

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder 25th August 2009
AUTHOR/S: HR Manager
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WORKFORCE PLAN REVIEW 2009

Purpose

1. To approve the attached revision of the Workforce Plan for 2009 prior to submission to the Cabinet on 10th September.

Background

2. The Council adopted the current three-year Workforce Plan in 2007. The plan was revised and rolled forward in 2008 and a similar exercise has now been undertaken for 2009. A new three-year plan will be prepared for 2010.
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 later this year.

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.

Recommendations

- 12. The Portfolio Holder is invited to comment on and approve the revised Workforce Plan prior to submission to the meeting of the Cabinet in September.

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