

Audit Wales – Springing Forward Strategic Workforce Management – Neath Port Talbot Council

– Cabinet Board and Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 14th February 2024

Decision taken by Cabinet

Decision:

That the Council response to the review undertaken by Audit Wales – Springing Forward: Strategic Workforce Management – Neath Port Talbot Council as detailed at Appendix 2 to the circulated report, be approved.

Reason for Decision:

To enable the council to put in place the necessary arrangements to support the effective delivery of the Strategic Workforce Plan.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision will be implemented after the three day call in period.

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Minutes – approved.

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Members referred to page 33, paragraph 24 of the Audit Wales report contained within the Cabinet Agenda pack. The report noted the council's current strategic risk rating does not adequately reflect the residual risk faced by delays in developing succession plans and identifying business critical roles. Members questioned whether the risk register has been updated to reflect this point, and what work has been carried out since the publication of the report to address the situation.

The Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that the Strategic Risk Register is currently under review, and this process will include work on succession planning. The Head of Service summarised the actions that have been put in place to increase the number of services that have succession plans in place with identified business critical positions. During the last calendar year, 72 Managers have attended Succession Planning Workshops and the workshop has been embedded as part of the Core Development Programme for Managers. Work is ongoing to review the toolkit used for succession planning with the aim of it being digitalised. An analysis has been undertaken of the succession plans that are currently in place. Accountable Managers have been reminded of the importance of ensuring that succession plans are in place.

Members expressed concern that a number of key senior managers have left the authority and the experience of these business critical officers has been lost. Members commented that the rate of recruitment was not matched with posts vacated.

The Head of People and Organisational Development acknowledged the importance of managers engaging with succession planning. It was noted that the council's successful appointment rate has increased over a period of two years from 82% to 93% and recruitment activity has increased by 40%, with a positive turnover rate. It was acknowledged that some posts remain hard to fill, particularly in specialist areas.

The Chief Executive gave assurance that this is an important area of work which will remain a priority going forward. The council is currently operating in a tight labour market. Workforce information is shared with Personnel Committee to enable members to track progress.

Members were pleased to hear of the rise in recruitment targets but expressed concern relating to staff retention and the financial cost of using market supplements in relation to hard to fill posts.

The Head of Service confirmed that market supplements are a tool that can be used when appropriate and the scheme is due for review. It was noted that pay is only one aspect of the employee remuneration package and other benefits made the council an attractive employer.

The Director of Social Services confirmed that the use of market supplements in Social Services has worked well and helped to retain experienced staff. There are financial benefits in applying market supplements rather than the alternative of backfilling vacant posts with agency staff. It was noted that the recruitment of social workers is difficult at present.

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive responses.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet.