

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER, PORTFOLIOHOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.3 TRANSFORMATION AGENDA OF THE COUNCIL - STAFFING

(Report prepared by Carol Magnus, Acting Head of People, Performance and Projects)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Transformation Agenda of the Council – and delivery against it. Staff (flexible working, home working and productivity).

INVITEES

None

BACKGROUND

The Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested that Officers provide reports on the different strands of the organisation's Transformation agenda and progress to date.

This report will focus on staffing. Over the past two years the organisation has worked at preparing for more flexible ways of working by updating policies and procedures as well as providing training and support for staff in preparation for these changes.

DETAILED INFORMATION

Throughout 2019 a significant focus was placed on preparing staff to work more flexibly and with greater autonomy, two programmes have been key to this; InDependence and Managing Remote Teams. All courses were delivered by external providers working very closely with the Organisational Development Manager and HR Operations Manager on design, development and content.

The InDependence programme was designed and developed by the Organisational Development Manager with input from an organisation psychologist. The workshops were then delivered by a team of six internal managers who had been trained in how to deliver the programme. In total 273 staff attended this programme.

The Managing Remote Teams course was attended by 52 managers and team leaders.

In addition, a booklet entitled Modern Working, Your Guide was written and published and circulated to all course attendees. This was reissued to all staff during the Spring lockdown. See Appendix A.

A number of policies were updated to support flexible working; these included the Allowances Policy (2018) and the Remote Working Policy (2019) which also included the Flexi Hours Scheme.

To further support the move towards greater flexible working and staff personal accountability online training has been overhauled. The organisation now uses a specialist online provider (iHasco) for all health and safety awareness training. This shift has resulted in greater compliance as staff can plan their own training schedule according to their work pattern. Compliance rates are in excess of 90%. Face to face delivery is still used for those requiring additional support or greater detail.

During 2018/19 a new inhouse online learning platform was designed and



developed.

Learning Zone can be accessed by all staff via laptop and other mobile devices. Member access has also just been facilitated. This platform hosts a number of mandatory courses, Careline specific courses and personal development learning opportunities.

The majority of the courses on iHasco and Learning Zone include an assessment before learners can be marked as 'complete' to receive their certificate.

Flexible working has been rapidly accelerated as a consequence of Covid, especially since March of this year when Lockdown resulted in the majority of office based staff working from home. Managers have been instructed to follow the best practice they were taught on the Managing Remote Teams training; namely to ensure regular catch ups take place, to conduct regular team meetings online, to ensure that each team member is contacted every week, to ensure that goals and targets are set and monitored as usual. The flexi hours scheme has been extended to enable staff to work even more flexibly and to take regular breaks away from the screen. Managers and staff have been supportive and appreciative of this approach. It should be noted that the vast majority of staff have continued to work their standard hours with only a few variations, most notably around child care whilst schools were closed.

Government guidance remains that all employees who can work from home should continue to do so. It is therefore anticipated that in the short to medium term the majority of office based staff will continue to work from home.

In order to improve the sustainability of our remote working arrangements a staff survey was undertaken by Human Resources to gain further insight into the experiences and challenges of staff working from home, as well as those staff who have continued to work within the district and on site throughout the Pandemic. This has enabled the organisation to identify areas of concern and implement the necessary support.

Following over 300 responses, headlines from the staff survey are as follows:

- 75% of respondents agree they have achieved the correct balance between work and home life, with 50% of respondents reporting a better work/life balance;
- 72% of respondents agree their role makes a difference to local residents;
- 75% of respondents get a sense of personal fulfilment from their job;
- 84% of respondents feel proud to work for the Council;
- 92% of respondents feel as productive or more productive working at home;
- 90% of respondents reported that the Council has kept them well informed during the Coronavirus Pandemic;
- 80% of respondents feel supported by their line manager; and
- Almost 60% would like to maintain their current working arrangements indefinitely.

In addition, the following priorities have been identified by staff completing the survey:

- Prioritise return to the workplace for those who will benefit most (when it is safe to do so);
- Prioritise continued working from home for those most ready and able to continue;
- Balance preferences with organisational needs;
- Provide support for those who are most in need; and
- Identify what lessons we can learn for the future

There can be no doubt that Covid has accelerated the Council's plans for increased flexible working and has caused it to have a greater degree of home working than was originally envisioned. However, the early work that had been undertaken in 2019 had prepared managers and staff in advance. As we approach 2021 it is to be hoped that it will be possible to have a successful blend of home and office based working so

that flexible working is fully embedded within the organisation.

Appendix B – Staff Survey Infogram

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.