

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

11th March 2024

Report of the Head of People and Organisational Development – Sheenagh Rees

Matter for decision

Wards affected: all wards

Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 - Review of Year 1 Delivery Plan and confirmation of Year 2 Delivery Plan

Purpose of Report

To provide Personnel Committee with a review of actions undertaken to deliver against the priorities of the council's Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 in the year 2023 / 2024; and following consultation with key stakeholders, to set out a proposed Delivery Plan for 2024 / 2025 for approval

Executive Summary:

The report provides background to the development of the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027, approved by Personnel Committee in October 2022. A review has taken place of actions to deliver the plan in 2023 / 2024 to assess whether we delivered what we said we would deliver, what impact has the delivery of these actions had to date, whether the 7 workforce priorities set out in the strategy remain relevant, and finally what actions do we intend to take in 2024 / 2025 to deliver the ambitions of the plan. Engagement and consultation has taken place to help us carry out this review and the report provides a summary of feedback. Other activities also provided evidence that was considered as part of the review process, for example, a review of completed succession plans and service recovery plans, feedback from focus groups, training sessions, and Viva Engage, etc. The report recommends that the 7 workforce priorities remain fit for purpose and sets out a draft delivery plan for 2024 / 2025 for member approval.

Background Information

The Council's Strategic Workforce Plan, the Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 (The Strategy) can be viewed via this link to the council's sharepoint: [The Future of Work Strategy - Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-2027 \(sharepoint.com\)](#). This was approved at Personnel Committee on 24th October 2022.

The Strategy was very much co-produced with the council's Corporate Management Group, and developed over a number of months during which we listened to what's important to our employees and managers at every level and our trade union partners.

We also worked with Audit Wales and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to ensure our workforce planning approaches and our people practices are the best they can be. A consultation in relation to the strategy was launched in August 2022, all employees were encouraged to provide feedback and face to face consultation took place with our recognised trade unions.

The Strategy sets out key workforce priorities aligned to the council's Corporate Plan and is supported by a 12-month delivery plan.

The seven strategic workforce priorities are:

Resourcing Team NPT

Attracting a diverse future workforce to ensure an ongoing supply of suitable applicants across a broad range of occupations, tackling skill shortage areas and attracting the right people with the right skills and competencies at the right time.

Developing and Retaining Talent

Through a strategic approach to succession planning that takes place at both a corporate level and operational service level, embedding leadership development, promoting movement across the council and facilitating career paths.

Employer of Choice: Employee Experience and Engagement

To help us recruit and retain the best employees, our ambition is to become an Employer of Choice, with an employment offer that is attractive to current and potential candidates and employees.

Developing the Future of Work

Developing our approach to embracing new hybrid ways of working, to ensure we are seen as an Employer of Choice. We want our workplaces to feel inclusive, so we will look at how we can introduce more choice and flexibility for all our employees, including those whose jobs do not lend themselves to a high level of mobility or agility in terms of location of delivery. Our approach will include removing unnecessary bureaucracy from internal processes and empowering our managers to make the decisions about how work is organised, and services are delivered.

Knowledge and Skills Development

Delivering training and development to our employees embracing new, innovative and creative methods, and focussing on targeted and bespoke training that supports priorities identified by services.

A Safe Workplace – supporting the health and wellbeing of our employees

Ensuring that our employees feel safe in the workplace, wherever that workplace is.

An inclusive Workplace where all employees can be themselves

We want our workforce to be properly representative of our communities. We want to remove any barriers in our workplaces for all employees, regardless of race, religion, sex, disability, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy or sexual orientation, and eliminate bias in our recruitment processes.

The Review process

The review process has considered:

- Did we carry out the actions we committed to undertake in 2022 / 2023 (the outputs)?
- Can we measure the impact of our actions (yet)?
- Are the priorities set out in the strategy still relevant?
- What are the actions we will undertake in 2024 / 2025 to deliver the priorities of the strategy?

We did this by:

- Reviewing the outputs of the following teams based in People & OD: The Future of Work Team, The HR Team, The Learning, Training & Development Team and the Corporate Health & Safety & Occupational Health & Well-being Teams.
- Analysing workforce information, for example to look at the impact on recruitment and retention.
- Holding focus groups with a cross section of employees, accountable managers and trade union representatives.
- Reviewing Service Recovery Plans
- Reviewing Succession Plans
- Listening to, and taking on board, feedback received from employees and managers at training events (for example the Succession Planning Workshops), briefing sessions (for example the Menopause Briefings), and via Viva Engage, generally and also in specific communities (for example Leading & Managing Team NPT, Staff Well-being, Staff News, Staff Matter).
- Listening to our recognised trade unions in both formal and informal events.
- Seeking input from Accountable Managers, Heads of Service and Corporate Directors at a consultation event held in the Accountable Managers online session of 30th November 2023, in order to help us assess whether the seven

priorities set out in the strategy remain relevant - attendees were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What is the key workforce priority for your service over the next 12 months?
- What one thing could we do for you that would make your job easier?

And finally, we invited Accountable Managers, Heads of Service and trade union representatives to attend consultation focus groups to consider the draft Delivery Plan for 2024 / 2025 and provide feedback to us.

Did we carry out the actions we committed to undertake in 2022 / 2023 (the outputs)?

Please refer to Appendix 1 which provides a summary position against each action in the Delivery Plan for 2022 / 2023.

As can be seen the additional resources that have been made available to the People & OD Service, supplementing the resources available to drive forward the Strategy, activity has taken place against every delivery action over the course of the past year. Because of the ambitious nature of the strategy, the majority of actions are not yet complete, and will require further delivery into this year and beyond:

Resourcing Team NPT:

- Significant recruitment activity has led to positive impacts on our ability to successfully appoint to our vacant posts (see section in relation to the impacts of our work below); however because of national skills shortages some posts remain difficult to recruit to and the need remains to continue to focus on both recruitment and developing our internal workforce to match critical skills sets now and in the future.

Developing and Retaining Talent:

- We made good progress in relation to embedding Succession Planning this year, developing the skill sets of our accountable managers in this area, and to date, approximately 75% of our services now have a succession plan in place.
- We have delivered phase 1 of the Organisational Review, developed competencies for our 3 senior leadership levels, and developed a leadership development pathway. Engagement with the recently launched leadership development programmes is already high.

Employee Experience and Engagement:

- We have made good progress in developing our employment offer, developing a number of initiatives described in Appendix 1, to improve employee well-being, motivation and engagement and help us to attract and retain the best

employees. Some of these initiatives have already been implemented, such as the Car Salary Finance Scheme and some will be launched later this year such as the Financial Well-being Platform and the Salary Finance Scheme.

Developing the Future of Work:

- We have reviewed our Hybrid Working Framework and delivered a range of training to support our managers develop their skills sets. A range of resources has been developed to help managers in this new world, and we will continue to review and develop this, as the world of work, new technology and working arrangements continue to evolve.
- We did want to develop some work around introducing more flexibility and choice for those jobs that do not naturally lend themselves to flexibility or home working, and this is one area that we were not able to progress in 2023 / 2024.

Knowledge and skills development:

- Activity ranged from launching the very popular face to face Induction day, the implementation of an 8 week 'manager induction' programme, the delivery of Leadership Development programmes at levels 3, 4, 5 and 7, the establishment of the NPT Ment2Be Mentoring network, a coaching network and a Viva Engage Community, to the delivery of 185 apprenticeships and 22,339 training days.

A safe workplace:

- A number of initiatives have been delivered, supporting the health and well-being of our employees, for example supporting carers in our workforce through the Employers for Carers initiative, the Menopause Action Plan to support women experiencing the menopause, and the implementation of an Employee Assistance Programme delivering a range of benefits including access to 24/7 counselling services.

An inclusive workplace where all employees can be themselves:

- We delivered a number of initiatives to improve equality and diversity in our workplaces and increase inclusion, focussing on a number of protected characteristics; of course this is not a 'job and finish' piece of work and next year we will expand our reach.

Can we measure the impact of our actions (yet)?

As you will see in **Appendix 1**, we have described the outputs of the year 1 Delivery Plan.

There are some actions where we have been able to show a quantifiable and measurable impact. This is particularly in relation to **recruitment** where we can now evidence that the significant activity to support recruitment is having a positive impact on the council's ability to attract candidates and successfully appoint to vacant posts:

- Our small HR Employment Support Team now supports an increase in recruitment workloads of c. 40% when compared with 2021 / 22.
- We can evidence that our successful appointment rates have increased proportionately more than this significant increase in recruitment activity – **so we are doing more, but what we are doing is also more successful**. Our overall successful appointment rate in the current year, 1st April 2023 – 31st January 2024 is currently **93%**, compared with 82% in 2021 / 2022 and 91% last year.
- Recruitment is outstripping resignations, and that in turn means we have a positive rather than negative retention rate.

For many actions, it is too early to be able to measure impact just yet, either because actions have only recently been implemented (for example the Employee Assistance Programme launched in January 2024) or because the actions in 2023 have been laying the foundations for 2024 (for example aspects of the Leadership and Management Development Pathway will launch later this year).

We can show activity rates, for example the numbers of managers engaging with opportunities to improve their skills to help them manage remote and or hybrid teams, or the number of employees who are starting to actively use the Viva Engage Platform to update themselves on news and developments across the council – as we continue to monitor activity, we will be able to begin to measure the value and impact of increasing / decreasing activity.

Where we can, we have provided feedback from other sources where this is available, so for example ratings on external job recruitment sites (resourcing NPT) show a positive view of the council as an employer of choice when compared with local government competitors, and the Gender Equality Award (an Inclusive Workplace) provides external assessment of the council's commitment to creating a fair and inclusive workplace.

We have also provided anecdotal feedback from participants at events, providing employee voice and the impact of actions on individuals in our workforce.

We recognise that measuring impact is important as we move through the delivery of this 5-year strategic plan, and understanding whether our outputs and efforts are making positive returns to the council. In March 2023, we established a new team in the HR Service, the People Analytics and Systems Team. We are developing the data analytics capability of this team, and we are in the process of establishing the

necessary data analytics tools (PowerBi), working in partnership with the Digital Services Team. This will enable this team to analyse workforce trends and predict future trends in a way that we have never been able to do before and develop robust metrics to help us measure the effectiveness of our People Services.

A key action underpinning the 2024 / 2025 Delivery Plan (see appendix 2) is to develop metrics that will help us measure delivery against our stated aims and ambitions.

We also plan to continue our partnership working with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, as a People Development Partner, and revisit the People Impact Survey, originally carried out in February 2022, repeating this exercise in February 2025 – this will give us a crucial external assessment in relation to our people practices, the impact of them, and how that has evolved in the 3 year period.

Are the priorities set out in the strategy still relevant?

Please see **Appendix 2**, for summary feedback collated to inform this review process.

Taking into account all of this feedback, the seven strategic workforce priorities described in the Strategic Workforce Plan clearly remain relevant and fit for purpose.

The feedback has also informed the delivery actions to deliver these strategic priorities, ensuring that we continue to focus on recruitment, retention, our employment offer, leadership development, career progression and development, talent management, employee engagement and motivation, diversity and inclusion, employee well-being, and importantly, ensuring we can evidence positive impact.

What are the actions we will undertake in 2024 / 2025?

The draft delivery plan for 2024 / 2025 is set out in **Appendix 3**. Consultation has taken place with Accountable Managers and recognised Trade Unions in relation to this draft plan, and following positive feedback, it is recommended to Personnel Committee.

Financial impacts:

The Council spends 48.6% of gross expenditure on its workforce (NB this figure will fluctuate throughout the year).

Integrated impact assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at appendix 1 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below:

“A full impact is not required as at this stage there is no identified impact on any protected group; there may of course be equality impacts through the consequential implementation of actions set out in the revised Delivery Plan. Regular monitoring, including equality monitoring, will help the council to identify if any adverse equality risks do occur in practice and take action to remedy this. This monitoring will also consider if actions are having the positive impacts intended on protected characteristics and review our delivery plan accordingly.

It also has no negative impact on bio-diversity or the Welsh Language”.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce impacts:

The strategic workforce plan sets out the priorities for the council’s workforce over the next 5 years. It describes how we intend to recruit, retain, develop, motivate, engage, reward and recognise our workforce.

Legal impacts:

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Risk Management Impacts:

Workforce planning seeks to mitigate any identified workforce risks. For example the plan identifies the threat that the challenging and competitive recruitment market poses to employers across the UK, and the actions the council is taking to mitigate this threat

Consultation:

Consultation has taken place with managers across the council and the recognised trade unions. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Members:

1. NOTE the review of actions undertaken to deliver against the priorities of the council’s Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 in the year 2023 / 2024.

2. APPROVE the recommendation that the 7 Strategic Workforce priorities remain relevant and fit for purpose
3. APPROVE the proposed Delivery Plan for 2024 / 2025.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Delivery Plan 2023 / 2024 Review of Actions

Appendix 2 Summary of Feedback Collated

Appendix 3 Delivery Plan 2024 / 2025

Appendix 4 - IIA

List of Background Papers:

The Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027

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