

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

**6 DECEMBER 2021**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor J. Bennett (in the Chair).

Councillors A.M. Whyte (Vice-Chair), D. Acton, C. Boyes, D. Jarman and D.C. O'Sullivan

#### In attendance

|                   |  |
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| Angela Beadsworth | Interim Director of HR                                 |
| Bev Norton        | Head of HR Operations                                  |
| Richard Fontana   | Strategic HR Lead for Health and Safety                |
| Kate Sturman      | Strategic HR Lead for Policy, Reward, and Intelligence |
| Jude Brown        | Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning   |
| Alexander Murray  | Governance Officer                                     |

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Holden, S. Longden and A.J. Williams.

### **18. MINUTES**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### **19. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions were received.

### **20. PEOPLE UPDATE**

The interim Director of HR delivered an update to the Committee picking out key highlights of the work that has been done in the last three months. HR had continued to support staff through the pandemic and had been working with Managers and staff to develop their skills and support them in the delivery of services. Attendance levels had been impacted by the pandemic and HR had supported services through a fast-track recruitment process. The recruitment process had been tightened so all vacancies were advertised internally in the first instance with a few exceptions including traded services, front line social workers, and shared services. The improved process required all external advertisements to be approved by the Interim Director of HR and the Director of Finance and systems. The Interim Director of HR assured the Committee the recruitment process aligned with the Council's "grow our own" strategy.

The Strategic HR Lead for Health and Safety then provided a detailed health and safety update. The update covered the support the team were providing to staff across the Council both within council buildings and when working from home. In response to the omicron variant the Council had moved to the essential wearing of

## **Employment Committee 6 December 2021**

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face coverings in all buildings. CO2 monitors were being utilised to ensure the levels of ventilation within council buildings was adequate. The first aid arrangements within Council workspaces were being updated to align with the move to hybrid working and ensure the Council remained compliant with its first aid responsibilities. The Strategic HR Lead for Health and Safety concluded their update by informing the committee of the ongoing work to support schools on a range of health and safety issues. The support included risk assessments, outbreak control, and providing information and guidance.

The Interim Director of HR then provided information on the other key activities of the department. The Council's employee recognition rewards were due to be held the next day and the Committee were informed of the award categories along with details of the process of selection of winners. The Council were to undertake a workforce survey in the new year. The exercise would include a "you said we did" document detailing staff feedback received within the last survey and the actions the Council had taken. An update on the outcomes of the survey would be provided at the next Committee meeting in March 2022.

There had been a lot of work done to provide and support Apprenticeships and kickstart placements during the year with 43 apprenticeships and 13 Kickstarter placements achieved. The first cohort of Kickstarter placements were due to graduate in December 2021 and 2 young people had attained full time positions, one within STAR Procurement, and the other had begun an apprenticeship in business support. 8 Trafford young people were due to start as part of the next cohort with 2 due to start on the following Monday.

The Interim Director of HR detailed the ongoing work to increase the number of social workers within the Council. This included additional support for social workers in their first year of employment with case load protection and additional 1:2:1 supervision. 8 people were studying for the 30-month social work qualification. The adult social care team were delivering sessions in secondary schools and the Council were facilitating work placements within schools. In Children's Services the Council were supporting 17 new social workers with another 2 due to start. 8 newly qualified social workers were preparing for the final panel and another 7 members of staff were taking the social care qualification across three cohorts.

The Council had been working with an external provider to ensure they were compliant with legislation and to meet the Councils commitment to challenge inequality and discrimination, particularly in employment. Part of this work had seen the creation of an equality steering group with executive representation, senior management representation from both the Council and Trafford CCG, and representation from staff forums. A report on the work in this area was to be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Flu vaccination clinics had been put in place and support was being provided to ensure all staff in adult care services were fully vaccinated, in line with legislation.

The HR team were involved in wide range of service redesigns with two of the largest areas being within Children's services around the no wrong door model

## Employment Committee 6 December 2021

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and early help. The engagement exercises for these services were complete and implementation was set for the end of April 2022. An early year's redesign was underway and expected to be ready for implementation midway through 2022. The HR team were also supporting Trafford CCG in their transition to the Integrated Care System Board.

The HR service was going through its own restructure which involved a move to a single front door contactable via telephone, email, or online portal. The effectiveness of the front door was being assessed with a survey going out to managers in the new year asking for their views.

The HR team continued to provide support to managers and elected members for appeal hearings through a comprehensive employee relations service. The Interim Director of HR concluded her overview by informing the Committee that the service was continuing to review and update all policies to ensure they were fit for purpose and compliant with legislation.

Following the overview Councillor Acton asked whether new social workers were accompanied on visits as part of their support and what happened in the second year. The Interim Director of HR responded that a comprehensive package of support was in place, which included having a mentor who worked with them on a 1:2:1 basis. The Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning added that there was a taught programme for the first year of supported learning and a provider was in place who helped new social workers to apply theory to practice. The Committee were then provided with details of the support provided in the first year and were assured the Council were looking to provide further support in social workers second year. Newly qualified social workers went on visits by themselves, but their mentor would provide close oversight and support. The approach taken was dependent upon each social workers abilities, experience, and confidence.

Councillor O'Sullivan asked how many vacancies the Council had for social workers. The Interim Director of HR responded she did not have the figures to hand and would provide the details after the meeting.

Councillor O'Sullivan asked whether any volunteers supported social workers. The Interim Director of HR responded that there was a volunteering strategy in place and the Council looked to support services with volunteer support where appropriate. The Chair added that it was worth considering whether retired social workers would volunteer to help support newly qualified staff. The Interim Director of HR responded that the council were looking at all avenues for opportunities to increase provision and that would be something to consider.

### RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That a report on the Councils work on equality and diversity in the workplace come to the next Committee meeting.
- 3) That information on the number of social worker vacancies be provided to Committee Members after the meeting.

**21. AGENCY SPEND JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Interim Director of HR introduced the report, which covered July to September 2021. The key highlights were the tightening of the vacancy process and the increase agency spend within Children's Services. There had been an increase of £240K due to an underreporting in the first quarter. The Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning then went through a presentation on the four main areas of focus in Trafford for improving stability within the Social Care workforce. The presentation gave a detailed overview of the work being done in each of the four areas which were recruiting, retaining, growing and developing, and sustaining.

Following the presentation, the Chair asked whether any analysis was done comparing the current retention rates to the rates ten years ago. The Interim Director of HR responded that the service could look back at historic data although there was a limit to how far due to changes in. HR did use exit interviews for leavers to understand why people were leaving the Council. The feedback from those interviews then fed into the Council's staff engagement plans.

The Chair noted that there was a total of 115 vacancies within Children's services and asked for a more detailed breakdown identifying where those vacancies were. The Interim Director of HR responded that a supplementary report with the additional information would be provided for the next meeting in March.

Councillor O'Sullivan asked whether the agency workers were offered employment within the Council. The Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning responded that throughout the implementation of the new structure positions were offered to Council employees and the remaining posts were offered to agency staff. Through this process 2 team leaders became Council employees reducing the number of agency staff at that level to 3 or 4. For advanced practitioners 4 or 5 staff became Council staff, 2 permanently and 2 or 3 on an interim basis. The Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning informed the Committee that the service could see how long each agency staff member had been in their role and the next step was to approach agency staff who had been at Trafford for over six months with an employment offer.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That supplementary report with additional information be provided for the next meeting of the Committee.

**22. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EXEMPTIONS TO THE SICKNESS POLICY**

The Head of HR Operations informed the Committee that during the last quarter 10 applications had been received and all had been agreed. Of the ten 3 were related to Covid and most of the remaining cases related to conditions with long treatment and recovery times. 4 requests had come from Children's Services, 3 had come from Adult Services, and 3 had come from Strategy and Resource.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

**Employment Committee  
6 December 2021**

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The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.02 pm