

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Human Resources Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2009

Present:

Councillors Clayton, McCulley, Sandiford, Trotman and Watson (RG/HS/09/24-28)

Councillor Priest – Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

RG/HS/09/22 Appointment of Chair

Decision

To appoint Councillor Sandiford as Chair until Councillor Watson's arrival.

RG/HS/09/23 Minutes

To note the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2009.

RG/HS/09/24 Skills Pledge

A joint report of the Strategic Director of Transformation and the Head of Corporate Personnel was submitted which set out progress towards a range of interventions being delivered through the City Council's Skill Pledge commitment. These included:-

- Actions to enable existing employees to learn and progress within the organisation
- The provision of a range of bespoke learning opportunities to enable Manchester residents to access employment within the Council
- The drive to significantly increase the number of apprenticeship and NVQ posts within the City Council

The Strategic Director of Transformation introduced the report giving particular focus on the progress to date on the apprenticeship/NVQ scheme. Members welcomed these developments and the importance of building aspirations in the workforce. They also highlighted the importance of giving recognition to the personal skill needed in addition to the technical aspects of a post.

Members also sought clarification on whom the apprenticeships/NVQs would be targeted. The Strategic Director of Transformation advised Members that local residents would be targeted with a particular focus on the long term unemployed, Looked After Children and residents aged between 16 – 19 years through targeted

work with schools and colleges in order to benefit school leavers.

The Personnel Strategy and Organisation Manager added that embedded within the pledge was a recognition of an individual's 'work readiness' whereby tailored pre- and post-employment support would be given.

Decision

To note the report and support the focus on the development of entry-level posts.

Councillor Watson arrived at the meeting during consideration of the above item, having been delayed at a Constitutional and Nomination Committee meeting that had over-run.

RG/HS/09/25 Management of Temporary Staffing Arrangements including the use of Secondment Opportunities

In response to the Subgroup's request, the Head of Corporate Personnel submitted an update report on the use and management of temporary staffing arrangements with a particular focus on the application of the Secondment Policy. The report summarised:

- Progress on implementing revised management arrangements for temporary solutions through the use of external agency staff and consultants.
- The review undertaken on the use of secondments.
- Proposals for a centralised "One Stop Resource" framework located in Corporate Personnel, with responsibility for co-ordinating all temporary staffing requirements.

The Head of Corporate Personnel introduced the report advising the Subgroup that the new centralised model of operation would offer service managers a bespoke support service to provide advice on how best to fill new vacancies. He added that firm and formal proposals on this particular area could be brought back to the next meeting of the subgroup.

A member asked whether a detailed analysis could be brought on why agency staff were recruited together with the resulting costs. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised that this also could be elaborated upon in the future report but that the issue usually arose from the absence of a specific skill within the workforce that was required to perform a particular task. He added that time-limited agency staff were often used in such situations. Members questioned whether the new approach would represent a cost or a saving overall.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources stressed the importance of not presenting a misleading figure in isolation and emphasised the need to instead focus on whether departments were remaining within staffing budget as well as making effective progress towards resolving staffing resource requirements appropriately.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To receive a further update on the management of temporary staffing arrangements and the use of secondment opportunities at the next meeting of the Subgroup that would explore:
 - Formal proposals on the support arrangements to service managers
 - Whether the proposals would lead to an overall cost or saving.

RG/HS/09/26 Personnel Service Improvement Programme

The Head of Corporate Personnel provided a further update on the Personnel Service Improvement Programme. This report set out:

- progress towards the implementation of the restructure approved by Personnel Committee in May 2009;
- implementation of the Personnel Shared Service Centre;
- the role of departmentally based Personnel Advisers;
- significant priorities for the Personnel Service.

The report made reference to development of a range of tools to provide managers with easy access to information about employee absences in order to help identify and manage attendance issues. Members discussed the challenges of promoting an appropriate cultural environment within the workforce to reduce avoidable absences. The Head of Corporate Personnel informed the Subgroup that the vast majority of employees adhered to the attendance policy, but that there would always be occurrences however robust the arrangements. He added that the future attendance policy had a clear protocol with the involvement of Occupational Health and disciplinary action where indicated.

Members sought clarification on the section of the report which discussed the consolidation of the Agency Client Group, 'Manchester Temps' and the strategic oversight of honoria or act-up, secondments and redeployment by a single 'Resourcing Group'. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised Members that the overall aim was to introduce a single point of call for advice on future vacancies. He added that advice would be given to suit individual circumstances and consequently may result in bespoke solutions. He emphasised that managers would remain in control and that all solutions would fit in with the organisational policy.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring that the Service Improvement Plan does not have a negative impact on the redeployment process. They noted that supernumerary posts had remained at a fairly static level over recent months.

Discussion then turned to the adoption of a well-being strategy which looked at the wider aspects of employee well-being within the work place to therefore encourage attendance. The Head of Corporate Personnel advised that although this specific strategy did not exist in isolation, firm principles which promoted employee wellbeing

underpinned the refreshed People Strategy. He referred to work by the University of Lancaster in looking at employee well-being. The Chair also referred to a report by Carole Black on 'Working for a Healthier Tomorrow'.

The Head of Corporate Personnel advised that further information on these points could be submitted to a future meeting of the Subgroup and that this information would include the impact of the physical environment on the workforce.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To request further information on the work with Lancaster University to promote employee wellbeing through the refreshed People Strategy.

RG/HS/09/27 Workforce Analysis

In response to the Subgroups request at its previous meeting, the Head of Corporate Personnel provided the subgroup with a summary of Manchester schools workforce composition and statistical information to demonstrate the proportion of senior staff who are residents of the Greater Manchester area.

Members commented on the proportion of senior staff who are Greater Manchester residents and discussed the skills mismatch for top positions within the authority and the skill set of the average local resident.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources commented that the issue was being tackled through the Manchester Partnership to raise the skill levels of our communities and make Manchester a place where people increasingly choose to live, bring up their children and work.

Decision

To note the report.

RG/HS/09/28 Work Programme

Members of the Subgroup were invited to consider their future work programme with specific reference to the items to be scheduled. The subgroup agreed to schedule a report on social worker recruitment for the January meeting of the Subgroup. The Chair emphasised that this report would purely focus on recruitment policies and procedures in line with the Terms of Reference of the subgroup.

Decision

To schedule the following items for the January meeting of the subgroup:-

- The People Strategy
- Social Worker recruitment

- Further update on the management of temporary staffing arrangements and the use of secondment opportunities.