

## **Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Human Resources Subgroup**

#### **Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2010**

##### **Present:**

Councillor Watson – In the Chair  
Councillors Clayton, McCulley, Sandiford and Trotman  
Councillor Priest – Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

##### **RG/HS/10/01                      Minutes**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2009 as a correct record.

##### **RG/HS/10/02                      Personnel and Organisational Development: Assignment of Post of Director of Human Resources**

A report of the Chief Executive which had been submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 December 2009 was submitted to the Subgroup to inform members of the proposals to strengthen the capacity, skills and operation of the personnel and organisational development functions by merging them into a single human resources function.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and commented that the redesign would support the Council to achieve substantial reductions in costs without reducing the level of service offered, and should equip the Council to face the challenges posed to public services. He added that a job description and person specification were being drawn up for the post of Director of Human Resources, who would lead the new section, and the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources and the Leader of the Opposition would be consulted on them, along with the Chair of this subgroup.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources illustrated his support for the redesign as it would equip the Council to make savings without being forced into making redundancies, affecting morale.

Members asked for further details about how the new service would be set up. The Chief Executive advised that a skills assessment would be made to see what talents the people in the new section would need. He envisaged that the post of Director of Human Resources would be filled by Summer 2010. Members commented that the Subgroup saw the Council's People Strategy as being of key significance in delivering the Council's objectives, and felt that the new section would play the key

role in implementing the Strategy. The Subgroup would be looking at how workforce development plans in business plans support the People Strategy at its next meeting.

The Chief Executive offered to bring a progress update to the Subgroup in March.

### **Decision**

To support the redesign of the personnel and organisational development business areas and to request an update on progress at the next meeting.

## **RG/HS/10/03                      Social Worker Recruitment and Retention**

A joint report of the Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Services and Head of Personnel was submitted updating the subgroup on how recruitment and retention of social workers in Children's and Adult Services was being supported. The report also covered the management of temporary staffing arrangements and stabilising the permanent workforce by attracting, recruiting and retaining quality social workers.

The Head of Personnel introduced the report and commented that Children's Services and Adult Services had been working individually and collaboratively to get permanent social workers in place to support personal development and stability in the services. An Assistant Director in Children's Services and the Director of Adult Services attended the meeting to give members insight into the approaches being adopted in the two areas.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services commented that recent successes in the approach had been to increase the number of permanent staff from 120 to 179 over the last quarter and decrease the numbers of vacancies from 18 to 3 and, crucially, the number of agency staff from 66 to 16. Members noted that the service had dedicated £1.5 million (approved in the 2009/10 Council Budget) over three years to addressing the problem, and considered that the Department had made effective use of the resource in achieving the improvements.

Members asked about levels of staff turnover, and whether a lot of the new employees were newly qualified and if so whether management support was strong enough to help them provide an effective service. The Assistant Director advised that a lot of permanent staff were former agency staff who already had social work experience. However staff turnover was too high (16%), and management was taking action to address this including arranging exit interviews to find out what makes staff in the area want to stay or leave. The authority was an attractive employer to a large number of social workers because of its size and the nature of its work, however there were national problems in recruiting social work staff, particularly to middle and senior management positions because of the focus on these positions following recent high-profile incidents of child neglect.

The Chair noted that a key focus of the Greater Manchester Strategy for the City Region Pilot would be the 0 – 5 years age range and asked whether this would

ensure that the Council could provide good social work support to 0-5's and their parents. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources commented that the Council would be aiming to provide this in a way that made children less dependent on support but not more vulnerable.

Members noted that the quality of office accommodation was improving to support the move to district-based working, but that some accommodation was not of sufficiently good quality, for example in Etrop Court in Wythenshawe. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that there were plans to improve the office accommodation and that these would be circulated to Wythenshawe Councillors. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources commented that it was a short-term target to improve the buildings used by social work staff, as he was aware of the effect that poor quality office accommodation can have on staff morale.

The Director of Adult Services, and the Head of Training and Development in Adult Services, advised that they had focused on creating new social worker posts, and once staff had been recruited this would allow the number of agency staff to be reduced. Adult Services experienced a lower level of staff turnover (8%). Members were advised that an update report could be brought in six months, by which time lower numbers of agency staff would be expected.

### **Decision**

1. To recognise the achievements in beginning to address the numbers of agency staff recruited as social workers, particularly in the Children's Services Department, and to congratulate the Department on the effective use of resources to achieve this.
2. To refer the report and minute of this item to members of the Children and Young People and Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committees for information.
3. To request a further update report on the recruitment and retention of social workers in July 2010 including updated statistics and information regarding the standards of office accommodation.

### **RG/HS/10/04**

### **Officers' Emoluments 2008/09**

A report of the City Treasurer and Head of Personnel was submitted setting out officers' emoluments above £50,000 for Manchester City Council compared with local authorities in other major cities and other Manchester authorities. The Subgroup formed the opinion that Manchester's emoluments were typical for an authority of its size.

### **Decision**

To note the report.

**RG/HS/10/05**

**Work Programme**

Members noted that the work programme for the Subgroup would be amended to reflect the decisions made in the meeting today.

**Decision**

To accept the workprogramme.