

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

9 DECEMBER 2019

PRESENT

Councillor J. Bennett (in the Chair).

Councillors A.M. Whyte (Vice-Chair), D. Acton, A. Akinola, J. Holden, B. Rigby (OS) and R. Thompson.

In attendance

Angela Beadsworth	Head of Workforce and Core Strategy
Kate Sturman	Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence
Caroline Myers	Trainee Solicitor
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Cordingley and P. Lally

14. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None were received.

16. WORKFORCE UPDATE

The Head of Workforce & Core Strategy presented the Workforce Update and a summary of achievements for Q2 is outlined below.

The Employee Recognition Awards has been a highlight of the year for both staff and the Council. This year has seen a record number of nominations being made and the event was enjoyed by all.

We have achieved the Defence Employer Gold Standard that demonstrates our commitment to the Armed Forces covenant which is a fantastic achievement and will help us to become an exemplar employer.

A lot of work has been done to engage with the workforce and a staff survey was conducted which has seen a 51% response rate from staff and we are in the 'one to watch' category. The results of the survey are currently being analysed and some high level feedback sessions are being held the following week, followed by more in depth work in the New Year.

We have held a number of "Let's Talk" events which are well attended. These sessions are part of the Council's engagement strategy and help connect the

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workforce to the corporate strategy and priorities. The Council are also really keen to continue to have a focus on our colleague wellbeing and a range of initiatives were outlined.

The Mental Health First aid network was launched, this is a network made up of 19 staff members who have been trained and are a point of contact to signpost staff to initiatives in place to support them to keep well to stop issues from escalating.

Following the overview of the update Committee Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. One Member asked whether the survey results would be made available for staff to see. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy responded that the results would be made available to staff and that they would ensure the information was accessible, that the document is not too long, and that it holds all the information that staff needed.

Another Member asked about feedback from the survey and whether the results were going to be discussed with any staff groups. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy answered that the Council's engagement strategy was about getting staff involved and listening to their views and letting them have input in the development and running of the Council's services. The E in Epic was about empowering the workforce and encouraging staff to be involved and take control of their own areas. A Member asked what the other letters of EPIC meant. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy responded that the other letters stood for People Centred, Inclusive, and Collaborate and explained to the Committee that these values were to be at the core of the Council's culture and ways of working.

A Committee Member asked whether the staff groups were active and it were not just box ticking exercise. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy assured the Committee Member that the groups had been very active especially the Council's disabled staff group where a range of initiatives had been put in place following feedback from the group. All of the groups are consulted when HR make changes to any HR policies or when directorates plan to make changes. The groups had also been very involved in the creation of the Council's people strategy for example that has been co-produced with a number of stakeholder and colleagues.

Another Member noted the Council's score from the survey of 631 and asked what the maximum available score was. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy responded that 1000 was the top score but they did not think that anyone had achieved that. The council were looking to stretch their performance and increase their score as they moved forward.

The Member then asked whether the Council mapped individual's progress. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy answered that the Council did not map individual's progress at the moment but that this was something that they were looking to do starting with the apprentices to ensure that they get the most out of their time with the Council.

The Opposition Spokesperson thanked the HR officers for the report which showed the large amount of work that they had done. They then requested that

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GM sickness absence data be included in future updates put the Council's performance in context. The Opposition Spokesperson also requested that information from previous years be provided so that trends could be identified.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That GM sickness and absence data be included within future updates to provide context.
- 3) That information from previous years be provided within updates so that trends could be identified.

17. AGENCY SPEND Q2

The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence went through the report that had been circulated with the agenda. There had been an increase in the amount of money spent on agency staff since the last quarter however, when compared to the same quarter in the previous year all areas had reduced apart from Children's Services, due to the statutory requirement for social worker and care roles.

Trafford were currently looking at the Council's offer and how it could be made more attractive to potential staff. This included the Council running a recruitment campaign in early 2020.

The Chair noted that this was a national issue as there were less and less qualified social workers available to draw from. A Committee Member stated that while it was a national issue they felt it was important to find areas of good/best practice to ensure that the Council were doing all they could to maximise employment.

Another Committee Member asked what employee's age demographic was and whether there were going to be a lot of retirements. The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence told the Committee Member that they did not have that data to hand but that it could be provided to the Committee.

The Opposition Spokesperson noted that while it was good for the Council to train their own staff up to these positions this was only true if they did not leave once they were qualified. The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence responded that this was why it was important for the Council to have a good offer in place for social workers to ensure that they wanted to stay and work at the Council.

The Opposition Spokesperson added that there had previously been agreements between Councils and agencies which set a limit on price of agency staff and they asked if that agreement was still in place. The Chair responded that many of the councils in the North West were no longer adhering to the agreement due to the severe lack of social workers. The Chair pointed out that the Council's package had to be more than just a financial offer, as there were a number of considerations, such as case load, which had a much greater impact on job satisfaction.

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The Chair asked for clarification on point 2.2.3 of the report in relation to the staff bank and the flexibility being offered to the staff that joined the bank. The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence responded that the bank was new and she did not have enough knowledge of it to answer the Councillors question in full but they were aware that the bank was performing well and that there had been good feedback from staff. The Chair requested that more information be brought to the next Committee meeting about the bank.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That staff demographic information be sent to Committee members.
- 3) That more information on the staff bank be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

18. UNSOCIAL ALLOWANCES

The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence informed the Committee that the report followed on a previous paper submitted to them. Since then, officers had worked on other areas of the unsociable hours policy and a full comprehensive review had been completed.

The Strategic HR Lead Policy, Reward and Intelligence went through the changes to the policy listed within the report. Following a comprehensive benchmarking exercise Officers had concluded that the Council's current scheme was fit for purpose. Further reviews would be conducted by HR whenever work patterns changed to ensure the policy remained fit for purpose. The Chair asked for exit interview data to be provided to assure the Committee that unsocial hours were not a reason that people were leaving the Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee note the report and agree its contents.
- 2) That exit interview data is to be provided to the Committee to provide assurance that unsociable hours are not a reason for staff leaving.

19. PEOPLE STRATEGY 2020-22

The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy introduced the People Strategy to the Committee and explained that it was important that the council as an employer had a strategy in place which demonstrated how they were supporting the current workforce to excel, attract quality applicants for new positions, and have a supportive culture whereby all colleagues can be the best they can be.

Within the strategy there are four key themes which align to our values and framed around the employee experience – Attract & Recruit, Engage & Retain, Grow &

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Nurture and Embed & Sustain. It's important that we attract the right people with our values who can deliver our services to residents and our customers. The people strategy outlines our comprehensive rewards package, and is aligned to the Greater Manchester Employment Charter. It has been designed to encourage staff to develop careers within the Council rather than seeing work as just the job they were currently doing.

A number of EPIC pioneers have been recruited within each directorate who are our ambassadors for change and who embody our values across the workforce.

A new appraisal process has been launched 'EPIC Check in' and a suite of training provided for managers and staff to ensure that they get the most from it.

HR will continue to work as enablers in partnership with colleagues across GM to ensure that Trafford were on the forefront of what was going on across the area to provide the best support for the workforce. The Committee were informed that the strategy would be launched in early 2020.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

20. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY

The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy informed the Committee that there were five cases with improved sickness arrangements in place and 1 had been rejected due to them having exhausted their sick pay through industrial accidents.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and finished at 5.37 pm