

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

Date: 26 June 2019

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Dear Chris,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 June 2019

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee my sincere thanks for attending Committee with an update of progress on the Workforce Strategy 2018-21. Please also pass on our thanks to Philip Lenz and Anita Batten for the comprehensive presentation. We offer the following comments and observations for your consideration and response.

Agile working

The Committee is interested in the challenge of smarter, agile working and its resource implications for employees, accommodation and technology. We note your reference to a new project within the Capital Ambition Delivery Programme that will address agile working. We look forward to finding out more about this project as we start to formulate the Committee's 2019/20 work programme. Please forward any existing policy and procedure papers on this topic to inform our work programme development.

Integrating Council policies

When we first considered the Workforce Strategy in May 2018 we understood that it aimed to strengthen the links between business, financial and workforce planning, with the intended outcome of improving overall performance including delivery of higher customer service standards. We wish to re-iterate that we consider it important to ensure that the Council's PPDR system has strong links to the Workforce Strategy and is included in its documentation and processes.

Similarly, given its relevance to the Workforce Strategy, we will monitor the roll-out of customer service training and the three levels of training to be delivered by the Academy as part of our 2019/20 work programme.

Health and Wellbeing programme

We note that the Health and Wellbeing programme is reported as being on track and wish to have sight of attendance figures you have collected for activities organised under this programme.

Workforce reflecting its customer base

Members are keen to establish progress in respect of the Council's levels of BME employees within the workforce. We note numbers have increased, particularly since the Council started advertising its jobs internally and externally simultaneously. However we are interested in the size of the increase and the percentage of BME applicants that are successful in being appointed having applied. I would be grateful if you would provide this information.

Zero based budgeting

The Committee observed that the overall number of FTE employees has decreased by 20% over the past 10 years at a time when workloads and customer demands have risen. We know that budgetary tightening will continue into the foreseeable future. So we consider it is important to establish existing and future budgets and staffing needs by taking a fundamental look at the resources required to deliver the services really needed rather than working with the status quo year on year.

Therefore whilst you said that staff resources are addressed each year in developing a budget, by taking a zero based budgeting approach to resourcing services you will be more likely to arrive at the correct number required to deliver essential services. This will reveal the number of staff who might be deployed to the front line to compensate for natural staff turnover and to meet other operational requirements.

Measuring success

Linked to the point above, members consider it important to be clear about the outcomes the Council is expecting from its workforce processes and activities to ensure it is able to measure success and focusses on the key goals and priorities.

We note that you feel there are many measures of success already in place, such as delivery against the Corporate Plan, delivery compared with all Wales performance figures and schools' results. Indeed all five priorities of the Workforce Strategy were cited as outcomes for measurement. The Committee suggests using productivity to effectively illustrate the outcome of the Workforce Strategy and inform staffing projections. Has the Council measured the work required, the productivity it expects and therefore the staff required to undertake its priorities and the skills needs of these employees? This is unclear at present and we consider that measuring productivity is fundamental in planning workforce requirements. I would therefore appreciate clarification on this key matter, and it is a matter that the committee may wish to scrutinise further.

I look forward to receiving the additional information requested in this letter. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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
Anita Batten, HR People Partner
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer.