

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – Human Resources Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2018

Present:

Councillor Russell – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Clay and Wheeler

Councillor Ollerhead, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources
Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services

Apologies: Councillor Rowles

RGSC/HRSG/18/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 as the correct record.

RGSC/HRSG/18/02 BHeard 2017 Results Overview

The Subgroup considered the report of the Director of HROD that outlined the results from the annual BHeard Survey which had taken place in October 2017.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- A background and overview of the survey;
- An analysis of the findings by factor and a comparison against the previous year;
- An analysis of the findings by level and a comparison against the previous year;
- An analysis of the findings by directorate and a comparison against the previous year;
- An overview and analysis of the key themes; and
- A description of the response and conclusion to the findings of the survey results.

Some of the key points that arose from the Members' discussions were:-

- The response rate to the survey and what provision had been given to staff, including those who did not have IT access to complete the survey;
- What analysis was there of the staff responding, including:
 - A comparison of full time and part time staff, agency staff and by geographical location;
- What were the reasons for staff not responding, and whilst acknowledging the improved response rate, what could be done to further improve the response rate;
- How did Manchester compare to other Local Authorities; and
- What had Directorates implemented following the publication of the survey results.

The Head of Organisation Development informed the group that the results of the survey had indicated an upward trajectory in all but one of the 8 factors surveyed, and the response rate was statistically significant and above average. He informed the group that the findings of the survey and subsequent actions arising had been fully discussed with the Trade Unions.

He said that agency staff were not included in the survey however these staff were involved in other staff engagement activities, such as the Listening In Action events so that their views and comments were captured. The Director of HROD further advised the group that the managers 'open door' policy and the corporate Whistleblowing Policy was available to all staff, including agency staff if they had concerns.

The Head of Organisation Development explained that there were three widely acknowledged reasons as to why people did not complete surveys, these were that they did not receive the survey; they did not believe that the responses would be anonymous and, that the findings of the survey would not be listened to. He said that analysis of the survey results would be used to identify any geographical or service areas that had not responded or had a low response rate so that future communications could be targeted and strengthened.

The Director of HROD said that mechanisms had been put in place so that all staff received the survey and managers were encouraged to give all staff the time to complete them, including paper copies if required. She said that measures such as the publication of 'You said, We did' information to staff would reassure staff that the survey was a worthwhile exercise and would help improve future response rates.

The Head of Organisation Development said that nationally there were a small number of Local Authorities that adopted this staff survey and other well performing Authorities, such as Wigan had engaged with this process for a longer time than Manchester so it was difficult to make a comparison. He said that discussions had taken place with Wigan to learn from their experience, however he reassured the group that he was confident that the improvements that were being made in Manchester were positive and it was envisaged that future surveys would reflect this.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources said that staff were encouraged and given the time to complete the survey, and whilst he would like to see a continued improvement in the number of staff completing the survey he would not wish to see this included as a management performance target. He commented that he had attended a number of Listening in Action events and had found them to be very positive as members of staff could question and discuss issues with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive in an open and honest forum. He recommended that members of the group should attend a session if they had not already done so.

The Head of HR Operations said that the BHeard survey provided a snapshot and contributed to a range of quarterly metrics that were collected to help drive improvements across all directorates and address any issues that are identified as a programme of continued improvement.

The City Solicitor said that the response of the Legal Services department had been to establish an extended leadership team to build on the feedback obtained from the survey. She said that the department was currently piloting a flexible working scheme and the initial feedback from staff had been very positive. She said that the issue of 'Fair Deal' which related to satisfaction with pay was identified as an issue and is being looked at by the extended leadership team and HROD to consider how this could be addressed. She said they had also improved communications with staff to ensure it was consistent, this had included regular staff briefings and newsletters. In addition she said that a number of informal events and activities had been arranged, such as a summer party that had helped to strengthened staff cohesion.

The Programme Lead Health and Social Care Integration said that staff had been encouraged to complete the survey and managers had been directed to allow all staff the time and access to complete the survey, especially for shift workers. She said that improvements had been made following the survey included, the delivery of a number of staff engagement events; increased visibility of senior managers across teams in various locations and middle management being empowered to take decisions. The Strategic Lead Service Delivery Adults said that BHeard team action plans had been created to strengthen teams and deliver specific actions.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services said that in response to the survey the Directorate had improved the support to staff by delivering quality and consistent supervision. He said they were committed to meaningful engagement with staff and the Senior Leadership Team were visible and moved around teams. He said that Social Worker supervision had improved with the adoption of the 'About you' conversations with staff.

The Director of HROD said that the Senior Leaders Group had recently been established so that they had a forum, both physical and digital to share good practice and identify skills gaps. She said the group had met three times to date and had a planned programme of events that had been co-designed. The Chair said that she would discuss with the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources how this activity was to be reported to the group.

Decision

To note the report.

RGS/HRSG/18/03

Attendance Management update

The Subgroup considered the report of the Director of HROD that provided an update on sickness absence levels across the Council and ongoing and developing activity to reduce and manage sickness absence and improve workforce wellbeing. Specific information in relation to a number of areas of inquiry identified at the March 2017 meeting were also included.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- Absence trends and key points of note identified;
- A corporate analysis of absence trends;

- Benchmarking;
- The corporate approach to improving attendance levels; and
- The promotion of health and wellbeing and mental health amongst employees.

Some of the key points that arose from the Members' discussions were:-

- What was the financial cost of staff absence;
- What support was offered to staff experiencing stress and/or depression;
- What was being done to address the stigma often associated with mental health and was reasonable adjustments made for staff in the work place;
- How were issues of capability addressed;
- Why had the number of return to work interviews reduced in Children's Services; and
- Was ICT and Legal services confident that the number of staff reporting mental health as a reason for absence accurate.

The Head of Organisation Development said that the only real term financial cost of staff absence to Departments was incurred if there was the cost of hiring agency staff to cover the absence. He said that a package of support had been developed to support staff experiencing mental health issues that had been developed in conjunction with MIND, the mental health charity. He said that a corporate emphasis on mental health had developed and this was demonstrated through the 'This is me' campaign where staff, including senior managers had spoken candidly about their own experiences and helped to address and challenge the stigma associated with mental health.

The Chief Information Officer said that he acknowledged that mental health is an issue within the work force and as a team they benefited from working in the same location with managers who were visible and accessible. He said they have regular team meetings and offered a flexible working scheme. He said they also encouraged the volunteering day programme.

The Head of Organisation Development informed the group that managers had received training to enable them to proactively identify signs of stress amongst staff and managers were encouraged to have appropriate conversations and offer support for staff. The Programme Lead Health and Social Care Integration said that they had applied reasonable adjustments when staff had displayed signs of stress to enable them to remain in work. She said managers actively promote and sign post staff to the confidential employee assistance programme. The Strategic Lead Service Delivery Adults said that it was important to understand the underlying contributing factors to staff absence and commented that these are often related to issues of bereavement and caring responsibilities.

The Executive Member for Children's Services informed the group that this was Carers week and that the Carers Network was currently drafting a guide for employers. He said that when this document was available he would share this with the group. He further gave an assurance to the Members that Return to Work Interviews were undertaken and the issue appeared to be around the recording of these. He said work would be done to ensure these were completed in a timely and consistent manner across the service.

The City Solicitor said that the flexible working arrangements that had been discussed during consideration of the previous agenda item had increased the work/life balance for staff and the number of absences due to sickness had reduced compared to the same time last year.

In response to the issue raised by a Member regarding capability the Head of HR Operations commented that issues of capability needed to be addressed appropriately and training would be delivered to managers to give them the confidence to undertake this activity and empower them to have difficult conversations with staff, adopting the 'About you' approach. She said that additional staff had been recruited to deal with the issue of attendance and capability. She said that managers were now being contacted directly following a period of staff absence which hit the agreed trigger points to ensure that the correct procedures had been followed and recorded. She said this was useful as it would identify any training needs amongst managers to ensure reporting was consistent and accurate.

