

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

**Meeting date** **Thursday, 14 December 2023**

**Committee Members present:** Councillor Michelle Le Marinel (Chair), Councillor Ryan Towers (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gordon France, Christine Heydon, Alex Hilton, June Molyneaux, Dedrah Moss and Kim Snape

**Committee Members present virtually (non-voting):** Councillor Samantha Martin

**Observers present:** Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) (attended virtually)

**Officers:** Hollie Walmsley (Head of Human Resources) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

## **24 Declarations of interests**

There were no interests declared.

## **25 Minutes of the last meeting**

Arising from consideration of the minutes, Councillor Heydon referred to a query she had raised since the last meeting as follows:

The latest version of the corporate risk register was made available to the Governance Committee at the last meeting on 29 November 2023 (Agenda page 98) Risk 5, directly related to lack of resources money and staff to deliver services.

Hollie Walmsley, Head of Human Resources was asked to provide a risk update to give a full picture of the current position and any mitigating actions currently being taken.

Hollie Walmsley indicated that the initial report presented to the Task Group in September 2023 outlined 5 main objectives:

- a. Implement a recruitment system with a focus on candidate experience and manager self-service;
- b. Develop an employer brand to increase proactive recruitment ability and communicate this brand;

- c. Use a data-based approach to support workforce planning and recruitment trends;
- d. Develop a diverse talent pool;
- e. Upskill managers to be confident and capable recruiters.

She informed members that since September 2023 progress made was as follows:

### **Implement a recruitment system with a focus on candidate experience and manager self-service.**

The new Eploy system has now been implemented and will go live on 8 January 2024 to capitalise on the increased numbers of active job searchers in the new year.

Eploy has been fully tested with managers across the councils and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

The front end of the system is the recruitment microsite which was demonstrated to the task group in November. The enhanced functionality of this system will enable © a data-based approach to recruitment, and (d) to manage our talent pool.

### **Develop an employer brand to increase proactive recruitment ability and communicate this brand.**

Activity to develop the employer brand includes the use of LinkedIn and other externally focussed media channels.

Additionally, since October 2023:

- a. A series of LinkedIn masterclasses have been delivered to Shared Leadership Team (SLT) – following which we have seen increased use and posting on LinkedIn by SLT.
- b. Two articles have been published in the Management Journal to aid senior recruitment.

### **Upskill managers to be confident and capable recruiters**

A series of masterclasses are planned to follow the implementation of the new system, to support the processes around it. These masterclasses will include:

- Advert writing
- Interview techniques
- Passive vs active job seekers and the differing approaches

In-person training on the recruitment system has taken place.

Coaching with managers has improved the outcomes of recruitment drives.

### **Benefits**

From September -December 2023, across both councils, 69 roles have been advertised and 64 have been filled, a success rate of 93%.

The use of direct approaches to passive candidates has enabled the appointment of 2 software developers, a cyber security officer, and a bio-diversity net gain officer. These are very difficult posts to fill.

The average time to hire has reduced from 53 days to 29 – time to hire is defined as the time from when a vacancy is created to when a formal offer of employment is made.

The Council has appointed 5 senior leaders on the first attempt and the quality of the applicants was extremely high.

The Task Group thanked Hollie for the updated information. She was also requested to obtain comparative information from other local authorities which will be provided on an annual basis, in line with other local authority reporting frequency.

### **Resolved -**

1. That the minutes of 20 November 2023 be approved; and
2. That the updated information provided be included in the final report.

## **26 Interview with Cabinet Member for Resources**

The Executive Member (Resources), Councillor Peter Wilson, attended the meeting to relate his views and perspective on the issues raised during the course of the review.

He highlighted the following points in relation to recruitment and staff retention at Chorley:

- As a relatively small district – we do very well to recruit and retain high quality candidates especially in respect of shared services, where there is more responsibility and expectations of the candidates appointed. For example, we recently carried out a recruitment to vacancies within Senior Management Team and were able to attract and appoint very good candidates to the posts. This was reflected in both shared and non- shared services and could be attributed to the key elements of pay and employee benefits / support forming part of the attractive Chorley offer.  
Chorley Council compares favourably with its neighbouring local authorities.
- It was acknowledged that certain teams (e.g. ICT, planning) experience certain recruitment challenges due to the pay being higher in the private sector. The gaps in specialist areas like planning are a concern.
- In respect of customer services, it was noted that the team had recently moved to shared services and there were challenges, however the situation was moving in the right direction. Councillor Wilson acknowledged that the issue regarding apprentices being put under pressure had been identified and there was a need to allow time for people to develop skills balanced against the demands of the service.

Arising from questions by the Task Group, Councillor Wilson made the following further points:

- Despite reports in the national media about some Councils experiencing financial difficulties, Chorley is fortunate to be financially stable position. It

therefore has the advantage to promote itself as an employer able to offer a good career in local government.

- Councillor Wilson saw his role as Executive Member (Resources) to hold officers to account and provide challenge to ensure that human resources were in place to deliver the Corporate Strategy and the Council's Policies.
- The Council is committed to quality apprenticeships, and going forward we will ensure that our stated aims, development plans, mentoring etc. are all specified as part of the package we offer. The Council does not want to rely on apprentices to deliver a service and will ensure a blend of apprentices and experienced staff within teams.

**Resolved:** That Executive Member (Resources) be thanked for his attendance.

## 27 Consideration of draft report and recommendations

A draft report for this scrutiny review was submitted for consideration.

The Task Group discussed its conclusions and recommendations arising from the draft report.

Overall members were very pleased with the report and thanked officers for their hard work.

The conclusions were agreed as follows:

1. The Task Group are satisfied that the new Recruitment Strategy is tackling the issues identified in the report.
2. That service delivery is being maintained, however it should be highlighted that there are challenges in certain service areas as identified during the course of the review.
3. That Executive Members and Directors hold heads of service to account where on occasion performance gaps are being attributed to lack of staffing, when there are other identifiable reasons.
4. That the Task Group recognises the dedication of all its employees and thanks them for their hard work.

The recommendations were agreed as follows:

1. That the Council's Senior Management Team be requested to investigate the feasibility of the Council working towards the Living Wage Accreditation, and if promising, present their proposals to Executive Cabinet
2. That the Council actively promotes health and wellbeing (including mental health) support available as part of its overall employee benefits package

3. That the Executive Member for Resources monitor recruitment and retention figures over the next 6 – 12 months especially in identified key risk areas
4. That a member learning session be arranged on an annual basis to update on workforce planning
5. To include performance reporting data on recruitment and staff retention on the new members portal from the new recruitment system

**Resolved** – That the final report (amended as per above) be circulated to members for approval via email.

**28 Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that the provisional meeting scheduled on Wednesday, 17 January 2023 be cancelled as it was not required.

Chair

Date