

For publication

People Plan 2019 - 2023

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| Meeting: | Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum |
| Date: | 24 March 2022 |
| Cabinet portfolio: | Business Transformation and Customers |
| Directorate: | Digital, HR and Customer Services |

1.0 Reason for inclusion on the work programme

1.1 The purpose of reviewing the topic is to consider the progress of the implementation of the People Plan.

1.2 The objectives of the review are:

- To review the progress of the implementation of the People Plan 2019 - 2023.
- To understand how the People Plan reflects the changes made in the organisation during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To understand how staff engagement is undertaken within the People Plan.
- To review the progress of the Investors in People delivery plan for year 3.
- To consider how scrutiny can support the development of the Council's new workforce strategy, which will be implemented from 2023.

2.0 Summary

2.1 The council has made very good progress to deliver the ambitions set out in the People Plan 2019 – 2023, whilst also navigating through the coronavirus pandemic. The financial year 2022 – 2023 is the final year of delivery of this strategy and the action plan is currently being developed following receipt of our Investors In People accreditation report. All critical success factors contained within the People Plan

2019 – 2023 are on track to be achieved at the end of the strategy period.

2.2 Since 2017, the Council has used the Investors in People standard as a mechanism to assess the progress which is being made to deliver against our People Plan ambitions and we have worked closely with the organisation to ensure we continuously improve what we do. We value our people and have been ambitious in ensuring that our workforce policies and processes demonstrate this and that everyone within the organisation takes ownership for making them come to life.

2.3 In 2017 the Council was a bronze level organisation, moving to achievement of the silver standard when formally assessed in 2018. Our ambition was to 'go for Gold' at the next formal assessment, due in late 2021.

2.4 During November 2021 to January 2022, the Council undertook the Investors in People assessment and has been credited as a gold standard organisation. Just 17% of organisations are recognised as achieving the gold standard, out of the 15,000 organisations across 75 countries who use the Investors in People standard to measure their progress. This is a fantastic achievement, and we are very proud to have achieved this result.

2.5 As we come into the final year of delivery of our People Plan, work will be undertaken to begin to shape our next workforce strategy. This will be guided by data, legislation and specifically by employee engagement and Investors in People recommendations. Regular progress updates can be provided to members of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny forum as the next strategy is developed.

3.0 Report details

Background

3.1 Chesterfield Borough Council approved its workforce strategy, *Our People Plan 2019 – 2023*, in December 2019. The strategy is attached at Appendix A.

3.2 Its development was informed by a wide range of data, including:

- Local Government Association research completed with the University of Birmingham – The 21st Century Public Servant,
- Investors in People recommendations, following our formal assessment in 2018,
- Employee engagement feedback,
- Internal analysis of gaps in our existing workforce skills, and
- Chesterfield Borough Council employee demographic data

3.3 The People Plan 2019 – 2023 focuses on the development of five strategic priority areas, which, when achieved, will ensure that the Council enables creative, flexible, and productive ways of working and increases the capacity, resilience, and wellbeing of our workforce. The strategic priority areas are:

- Developing great leaders,
- Managing change well,
- Developing capacity and skills,
- Supporting employee wellbeing,
- Recognition and reward.

3.4 Successful delivery of the strategy will be demonstrated by achievement of the following success measures:

- Employee survey response rates increase by 5% or more,
- Improvement in rankings is achieved in six of the Investors in People themes,
- Sickness absence data averages at no more than 8 days per employee,
- Completion of annual action plans.

3.5 Appendix B provides a high-level summary of the activities which have been undertaken to progress delivery of the strategy.

Progress being made to deliver the People Plan

3.6 Each year an action plan is developed which will ensure that the Council is able to successfully deliver against the five strategic priorities set out in the People Plan.

3.7 The action plan which is being delivered in 2021/22 is attached at Appendix C. This plan provides details of the progress which has been made this year to achieve the key actions set out in our People Plan.

Appendix D sets out the channel shift benefits that have been achieved by using digital technology.

Reflecting the changes made to the organisation due to Covid-19

- 3.8 Since 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on the way the Council works. Our employees have worked very hard to support our residents and businesses and minimise the negative impacts of the pandemic, as far as is possible. Our passion to deliver great services and support our communities has been at the forefront of this work and our People Plan activities have been updated to reflect the emerging needs of our workforce during this time. Whilst additional actions have taken place, the strategic priorities identified in our People Plan have remained relevant throughout the pandemic.
- 3.9 Like many organisations, we have accelerated the introduction of new ways of working to enable continued provision of our essential services from home.
- 3.10 In addition, many of our workforce have volunteered to support those in our communities who are in greatest need by delivering medicines, food and supporting wider community response teams. New skills have been learned, ensuring that there are effective business continuity and succession plans in place.
- 3.11 To ensure the council was able to remain operational throughout the pandemic a working group - the Resources task and finish group - was established (to include diverse members of the workforce and unions) to lead on the internal response to Covid-19. This group provided the Council's leadership team with recommendations relating to wellbeing, change management, developing capacity and skills and reward and recognition.
- 3.12 Of primary concern over the last 18 months has been the safety and wellbeing of our workforce. Early decisions were taken to ensure our workforce could work from home wherever possible from the start of the pandemic and this has continued throughout. A letter with a personalised message from the Leader and Chief Executive and branded facemasks were issued to all staff at the outset of the pandemic to demonstrate our care for the workforce, together with thanks for their continued support and hard work. The Council has

taken a cautious approach during the pandemic, and this has ensured our workforce has remained safe.

- 3.13 During the pandemic there has been an increased need for strong leadership and clear communication. The corporate leadership team met daily for many weeks, reducing to twice weekly as time moved on. Daily operational team meetings were held to ensure ever changing priorities were met, such as food parcel deliveries, prescription deliveries and burials. Communication channels were improved, and the frequency of management contact increased.
- 3.14 During the pandemic the senior leadership were clear that those staff who were not able to work were treated fairly and that staff would not be penalised for lack of availability of work. The council made the decision to furlough staff where services had closed and took the decision to pay those staff an average of their previous three months' salary at 100%. In addition, all staff who had variable payment roles were also paid an average of the previous three months' salary.
- 3.15 During the pandemic over 160 staff were transferred back into the council from outsourced providers and as gesture of goodwill the lowest paid staff were aligned to the council's voluntary living wage rate on transfer.
- 3.16 An employee assistance programme was procured so that staff members had access to counselling and financial advice 365 days a year 24/7 as a communication survey highlighted this was a concern for staff. The Mental Health First Aid programme was also launched early so that we could provide support and guidance in the workplace. Recognising that Elected Members also needed support during the pandemic, a referral process for Occupational Health support was also made available.
- 3.17 In recognition of the huge change in working practices at the outset of the pandemic, the Council quickly worked in partnership with a provider to deliver on-line training around new ways of working for managers. We hosted a series of webinars with 'People, Impact and Change' to assist our managers with the changes they were experiencing, including:
 - Successful remote working
 - Effectively navigating change

- Engaging others remotely

70 managers took part in the three webinars and the feedback was excellent.

3.18 The Council was also able to access a suite of webinars free of charge from NHS Commissioning, Communities and Policy. These were delivered by the **Art of Brilliance** team. 29 staff attended this training. Feedback from attendees identified the need for them to prioritise personal wellbeing and focus on gratitude, personal reflection, and motivation for personal growth.

3.19 Manager's seminars are now regularly delivered on-line and attendance has increased. The Council invites team leaders and supervisors to participate in the sessions. The seminars are recorded and put onto aspire with any supporting information such as slide presentations. Topics covered over the last year have been Covid-19 related in the main. Feedback suggests the topics covered are useful and relevant to managers

Employee engagement feedback

3.20 The Council has several different ways that employee feedback is obtained.

3.21 At its most basic level, regular two-way feedback is sought through PDR and monthly performance discussions held with individual employees. Feedback is also obtained at team meetings.

