

## **Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – Human Resources Subgroup**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2016**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Ollerhead – In the Chair  
Councillors Collins and Connolly

Councillor Flanagan, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources  
Councillor Lone, Member of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

**Apologies:** Councillor Russell

#### **RGSC/HS/16/01                      Appointment of Chair**

Councillor Ollerhead was nominated to continue as Chair for the Subgroup, which was seconded and approved.

#### **RGSC/HS/16/02                      Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2016 as the correct record

#### **RGSC/HS/16/03                      Human Resources Service Review**

The Sub Group received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People, Policy & Reform) which provided an overview of the outcomes from two external reviews of the Council's HR activity which took place earlier this year. It set out the key findings from the reviews, the activity which has already taken place to deliver a number of identified 'quick wins' and the approach to delivering further improvements in line with the reviews' findings. Two appendices were also attached providing specific information as requested by the committee covering a progress update with the delivery of employee and manager self service (mi people) and a summary of the current position on employee time recording activity across the Council. A presentation providing an overview of the strategic workforce context for the organisation was also provided to members at the meeting. The Strategic Lead Workforce Planning and the Interim Head of Human Resources Organisational Development (HROD) delivered the presentation across its main themes.

Members were informed that the BHeard survey was carried out amongst approximately a third of Council staff in October 2015 with a 40% response rate (which was 10% higher than the average of other organisations within the same category of best companies survey). A member questioned why only third of Council staff were asked to take part; and whether they were truly reflective of the Council's workforce. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead responded that the sample was proportionate of service areas and chosen randomly by the external company carrying out the review and confirmed they were representative of all the Council's grades. He added that the bulk of Council employees were between grades 3 and 6

and the response rate was lower for lower grades of staff. Members felt that lower grades of staff should be encouraged to contribute and supported to participate in the process. In response to members queries the Strategic Workforce Planning Lead responded that reasons for lower response rates varied, including staff not having ICT access and, therefore, a reliance on hard copy surveys being distributed, completed and returned by post. . He added that the best companies had a helpline to respond to staff queries regarding the survey and that briefings and materials had been supplied to managers to support staff and Union Learning Representatives (ULR's) were also available. He also added that lessons learnt would feed into the re-run of the survey planned for October 2016 including the intention to post hard copy surveys to the home addresses of those without Council IT access.

Members enquired why the Council was no longer part of the Investors in People (IIP) Scheme. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead advised that the benefits did not justify the amount of work that the scheme required and no negative feedback had been received from staff since ceasing the scheme over 12 months ago. He explained that the BHeard Survey was a similar initiative and generated a more useful blend of quantitative and qualitative intelligence. Also, if we scored highly we could be entered into the Times Top 100 employers.

Members discussed satisfaction levels amongst staff and officers confirmed that this was comparatively lower for grade 10 staff and above and this feedback had resulted in a number of management engagement and development sessions being carried out. Members noted that satisfaction levels generally were low across the public service sector in the current climate and questioned how appropriate it was to compare with satisfaction levels within the private sector. The Interim Head of HROD agreed but added that there was still room for improvement. He explained that the survey consisted of circa. 60 questions which were scored against 8 factors and the results of other organisations were taken into account when setting the organisation's improvement benchmark. Members requested that a copy of the survey questions be circulated, and information regarding the scores against the 8 factors. with a breakdown areas. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead explained that the raw data had not been provided but was summarised within a report provided by the company instead. Members agreed for a copy of this to be circulated to members instead. The Chair added that he would also like the complete reports of the two external reviews carried out earlier in the year circulated to members as items of information.

Members discussed the outcomes of the survey and how these were being addressed. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead advised that an area where we had scored highly were questions around getting a fair deal and teamwork. Areas where the Council had scored poorly included that staff felt there were limited opportunities for development and growth. He explained that each directorate was considering what it needed to do to address this and HROD were leading on a range of corporate responses including reviewing the appraisal process to take account of this feedback. He added that Workforce Development Budgets had not been reduced for some time and funding was still available for development and training and this was being communicated at events being run for leaders and managers.

Members welcomed the number of apprenticeship opportunities being offered by the Council and how this would develop skills for local residents. The Chair said he would like a future report on how the Council's ambitions to recruit apprentices would be achieved, and he would like to invite apprentices to the meeting when this was discussed.

Members discussed the importance of technology. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead explained how the introduction of smart phones for reablement workers had resulted in positive feedback from workers and increased efficiency as workers did not have to attend the office first to find out their rotas. The Head of HROD Service Delivery explained he had met with ICT to discuss what HR required to assist with service improvements but he did not think a feasibility exercise would be completed until the end of the calendar year. He added that ICT would be carrying out a cost benefit analysis of the proposals; in relation to the Corporate ICT strategy, and they may propose alternative options.

Members discussed the Mi People Update and asked officers to expand on this. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead explained how the system worked in practice and how the Council was moving to a more self service model of transactional activity. In response to members' queries he described how the system related to other systems and the proposals that had been discussed with ICT. The Interim Head of HROD described the role of managers as 'freedom within boundaries'. He added it was important that managers were held accountable for their actions.

Members discussed time recording within the Council noting that lots of different methods were used and they would prefer one system to be used consistently Council wide. The Head of HR Service Delivery agreed but said it would be costly to replace existing systems with an integrated solution. He added that Timenet was used by most staff and had replaced old mechanisms going forward but that it did not interface with the Council's SAP system which was used to record HR data and process payments. The Strategic Workforce Planning Lead noted the diversity of working arrangements of staff across the Council. The Chair said that ICT and Facilities Management, in conjunction with HR, should consider how time recording could be best addressed going forward.

In response to members queries officers responded that the updated People Strategy was planned for October 2016 and would be submitted to Personnel Committee. Members requested that this also be provided to the next meeting of the Subgroup.

**Decision:**

1. Members requested that a copy of the BHeard staff survey carried out in October 2015 be circulated, along with the results
2. Members requested that when available the new BHeard survey questions be circulated to members
3. To request a future report on how the Council's ambitions to recruit apprentices will be achieved, and to invite apprentices to the meeting where this will be discussed.

4. To request the complete reports of the two external reviews carried out earlier in the year of the HROD Service be circulated to members as items of information.
5. To request that the updated 'People Strategy' be submitted to the next meeting of the Subgroup

### **FS/HS/16/11            Terms of reference and Work Programme**

Councillor Lone who was present at the meeting expressed interest in becoming a member of the Subgroup. The Subgroup agreed to update its terms of reference to add Councillor Lone to the membership and confirm that Councillor Ollerhead was the Chair. The Committee Support Officer noted that the Strategic Director had now changed to the Deputy Chief Executive (People, Policy and Reform).

Members agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 24 November at 10am in the Scrutiny Committee Room.

Members agreed the work programme subject to any additions agreed at today's meeting.

#### **Decision:**

To approve the terms of reference and work programme subject to the above additions.