

**JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  
18 DECEMBER 2019**

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To update the Joint Staff Consultative Committee on the progress made in the last quarter on the People Strategy 2015 – 2020 which covers the Workforce Development needs and to provide a round up of the work of the HR Department and JSCC over the 12 months January 2019 to December 2019.
- 1.2 During 2020 a new People Strategy will be developed to cover the period 2021 to 2026. The Local Government Employers will be releasing a new Workforce Development Framework during Spring/Summer 2020 and because the Framework will be tailored to meet the difference's between County, Borough and other Councils and will have a specific version for a Shire District. It's proposed the Council adopts the framework to create a workforce development plan and create the People Strategy alongside that during autumn and winter 2020/2021.

**2. STEPS TO DATE**

- 2.1 This Information Note summarises the HR work progress over the year including a short round up of our year's Strategic Discussions and other regular reviews such as equalities and retention.

**3. INFORMATION TO NOTE**

- 3.1 Progress against the People Strategy is reported to all quarterly JSCC Meetings. Attached at Appendix B is the HR Service plan 2019/20. The terms of reference for the Joint Staff Consultative Committee are to be the corporate interface with employees on major Human Resources issues and to be the Strategic HR Forum for NHDC Members. HR projects do require support from other support services such as IT, Finance, Legal Services and others.
- 3.2 Recruitment

Recruitment has been particularly busy this year with a total number of vacancies advertised during the period January to November 2019 at 93 (compared to 68 over the same period 2018). These include posts advertised from restructures and both internal and external recruitment.

The recruitment of Apprentices has been an important part of the recruitment activities this year and we have now have 12 Apprentices working at the Council including replacing posts where the apprentice moves to a permanent post. Two more Apprentices are at the recruitment stage with appointments expected by January 2020.

We are planning recruitment to start before an apprenticeship ends and have used the apprentice levy and apprentice salary budgets really well.

### 3.3 Equal Pay and Equalities

The Equalities Data for 2018 (required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010) was sent for publication in time for the 31st January 2019 deadline.

Mandatory gender pay gap reporting was introduced in the public sector from the end of March 2017 and the Council has published 2 sets of data with a full report for 2017 and 2018. We now have a very active Gender pay Gap working group and have completed a number of projects. Among these was a survey of staff on career development aspirations, procuring Gap Square software to drill further into pay equality, promoting awareness of unconscious bias through communications and training and introducing software to neutralise language used in Job Descriptions, Person Specifications, job adverts, interview and assessment materials.

There is a separate Equalities Information Note that has more details on all the work completed this year.

### 3.4 Pay

April 2019 saw the end of a two year pay deal of 2% with higher increases for the lowest paid to meet the rising rate of the National Living Wage and to work towards it increasing up to the rates expected in 2020. The Council now pays £9.09 at the lowest pay point, this is the rate paid to the majority of Apprentices. We do not operate any minimum pay or age related minimum pay rates. This pay deal incorporated a review of the LG National Pay Spine although the Council doesn't use this, we do apply salary increases in line with national pay bargaining pay increases.

Trade Union (Unison) Pay Claim 2019/20, the pay claim is positioned by the Trades Unions as a "bold" pay claim after the pay freezes and low increases in recent years. The pay claim calls for pay deal of 10% or £10 per hour, whichever is greater.

The regional pay briefing took place in September. They sought employer views on affordability. The majority of councils have budgeted for a 2% increase. The Employers advised councils there was unlikely to be any pay offer until after a general election and have recently written to councils to confirm this with the election now on 12 December.

The current contract with Serco for our payroll service will end in March 2020. A full tender process has been undertaken and a new supplier, Liberata, will provide a payroll service using iTrent software from 1 April 2020. This work has taken a significant amount of resources from the HR team throughout this year and the work will remain intensive until well beyond the go live date including training on self service for staff, managers and councillors, who will use self service for the first time. Elections payroll is also included. The officer leading this work is Rebecca Webb, HR Services Manager supported by the rest of the HR team. The project is also supported by other services such as IT and Finance and a number of other staff have volunteered to be payroll champions.

The iTrent system is a far more modern and user friendly system than the current SAP system and IT have been further working with HR on introducing chat bots to the system to help users via new AI intelligence. The self-service aspects of the new iTrent system can be accessed from mobile devices allowing officers and councillors greater flexibility, for example in claiming expenses and viewing payslips.

### 3.5 Benefits

The contracts for the provision of EAP and OH services to the Council expired on 31 March 2019. These had been procured under an HCC Framework which was re-procured by HCC as a new Framework with effect from April 2019. NHDC were named on this new Framework and as the specifications for the services offered matched our needs, we called off from this for the provision of both OH and EAP services. Under the new contract, OH services continue to be provided by Optima Health, as under the previous contract, for the period 1.4.2019 – 31.3.2022, but with a saving of £2.90 per head per annum which amounts to almost £1,000 per year. The EAP service from 1 April 2019 is provided by Right Corecare trading as Workplace Wellness, who in the past has provided a confidential advice service for NHDC employees, although not under the most recent contracts. This contract is for 4 years from April 2019 and has also resulted in a per head saving to the Council. In this case the saving is £1.95 per head per year, almost £700 per annum in total. Councillors are able to take advantage of the services provided by this valuable support scheme.

In the middle of the year the Council launched a free GP consultation service as a new employee benefit. Employees can arrange a GP consultation either by telephone or on line and the service also includes the option of a face-to-face webcam consultation with a GP, a private prescription service (this service incurs a charge payable by the employee) and a medical information service, where there is access to health, disease, lifestyle and travel information on over 700 topics.

The Council continues to have salary sacrifice schemes for childcare vouchers and lease cars and re-launched its Cycle2work scheme in conjunction with Halfords on 1 December 2019. More details of salary sacrifice schemes are given in the Discussion Topic paper for this meeting.

### 3.6 Learning and Employee Engagement

The organisation's Values and Behaviours are now becoming an integral part of the way we do things and will be part of a planned Organisational Development Strategy.

The Values and Behaviours are also integral to the Senior Leadership Team coaching and development programme that is currently underway. They are also embedded in our induction programme and all of the workshops that we deliver to our staff.

A newly introduced staff recognition scheme, will draw on the Values and Behaviours as they form the basis for the criteria for recognition and reward.

We have recently undertaken training to provide the Organisation with Mental Health First Aiders, this is a demonstration of our continued commitment to wellbeing.

We have undertaken a number of initiatives to address the gender pay gap and to encourage diversity within the organisation.

### 3.7 Regular Performance Review

We are continuing to emphasise the Values and Behaviours as a basis for discussion.

During the next year, we will be encouraging managers to embrace RPR as a means for regular one to ones and discussions.

The RPR is a key tool in discussing career aspirations and to consider succession planning, this will allow Managers and the Learning & Employee Engagement Team to address some of the feedback given during the recent Career Development Survey.

We will continue to monitor the Learning and Development requirements raised in the RPR, through an annual snapshot review, but this can be conducted at any time throughout the year, in line with the needs of the Service. This will create more flexibility for Managers and staff.

### 3.8 Organisational Restructures

The HR team are currently supporting a couple of service restructures, with most service areas having settled following last year's senior management restructure. In addition to the team continues to support absence management and a number of employee relations cases.

The Learning and Employee Team continue to work alongside the departments to consider development needs associated with organisational change.

### 3.9 HR Policies

The majority of the Council's policies emanate from the Resources team. During 2019 a review was commenced of the format and content of these. This work ran concurrently with a project being undertaken by HR to streamline HR policies and ensure they were easily accessible, user friendly, current and relevant. So far, as a result of this review, the contents of the Attendance at Evening Meetings, Long Service Awards and Rates of Pay policies have been incorporated into the Employee Handbook thus reducing the number of separate documents employees need to be aware of. Work is ongoing on this project and the next step is to modernise the Employee Handbook to a web based format.

One other significant policy change was to introduce contractual shared parental pay and make these payments equivalent to those available as contractual maternity pay.

### 3.10 Absence

The Short Term absence target of 3.50 for 2018/19 was exceeded by 0.60 days per FTE. Short term absence rates have risen over the period 2017 – 2019. A discussion paper was included on the Senior Management Team meeting of 5/11 with the suggestion that the 4 Service Director areas with the highest rates are given HR support to further drill down to why rates are rising and to support managers with any specific issues.

Long-term absence is at a very low rate and is lower than in recent years. When there are long term absence cases the HR team work closely with managers to support a return to work as soon as possible.

### 3.11 Flu Vaccinations

The 2019 Seasonal Flu vaccination programme was as popular as in previous years with sessions offered at the Council offices. Those that could not make it to the sessions could opt for the vaccination voucher which can be redeemed at any local Superdrug pharmacy. The cost of the vaccination is £7 per person (plus a charge for the onsite clinic) and is paid for by NHDC. This has a number of benefits; for individuals with long term health conditions and those who have caring responsibilities for young or elderly relatives. The Council may also benefit from less flu related illness. This year 106 staff took up the offer of a flu vaccination which is similar to previous years.

### 3.12 Children's Christmas party

The annual joint funded Unison and NHDC Children's Christmas tea party was arranged by an HR Apprentice, with help from the Trade Union and other officers including our own Father Christmas. This is always a really lovely event for around 20-25 children and grandchildren of council officers. The party for 2019 was held in rooms 2 and 3 on floor 1 of the District Council Offices on Friday 13th December 2019 4:00 - 6:00pm.

### 3.13 2019 Audits

During 2019/20 the following audits involving HR took place:-

- Flexi time
- Workforce planning
- Equalities
- Apprentice Levy
- Overtime
- Risk Management
- Allowances & Expenses

### 3.14 Strategic HR Discussions of 2019

In March we discussed the work of the Learning and Employee Engagement Team and how they support organisational change through development activities and employee engagement. In June it was the role of Occupational Health at the Council and in September all the various things that are done to support the Council in helping with staff and councillors with their mental health and wellbeing. We are rounding up the year with a discussion paper at the December JSCC on Salary Sacrifice Schemes.

### 3.15 Balanced Scorecard

Balanced Scorecard measures will continue to be collated to measure the success of the People Strategy. Key measures are as follows:-

- Number of days lost to sick absence per Full Time Equivalent.
- Turnover

## 4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the People Strategy and the annual work plan will be reported to all Quarterly JSCC Meetings and an annual report presented to the December meetings.

## **5.0 APPENDICES**

5.1 Appendix A – Key Performance Measures

5.2 Appendix B – HR People Strategy Work Plan for 2019/20

## **6.0 CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 People Strategy 2015 – 2020