

## **Overview and Scrutiny Human Resources Sub Group**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2019**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Russell – in the Chair  
Councillor Clay

#### **Also present:**

Councillor Ollerhead, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources  
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

#### **RGSC/HRSG/19/01                      Minutes**

##### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2018 as a correct record.

#### **RGSC/HRSG/19/02                      Staff Travel Policy Update**

The Chair announced that consideration of this item would be deferred to a future meeting.

##### **Decision**

To defer consideration of this item to a future meeting of the Sub Group.

#### **RGSC/HRSG/19/03                      Highways Work Force - Presentation**

The Sub Group considered the presentation provided by the Director of Operations (Highways).

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

- An overview of the Highways structure and teams;
- A profile of the workforce;
- Health and Wellbeing data;
- Comparative information for the 2017 and 2018 BHeard survey results and areas identified for improvement; and
- Identified challenges and opportunities.

Some of the key points that arose from the Sub Group's discussions were: -

- To recognise the improvements that were being made to the Highways Service;
- The rate and type of sickness absence within the service;
- That it was important to be clear to staff that expectations had changed and that they would be supported through good management to improve rather than

dwelling on past performance issues which had stemmed from poor management;

- The importance of About You sessions as a starting point for performance management and, where necessary, capability procedures, and to request information on what percentage of staff had had an About You session with their manager;
- What the results of the BHeard Survey were for senior staff within the service;
- What was being done to fill vacancies, including those at senior levels, and the importance of offering flexible working to attract people to the service; and
- The importance of ensuring that appropriate reasonable adjustments were being made for disabled staff.

The Director of Operations (Highways) reported that previously staff on long term sickness absence had not been managed back to work but that now this was being addressed through return to work plans, home visits and regular contact. The Head of Transformation (Highways) informed Members that, of the 44 people that had been absent during the reporting period due to long-term sickness, 13 of these were stress related. The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport reported that, in a presentation to a future meeting, officers would include more detailed information on absences. She highlighted that Manchester Contracts had particular challenges which required additional support and that their figures were not representative of the whole Highways Service.

The Head of Transformation (Highways) agreed that staff needed the opportunity and support to do their job well and outlined the training being provided to supervisors and how staff were being engaged with. The Head of HR Operations reported that the service had a full-time HR officer allocated to it.

The Head of Transformation (Highways) informed Members that staff at Grades 10 to 12 were the most disengaged, according to the BHeard survey, and that this was in relation to the Fair Deal, My Team and My Company factors. She reported that workshops had taken place with this staff group and plans were being put in place to address the issues they raised.

The Head of Transformation (Highways) reported that officers were reviewing the recruitment strategy in terms of the best channels and materials to promote the vacancies and that it would include targeting specific groups, such as women in construction. The Director of Operations (Highways) reported that he was working with the Head of Work and Skills to develop a 'Made in Manchester' programme to offer graduate schemes and apprenticeships which included placements with a range of partners. He informed Members that officers were also working with military charities to see if the Council could attract ex-armed services personnel to work in this area. The Chair welcomed this.

The Director of Operations (Highways) informed Members that health screening in relation to Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and hearing tests had been undertaken for all staff in Manchester Contracts. This had identified a number of people that required adjustments, and reasonable adjustments had then been made, where appropriate. This was also welcomed by the Chair. A Member suggested that

the next presentation including information on the impact this was having on staff absence.

## **Decision**

To request a further presentation or report in 6 to 9 months' time to include:

- What percentage of staff in the service had had About You sessions with their manager and the reasons for any which had not taken place, whether this was resulting in improvements in performance and any capability procedures which had been started;
- Information demonstrating that reasonable adjustments were being made for disabled staff;
- What the impact on staff absences was of testing for health issues such as HAVS and making reasonable adjustments;
- Information on any remaining vacancies in the service, including why they had not been filled, what the plan was to fill them and, if applicable, an analysis of the reasons that a particular post could not be filled. To also include consideration of apprenticeships and recruitment opportunities for groups such as ex-offenders and Our Children (young people leaving care).

## **RGSC/HRSG/19/04                      BHeard 2018 Overview - Presentation**

The Sub Group considered a presentation that provided an overview of the outcomes of the BHeard survey that was conducted in 2018. Officers referred to the main points and themes within the presentation which included: -

- The context of the BHeard survey;
- Comparative data on the response rates;
- Headline results;
- Comparative data against the 2017 survey results;
- Identified key strengths of the organisation;
- Those areas identified for improvement;
- Response analysis for staff with protected characteristics, by gender and by age;
- The work to embed the Our Manchester behaviours;
- Case studies; and
- A description of the corporate response and the service level response to the survey results.

The Chief Executive outlined the steps being taken to make improvements in relation to the leadership factor. She reported that she had sought feedback from the top 100 managers on what they thought good leadership looked like and what improvements could be made, which managers had reacted positively to. She informed Members that the Corporate Plan had been published after the BHeard Survey had taken place and that the Listening in Action sessions had since been changed to ensure that staff and managers understood that there was one single plan and set of priorities that the Council had to deliver together. She reported that a development programme had now been put in place for senior managers and that a leadership plan was being developed collaboratively with the top 100 managers.

Some of the key points that arose from the Sub Group's discussions were: -

- Request for further information on the breakdown of responses to the leadership factor by grade;
- Request for a list of questions in the survey;
- Whether exit interviews were carried out with managers who left the organisation;
- How staff were responding to the new values;
- Request for information on the service areas which had performed less well in the survey; and
- What plans were in place to fill the post of Director of HR and OD.

The Head of Workforce Strategy provided the Sub Group with further detail of the responses to the leadership factor, broken down by grade. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources highlighted the recent changes in organisational culture, including the introduction of Our Manchester ways of working and changes in performance management, and advised that this would have impacted on the results, as staff and managers were still adapting to this new approach. He reported that he expected next year's results to show clear progress, as these changes became more embedded.

The Head of HR Operations reported that all staff leaving the organisation were offered the opportunity for an exit interview, which could be carried out by their line manager or an HR officer. She advised Members that staff might have previously felt that there were too many different lists of values, behaviours and priorities but that the Corporate Plan pulled everything together into a single plan for the organisation. She informed Members about work taking place to develop managers' softer skills so that they could manage staff behaviours.

The Head of Workforce Strategy provided information on the services which had performed less well in the survey, reporting that focussed work was taking place with these services but that a number of them had improved significantly on their results from 2017.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the Council had started the process of recruiting a new Director of HR and OD. She reported that, as it could take about 6 months to get someone in post, arrangements had been made for two officers to cover this work and that the Council was also exploring the option of bringing in additional interim support. The Members said that this appointment was of great concern and that they would like to see someone permanent in post as soon as possible.

## **Decisions**

1. To request an update report in 6 months' time.
2. To request that the list of questions in the BHeard Survey be circulated to Members of the Sub Group.

**RGSC/HRSG/19/05            Work Programme**

The Sub Group were invited to consider and agree the work programme.

**Decision**

To agree the work programme, subject to the amendments agreed under the previous items.