

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 25 JANUARY 2024

PROGRESS ON THE COUNCIL’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ORGANISATION & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – COUNCILLOR ROGER LEES, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report and appendices are to supplement a presentation to Standards & Resources Committee on 25 January 2024 regarding an update on the Council’s Workforce Development Strategy and our plans to future proof our workforce. This work incorporates our Employer of Choice plans, recruitment, retention & succession planning, equality & inclusion, wellbeing, and leadership & culture.
- 1.2 Appendix A sets out our progress against the workforce development strategy action plan ‘*Values based leadership, attracting, and retaining the best talent and continuing our ways of working journey.*’ Appendix B is our data for publication and incorporates the Public Sector Equality Act and Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reporting requirements and will be published on the website.

2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	Improving recruitment, retention, wellbeing, culture, and inclusion, benefits the workforce and our communities.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	The report is not proposing a new policy or scheme.
	Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been completed?	
	No	No new proposals regarding the handling of personal data.
SCRUTINY POWERS	No	
KEY DECISION	No	
DECISION TIMELINE	NA	For information.
DELIVERY DATE	The strategy timeline is 2022-2025	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	No	
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, The Equality Act 2010 and (Amendment) Regulations 2023.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Organisational development plans mitigate reputational, recruitment, retention, and service delivery risks.	
IMPACT ON WARDS	No	

3. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 3.1 The workforce development strategy was updated in 2022 and sets out how we intend to continue to recruit, retain and develop the skills of our staff, ensuring everyone has the right tools to support our communities over the next three years; whilst also enabling employees to develop their career.
- 3.2 The strategy recognised recruiting and retaining the right staff is one of the most significant workforce development challenges facing Local Government. The jobs market has been significantly influenced by the pandemic, changing technology, ways of working, shifts in age profiles and a shrinking labour pool for many professions. Within the context of a tight labour market (94% of Council's are experiencing difficulties) the recruitment trends¹ for 2023/24 are:
- Graduates -have a heightened interest in pressing social issues, equality, and career development opportunities.
 - Talent pools are emerging as a strategy – linkage with organisations who have candidate data bases, less external hiring, offering current vacancies or upskilling to existing staff as part of succession planning/retention.
 - Strong employer branding conveying the organisations vision, reputation and culture is highly effective in connecting with candidates.
 - Recruitment researchers report job seekers strongly value workforce wellbeing, and autonomy over where and when they work, and this is helping to recruit and retain talent.
 - HR automation, social media, and AI tools - but the key point is modern, engaging onboarding experiences for candidates.

Employer of Choice – Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning

- 3.3 During 2022/23 Digital Services and Human Resources developed a new modern recruitment landing page for the website. The site promotes our organisational values, benefits package, and career opportunities. This has been informed by the above recruitment research, and strongly promotes our employer of choice brand. We also replaced a legacy recruitment system with a new online onboarding system whichs has modernised and speeded up recruitment processes.
- 3.4 Workforce trends data in Appendix B shows our recruitment reach has increased since 2022. 150 employees live in the district. Page 5 of Appendix B provides a break-

¹ Sources LGA workforce survey England April 2023 – This data comes from multiple sources therefore dates will vary across the data set and includes some 2021/22 data, UK recruiter 2023, CIPD Labour market outlook Spring 2023, LinkedIn recruitment trends 2023, Edelman, Glassdoor, Harvard Business Review 2022.

down of employee location data by locality area. We will be using this data to target careers support, work with partners and review how and where we advertise jobs.

- 3.5 We have worked with Penna to access their candidate network to recruit senior posts. We are continuing to grow our apprentice scheme and have also enhanced our work experience and careers support for schools, to encourage local students to consider us as a future employer. We have also partnered with West Midlands Employers (WME) and participated in their 'careers in Local Government campaign.
- 3.6 Our retention strategy has included the commissioning of market pay reviews to ensure we have data and intelligence to inform recruitment and retention incentives where these are necessary.
- 3.7 Overall, the Council's pay, recruitment and retention appears to be competitive however we need to ensure the Council is positioned to respond to a rapidly changing market. It is therefore proposed that the market supplement policy is adapted to be a broader recruitment and retention policy which will be the subject of a separate report to Council.
- 3.8 Our retention strategy has actively encouraged internal candidate recruitment. The Council has offered a range of career development including qualifications, career grades, corporate projects, roles, development to support upskilling to help staff develop the confidence and experience to step into promoted roles.
- 3.9 ASPIRE our annual talent management programme is one such example of how we develop and retain our staff. This is a personal development programme which helps staff develop knowledge, skills, and confidence. Many colleagues have developed their career and gone on to promoted positions.

Outcomes, Employer of Choice – Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning

- Current strategies are on the whole effective for filling hard to recruit posts.
- Candidate acceptance rates 87% and 75% of vacancies filled first time.
- Retention rate on 31 March 2023 was 88%², (4% improvement from 2022) and 50% of appointments were filled internally.
- During 2023 the Council supported 16 school student, 3 higher Education students in Planning Services and 1 long term placement in Legal Services.
- The Council is currently supporting 12 apprenticeships³. Over the last 2 years 5 have secured permanent employment.

² Average turnover for UK workers is 35%. This splits down as 26.9% who move to a new employer and 8.2% who are not working one year later (year 2), which could be due to study, or retirement, for example. (CIPD PM article May 2023). Local Government workforce turnover 14%. (LGA labour turnover survey 2021/22).

³ Won Digital Apprentice of the Year Award, another was a runner up. SSC achieved the upper middle quartile in the LGA's apprentice quality standard framework for apprentice programmes in Local Government.

- IESE Cert of Excellence for our Employer of Choice strategy during 2023.
- ASPIRE 2023 cohort won the Leadership Award at the WME regional LA Senior Management Challenge event in September 2023.
- The Council's employee engagement survey in September 2023 confirmed over '96% would recommend South Staffordshire Council as a place to work'.

Equality & Inclusion

- 3.10 Appendix B is our data for publication and incorporates the Public Sector Equality Act and Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reporting requirements.

Gender

- 3.11 Gender profile of the workforce, 60% female and 40% male. Many jobs offer part-time and flexible working. Gender distribution across management tiers is positive.

CLT	Assistant Directors	Team Managers	Assistant Team Managers
Female 60%	Female 50%	Female 57%	Female 37%
Male 40%	Male 50%	Male 43%	Male 63%

- 3.12 Gender pay gap (GPG) has improved compared to the previous year.

GPG Date	Mean GPG %	Median GPG %
31.03.22	6.53%	9.42%
31.03.23	4.87%	6.98%

Ethnicity

- 3.13 Ethnicity categories are being revised to mirror census definitions. Page 11, appendix B estimates our ethnicity categories against the % of economically active in the recent census release and our workforce appears to be representative of our communities.
- 3.14 During 2022, the Council revised and strengthened its Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and equality training.

Age

- 3.15 68% of the workforce were aged 36+. Almost 19% were aged 25 and under which is a modest improvement from the previous year.

Disability

- 3.16 4.97% (16 employees) disclosed they had a disability. A slight increase from the previous year however disability disclosure is still thought to be underreported.

New data capture areas

- 3.17 The Council is adding to its existing equality data publication. We have included data on workforce profile by religious belief and sexual orientation. We have updated our sexual identification categories. We also plan to capture data on carers. This data will be reportable from next year onwards.

Future plans

- 3.18 The Equality Steering Group will be overseeing the direction of travel for Equalities for the next 12 months. This includes a review of the Council's objectives which will be part of the development of the Council Plan during January – March 2024. This will also inform the refresh of the Council's Everyone Counts document, Equality policies and a review of customer equality data. Member development will also include Equality training.

Outcomes, Equality & Inclusion

- Gender pay gap 31 March 2023 - 4.87% mean. 6.98% median. Improved from 2022.
- Ethnicity – Increased the employment of employees from ethnic backgrounds to 22 compared with 14 (2022) and 16 (2021).
- Training - 280 employees attended equality training during 2022/23.
- ASPIRE our talent management programme considered protected characteristic as part of the application process.
- Developed an inclusion calendar to improve knowledge of and celebrate the range of diverse cultures and beliefs of our workforce and communities.
- The Council has 12⁴ apprentices.
- Registered as a Disability Confident Employer and also developing partnerships and training to strengthen our support for neurodiverse employees.
- The Council's employee engagement survey in September 2023 achieved an average rating of 8.8 out of 10 for the question '*Do you agree the Council is an inclusive organisation*'.

Wellbeing

- 3.19 The Council's absence target is to not exceed more than 6.95 full time equivalent (fte) average days per employee per year. Performance in 2022/23 was 7.20. The duration of long-term absences accounted for 4.91. These absences required diagnostics/treatment and in some instances NHS waiting times were a factor.

⁴ Includes new posts and existing employees studying an approved apprentice levy qualification.

