

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Human Resources Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2010

Present:

Councillor Watson – In the Chair
Councillors Clayton and B Fisher

Councillor Priest – Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Apologies:

Councillor Trotman

RG/HS/10/14 Minutes

Decision:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2010 as a correct record.

RG/HS/10/15 Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Update

The Subgroup had looked at social worker recruitment and retention earlier in the year and noted that significant progress had been made in reducing the Council's reliance on agency staff. A report of the Director of Children's Services, Director of Adults and Head of Personnel was submitting updating members on progress.

The number of social work posts in Adult Services had remained stable and the numbers of agency staff had declined. In Children's Service the number of posts had risen and the number of agency staff had been reduced by two-thirds. Children's Services now had many more permanent social workers in place, and many of these staff members were newly qualified and had less than two years experience. The Chair asked whether the Children's Safeguarding Board was aware of this and the risk it presented. The Head of District Provision, Children's Services said that they were and the department had ensured there was sufficient support from more experienced colleagues available to assist the development of the newly qualified staff. A member asked how the increase in the number of posts overall had been paid for. The Head of District Provision advised that money had been set aside for the posts as a reinvestment. The Subgroup had expressed some concerns previously about the Council's ability to recruit so many social workers when there were problems recruiting staff nationally. The challenges of being a social worker in Manchester may have mitigated against this and attracted a number of applicants.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources felt that there was progress overall in recruiting staff who were committed to the city and would develop an understanding of the area and that the reduced reliance on agency staff would

introduce more continuity, which would improve services and save money in the long run.

The Subgroup noted that a freeze on leasing new premises had meant that staff were still working out of the Etrop Way site in Wythenshawe. An evaluation of accommodation arrangements had taken place and deemed the accommodation not fit for purpose. The Council was in discussion with its partners to secure temporary accommodation for the staff. The Chair felt that staff working at Etrop Way would feel undervalued by the accommodation arrangements which should be resolved as a priority. The Executive Member said that the Council had a large amount of savings to make and investments in property would need to be properly considered. He felt that providing appropriate accommodation for staff was important and he would meet with the Head of Corporate Property and a representative from the Children's Services Department to see if a solution to the problem could be found.

Decision:

1. To note the sustained improvement in reducing agency staff in a manner consistent with the M People principles.
2. To request that a meeting be arranged between the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources, the Head of Corporate Property and a representative from the Children's Services Department to see if a solution to the accommodation problems at Etrop Way can be found.
3. To request that a note for information on the accommodation issues at Etrop Way is submitted to the next meeting of the Subgroup.

RG/HS/10/16 Private Sector Housing Review

A Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services was submitted setting out the redesign of the Private Sector Housing Service. This had taken place to support the transition of the service into the Neighbourhood Services department and ensure it delivers a high quality and value-for-money service.

Following a substantial recruitment process the delivery of the new service had started from April and early progress was promising. The redesign had led to 57 staff members without assigned roles. The M people principles had been introduced during the service redesign and the Council was now treating those members of staff without roles in accordance with the principles. 21 members of staff had been supported to find other jobs in the Council that matched their skills whilst three members of staff had left the council. The service now had 33 staff members with whom it was working with to find rewarding new employment. The surplus staff had an impact on the budget of around £17,000 a week and so it was important that good solutions were found quickly.

The Subgroup supported the M People approach and felt it was a welcome departure from the 'redeployment' process as it involved a more positive dialogue around the sorts of new roles an employee might want to develop into.

The Chair felt that the quality of the service level offered by Private Sector Housing had dipped during the redesign, and the absence of the service from ward co-ordination meetings had inhibited local Councillors from finding solutions to their constituents' housing concerns.

The Head of Private Sector Housing advised the Subgroup that the service now had more flexibility and included teams which supported specific areas of the city. This meant that staff delivered a range of service in one area, rather than one service in a range of areas. The Chair urged the Head of Service to ensure that the staffing arrangements supported the smooth handling of requests for and installation of alleygating schemes.

Decision

To note the redesign of Private Sector Housing and the opportunity it provides to deliver high quality and value-for-money services.

RG/HS/10/17 Human Resources / Organisational Development

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (People) was submitted on the progress of the integration of the Human Resources and Organisational Development services and the role of M People in this.

The Assistant Chief Executive (People) advised that discussions had taken place with trade unions on the restructure. The unions had informed them that issues raised by staff were being responded to well. Posts within the structure would now be advertised where there was a vacancy. The M People approach was being applied to the restructure and conversations were taking place with staff about how they can meet their career aspirations within the service's objectives.

The Subgroup noted that one of the M People principles was that external recruitment would only take place in exception and with corporate agreement. A member asked what corporate agreement involved. The Executive Member advised that this required agreement by the Executive Member for the department, the Leader and the Chief Executive. Whenever a vacancy arose service managers would look whether the vacancy needed to be filled and whether there were any internal candidates who had the skill set to perform the role.

A member was keen to establish that management of poor performance would still take place within the M People approach. The Assistant Chief Executive (People) advised that a Performance Board was in place to address this. The Strategic Management Team subgroup overseeing the integration would ensure that the integration of the two services continued to be carried out effectively over the next few months.

Decision:

To request a brief update on the continuing integration of Human Resources and Organisational Development at the Subgroup's next meeting.

RG/HS/10/18 Workforce Analysis and Intelligence

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (People) was submitted providing information on the size and demography of the workforce between April 2009 and May 2010. The statistics did not include school staff or staff employed on an agency or consultancy basis.

Members noted that the graph showing payroll costs included a spike around autumn 2009; this was due to National Pay Awards being made as part of the job evaluation process. The Interim Head of Finance (Governance) advised that although statistics were not available beyond May 2010, the number of full-time posts should now be dropping. This had been helped by the vast increase in the number of jobs advertised internally.

The Chair felt that the Subgroup needed more information to be confident that a sustained downward trend could be achieved. Members needed to see the changes in the numbers and costs of school employees, casual workers, Manchester Temps, agency workers, contractors and consultants.

Decision:

To request a further report at the next meeting showing the most up-to-date figure and including changes in the numbers and costs of school employees, casual workers, Manchester Temps, agency workers, contractors and consultants.

RG/HS/10/19 Work Programme

The Subgroup's current work programme was submitted.

Decision:

To agree the work programme subject to the revisions made in this meeting.