

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Human Resources Sub Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2009

Present:

Councillor Watson – In the Chair
Councillors Clayton, McCulley and Trotman.

Councillor Priest – Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

RG/HS/09/17 Minutes

Decision

To note the minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2009.

RG/HS/09/18 People Strategy Implementation - update

A joint report of the Strategic Director of Transformation, the Head of Corporate Personnel and the Head of Leadership Development was submitted on the current People Strategy 2015 implementation. The Strategic Director of Transformation highlighted that the drivers behind the refreshed People Strategy included:

- An analysis of the Council's staffing structures and how well they help the Council to offer high quality services
- The experience of Service Improvement Projects in the Corporate Personnel and Organisational Development sections
- The pledge that all staff will have at least a level 2 qualification
- The changes to the culture and ways of working in the organisation that the Town Hall Complex Programme will bring

A member of the sub group commented that there was a disappointing level of senior staff who were not Manchester residents. Other members stated that their experience was not that people had reached senior positions and then left the city, but that they had never lived there. The Head of Corporate Personnel added that the Council's continued efforts to make Manchester as attractive a place to live as possible would also lead to more senior staff living in the city. The Strategic Director of Transformation advised that the Residents' Wages Project was also responding to the statistic which showed that the average wage of someone employed in Manchester was above the national average but the average salary of a Manchester resident was below the national average.

The Chair thought that whilst some senior staff might not technically live in the city of Manchester, they lived within Greater Manchester. She requested statistics which would demonstrate what portion of senior staff were residents of Greater Manchester.

The sub group had looked at the People Strategy in the past, and felt that whilst members supported its objectives they were not convinced that they would be achieved by the workforce plans included in many service areas' business plans. They had commented that workforce planning was of a high quality, and supported the People Strategy in some areas of the council, but not in others. The Head of Organisational Development advised that, reacting to the views of the sub group, workshops on workforce planning had taken place early in the business planning process.

The sub group felt that with continued strong leadership of the People Strategy improvements could be made in workforce planning. The sub group would return to see whether this had occurred at its meeting in January 2010.

Members enquired why schools staff were not included within workforce statistics presented to the sub group. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised that the Council had little control over schools' employment practices. The sub group agreed that it would be helpful to look at this information.

The Head of Corporate Personnel then gave an overview of the Service Improvement Programme (SIP) in Corporate Personnel. He advised that the reorganisation would mean that fewer senior managers reported directly to him, and would support the section to make required efficiency savings. Members requested further information showing the organisation of the service following the SIP, including how departmental personnel teams would work with the Corporate Personnel section.

Decision

1. To request that a workforce analysis of school staff be provided at the next meeting of the sub group.
2. To request that statistics which demonstrate what proportion of senior staff are residents of Greater Manchester be submitted to the next meeting of the sub group.
3. To request that the refreshed People Strategy be presented to the sub group at its meeting in October 2009 or January 2010.
4. To request an analysis of workforce plans arising from the business planning process be presented in January or March 2010.
5. To request that information about the Corporate Personnel SIP is submitted to the meeting of the subgroup in October.

RG/HS/09/19

Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures

The Head of Corporate Personnel submitted a report on the City Council's Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure. The report set out the aims of the policy, the link with the revised Employee Code of Conduct, the role of managers within the policy itself and the wider context of the People Strategy.

The report included performance data on instances of disciplinary action for 2007/8 and 2008/9, which demonstrated a decline in numbers of cases being progressed through the disciplinary, dismissals and appeals processes. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised the sub group that a more enlightened approach to management had been encouraged and this had led to a reduction in regrettable incidents and consequential disciplinary action.

The report also included the average length of time involved in processing a disciplinary investigation from incident through to appeal to the Employee Appeals Committee. The length of time had reduced but with scope for further reduction.

Members stressed the importance of equipping managers with the appropriate skills to effectively oversee cases. The Head of Corporate Personnel agreed that a good understanding of the processes was crucial and that a variety of training events were available which would help managers.

A member of the sub group sought clarification on the reasons that would be accepted for non-attendance at a disciplinary hearing or meeting. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised that a mutually convenient date was set for hearings and meetings. The Council would only accept severe sickness or certain family circumstances as an acceptable reason for non-attendance. If there was any doubt about the validity of reasons for non-attendance the Occupational Health section would be asked for their views.

A member queried how the Disciplinary and Dismissal, Managing Attendance and Managing Capability policies related to each other. The Personnel Manager (Employee Relations) advised that the Corporate Personnel Service Improvement Programme would introduce improved guidance for managers which would be more accessible on the Council's intranet site.

The report included a summary of the number of disciplinary cases and sanctions over the last two years. Members asked about the number of cases which had been taken to an employment tribunal. The Personnel Manager (Employee Relations) informed the sub group that since March 2008 a total of 11 cases had gone to tribunal, none of which the City Council had lost. Members agreed that these figures demonstrated that the processes were operating successfully across the Council.

Decision

To note the report

RG/HS/09/20

Secondments – Oral Update

The Head of Corporate Personnel provided an interim oral update on secondments. . He advised the policy on secondments was being reviewed by the Temporary Staff Working Group. The sub group would receive a report in October which would cover the development of the new secondments 'model' and would included an analysis of conversions to permanent posts. It would also include information on the average length of secondments.

He added that the group was focused on ensuring that secondments were only made available where the position was for a limited duration and it represented a development opportunity.

Decision

To note the information and to anticipate receiving a full report on the activities of the Temporary Staff Working Group at the next meeting.

RG/HS/09/21

Work Programme

Decision

The work programme of the sub group was amended to include the requests for further information made during the meeting.