3.22 Annually, an employee survey (or the survey completed by Investors in People on behalf of the Council) is completed and this provides the leadership team with oversight of employee engagement levels across the organisation and at service level. Survey questions remain static, enabling trends to be identified. A survey was not completed in 2020 because of the additional workload generated by the coronavirus pandemic.

3.23 The latest employee engagement survey was completed in December 2021, when the Investors in People survey was completed. The online survey results benchmark favourably with the last assessment (completed in 2018), with most indicators 0.2 – 0.4 points above the

2018 survey. Results of the survey are detailed in Appendix E of this report.

- 3.24 Targeted surveys are often also completed to explore specific areas of concern. Recognising the impact of the pandemic and the impact of remote working for many, a communication survey was undertaken in 2020 to understand what changes/support mechanisms were needed in the organisation. From this, a weekly manager bulletin was developed to improve speed and consistency of communications and this has been delivered throughout the last 18 months to cascade core messages to all staff. In addition the monthly manager seminars have continued to be held during the pandemic and the channel shift to Microsoft Teams has enabled the invite to be extended to include all teamleaders and for the meetings to be recorded and published on the intranet.
- 3.25 The Communications survey achieved a high number of responses (561) and enabled communication methods to be targeted in different ways e.g., weekly manager bulletin for cascade, further action taken on DSE risk assessments and further action taken on the distribution of equipment. Various blogs were also written by our HR Business Partners, to share stories and coping strategies. The Chief Executive video messages were also tailored to address staff concerns.
- 3.26 Of the 561 responses received, 88% of staff said they were having daily communication with their manager, 65% said they were getting information via emails, 83% were getting information from their line manager and 62% are getting information from aspire. 90% of respondents said they knew how to raise concerns relating to covid.
- 3.27 Two further employee engagement surveys have been undertaken in 2021. The first survey asked our people to tell us their views on work location, post pandemic. This data is helping to shape a hybrid working solution for Chesterfield Borough Council.
- 3.28 The second survey was an early Investors in People assessment, completed for those staff working in the contact centre who had TUPE transferred into the council in January 2021 and where it was recognised on transfer that low morale existed. Employee improvement plans have been developed following this survey and improvements have been seen in the latest survey results.

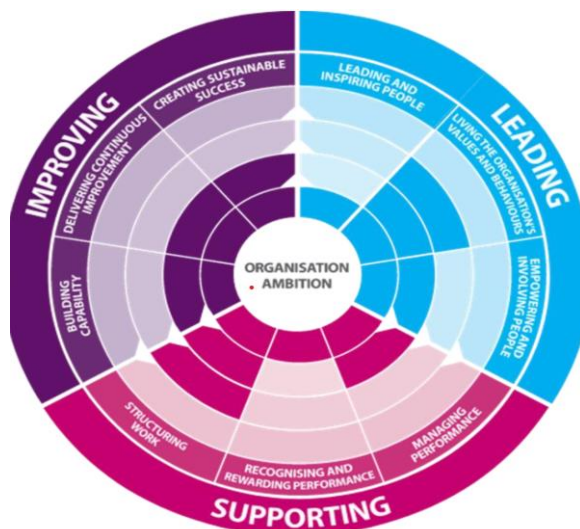
Reviewing our progress against the Investors in People standard

3.29 Chesterfield Borough Council has been assessed as a Gold Standard organisation in the latest Investors in People assessment. The report which details the findings from the assessment is provided at Appendix E.

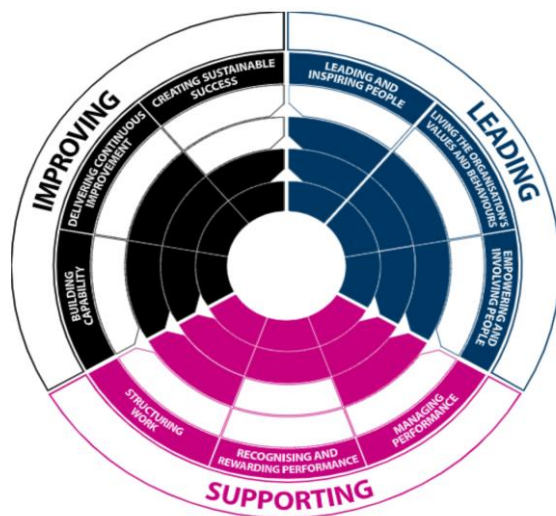
3.30 Diagram 1 below demonstrates the progress which has been made in each of the nine standards from 2018 to 2021. Each wedge of the wheel represents a criterion of assessment and each of the coloured blocks shows the level of maturity which has been achieved, moving outwards from the centre as the organisation reaches greater maturity. Our People Plan ambition was to achieve progress in 6 of these sections by 2023. This has been achieved.

3.31 Diagram 1

Heatmap 2018



Heatmap 2021



- 3.32 Recommendations for areas of further development have been provided by the Investors in People assessor. These can be found in Appendix E, at pages 6 – 8 of the report.
- 3.33 These recommendations will be used to develop the final action plan and to inform the shape of the next workforce strategy. Strategic reviews of our progress against the Investors in People standard will take place in 12 and 24 months, with reaccreditation taking place in 2025.
- 3.34 Service managers will now be provided with the details of their survey results and will develop improvement plans with clear actions to address the areas that our people have told us need to improve. This work will be supported by HR Business Partners.

4.0 **Potential barriers**

- 4.1 The Council has already made good progress in delivering the actions set out in the People Plan 2019 – 2023. Few barriers are expected.
- 4.2 Nationally, work is underway to review pay scales, so that the Chancellor's target National Minimum Wage of £10.70 by 2024 can be achieved. Any work that Chesterfield Borough Council completes to develop a reward and recognition strategy will need to be cognisant to the external national negotiations which are underway. The Council is working closely with East Midlands Councils to keep abreast of national thinking.
- 4.3 Many of our HR policies are due to be refreshed and this may result in recommended changes to existing policies. The speed in which these can be reviewed and implemented will be impacted both by Trade Union availability and HR Business Partner availability. The Trade Unions are working in partnership with the HR team to implement the refresh in a timely manner. Those policies which are heavily in use will be prioritised for review.

5.0 **Future Plans and areas for scrutiny involvement**

- 5.1 Work will begin on development of the next workforce strategy during 2022, and scrutiny members could support this activity by providing feedback as the strategy is defined.

5.2 Scrutiny members may also wish to keep oversight of the Council's performance against the newly developed People Plan.

6.0 Implications for consideration

6.1 The People Plan underpins the successful delivery of the Council Plan.

6.2 There are no additional financial implications created by the People Plan 2019 – 2023. It is expected that the new workforce strategy will include a review of pay and reward, so that changing pay legislation relating to the National Minimum Wage can be met.

6.3 Training and development activities are funded by a centralised training budget which is set annually. Learning and development needs are prioritised by the Corporate Leadership Team to ensure that funding levels remain appropriate.

6.4 The People Plan supports skills development internally and externally in the Borough, by using apprenticeships, the Kickstart scheme and by working in partnership with schools.

6.5 It is proposed that the future delivery of the People Plan will be governed through the Council's Organisational Development Programme. A separate report will shortly be provided to Cabinet to provide more information on content of the proposed Organisational Development programme.

Document information

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| Report author |
| <i>Rachel O'Neil, Service Director – Digital, HR and Customer Services</i> |
| Background documents |
| These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared. |
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| Appendices to the report | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Appendix A | People Plan 2019 - 2023 summary document |
| Appendix B | High level achievements |
| Appendix C | Annual progress against delivery plan |
| Appendix D | Channel Shift progress |
| Appendix E | IIP accreditation findings |