

Overview and Scrutiny Human Resources Sub Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 22 November 2018

Present: Councillor Russell (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors: Andrews, Clay and Rowles

Apologies: Councillor S Wheeler

Also present: Councillors: Stone

RGSC/HRSG/19/23 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018 as a correct record.

RGSC/HRSG/19/24 Apprenticeships

The Sub Group considered the report of the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development that provided an update on the Council's apprenticeship strategy and activity since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy.

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

- A background to the levy, introduced on all employers with employee pay bills in excess of 3 million pounds, equivalent to 0.5% of their payroll spend;
- A description of the five principles that had been agreed to guide the Council's apprenticeship strategy;
- Noting that over the past 19 months the Council had seen a total of 254 employees accessing apprenticeship opportunities, committing circa. £1.6M of our Levy pot to the development of new and existing staff;
- The promotion of apprenticeships as an option for all, and not simply a route for 'young people';
- The development of peer support that was available to apprentices and their managers to ensure that individuals successfully complete their training and maximise the broader opportunities this brought;
- An overview of activities in relation to recruiting apprentices to vacant posts, apprenticeships as main source of accredited training, releasing employees for training and promoting apprentice opportunities as widely as possible;
- The work undertaken at a Greater Manchester level to support the development of new and emerging standards linked to organisational workforce development priorities and promoting the apprenticeship agenda across Greater Manchester;
- An update on the uptake of apprenticeships from Community Schools; and
- An update on the transfer of apprenticeship funds.

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

- Clarification was sought regarding the number of Manchester residents employed as an apprentice;
- Was it practical to release staff to undertake 'block' training to fulfil the 20% protected learning requirement;
- How did our apprenticeship scheme compare to other schemes;
- Noting that the preferred term was 'Our Children' and what alternatives to formal interviews were considered for people with support needs; and
- An assurance was sought regarding the completion of the electronic form that was completed by managers and submitted to the Resourcing Team to request a vacancy to be filled were reviewed.

The Head of Workforce Strategy responded by informing the Group that the information of the number of apprentices that were Manchester residents within the report related to new recruits only and that a full overview of all apprentices would be circulated to the Group.

In response to the question regarding teaching qualifications the Head of Workforce Strategy stated that currently a teaching qualification was not available and the apprenticeships related to support roles, such as teaching assistants.

In regard to the 20% training requirement, the Head of Workforce Strategy commented that a flexible approach would always be taken to fulfil this commitment, noting that it may not always require a formal academic setting, for example if time was required to complete a project. He said this provision was monitored to ensure it was appropriate. He commented that apprenticeship providers across the city had been very flexible and had worked closely with the Council to meet the demands of each particular cohort of apprentices to ensure they received quality learning and maximised opportunities.

He commented that discussions were ongoing with partners and contractors through the procurement process to maximise the apprenticeship offer and the support available to them. He said that this activity, to increase apprenticeship positions would also reduce the risk that a proportion of the Council's levy pot may begin to be clawed back from July 2020. He said this would be closely monitored in conjunction with the Work and Skills Team to ensure it benefited Manchester residents. In answer to a question from a Member he said other organisations such as housing providers could be considered to maximise the use of the levy allocation.

In response to the comment regarding alternatives to a formal interview the Head of Workforce Strategy said that he acknowledged the point raised by the Member. He said discussions were ongoing with the Equalities Lead to progress this to ensure that the recruitment and selection process was inclusive and flexible, and that the appropriate assessment processes were used.

The Head of Workforce Strategy advised the group that there were examples of apprenticeships at a high grade but commented that they continued to monitor this, in addition to supporting and developing entry level apprenticeships. He further commented that the electronic forms submitted were reviewed and challenged if

necessary, in addition these requests would be further reviewed as part of each directorate budget review process when requests for posts were submitted. The Group requested that information on this activity be included in any future update reports.

Decision

The Sub Group:-

1. Requests an update report in six months' time.
2. Recommends that Best Value and Social Value was applied when transferring any funds to another employer for use in funding apprentices training.
3. Requests that a future update reports to include information on the number of Our Children employed as apprentices
4. Noting that the Group would structure future meetings in a thematic way, when a directorate was considered, comparative information would be provided on the number and grades of apprentices employed.

RGSC/HRSG/19/25 Our Ways of Working

The Sub Group considered the report of the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development that provided an update on the Our Ways of Working (OWOW) programme.

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

- Providing a description of the OWOW and the rationale for this approach;
- The activities delivered to date with the leadership team to support this way of working through their words and also demonstrating their practical support through their actions;
- Information on service and manager engagement;
- Examples of what had been achieved to date;
- An update on the estates rationalisation and improvement strategy;
- An update on ICT developments to help staff become more mobile, agile and connected through the deployment of secure, fit for purpose technology;
- The work to strengthen and clarify policy guidance and present the full range of associated policies together clearly and concisely; and
- Describing the workstreams which would ultimately contribute to the success of OWOW.

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

- The retention of senior management team (SMT);
- What more could be done to improve the culture of the organisation;
- The need to manage change sensitively, recognising the impact this could have on individuals and was there specific training for managers to facilitate this;
- Had Trade Unions been consulted with regarding the OWOW;

- How did OWOW apply to part time workers;
- What was being done to ensure the wellbeing of staff who worked from home, noting that those staff could often feel isolated; and
- Home working incurred additional costs and would staff be compensated.

