

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet 10 September 2009  
**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Executive / HR Manager / Policy and Performance Manager

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### WORKFORCE PLAN REVIEW 2009

#### Purpose

1. To approve the attached revision of the Workforce Plan for 2009.

#### Background

2. The Council adopted the current three-year Workforce Plan in 2007. The plan was revised and rolled forward in 2008. A similar exercise has now been undertaken for 2009 and a refreshed three-year plan is attached. Most of the actions in the plan are for 2009/10 and 2010/11 with some rolling on to 2011/12. For 2010 a more radical review of the plan will be carried out.
3. The Audit Commission has published the document *Tomorrow's People* which reviews local authorities' approach to workforce planning. The review draws attention to the benefits of taking a strategic approach to recruitment and retention, but comments that many local authorities need to improve in this area. The review highlights the gains that can be achieved in efficiency and service improvement by effective workforce planning and the benefits of working with partners and across areas to address workforce issues.
4. This Council's approach to workforce planning compares well against the commentary and conclusions in the report. However, there are areas which could be strengthened – for example in terms of working with partners and closer links with the efficiency agenda. These issues, and the development of the workforce element of the use of resources assessment, will be taken into account when the new three-year plan is developed in 2010.

#### Main Changes/Developments

5. The main changes or developments which have been included in the 2009 revision of the Workforce Plan are –
  - a) The achievement of IIP accreditation.
  - b) The adoption of Council Values and the work taking place to embed them.
  - c) The staff survey and the various workstreams to address issues arising.
  - d) The economic downturn and its impact on development related jobs, including the problem of managing the impact of the current downturn on the workforce, while being in a position to respond to the subsequent recovery.
  - e) The impact of the Housing Futures ballot on the housing service.
  - f) The overall financial position over the three years of the plan.
  - g) Developments in equality and diversity. The Council has adopted its Comprehensive Equality Policy; achieved Level 2 of the equality standard; become a Stonewall Champion; carried out extensive staff training; and worked to embed a culture of equality and diversity within the Council.
  - h) Developments in succession planning

- i) The launch of the Management Competency scheme and the revision of the appraisal scheme (now PDRs)
- 6. The profile of the workforce is much the same as previously. The main features are the length of service (with 16% of the workforce having 20 or more years' service); the fact that 50-59 year olds represent the largest age group in the workforce; and the relatively small proportion of younger employees. These factors give rise to the need for succession planning and to consider how the Council's profile among potentially younger employees could be improved.
- 7. There has been a small increase (3% to 4%) of employees from an ethnic minority group, although this and the proportion of employees with a disability (3%) may be understated because of the proportion of employees not declaring on these factors.
- 8. Recruitment difficulties have eased over the last year, but it is important to see the recruitment into certain professions and posts as continuing medium term issues, as observed by the Audit Commission report. Turnover has also been low in the last year (5.5% against a generally accepted guide level of 10%), likely also to be largely the effect of the economic downturn.
- 9. Members will be aware that sickness absence continues to be above average and is an issue which will continue to be addressed.
- 10. The Action Plan has been updated and rolled forward. The revisions reflect ongoing activity to address management improvement and cultural change; key workforce issues such as succession planning, absence management and recruitment; and specific service-led projects such as in housing, new communities and ICT.
- 11. A great deal of change has taken place over the last year and is now reflected in the Workforce Plan, some of it arising from the national economic situation and some from a range of Council initiatives such as achievement of IIP accreditation, management competency framework, values and progress on equality and diversity.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 12. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the Plan and its conclusions can be summarised as follows. The Plan addresses and promotes workforce diversity. A good level of monitoring information is presented, but there are gaps in that there are significant proportions of staff who have not declared their ethnic origin or disability status. Also, the Council does not collect data on staff sexual orientation or religious belief. Workforce data is compared with the equality profile of the district and generally compares favourably. There is a disproportionate lack of younger staff, but this is an issue with the wider local government community. Work is being done by the Council to address this shortfall and there is no negative effect arising from the Council's workforce policies or practices. Overall, it was concluded that the Workforce Plan represents a positive or neutral impact on equality. The following action points were recommended in the assessment:-
  - a) Investigate whether data can be collected on the sexual orientation or religious belief of staff
  - b) Investigate the benefits of advertising vacancies in specialist minority publications
  - c) Investigate the possibility of setting up staff networks.
  - d) Investigate the possibility of monitoring and reporting on data from recruitment monitoring forms.
  - e) Consult staff more widely when the workforce plan is revised in 2010.

13. All these recommendations will be taken up, either in the workforce plan or other planned programmes.

#### **Implications**

14. The central purpose of the Workforce Plan is to deliver the Council's Vision and Aims. This is addressed particularly in section 4 of the plan. There are no financial implications which are not already included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

#### **Consultation/Prior Discussions**

15. The draft plan has been considered by SMT and by the Staffing Portfolio holder and has been endorsed with changes which have been made to the report.

#### **Recommendations**

16. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Workforce Plan, including the Action Plan.

#### **Background Papers:**

- Previous versions of the Workforce Plan
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Various other council reports and papers.

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