

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology****Corporate Services Committee : 2 November 2022**

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**Subject: Council Workforce Plan 2017-2022: Update & Annual Action Plan 2021/22**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's workforce planning activity for 2021/22.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- Note progress during 2021/22 in delivering against the Council Workforce Plan;
- Note the workforce profile as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and key changes;
- Note development of planned actions for 2022/2023, linked to the People First Strategy & 5 year plan and
- Note the Delivery Plans for each service include workforce annual action plans.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** The Council Workforce Plan 2017-2022 was approved by this Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017, having been developed in line with the Council's revised Strategic Planning Framework.

- 3.2** The Council Workforce Plan is subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that it remains effective in delivering required outcomes and responsive to any changes in circumstances which subsequently arise. This report contains 3 sections and associated appendices:
- The progress and achievements made over the last year (Appendix 1);
  - The current workforce profile, examining any changes (Appendix 2); and
  - Future actions for Workforce planning 2022/23 linked to the People First Strategy (Appendix 3).

- 3.3** Progress updates will be submitted to Corporate Services Committee on an annual basis, outlining progress to date and actions for the year ahead. The progress update at Service Level (Appendix 1) and the high level action plan for 2022/23 (Appendix 3) are attached.

- 3.4** Workforce annual action plans, for each Chief Officer Area are submitted to the relevant Committee as part of the Delivery Planning process. Separate reports are tabled at this committee.
- 3.5** Whilst separate planning processes exist in relation to West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP), appropriate alignment is in place to ensure that Council employees working within HSCP are included and benefit from all Council Wide initiatives and actions.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The attached (Appendix 1) updates on the annual workforce planning action plans for Services for 2021/22 under the areas addressed as follows:
- Addressing the gap between current workforce supply and predicted future demand;
  - Addressing the gap between current and required workforce capabilities;
  - Improving resilience within teams;
  - Ensuring clear, effective and stable organisational design;
  - Addressing workforce diversity objectives; and
  - Improving use of technology and new ways of working.

#### **4.2 Key Achievements**

- 4.2.1** As expected, the principle focus over the last 2 years has been the COVID-19 pandemic, our response and recovery, adapting to ever changing legislation and guidance to ensure continued delivery of front line services and employee support. This has resulted in many changes to service delivery, working styles and individual service plans provide details of changes, challenges and achievements.
- 4.2.2** Services are reviewing and improving use of relevant data and the changing environment to predict future demand and explore opportunities to deliver services differently and more effectively. Where relevant, services considered the opportunities and benefits of cross service working and shared services as appropriate.
- 4.2.3** In 2021, West Dunbartonshire Council was named one of Scotland's most flexible employers thanks to a range of initiatives designed to improve employees' work-life balance. The award, from charity Flexibility Works, ranked the Council in the Top 10. Judges were impressed with the high volume of the Council's workforce already working flexibly throughout the organisation, and praised the fact that all employees have a right to flexible working from their first day of employment with the application process supporting this from pre-employment stage. This commitment to flexibility will continue to adapt and evolve to support employees to work in a more agile and flexible way.

**4.2.4** In 2020/21, the innovative Fit for Future (FfF) service review process was introduced to further improve service delivery and identify potential savings. This programme uses a range of tools which encapsulate service design, and employee engagement. This information is gathered and reviewed to identify improvements, to ensure services are efficient and make best use of resources. The FfF approach supports and promotes better use of data, informed decision making, improved people practices and the identification of opportunities for digital solutions.

**4.2.5** Each review informs the next and these are going from strength to strength, developing a robust and effective process across services. To date, 6 reviews have been completed:

- FfF1 – Waste Services
- FfF2 – Working 4 U
- FfF3 – Repairs Contact Centre
- FfF4 – Procurement
- FfF5 – Building Standards
- FfF6 – Housing Voids & Allocations

A seventh FfF review is being conducted for Facilities Management and Catering and this will be completed by the end of 2022.

**4.2.6** Surveys, self-evaluation and quality improvement exercises also continue to provide beneficial insight into areas for enhancement and have informed associated action plans. Services continue to work in a more cohesive fashion, promoting a one council approach in projects such as Integrated Housing Management System, Digital Transformation and Employee Wellbeing.

**4.2.7** In recent years the council has placed great emphasis in supporting the development of the workforce, improving digital skills, embedding 'be the best' conversations, introducing skills passports and training plans whilst building resilience and career planning into service plans. Now, working more remotely, the need for these interactions is even more apparent and guiding managers to support their teams remotely has been a focus and will continue to be a priority.

**4.2.8** The introduction of the Digital Skills Support Framework aims to ensure all employees have access to the support and information they need to grow and develop their digital skills both as an employee, for their role, and as a citizen of Scotland. There has been a marked increase in usage of the online learning platform (ilearn) and work continues around building and developing its modules and capability, particularly around reporting and accessibility. Fit for Future reviews continue to activate learning programmes where appropriate.