The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development acknowledged the comments regarding SMT and commented that the reasons could be complex and was not uncommon in organisations following a change in Chief Executive. She said that the results of the bHeard survey would be available soon and an analysis on these returns would help in this understanding. She said that the OWOW was a response to previous survey findings in relation to staff wellbeing and demonstrated how the organisation was committed to listening and responding to staff and their concerns and demonstrated an attempt to change the culture of the organisation.

She commented that work was ongoing with the Senior Leadership Group across the organisation to challenge the culture of the organisation, promote OWOW and influence change. She said that a number of working groups had been established to look at specific areas of work and activity. She said staff at all grades would be engaged with to embrace the OWOW and drive this agenda.

The Head of HR Operations said that it was recognised that the involvement and support of staff at all levels was crucial to the successful delivery of OWOW. She said that it was recognised that the organisation was complex and OWOW would look different in different directorates. She said OWOW would be rolled out in a managed way, understanding what worked for different functions and co-designed with staff involvement. She said a range of support mechanisms had been established, including online toolkits and Change Champions had been identified to support officers implementing changes across their respective service. She also confirmed that Trade Unions had been fully consulted with. She further commented that a lot of informal arrangements were already practised across teams and that the formal adoption of the OWOW would help address some of the issues that arose in previous Be Heard surveys around flexible working and work/life balance. She said that it was recognised that some roles and services presented challenges due to the nature of the job, however discussions were ongoing to discuss how this could be addressed with teams being encouraged and empowered to devise their own solutions around service needs.

The Head of HR Operations noted the comments regarding home working and stated that she recognised the comments made regarding social isolation, and if a staff member did not wish to work at home they would not be forced to do so, commenting that across a service a balance was often found between those wishing to work from home and those not wishing to. She said that staff working at home would always be encouraged to attend team meetings to ensure team identity and dynamics were maintained. In response to additional costs incurred by home workers she said there was no direct additional compensation, however staff have been supported through the purchasing of team laptops and mobile phones that staff could use from home.

Decision

The Sub Group requests an update report at an appropriate time that includes information by directorate on the number of staff working part time, how many are formally working flexibly and how the OWOW was being promoted and taken up by staff.

RGSC/HRSG/19/26 Review of Workforce Practices - Education Services

The Sub Group considered the presentation delivered by the Director of Education that provided: -

- A description of the team structure and workforce profile;
- A description of the various team functions and responsibilities;
- The results of the b-Heard survey and the response to the findings;
- Data on the absentee rates across the education work force for the period October 17 to September 18;
- Information on the support offered to staff to maintain attendance; and
- Highlighting good news and describing the current challenges.

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

- Noting the number of Ofsted inspections in previous years, and the pressure this placed on resources what could be done to ensure inspections are undertaken in a more planned manner;
- Further information was sought on the work of the Schools Admissions Team when allocating a school place for a child;
- How many apprenticeship places were offered in Education Services; and
- What data was available in regard to gender, ethnicity and sexuality for staff working in Education Services.

The Director of Education stated that whilst meetings did take place with the Regional Director for Ofsted and the issue of inspection timing was raised, ultimately the decision to inspect rested with Ofsted.

In response to the questions regarding the Admissions Service the Director of Education commented that whilst there were specific peak times in the academic year, for example when school place offers were made, the service remained busy throughout the year. She explained that Manchester experienced a large number of children entering the city at all times of the year that had placed pressure on schools. She described that Manchester had adopted a coordinated admissions policy and every effort was taken to offer a school place within four weeks. However, if a place could not be offered within four weeks the case would be reviewed and a decision would be taken to offering a place that may not be the parents' preferred choice. A Member noted that a significant number of parents exercise their right to appeal for a school place, commenting that Admissions Staff were required to attend the appeal hearing, placing an additional pressure on staff resources.

The Director of Education continued by explaining that for complex admissions, for SEND children or excluded children for example the In Year Fair Access Protocol is

enacted. This protocol was designed to place these children in a school and schools met monthly to agree the allocation to ensure there was a fair distribution of resources across all schools. She said these allocations took longer to secure due to the often complex nature of each individual case and the capacity of schools.

The Director of Education informed the Group that there were a number of apprentices in the service who were currently supported to work towards management degrees. She said the service would always consider apprenticeship roles and was keen to develop these further, in particular in regard to Youth Services.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding the possibility of developing joint apprenticeships across services, the Head of Workforce Strategy said that there was potential to deliver this and he would explore this further.

In response to the question regarding the workforce profile, the Director of Education advised that the majority of senior staff was predominately female and that information regarding the numbers of BAME staff and data available regarding LGBT would be circulated to the Group.

Decision

The Sub Group requests that data on LGBT staff working in Education Services be circulated.

RGSC/HRSG/19/27 Work Programme

The Subgroup were invited to consider and agree the work programme. The Chair recommended that she would review the Work Programme following discussions with officers. The Members agreed this recommendation.

Decision

The Subgroup agree the Work Programme, subject to any amendments agreed by the Chair following discussions with officers.