

Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Recruitment and Staff Retention**

Meeting date **Tuesday, 3 October 2023**

Committee Members present: Councillor Ryan Towers (Vice Chair in the Chair), Councillors Gordon France, Christine Heydon, Alex Hilton, June Molyneaux, Dedrah Moss, Kim Snape and Ryan Towers

Committee Members present virtually (non-voting): Councillors Karen Derbyshire and Michelle Le Marinel

Officers: Hollie Walmsley (Head of Human Resources), Emily Monk (Transformation Officer) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Samantha Martin

6 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Samantha Martin.

7 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

8 Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 6 September 2023 were presented for approval.

An amendment was proposed to Minute 2 – Declarations of Any Interests, to read “Councillors le Marinel, Towers, Hilton, France and Heydon declared a personal interest insofar as they were members of a trade union, none of which had a direct bearing on this piece of work or gave rise to a conflict of interest in respect of the work of this Task Group”.

Resolved:

That the minutes be approved subject to Minute 2 being amended to read “Councillors le Marinel, Towers, Hilton, France and Heydon declared a personal interest insofar as they were members of a trade union, none of which had a direct bearing on this piece of work or gave rise to a conflict of interest in respect of the work of this Task Group”.

9 Policies relating to Recruitment and Staff Retention and associated documents

A number of documents (HR policies and other documents relating to recruitment and staff retention) requested by the Task Group at the last meeting were made available to members on the Council’s intranet / modern.gov library.

The documents were as follows:

Behaviour policies – Grievance policy, Code of Conduct, Social Media policy, Disciplinary policy, Conduct Policy

Benefits policies – ERVS guidance, Pensions & long service, flexible retirement, Reservist Policy, Sustainable Travel Policy, Expenses policy.

Changes policies – Change policy and Written Statement of Particulars (examples with/without flexi etc).

Recruitment and Development policies – Capability policy, Recruitment Selection and Onboarding, Leavers Guidance, Probation form.

Website Recruitment Pages (job applications) - How to apply, People with Disabilities, Recruitment Equality Monitoring Guidance

Wellbeing Policies – Managing the effects of the menopause, Emotional wellbeing policy, Smoke free and substance use policy, Improving attendance policy

Work-Life Policies – Homeworking policy, Flexible working policy, Parental leave, Leave policy.

A note was also provided which clarified the respective roles of elected members and the Chief Executive with regard to staffing and recruitment.

Resolved:

That the documents provided be noted.

10 Report of the Head of Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources, Hollie Walmsley, presented a report giving detailed information regarding the following:

1. Exit interview data analysis and an example exit interview
2. Living Wage Accreditation summary and next steps.
3. 2023/24 Recruitment Strategy report to SMT and project plan
4. Equality and Diversity – equality monitoring and people with disabilities
5. Workforce planning summary

6. Policies which support recruitment and retention – specifically Parental Leave, Leave, Recruitment, selection, and on-boarding.

The documents relating to (4) Equality and Diversity – equality monitoring and people with disabilities and HR policies at (6) were previously made available on the modern.gov. library. The other documents were appended to the report.

Exit interviews

As regards exit interviews, the report indicated that in July 2023 the exit interview process was refreshed and relaunched. All leavers were offered an exit interview, however this was not compulsory and as such only 8 people had so far engaged.

The report summarised that reasons for leaving were due to relocation, promotion, other opportunity in a different sector and one was unhappy with working for the council. 7 would recommend the council as an employer one wouldn't; 7 would work for the council again one wouldn't; 7 agree that the council is a good employer and 1 doesn't. The negative responses were all from the same person.

Hollie Walmsley explained that people who had already raised issues previously were more likely to complete exit interviews, which tends to be reflected in the figures. However, Human Resources try and get as much feedback as possible either in person or in writing.

The Council also obtains feedback from its employees throughout their employment, via regular one to one meetings with line managers, and personal development reviews.

Living Wage Accreditation

Hollie Walmsley explained that at present although the Council paid the Living Wage to all its directly employed staff, its sub-contractors were not all meeting that criterion. Hence the Council currently did not have the Living Wage Accreditation.

It was suggested that options be explored to address this e.g. via the procurement route. This would be a long term project as would involve a review of the Council's contracts once they were due to expire.

Recruitment Strategy

Hollie Walmsley outlined a number of improvements the Council was making with regard to recruitment, including use of LinkedIn, and developing a dedicated front-end micro website for job vacancies. This would reduce recruitment costs as the Council would not be relying on outside agencies.

Hollie Walmsley also outlined other recruitment initiatives such promoting the Council at careers events (e.g. for school leavers) and investing in the local community via apprenticeships / opportunities to gain professional qualifications with the Council. This "upskilling" approach was something the Council also promoted to its partners. It was noted that a "careers day" was due to be held on 9 October.

A query was made about learning agreements, where people must stay with the Council for a certain length of time after gaining a qualification (this doesn't apply to apprenticeships, however). Hollie Walmsley stressed that where a learning agreement was in place, employees would be provided with a clear pathway of career development. She also stressed that this approach ensured that new employees quickly move off the "bottom rung" of the organisation, freeing up space for new recruits and refreshing the workforce.

Workforce Planning

A question was asked regarding the impact of staffing levels on the performance of the Council e.g. recently members had been informed the Statement of Accounts was published late due to staffing levels. Hollie Walmsley explained that staffing structures are very lean, and it was the responsibility of Shared Leadership Team to manage resources in line with service need.

Members highlighted "pinch points" at certain times of year which could be predicted and form part of business planning e.g. garden waste is seasonal. Hollie Walmsley explained that this detail would be addressed at Service Plan level. She stressed that transferring staff from other services is generally not practicable, because skill sets are different and teams do not have the capacity.

Resolved:

1. That the report and information relayed at the meeting be noted;
2. That the Head of Human Resources be requested to investigate the feasibility of the Council working towards the Living Wage Accreditation.

11 Presentation by Emily Monk, Transformation Officer (Organisational Development)

Emily Monk, Transformation Officer (Organisational Development) gave a presentation on the People Strategy, which included the feedback from staff via the Pulse Survey carried out in 2021/22 and May 2023.

It was noted that some feedback, i.e. in relation to job descriptions related to South Ribble. Hollie Walmsley also confirmed that there were no back pay issues (which had affected some other Councils nationally).

It was noted that staff had recently experienced a lot of fast paced change which had generated a substantial amount of internal communications. The Task Group were assured that the approach would now be more engagement with the Pulse Survey. Emily Monk indicated that the response rate had increased and so had staff satisfaction levels. This data could be provided to members.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be noted; and
2. That data regarding the Pulse Survey response rate and satisfaction levels be provided to members.

12 Date of next meeting

The Task Group agreed that the following would be considered at the next meeting:

- UNISON Branch Secretary, Lesley Miller, has been invited to attend the meeting;
- A presentation on the new Recruitment System;
- Further information requested at this meeting on the Pulse Survey.

Members also reviewed the proposal for a “World Café” event initially suggested at the scoping meeting. It was agreed that it would be difficult to arrange attendance from all Senior Management Team and Executive Cabinet members at the same time. It was therefore proposed that their views be obtained via questionnaire to be drafted by Hollie Walmsley and agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair.

Resolved:

1. To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, 19 October 2023 at 6.30pm; and
2. That the views of Senior Management Team and Executive Cabinet members be obtained via questionnaire to be drafted by Hollie Walmsley and agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair.
3. That the scoping document and roadmap be amended accordingly.

Chair

Date