**4.2.9** With an increased number of employees currently working from home, the continued development of online employee engagement practice is essential.

Trickle, a digital platform for employee engagement is being further developed and informs new advances. It has been rolled out across 56 teams and currently has 1316 users. A programme of work is planned to promote Trickle and increase usage across Council commencing in September 2022.

- 4.2.10** A full on-boarding review was intended however this was paused due to other work priorities and resources. This project sought to review the systems and processes around recruitment, from attracting the right candidates to appointment and integrating and supporting a new employee into the organisation. The intention being to create a positive inspiring, informative and seamless journey from application to appointment and the first stages of employment. Whilst initial work commenced, this project has now been incorporated into the People First Strategy and associated 5 year plan commencing in 2022 with a spotlight on recruitment and on-boarding in years 1 and 2. An induction App was also created to push out helpful organisational information that would assist employees in the first few months. Further promotion, development and analysis of use is required.
- 4.2.11** Since its' launch in late 2020, the workforce planning console has been successfully rolled out to the senior management network and continues to be the key source of workforce information. This allows managers to see their workforce information using real time data which has set West Dunbartonshire Council ahead of others, has supported better workforce planning and understanding whilst removing the need for report requests as they have been replaced by the console. Continuous improvement allows for feedback and development of this console with further developments being undertaken this year.
- 4.2.12** Throughout the Pandemic the Organisational Development, Change and Digital section has continued to adapt, redesigning how support is provided to managers and employees. The wider implications for the working environment following the pandemic, and innovations in technology, mean this is a key turning point in how we develop and deliver learning for the organisation. Significant work has been undertaken to redesign all internal delivery workshops and programmes to enable virtual facilitation, and incorporate latest practice and research including learning and support for digital skills, hybrid working and wellbeing. Additionally, work is also underway to review and update the behavioural frameworks, ACHIEVE and People Management, in line with current thinking and practice, including integration of digital skills and modern leadership.
- 4.2.13** Building on the positive equalities work already demonstrated such as flexible working and disability confident, a detailed action plan has been developed and is being progressed. This ambitious plan sets out how the equalities actions including how the responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty can be better met. The vision is to create and promote West Dunbartonshire Council as an inclusive organisation that reflects the wider community. The action plan straddles many facets, including data and system development, communication, learning and development, policies and

procedures with a focus to refine, ensure continuous review and improvement, reducing and removing barriers to employment for minority groups and implementing positive action. This year actions focused on data collection and verification with the Be Seen, Be Heard campaign, Improving information on our intranet and mandatory training, signing up to the Violence & Harassment Treaty and being part of the Equally Safe in Practice Pilot scheme.

**4.2.14** With a revised approach to supporting employee wellbeing implemented in 2019/20, the focus through 2020 - 2022 has been to consolidate the key changes made to the infrastructure of the Employee Wellbeing Group and the associated communication channels thereby realising the benefits brought by these changes. This included but was not limited to clearer lines of communication through the Wellbeing Advocate and Wellbeing Manager groups, to ensure the right support was available to employees at the right time. The pandemic highlighted the importance of continuing to support employees' mental health and, as a result, a rolling programme of learning opportunities, with targeted wellbeing content, were provided that enabled employees to reflect on and build their resilience during what was a professionally and personally challenging time. There have been welcome improvements in the Local Government Benchmarking Statistics related to attendance which reflects the work in this area and in 2021/22 79% of employees stated they felt valued by the organisation.

**4.2.15** Employee engagement has been key in driving the employee wellbeing agenda forward with feedback from Wellbeing Advocates, Trickle (the employee engagement app) and pulse surveys informing the range of supports that were available. The introduction of the Winter Wellbeing Toolkit and the Wellbeing Round ups have provided a clear single point of reference for employees to access resources that support their physical and mental wellbeing as well as offering learning opportunities to support the different ways of working that have been adopted over the last 17 months. Additionally, the last year has seen employees being further encouraged by senior leaders to take small and important steps to take care of their wellbeing. Blogs from Chief Officers and the Chief Executive have stressed the importance of employees taking regular breaks, getting away from computer screens and working flexibly where possible to highlight that the Council values employees and the work they do. This work contributed to the Council Flexible Employers Award in 2020/21 and being shortlisted for Best Health and Wellbeing Strategy in the UK wide HR Excellence Awards.

**4.2.16** Full details of the progress made against workforce planning actions across Services are contained in appendix 1.

