, Home Start.

The development of place-based recruitment events is being planned with colleagues in the Active Citizens and Places Team.

We will also be promoting Council jobs at the following events:

- 8th and 10th March (All and Catering) – Kirklees College
- 16th March (Apprenticeships) – John Smiths Stadium
- 22nd and 29th March (Adult Social Care) – Huddersfield and Dewsbury
- 31st March (All) – Thornhill Leeds Volunteer and Job Fair
- 20th April (All) – Leeds Career Fair

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that Corporate Scrutiny Panel:

- notes the update on the People Strategy programme of work and the recruitment and retention challenges facing the Council
- provides check and challenge on the actions being undertaken to address the challenges faced

5.0 Contact Officers

Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Strategic Director – Corporate Strategy, Commissioning & Public Health

Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services