

Essential Reference Paper “B”

Workforce Planning 2015

Introduction

Between July and August 2015 Heads of Service were invited to attend a financial and business planning meeting to discuss the direction of travel for their service and identify a range of service delivery options to explore with Members. These options were then consolidated into a 4 year service plan for each service. An HR Officer attended these meetings to challenge Heads of Service to think about their workforce planning needs to achieve their desired position. This included discussing issues such as succession planning, skills and competencies, recruitment and retention, vacancy management and organisational design.

The outputs from these meetings were collated and key themes were identified in order to develop a workforce plan to address key workforce planning issues across the council.

The key themes and actions support the Organisational Development Strategy 2015 to 2019 and Investors in People Bronze to Silver action plan 2015.

Workforce Plan - Key Themes

Ageing workforce / Knowledge Transfer / Succession Planning

Most services reported imminent retirements, with some services having as many as 30% of employees expected to retire in the next few years. Many of these employees have worked for the council for a long time and have considerable experience, knowledge and sometimes very specialist skills. This causes issues in terms of knowledge transfer and so where possible, succession planning should be considered. However some services have large steps between posts and so succession planning is not always possible and recruitment to vacancies is likely to be externally.

Actions

- Structured work experience programme with Youth Connexions
- Apprentice/trainee posts
- Career graded posts
- Continue and possibly expand graduate development programme
- Formalised succession planning supported through the PDR process and provide frameworks for the up-skilling/re-skilling of employees
- Developing talent for the future by ‘Growing Our Own’
- Develop approach to coaching and mentoring

Skills Development

Many services need to develop skills in their teams to keep up to date in the modern workplace. For example social media skills and digital skills in general need to be developed in order to facilitate the council's channel shift to more self-service and web access. Business skills for first line managers need to be refreshed. Some services rely heavily on consultants/contractors to cover skills gaps and consideration should be given to whether it may be more cost effective to train staff.

Actions

- Review and strengthen PDR process. Strengthen connection between training needs identified through PDRs and training programmes and outcomes
- Investing in wide range of learning tools including e-learning and webinars
- Developing talent for the future by 'Growing Our Own'
- Supporting secondments, job shadowing and networking opportunities
- Develop a leadership and management development framework
- Develop approach to coaching and mentoring
- Promoting a programme of learning and development to support transformational changes, commercialisation and innovation
- Embedding the Council's values and behaviours

Change in Service Delivery

Some services are modernising their service delivery model which has workforce implications. Support services are moving to a more strategic model, for example working on a client/commissioner basis or taking a business partner approach. Many services are trying to encourage a channel shift for customers to self-service and online support. Other services are looking at removing/introducing out of hours services or extending opening hours to meet customer demand.

Actions

- HR to support individual services through change programmes as appropriate
- Promoting a programme of learning and development to support transformational changes, commercialisation and innovation

Career Progression

Due to small teams in many services, career progression can be an issue as there are either standalone posts or the steps between posts are too large for employees to progress between them. This may be a particular issue in relation to retaining the graduates and getting return on investment. Career graded posts are working well in some areas and could be a solution for other services.

Actions

- Apprentice/trainee posts
- Career graded posts
- Continue and possibly expand graduate development programme
- Formalised succession planning supported through the PDR process and provide frameworks for the up-skilling/re-skilling of employees
- Developing talent for the future by 'Growing Our Own'
- Develop approach to coaching and mentoring

- Supporting secondments, job shadowing and networking opportunities

Recruitment / Retention / Pay issues

Some service areas are experiencing recruitment problems in terms of attracting employees with the right skills. Some areas feel that this is due to the level of pay not being high enough to attract the required calibre of applicant or because the council cannot compete with the private sector in terms of pay. There is concern that the pay for some professional roles is low in comparison to neighbouring authorities. Some areas also raised the need to look at introducing market supplements

There are other areas where demand for applicants is outstretching supply; this is particularly the case for highly specialist posts where the combination of specialist skills and local government experience is difficult to find.

Actions

- HR to carry out benchmarking where services believe there to be an issue
- Develop innovative and modern ways to advertise job vacancies, using social media
- Implementing the Recruitment Review 2015 recommendations
- Valuing, recognising and rewarding our workforce. Exploring how we get more from our reward and benefit packages

Resilience / Shared services

Resilience is a considerable issue for most services due to small teams and specialist posts where only one employee has a particular skill. Many professional roles have to be covered by consultants/contractors if the employee leaves or is absent as there is no resilience within the service. Some areas also have a high percentage of part-time workers which can make office cover very difficult. Shared services have aided resilience in some areas and some other services are either in the process of or are keen to explore shared services further.

Actions

- Explore shared service and partnership options as appropriate
- Working with current and future partners to improve how we deliver our services

Increase in Resources

Many services reported the need to increase resources in order to deliver their service plans effectively. In some cases there is only a need for additional temporary resource to deliver a project for example. However, previous restructures have left resilience in some services very tight and in some cases a decision needs to be taken to do less or increase resources to deliver the existing workload.

Actions

- Heads of Service to request additional resources through normal channels - CMT approval

Apprentices / Trainees / Graduates

Views on apprenticeships were mixed; some services had taken on apprentices but found them a big drain on other staff in terms of providing support. This is particularly the case in small teams where there is already little resilience. Others had found apprenticeships to work well or were actively considering hiring an apprentice.

Actions

- Apprentice/trainee programme
- Career graded posts
- Continue and possibly expand graduate development programme

Restructures / Service Reviews

Several areas are considering restructuring or carrying out a service review. Several services reported that job descriptions needed to be reviewed to reflect new ways of working.

Actions

- HR to support individual service areas as appropriate

Lone Working Issues

Concerns about the safety of lone workers and the reliability of office procedures in place to monitor lone workers were reported in the following services:

- Revenues and Benefits
- Planning and Building Control
- Community Safety and Health Services
- Housing Services
- Environmental Services

These should be resolved by the corporate solution to lone working due to be introduced.

Actions

- Corporate lone working system

Stress / Workload issues

Several services reported that employees were experiencing work related stress due to high workloads. In some areas teams are working at full capacity all of the time and struggle to find time to keep up with important changes in legislation or have staff training. High turnover and recruitment issues in some services are also putting additional pressure on existing employees.

Full support is provided to employees who are experiencing stress through Occupational Health and in accordance with the Council's absence management policy.

Actions

- Actively promote and encourage healthy lifestyles and wellbeing programmes for the workforce
- Heads of Service to request additional resources through normal channels - CMT approval
- Investigate whether there are any underlying issues in service areas with high turnover
- Employee support through Occupational Health and absence management policy

Monitoring and Progress

Workforce planning is a collaborative process that should be closely synched and integrated with the business planning process. It is not a project but an ongoing programme and will be monitored through delivery of the service plans and the Organisational Development strategy over the next four years.

The HR service will work with senior management team to gradually build workforce planning during this period.

**HR Service
August 2015**