#### **4.4 The current workforce profile,**

**4.4.1** The workforce profile as at 31/3/22 is attached in Appendix 2, with comparisons made against the previous year and commentary on trends. The main observations are detailed below:

- 4.4.2** When compared to the same period last year, there has been a headcount reduction of 27 across the council. This change is accounted for by a reduction in fixed term contracts of 25. Although there was an increase of 17 permanent contracts, the reduction also stems from 19 less apprenticeships. Reviewing the comparison data the overall workforce has steadily declined with the bulk of the reductions in Supply Distribution & Property and within Teams in the HSCP, Community care and Mental Health, Addictions and Learning Disabilities.
- 4.4.5** There has been a continuation of growth in permanent employment, which is a positive development, providing security and stability in times of uncertainty. This is however likely to change in the future as monitoring of the workforce is indicating further reductions in headcount and both permanent and temporary contracts.
- 4.4.6** The overall sex profile remains largely unchanged with an overall split of 27.1% male and 72.9% female.
- 4.4.7** There has been a 4.9% increase in turnover from 8.3% last year to 13.2%. Between 2016 and 2018, the turnover was between 8.6 and 8.7%, this reduced to 8% in 18/19 and further reduced to 7.9% in 19/20. The Pandemic and turnover in vaccination centres contributed to this.
- 4.4.8** This year the data showed that there is an increase in the percentage of employees working past the age of 65 (3.9% to 4.3%) and has steadily increased over the last 3 years, supporting the national profile of employees choosing to work longer for various reasons. The flexible working practices available in the council support this through flexible retirement, more flexible or part time working arrangements, retaining experience to support workplace transition.

#### **4.5 Workforce Planning Actions for 2022/23**

- 4.5.1** Commencing in 2022/23, a 5 year People First Plan has been developed focusing on key improvements of the Employee Life Cycle with spotlights on the following:
- Year 1 – Recruitment
  - Year 2 – On Boarding
  - Year 3 – Development
  - Year 4 – Retention
  - Year 5 – Recognition
- 4.5.2** The People First Strategy will build on work already undertaken, analysing all aspects of recruitment from attracting candidates to integrating a new employee into the organisation and demonstrating our positive culture whilst at the same time incorporating the aspects of the Fair Work Convention. Part of this project will involve influencing how the Council is viewed and rated as an employer in order to attract and retain key skills and provide a workforce

which can meet our service delivery requirements. This is paired with the development work, embedding and continuing to improve the exit interview process providing insights into the environment within services. Trends and feedback from this work will identify and inform future actions.

- 4.5.3** An increased focus will be on workforce planning actions which facilitate the achievement of the People First Strategy concentrating on supporting the internal and attracting the external recruitment markets, increasing and devising employee development opportunities, succession planning and development of talent pools and career development paths with a focus on increasing the diversification of our workforce.
- 4.5.4** The Council is currently developing a new 5 year Strategic Plan with Service Delivery Plans aligned to this. Workforce Actions plans will be embedded into service delivery plans and be featured under the Priority 'Our Council' and reported within Service Delivery plans mid and end of year.
- 4.5.5** In order to simplify the reporting and support the considerations around workforce planning in line with the People First Strategy the Workforce Priorities have been revised to 4 for 2022/23 as follows:
- 1. Our People (Workforce Profile)** - Ensure resilience and engagement of the workforce.
  - 2. Recruitment & Retention** - Current and predicted future workforce gaps are addressed and core skill sets retained.
  - 3. Structure & Roles** - Service Structure and delivery model/s are stable (robustly supported by job evaluation and governance), fit for purpose and future requirements;
  - 4. Skills & Capabilities** - Current and future skills gaps and capabilities are addressed.

Resilience (including continued Covid recovery), equalities and improved use of technologies and new ways of working remain imperative and will therefore be considered within and across the 4 priorities.

- 4.5.6** Appendix 3 provides further detail in relation to the revised workforce planning Priorities and their aims with a high level Workforce Plan linked to the 5 Year People First Strategy. Work will be undertaken with Services to ensure these initiatives are considered within their workforce plans and reflected in service specific actions. Cognisance will be taken of service level feedback in relation to activity and outputs of the People First Plan to inform the development and implementation of future actions ensuring service needs are met.
- 4.5.7** With the workforce planning console embedded into service planning processes, this year will focus on continuous improvement of data and improving the organisations future focus with the incorporation of finance data, concentrating also on projective data, leavers, recruitment and equality information.

