

Workforce Strategy Update Report

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Bal Sandher, Head of HR Shared Services
Classification	Public
Wards affected	No wards

Executive Summary

The Council has had a Workforce Strategy since 2008 and this has been reviewed and developed as the priorities and environment has changed. The most recent version covers the period 2016 - 2020 and was agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee 29 June 2016. As part of the approval the P&R Committee requested that the Employment Committee should receive progress updates twice per year. Following the Committee Structure Review undertaken by the Democracy Committee in the 2018/19 municipal year, the functions of the Employment Committee now fall under the Democracy and General Purposes Committee.

At Appendix 1 the report sets out the progress made against the action plan that supports the Workforce Strategy.

Purpose of Report

The report is for noting.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the progress of the actions set out in the Workforce Strategy be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	29 January 2020

Workforce Strategy Update Report

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all aspects of the corporate priorities.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Cross Cutting Objectives	The Workforce Strategy has an impact on all objectives.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Risk Management	The overarching risk is that if the council does not have a Workforce Strategy it may fail to put in place the actions to deliver the priorities.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Financial	Workforce costs are the single biggest area of expenditure for the Council, accounting for around half of the Council's total budget. The Workforce Strategy therefore has a financial impact, but this is costed within the normal annual budget. Specific initiatives described within this report are also funded from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Workforce Strategy will have an impact on staff – this should be a positive impact as we work to ensure that there are improvements.	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Legal	Although there may be specific actions arising out of the Strategy that require legal input, there is nothing identified in the plan overall that will have legal implications.	Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	No personal data is contained in the report.	Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Equalities	No impact identified as a result of this update report. As an employer the Council has a duty to fulfil under the Equality Act 2010. This is ongoing and is embedded in the processes to deliver the Work Force Strategy	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher, Head of HR
Procurement	No impact identified at this time	Bal Sandher,

		Head of HR
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The key themes of the Workforce Strategy are:

- Organisation culture and change;
- Resourcing;
- Development, and
- Reward.

2.2 There has been progress against all of the themes, much of which is cross cutting and affects more than one theme.

2.3 Organisation culture and change

2.3.1 The Council's Investors in People (IiP) review took place in January 2017, resulting in achievement of the IIP Silver accreditation. The Council's next assessment was due to take place in January 2020. However, a decision was made by the Council to create our own annual engagement survey that will be designed, developed and analysed in-house. A session with the Wider Leadership team and the Staff Forum was carried out to explore areas we wanted to obtain feedback and to find out from staff what information they wanted to share with us. The information from these sessions has helped to create the key areas of the engagement survey which will help to understand how engaged staff are and to address any particular concerns. The engagement survey will be launched at the One Council event on 22 January and will close at the end of February. In addition, we will also be introducing pulse surveys to establish progress against actions or particular issues. This will help to target hotspots and measure engagement on a regular basis.

2.3.2 The annual engagement plan for the council includes ways to communicate with staff to ensure we are continually engaging with them on key issues. The new Strategic plan outlines the priorities that the council will be working on over the next few years. To ensure staff have a greater understanding of the council's vision a showcase on each priority has been included in the engagement plan. There have been two showcases on the priorities; Safe, Clean and Green and the other on Embracing Growth that has been delivered at the managers and staff forum. The priorities on Homes and Communities and Thriving Place will be presented to staff at a later date in the year.

2.3.3 The One Council event will be held on 22 January 2020 at the Hazlitt Theatre. The event will include an update on the Council and the annual staff awards. The event provides the opportunity to recognise the great contribution of our team members in achieving the council's objectives and delivering great services to the public. This has become an important part of reinforcing our culture and

values. The One Council update also provides an opportunity to remind staff of the priorities that we are all working towards and update them on the progress of various projects.

2.3.4 We continue to support our 27 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) with quarterly supervision sessions, which provide support to them as well as to ensure their knowledge and skills remain up to date. We require our Mental Health First Aiders to report when they have had a Mental Health First Aid conversation on a reporting system. The records do not discuss who they have had a conversation with but are there to remind and ensure the MHFA's have covered everything in the conversation that they need to and also let HR know whether the MHFA themselves need any further support. It also allows us to monitor the demands placed on the MHFA's. The council currently has 27 qualified Mental Health First Aiders and 10 conversations have been recorded by 7 different Mental Health First Aider's in the period between 01/04/2019 and 31/10/2019.

2.3.5 Based on the feedback from staff that attended the Mental Health First Aiders training course, we have introduced in November 2019 the first iAct course for managers on Managing and Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing. This training is intended to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and provide some tools and signposting to help our managers support their teams. Another programme will run in February, with further sessions in 2020/2021.

2.4 Resourcing

2.4.1 We have introduced a new HR service delivery model from April 2019. This requires HR Advisors to attend Head of Service team meetings with their managers to go through key workforce data on turnover, sickness absence, recruitment, starters and leavers and other areas as required by managers. We have recently obtained feedback from managers on the new HR Advisor model which has resulted in positive feedback in terms of the support, advice and knowledge provided to managers to support them in managing their teams successfully. The purpose of the HR Advisor model was to provide the knowledge and skills to managers to enable them to effectively manage staff as well as the capability and confidence in delivering their role effectively. This seems to have been achieved from the manager feedback on the advisory model.

2.4.2 As part of the HR Advisor model, we have also introduced HR surgeries. The HR surgery takes place every 2 months at each council and provides the opportunity for staff to discuss confidentially any concerns or issues with one of the HR Advisors. The HR surgeries are proving to be useful for staff and some of the information discussed in the meetings include:

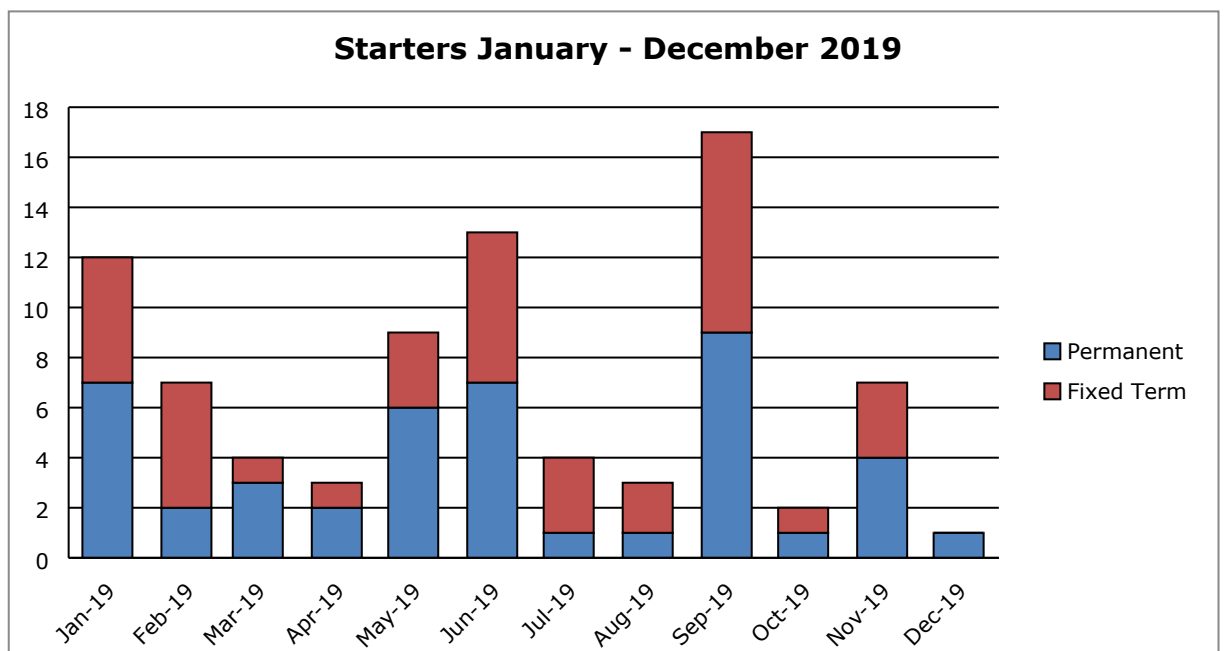
- advice on terms and conditions
- advice on HR policies
- advice on wellbeing and signposting for further support

- information on rewards and benefits
- general support and advice

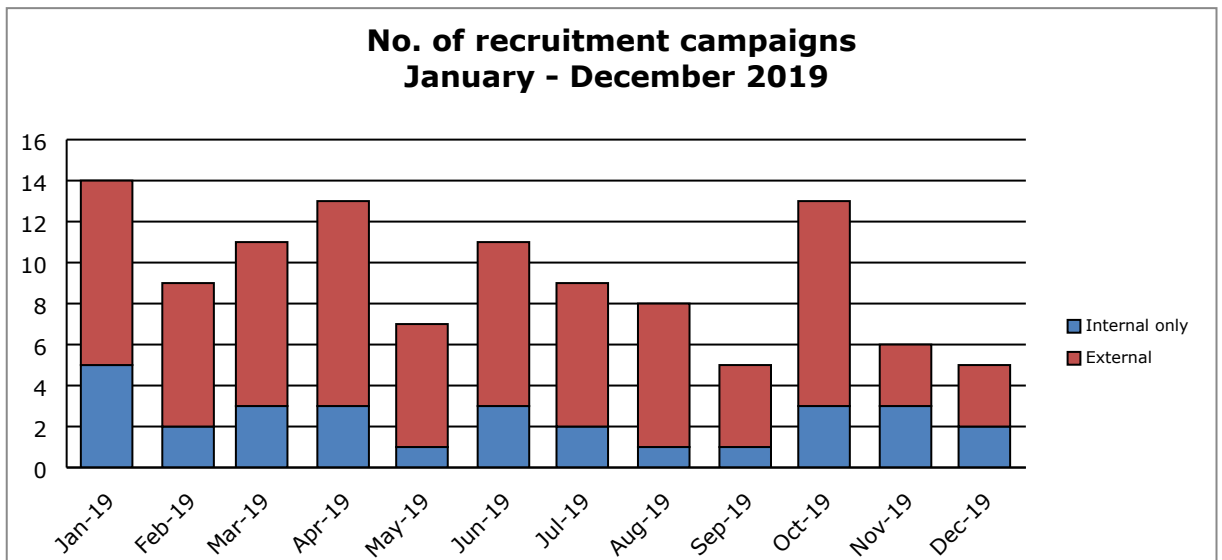
2.4.3 We have been working with the Grow 19 College that help students learn functional and life skills. The students all have additional needs and are aged from 19-25. The council has been able to offer 5 students work experience for one day per week in the Environmental Services Team to help them gain practical skills. This has been a successful project for the council and a positive experience for the students from the Grow 19 College.

2.4.4 During the period from January 2019 to December 2019, the team have supported managers in recruiting 82 new staff at the council. This has included permanent and fixed term contracts to various positions at the council. In addition, there were 49 staff on permanent contracts that left the organisation over this period.

The Council's turnover during the year January to December 2019 was 9.26%. According to a Local Government Workforce Survey report dated June 2019, the average turnover has been reported as 13.4%. The Council's turnover is therefore generally below that of other local authorities.



The number of recruitment campaigns completed during the same period has been 111; this includes internal and external recruitment.



2.4.5 All employers with a salary cost of over £3 million per annum must pay an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of their monthly pay bill. In addition, we are required to have 2.3% of the workforce on apprenticeships as an average from period 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2021. For Maidstone Borough Council this equates to approximately 14 apprentices a year on average.

An apprentice can be a newly appointed member of staff, employed into an apprentice post, or can be an existing member of staff undertaking an apprenticeship qualification.

We currently have 5 apprentices within the Council, with potentially a further 5 joining in the next few months. We also have 8 staff studying for a qualification through this route. This will support the Council in meeting the public sector targets of 2.3% of the workforce undertaking an apprenticeship programme.

2.5 Development

2.5.1 In 2019-2020, a central training budget of £44,140 was allocated. The central training plan provides training to staff in areas including health and safety, safeguarding, management development, personal effectiveness, wellbeing, customer service and IT. Between 01/04/2019 – 31/12/2019, there have been 48 training sessions delivered to staff, attended by 462 delegates. Nearly half of the programmes were delivered by our internal team.

The cost of the Council's eLearning system is met from within the training budget. The eLearning system, elms, provides training on; health and safety, safeguarding, management development, personal effectiveness, mental health, wellbeing, information governance, and equality & diversity. Between 01/04/2019 – 31/12/2019, 2217 courses have been completed by staff.

- 2.5.2 In the latter part of 2019 we ran a pilot with teams from Commissioning and Business Improvement, and the Street Scene team within the Environment and Public Realm Service Unit, to trial a fresh approach to performance review and planning which sees staff having more regular 1:1's with their manager, rather than the bi-annual appraisal process. The pilot includes testing some software to support both the manager and team member with keeping a record of their progress, actions, development needs, as well as an opportunity to give and receive feedback to and from others. The results of the pilot will be reviewed and presented in early 2020 to the management team.
- 2.5.3 We continue to run the Personal Best programme for staff, and this year we have introduced Personal Best for Leaders. This is similar training for managers as it is designed to support people in developing a growth mind-set, vital in organisations undergoing change and needing staff to get involved in innovation and developing new ideas. The Leaders programme aims to develop our managers and supervisors so they are better able to support their team members in developing growth mind-sets and meeting the challenges being placed on them. As part of the programme, the group are split into smaller project groups to work on projects identified by the management team which include Modernising Democracy, Reducing Health Inequalities, The Workplace of the Future, and Reducing your carbon footprint. The outcomes of the projects will be presented back to the management team in the final workshop.

2.6 Reward

- 2.6.1 There have been a number of benefits that have been promoted as well as wellbeing events organised over the last few months. In August 2019, we promoted the Cycle to Work scheme enabling staff to benefit from tax and national insurance savings, promoting a healthier journey to work and reducing pollution and congestion. We also provided communication to staff on the corporate discounts available to them from the Maidstone Leisure Centre including staff savings from the Employee Benefit portal.

In September 2019, information was provided to staff on Migraine Awareness week. In addition, we celebrated National Dementia Carers Day on September, Stress Awareness day in November and provided advice and support in managing stress. We also promoted our Volunteering policy for teams or individuals to participate in a voluntary activity within the local community. The main purpose for these wellbeing events is to encourage individuals to take preventative measures to avert the onset or worsening of an illness or disease and to adopt healthier lifestyles.

- 2.6.2 We have recently designed and delivered workshops on menopause for staff and managers which was launched on World Menopause Day on 18 October 2019. The purpose of the sessions

was to raise awareness of the symptoms that women can suffer from when they experience the menopause, how it can impact upon their working life and how the work environment can sometimes exacerbate the symptoms. The sessions also raised the importance of managers developing a work environment that is more understanding and supportive of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms. At the council, women comprise more than half (55%) of the council's workforce and menopause symptoms can affect a number of women at work. Feedback from staff that attended one of these sessions found the information presented very useful and that a specific session should be delivered to all managers at the council. As an employer we have a duty to look after the health and safety of our workers, and the launch of the menopause sessions has raised the importance for the council to take steps to support our female workers and their managers to talk and think about what adjustments could be made to the working environment to mitigate the impact of the menopause at work.

2.6.3 The next annual Wellbeing week has been arranged to take place between 10- 14 February 2020. A number of events have been organised across the council including our satellite offices in order to promote the importance of being healthy and active. The aim of the week is to raise awareness on wellbeing by arranging opportunities for staff to get involved in activities that will improve their fitness, mental health and their overall wellbeing.

2.6.4 The Council has introduced long service awards in 2014 to reward staff that have been working at the council for a significant period and to recognise their contribution to the council. The long service award scheme provides a financial reward in the form of shopping vouchers for reaching particular milestones. To improve the employee experience we have recently changed the suppliers for long service awards so that staff are able to purchase goods online as well as the High Street. The previous supplier provided vouchers in a paper format which staff were not able to use online. The changes will support the on-going improvements to processes for staff.

2.7 The Workforce Strategy sets out the key themes for the period 2016-2020, there is an associated action plan that will be updated on a regular basis to ensure the council continues to develop. The action plan that was agreed in June 2016 is at Appendix I and it has been updated with the progress to date.

3 AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress to date, and agree that work continues on the current action plan. Members could substitute alternative actions or add to the existing ones.

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is for the Committee to note the developments and support the on-going work.
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5 RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Workforce Strategy was developed with input from the managers in the organisation and discussed with both the trade unions and Staff Forum.
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7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Developments based on the Workforce Strategy are regularly communicated to managers and staff through the council's newsletter, Team Talk activities, consultation with trade unions, Staff Forum and by email.
- 7.2 Actions within the Workforce Strategy are regularly reviewed by the Wider Leadership Team and twice a year by the Committee.
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8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Workforce Plan 2016-2020 Progress January 2020
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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Workforce Strategy

https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/164653/MBC-Workforce-Strategy-2016-to-2020-final-002.pdf