

Summary of Feedback Collated

The review of **Succession Plans** and **Service Recovery Plans** confirmed the following themes are high priority for Accountable Managers:

- Recruiting now and in the future
- Ensuring a supply of business critical skills and experience
- Ensuring our employment offer is competitive
- Developing our hybrid working practices, and ensuring managers are equipped to manage hybrid teams effectively
- Ensuring employee well-being to support retention
- Top down communication

Feedback from the **Accountable Manager event held on 30th November** from Accountable Managers, Heads of Service and Corporate Directors in relation to what they see as their **principal workforce priority** can be summarised as follows, repeating many of the themes cited above:

- Recruiting to vacant posts
- Retention of business critical skills and knowledge
- Reviewing pay and remuneration for 'hard to fill' jobs
- Succession Planning
- Facilitating Career Progression
- Developing specific skills sets linked to service priorities
- Employee engagement and motivation
- Reduction in bureaucracy

Wales Audit (WA) highlighted the following strengths in the Springing Forward Review of the Council's workforce planning approaches:

- The Council has a clear vision for its workforce, strengthened by its work with partners.
- The Council has a good understanding of how the workforce will operate in the future.
- The Council has a clear workforce planning approach.
- The Council has proactively learnt from others and is developing a broader range of workforce measures.

WA made the following recommendations to improve our workforce planning approach:

- To ensure there are progression pathways for staff and there is resilience around its business-critical roles, the council should ensure all services have succession plans and have identified their business-critical roles.
- Develop measures that focus on outcomes and impacts as well as inputs.
- Benchmark measures and metrics with peers in order to identify good practice and areas for improvement.
- To enable the Council to have a clearer understanding of the progress it is making towards meeting its workforce ambitions the council should assure itself that the Organisational Delivery Board is providing effective oversight and driving integration across related programmes of work.

Feedback from the **6 Focus Groups** events to review the priorities:

- Recruiting to some vacancies remains difficult for a myriad of reasons – particular examples cited in SWTRA and Trading Standards.
- An absence of business critical skills and experience amongst external candidates, particularly in relation to technical / professional posts
- Some services are concerned about the future supply of employees
- Some managers have the perception that pay in other organisations is significantly higher than that offered by NPT (particularly where there is a well-paid private sector market).
- Feedback on the Hybrid Working Framework remains largely positive, with the majority of managers across all directorates reporting that it supports employee retention and well-being.
- There is however a perceived inequality amongst employees about how some managers are applying the hybrid working framework. Whilst there is an understanding amongst employees that managers have the autonomy to apply the framework in a way that suits their particular service, some employees did not feel that their managers had properly communicated / justified their particular requirements.
- A minority of managers, whilst understanding the empowerment to apply the framework according to service needs, report that the flexibility that can be offered in other services has led to dissatisfaction amongst their own workforce.

- Important information updates about the council are not always reaching all of our Accountable Managers / employees.
- Being involved in the co-production of employment policy and processes is seen as really positive, although some managers have commented that they struggle to commit their time to this because of workloads.
- Some managers have identified that it is more difficult to induct new employees to the workplace, particularly if they work at home for the majority of their week.
- Some managers find it harder to create a team ethos amongst hybrid workers (some in the workplace, some at home or in the community).
- The wellbeing initiatives (including Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health initiatives, menopause action plan, etc) have been received very positively and managers and employees report feeling more comfortable discussing health and well-being issues within the workplace.
- One manager said that it is important that we are able to determine the quality of our 'Future of Work' initiatives – for example, how do we know that the apprenticeship schemes or our well-being initiatives are having positive impact on those participating in them?
- The Ethnic Minority Employee Forum was described as a very positive move on the part of the council and a request made to extend this approach to, e.g. employees who have a disability.
- Communication remains an issue, with some managers reporting a "communication overload" and then some managers reporting that they remain unaware of many key employment / council initiatives and updates.
- Feedback is similar in relation to involvement and engagement in policy development and initiatives, with some managers being very positive about being more involved, but others citing that they wish to be involved but then cannot spare the time due to workload.
- Some managers feel that funding, budgets, pay and conditions remain a barrier to retaining employees.