

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

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County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall,
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Weaver,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 16 May 2018

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee thank you for attending Committee to facilitate policy development scrutiny of the Workforce Strategy 2018-21. Please pass on our sincere thanks to Philip Lenz and Tracy Thomas for their full presentation of the five pillars of the strategy. The Members wish to pass on the following comments and observations.

A framework to improve performance and customer service

The Committee notes the strategy is a framework built around five pillars (*equalities and diversity, workforce planning, learning and development, engagement of employees and trade unions, and health and wellbeing*). This framework is designed to deliver an holistic approach to workforce planning and is one we would expect to see in any organisation. However we were very pleased to hear that it aims to strengthen the links between business, financial and workforce planning, with an intended outcome of improving performance and thereby customer service. The Committee has recently completed its own review of customer leadership within the Council and you are aware of our recommendations. It is hoped you will take them into account as you refine the workforce strategy and as service areas embark upon the action planning that will follow.

Members noted the new workforce planning toolkit for use by service areas. We are however keen to establish how the detail collected from applying the toolkit, across all service areas, then collated and reviewed on an annual basis, will address the challenges faced. We feel the strategy should clearly identify the workforce issues and problems the Council is facing that the strategy will be designed to address.

We are unclear as to what the strategy will tell us about the recruitment and retention of staff, and whether there are visible gaps across the organisation where it is proving difficult to recruit and retain staff. Members are of the view that this should be clear in the strategy.

The Committee considers it is important that the Council workforce reflects the community it serves, and it must therefore prepare to serve the increasing number of Welsh speakers, particularly in the context of Welsh Government targets for one million Welsh speakers by 2050. We therefore endorse your engagement with Welsh medium schools and the increased language training on offer to all staff.

Collating and using the data

We accept that the new workforce strategy will be a mix of consolidating existing approaches and introducing new ones. For example, proactive initiatives such as introducing corporate traineeships to address the surprising fact that only 4% of the Council's workforce is made up of young people under the age of 25.

The Committee is pleased to hear that service areas have bought in to the requirement for workforce planning, the application of the workforce toolkit and the requirement that they assess the impact of all external factors. Whilst we note that the resulting service area owned data, produced by those familiar with their directorate delivery plans, will be collated by the human resources directorate, and used to develop the strategy, we are concerned that such analysis will require significant resources. We note the intention that such analysis will be achieved by human resources and service areas working together. Members heard that this service area data exists and would welcome sight of it.

The Committee understands the challenge you face in collating accurate data on disability and the natural caution around drawing attention to one's disability. We believe staff require reassurance that such data will not be shared. Collecting such data is considered essential in enabling the Council to collate an accurate profile of disability across the workforce and most importantly, where the strategy needs to improve.

Building a loyal workforce

The Committee is firmly of the opinion that a key outcome of the workforce strategy under development should be building a loyal workforce and attracting talent, and as such made the following observations.

Members note that the Employee Survey forms a part of the framework for employee engagement. We do not necessarily consider this a good quality engagement process. Officers were clear there is often a deficiency in frontline response to the staff survey and we take the view that surveys do not need to be paper based. Our view is that staff may be more willing to engage at team meetings. We note your intention to hold an annual engagement event for employees led by Cabinet and the Chief Executive and to review the format of the employee survey to ensure harder to reach groups have accessible means to respond.

The Committee is keen that the Council should maximise the use of its assets such as the Castle and St Davids Hall for the benefit of staff. Access to such venues is a staff benefit worthy of support. Similarly, the Council's promotion of agile working and a management focus on outcomes rather than presentism is something the Committee will be interested in evaluating in due course.

Members endorsed the Council's re-joining of the Stonewall Cymru network. We consider this a positive move and, as with agile working and wider staff benefits, we would encourage the use of the Stonewall brand and other employee networks (*BME, Carers, Disability, LGBT, Women's network*) in all job advertisements.

Importance of action planning

Finally, returning to the importance of the action plans that will sit beneath the Workforce Strategy. The Committee would welcome sight of the action plans and the final strategy and look forward to monitoring what is achieved six months on from its implementation.

To recap, in developing the workforce strategy the Committee:

- refers you to the recommendations of its Customer Leadership inquiry, as you refine the workforce strategy;

- considers the strategy should clearly identify the workforce problems the Council is facing;
- considers clarity is needed as to whether there are visible gaps across the organisation where it is proving difficult to recruit and retain staff;
- believes it is important that the Council workforce reflects the community it serves, and we must therefore prepare to serve the increasing numbers of Welsh speakers
- is concerned that analysing service area data to develop the strategy will require significant resources;
- would welcome sight of the service area data that exists on which to develop the workforce strategy;
- believes staff require reassurance that disability data will not be shared, but will enable the Council to collate an accurate profile to inform the strategy.
- considers staff may be more willing to engage in workforce planning at team meetings;
- would like assets such as the Castle and St Davids Hall to be used as a benefit to attract and retain staff;
- similarly, the Council's promotion of agile working be used as a benefit to attract and retain staff;
- endorses the Council's re-joining of the Stonewall Cymru network and encourages the use of the Stonewall brand and other employee networks (BME, Carers, Disability, LGBT, Women's network) in all job advertisements;
- Would welcome sight of the action plans and the final strategy;
- looks forward to monitoring what is achieved six months on from its implementation.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee to assist us in consideration of the Workforce Strategy.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Philip Lenz, Chief Human Resources Officer
Tracey Thomas, HR People Partner
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer.