WILTSHIRE COUNCIL   **AGENDA ITEM NO.**
STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE
4 November 2020

Agile deployment of staff

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on new approaches being introduced through the "agile workforce" workstream of the organisational recovery programme to support more flexible deployment of staff within the council.

   Note – Staffing Policy Committee will be provided with an update on the council's Organisational Recovery Programme at the start of the meeting to set this paper in context.

Background

2. Two outcomes of the council's Organisational Recovery Programme are that we can deploy our staff and resources to meet business need as well as ensuring that the council is financially sustainable.

3. In July, CLT introduced controls to manage spending, increase savings, reduce costs and improve efficiency. These controls included a halt on spend on new agency workers or extensions to existing contracts and a freeze on all external recruitment unless approved by CLT.

4. This has meant that wherever possible vacancies are being filled through the identification of resource from within our existing workforce. Since spending controls have been in place external adverts for council roles have reduced from an average of 36 live per week to 6 live per week. This approach, alongside other spend control measures, has been successful in helping to address our current financial position.

5. Through the response to the pandemic, it has become clear that there is strength in having confident, skilled people who are willing to work in an agile and flexible way. This has enabled us to deploy staff from across the organisation into critical service areas with a specific business need and support our most vulnerable residents.

6. We therefore need to ensure that council policies and processes provide continuing opportunities to enable existing staff across the organisation to develop and upskill so that we can be flexible as an organisation and react to where there is a business need in the future.

Main considerations

7. A number of current policies and processes (such as acting up, additional duties and secondment policies) already support the flexible movement of staff into

vacant roles, however through the organisational recovery programme additional approaches have been identified to further support a more agile workforce.

8. CLT approved these approaches on 1 October 2020, and they were discussed with the recognised Unions on 21 October 2020.

9. Steps are now being taken to implement the following approaches and to update related policies as required.

More flexible recruitment to roles

10. The council's recruitment policy currently requires applicants to fully meet the person specification of the role. This ensures that we maintain our policies in relation to equal pay.

11. However, it is recognised that, in some cases, staff within the council have relevant experience, skills and behaviours which would enable them able to quickly adapt and be able to undertake the role, but who do not fully meet the person specification.

12. New approaches are being introduced to support staff to move more easily into these roles:

More flexible use of upskilling apprenticeships

13. Our apprenticeship policy already enables managers to offer upskilling apprenticeships where there are standards which exist that relate to the "target post" – i.e. the vacancy they want to fill. This enables existing council staff to undertake an apprenticeship but remain on their existing grade (rather than move onto an "apprentice" pay rate).

14. Currently we mainly use these to support staff in their existing roles to undertake leadership and management training, although in some services they are offered as a way for more junior staff to take the first step onto a qualification-based career path.

15. HR business partners already support managers in considering apprenticeships to fill any vacant role within their structure. However, in some cases managers are unwilling to consider apprenticeships even where there are relevant standards, because it requires them to support 20% off the job training.

16. Going forward, should a role not be able to be filled internally by someone who already has the relevant skills / knowledge, and where an appropriate apprenticeship standard exists, managers will be required to convert the post to an apprenticeship and initially attempt to fill this internally.

17. To widen the pool of potential applicants our apprenticeship policy will be amended to enable managers to offer upskilling apprenticeship roles as secondments to internal staff who are currently in roles one grade higher than the target post within a different service area, protecting their pay for the period of the apprenticeship.

18. At the end of the apprenticeship there would be an expectation that they moved into the target post, on the normal pay for that role. However, they would have gained a qualification which would enable them to then progress along an otherwise unavailable career path.

19. If there are no internal applicants CLT will look favourably on requests to recruit externally into apprenticeship roles.

Development secondments and career step roles

20. Where no internal applicants fully meet the person specification for a vacant post and where there is no ability to convert the vacancy to an apprenticeship, a new approach is being introduced which will enable the recruiting manager to interview potential applicants who do not fully meet the person specification and assess their potential suitability for the role.

21. Where they identify a candidate who they feel would quickly be able to develop the required skills to fully undertake the role they could offer the role as a secondment and agree how the candidate will develop into the role with clear milestones and measures. At the end of the secondment, where the member of staff was fully meeting the person specification for the role, they could then be confirmed into post permanently.

22. Where an internal applicant would not be able to fully undertake the role but has potential to develop these skills the recruiting manager will be supported to create a lower graded "career step" role with a "portfolio" of knowledge, skills and experience that need to be gained before moving fully into the role. This may include supporting them to gain a professional qualification where this is required for the role.

23. The council's secondment policy will be updated to detail these additional options and provide template development portfolios and secondment letters, as well as outlining the steps that will be taken should staff not achieve the required level within the role within a specified timeframe.

Implementation of generic business support roles

24. The job family approach was introduced and implemented to support service re-design as part of the organisation design process and to provide clarity regarding the levels and grading of posts.

25. Within each job family there are generic role profiles which describe the levels of work and competence required for each required grade within that job family. Each role profile is supported by a role description, written by the service, which provides service specific details and give examples of the duties of the role.

26. We currently have a total of 149 role descriptions covering grades D to F of the Business Support job family.

Business Support job family	Number of role descriptions	Staff currently held against these role description

Grade D	34	80
Grade E	47	88
Grade F	68	169
TOTAL	**149**	**337**

27. Going forward a single set of generic role descriptions will be used to recruit any grade D, E, and F grade business support roles across the council. Where vacancies for these roles arise in any service, they will be required to use the generic role description, adding a context statement about the team and service that is advertising the post. There will also be a model template advert for these generic roles to ensure consistency and save managers time.

28. This will mean that all newly recruited business support staff on one of these grades will be on the same role profile and role description, regardless of which service they initially work in. This will increase the flexibility to move staff between services and directorates should the need arise. It will also save managers time as they will not need to write bespoke role descriptions.

29. In addition to the D, E and F grade roles a generic grade H business support / admin team manager role description will also be produced which managers will be encouraged to use unless, working with their HR Business partner, there is deemed to be a genuine reason why this is not suitable for use within their service area.

30. Staff recruited into these generic roles will understand from the start that there is a requirement for flexibility and expect that they could be moved between directorates, both to support service delivery and for their own development.

31. As services review their structures in the future there will be a requirement to align all staff on business support roles to these generic role descriptions.

Creation of deployment talent pools

32. We know, from staff who have been redeployed during the Covid response, that this has provided opportunities to develop skills, increase resilience and confidence and opened potential careers paths that they may not have previously considered.

33. Since March 2020 many staff been redeployed both formally (for example into the Wellbeing Hub and to support with business grants) and informally within services into priority Covid work.

34. One of the difficulties has been in identifying staff in the right locations with the right skills and experience and this has involved a largely manual process, requiring significant HR team resource to support.

35. To encourage staff to consider internal career moves and to enable relevant staff to be proactively contacted when a vacancy or redeployment opportunity arises the recruitment team are developing the use of talent pools.

36. The talent pool functionality will be developed in our Application Tracking System (Talentlink) and is a free module within this system, with the only costs being the resource to set up and then administer the talent pools going forward.

37. The aim is to have talent pool functionality available to pilot in November, and part of the work of the agile workstream will to plan the launch of this to both staff and managers in order to ensure successful roll out.

Extending internal opportunities to Wiltshire care leavers

38. Due to the limited number of roles which are being made available for external recruitment, and in line with our Corporate Parenting responsibility, we have extended the criteria of who can apply for roles advertised as "internal only" to enable Wiltshire Care Leavers who meet the person specification for the role to apply for them.

39. Care leavers are required to identify themselves through the application process and will be shortlisted against the person specification and go through a competitive interview process in the normal way.

Recommendations

40. That Staffing Policy Committee note the approaches that are being developed to support the more agile deployment of staff, in support of the council's Organisational Recovery Programme outcomes.

41. Staffing Policy Committee note the extension of internal opportunities to Wiltshire Care Leavers to support the fulfilment of the council's Corporate Parenting responsibility.

42. Recognising that there is not another committee meeting until January 2021, Staffing Policy Committee delegate approval of policy changes to the relevant senior officer (the Director of HR&OD) in order to enable approaches outlined in this paper to be implemented as soon as possible, following consultation and agreement with the recognised unions where applicable.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None