- 3.20 The Council's short-term absence was extremely low at 2.29 fte days lost, a modest improvement on the previous year (2.35). Occurrences of some short-term absences are higher than the previous year (e.g., cold/virus) however the duration of short-term absences is lower which may be influenced by the Council's ways of working.
- 3.21 Some comparative absence data from the UK annual absence survey⁵ conducted by CIPD and Simply Health confirms UK employees were absent for an average of 7.8 days. However, the research found that average absence levels were considerably higher in the public sector (10.6 days per employee).
- 3.22 Stress, musculoskeletal, mental health, minor illness, and covid were highlighted as key absence causes. Interestingly, Covid, Musculoskeletal and stress/anxiety related absences at the Council were lower than in 2022 which may relate to our employee welfare support (occupational health, counselling, and physiotherapy) and our strong wellbeing culture.
- 3.23 The Council provides a range of wellbeing support, training, a staff online wellbeing resource hub and regular communications on health and wellbeing.
- 3.24 In recognition of the cost-of-living crisis the Council launched Vivup a new employee benefits platform in November 2022 to support financial wellbeing. At no cost to the Council, this provides general wellbeing resources, signposting for financial wellbeing advice and a range of high street and online retail discounts for staff and Members. At the time of writing, there are 183 staff and 26 Members who have registered.
- 3.25 The Council are now looking to expand the employee benefits scheme with the introduction of salary sacrifice schemes. This is a scheme where employees can order goods and pay for these monthly through salary sacrifice. This means they can ease payments for large purchases and potentially achieve savings.

Outcomes, Wellbeing

- Achieved the iESE Certificate of Excellence for our wellbeing strategy in 2022.
- During 2022/23 delivered wellbeing related training to 269⁶ members of staff.
- Achieved Workplace Wellbeing Charter accreditation in September 2023
- Launched Vivup our employee benefits platform.
- The Council's employee engagement survey in September 2023 achieved an average rating of 8.2 out of 10 for the question '*The Council cares about my wellbeing and supports me in balancing my work and personal commitments*'.

⁵ The Health and Wellbeing at Work research analysed trends in sickness absence rates and employee health and wellbeing among 918 organisations, representing 6.5 million employees. It was conducted in March and April 2023. (Personnel Today Sept 2023).

⁶ 1 April 2022 to date. Some staff may have attended more than 1 session.

Leadership & Culture

- 3.26 During 2022 the Council invested in a leadership coaching programme with a focus on 'a high-performance culture' for the Corporate Leadership Team, Assistant Directors, Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers to continue to strengthen our inclusive culture and leadership. We will also be offering a new first line managers programme in 2024 and continue to offer a corporate induction course for new employees.
- 3.27 The Council has also invested in other high impact development options that correlate with our Evolution Programme plans including workshops to support staff with improving the use of data and analytics, community engagement and compassionate (values based) leadership.
- 3.28 Following a pilot, the Council has also modernised its managing attendance scheme which focuses on management by outputs and outcomes which fits with hybrid working and our values of trust and empowerment.
- 3.29 In September 2023 we launched our latest employee engagement survey. The survey responses provided incredibly positive feedback on leadership, culture, and wellbeing themes which are set out below:

Outcomes, Leadership & Culture

Employees were asked to rate the following questions out of 10. (0 = disagree. 10 = agree) Average rates were: 1. 8.3 -I am treated fairly and feel valued. 2. 8.8 -I have a good relationship with my manager. 3. 8.8 -I am satisfied with the leadership & culture of the organisation.	Words used to describe the Council's culture included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendly & positive• Supportive & caring• Ambitious & progressive• Diverse & inclusive• Accommodating & flexible
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4. ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2023/24

- 4.1 We will continue to implement our workforce development strategy, including:
- Refreshing the Council's values
 - Supporting the organisations ambitions to attain a consistent high level on an organisational '*Maturity Model*'.⁷

⁷ A maturity model is structured stages of the evolution of an organisation as it goes through the various development stages and responds to the impact of changes in an organisations culture. In summary it is about creating the conditions (the concept), gaining buy in, and then releasing the potential. The closer you get to level 5 – the stronger the culture of consistency & continuous improvement.

- Adapt the market supplement policy to reflect the Council's wider recruitment and retention needs. Noting this will be a separate report to Council.
- Continue to work with partners to develop new talent pools.
- Continued enhancement of employee benefits offerings and salary sacrifice
- Implement our Equality plans - Appendix B, page 28.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT-ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 Equality impact assessments will be carried out for any workstream actions that include any new or material policies, projects, or schemes.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 6.1 N/A.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix B is our data for publication and incorporates the Public Sector Equality Act and Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reporting requirements and will be published on the website.

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