The group recommended that a report on this activity be submitted to the group for consideration at an appropriate time.

Decisions

The Subgroup;

1. Note the report.
2. That a report on the activity to address capability be submitted to the group for consideration at an appropriate time.

RGS/HRSG/18/04 Adult Services training budget

The Subgroup considered the report of the Director of HROD that provided a high level overview of the Adult Services Training Budget and activity delivered through utilisation of the Budget in 2017/18. This was set in the context of Council wide activity to strengthen learning and development processes and governance, including budgets.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- A background and overview to the Adult Services budget position;
- An overview of training activity; and
- The approach taken to strengthening corporate learning and development arrangements.

Some of the key points that arose from the Members' discussions were:-

- What was the reason for only 60% of the budget been spent in the previous year;
- Were apprentices paid the Manchester Living Wage; and
- Professional development of staff, in particular the progression of non-Social Workers.

The Programme Lead Health and Social Care Integration informed the group that the previous year had presented a number of challenges and made reference to the development of the Local Care Organisation and the wider integration of Health and Social Care and a new Director taking up post. She said that staff training would be implemented and reassured the Members that all mandatory training, such as first aid courses was delivered. She said that it was recognised within the Directorate that staff training was important to empower and develop staff. The Strategic Lead Service Delivery Adults said professional development of Social Workers continued so they could maintain their professional registration with a number of staff also obtaining post graduate qualifications.

The Programme Lead Health and Social Care Integration commented that non Social Worker staff were valued and training programmes to offer development were being progressed. She said that the integration of Health and Social Care was presenting an opportunity to extend this offer for staff. She further confirmed that all apprentices were paid the Manchester Living Wage. The Head of Organisation Development said that the Social Work Apprenticeship Standard was not yet available.

Decision

1. To note the report.

RGS/HRSG/18/05

Review of HR Metrics – Workforce intelligence update

The Subgroup considered the report of the Director of HROD that provided the current highlights from the Quarter 4 2017/18 Workforce Dashboards.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- An Overview of Key Metrics;
- An update on sickness absence trends;
- An update on agency spend; and
- An update on apprentices and the implications of the apprentice levy from April 2017.

Some of the key points that arose from the Members' discussions were:-

- What provision was made for staff to receive an annual flu jab;
- BAME representation across management grades and above; and
- How long had Team Managers been in post in Children's Services.

The Head of Organisation Development informed the group that he would circulate the information to Members on the length of time Team Managers had been in post. In regard to flu jabs he said the corporate approach had been to fund flu jabs for all staff. He said that the take up of this had been relatively low despite the promotion of this.

The Chair commented that there was a report scheduled to be considered at the groups next meeting entitled 'Workforce Equality', and requested that when writing

the report Officers address the comments raised by the Member regarding BAME representation across the management grades.

The Strategic Lead Service Delivery Adults addressed the issue of agency spend of Social Workers. She said that in a large number of cases there was no cost incurred by the Council, as the Authority received a Health grant to assist with the funding of staff to facilitate the discharge of patients from hospital care.

Decision

1. To note the report

RGSC/HRSG/18/06 Work Programme

The Chair informed the group that a report on the Work Force Strategy would be considered by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and the discussions arising from this would inform the Subgroups work programme.

Decision

1. To note that the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee would be considering the Work Force Strategy and this would inform the work programme of the Subgroup.

RGSC/HRSG/18/07 Exclusion of the Public

A recommendation was made that the public be excluded during consideration of the next item of business.

Decision

To exclude the public during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Council and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

RGSC/HRSG/18/08 Review of HR Metrics – Workforce intelligence update (Public Excluded)

Members received the Dashboard that provided a headline overview of key workforce intelligence metrics for the Group's information.

Decision

1. To note the report