- 4.5.8** The Workforce Planning Framework will be reviewed in order to simplifying processes and further embed key workforce planning strategies. Guidance to managers will support this to further enable the workforce planning function.
- 4.5.9** The Fit for Future Reviews programme will continue across services, supporting and promoting better use of data, improved decision making and better people practices, fully utilising existing systems and technologies to improve service delivery and improving services for our citizens.
- 4.5.10** Continuous improvement initiatives, such as Lean six sigma, service design, coaching and mentoring and leadership development have been successfully embedded and will continue as core organisational deliverables. Services will continue to promote and engage in cross organisational working, and explore the opportunities that this provides, including the potential for retraining of employees into other areas. To support current budget gaps and future proof the plans for service delivery, succession planning and talent management will be key in further supporting this.
- 4.5.11** A significant area of development will be the digitalisation programme for the organisation, managed through the Digital Transformation Board and chaired by the Chief Officer for People & Technology. Digital developments have increased tenfold with the COVID pandemic. The work already carried out in this area greatly assisted with employees benefiting from improvements to their digital literacy over recent years. All employees and Elected Members working from home during the pandemic have benefited from the launch of online collaboration tools such as MS teams, Zoom etc. and this will continue to improve and evolve with the rollout of MS365.
- 4.5.12** To ensure employees are not digitally excluded, the focus on digital literacy and skills will continue. The already highly successful Excel and Outlook courses provided by West College Scotland continues supporting improved data usage, understanding and promoting new and efficient ways of working. The Digital Skills Support Framework will also expand this to ensure every employee has access to digital skills support and information.
- 4.5.13** The organisational culture and environment had changed markedly during the preparation to move to offices of the future. This has continued to evolve and improve in the last 2 years and will continue with a focus on wellbeing, working from home, employee engagement and promotion of more flexible working styles. As a forward thinking, innovative and creative council, we will continue to promote agile working where possible and support employees and managers across all service to embrace and embed the various flexible working options. As at the beginning of September 2022 7.15% of employees were working remotely, 6% classed as mobile between office, sites and home and 12.46% Flexibly at different locations. More office based employees are now working remotely and all employees have the opportunity for more flexible styles of working. It does however remain imperative that employees continue to come together for collaborative working face to face when



required.

- 4.5.14** Monitoring the changing working environments will continue as employees are supported to work from various locations, more flexibly whilst balancing their work and personal commitments. This is considered essential not only in supporting employee's wellbeing but also key to improved productivity.
- 4.5.15** Continued support of employees in a more virtual environment using trickle, webinars, on line training, surveys, employee forums and support to ensure that employees feel engaged, supported and valued will continue. Peer support groups/communities have been developed to allow for collaboration and networking e.g. wellbeing advocates and MS Teams ambassadors
- 4.5.16** Communication frameworks changed and evolved to support the organisation through the pandemic. This infrastructure will continue to be utilised to improve communication frameworks for national and local messages, improving the information transfer across the organisation and ensuring the workforce is well informed
- 4.5.16** The BAME profile has been identified as an area of focus for the Council's equality outcome to 'attract more diverse talent' by reviewing policies and practices to ensure that there are no barriers to entering employment for these groups as set out in the Equalities Mainstreaming report. A Respect at Work Policy is being developed with key stakeholders in relation to Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation and feeding into a Resolution Framework planned for later in the year.
- 4.5.17** The Equalities agenda will focus on the Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) programme, an innovative employer accreditation programme to address sex inequality and violence against women and girls. Its aim is to support employers in reviewing workplace culture and ensuring that policies and practices are enhanced to address the barriers that women face at work. With 4 levels of award from Development to Gold the Council will commence work towards Foundation level by July 2023.
- 4.5.18** In 2019/20 a verification exercise was carried out to understand the composition of the workforce using the Workforce Management system. In order to increase reporting, a further exercise including a manual, paper exercise is planned for this year, previously delayed due to the Pandemic.
- 4.5.19** The Council has held the Armed Forces Gold Award for actions in support of Armed Forces, reservists and their family members since 2019. The Council will be due to re-validate the gold award in 2024 however actions to further support this community will be considered within our People First Strategy and equalities work including encouraging the recruitment and retention of Armed Forces Reservists and their family members. A fuller report detailing activity around this topic is scheduled for October Council Meeting.

**4.5.20** The main vehicle for pushing Service Redesign programmes is the Fit for Future Programme but this is also supported by the Automation Team and Digital Transformation Board. The introduction of MS365 will bring many opportunities and access to tools that services will require support with to ensure they can maximise benefits from the available applications. Service managers are reviewing workforce plans, structures and digital solutions to support service delivery and these are supported by the People & Change team in a number of ways such as change management, project support, training, automated forms, service design, employment advice and recruitment.

**4.5.21** Now integrated into the organisational priorities, the Employee Wellbeing Strategy continues to focus on priority areas, responding to the needs of the organisation. There will be regular progress reports to PMRG and JCF including monitoring the impact of the resulting actions.

**4.5.22** Full details of the 2022/23 High level action plan are attached as Appendix 3.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** Integration of workforce planning within wider organisational planning processes ensures that workforce issues are effectively identified and addressed. This supports the Council's commitment to its' employees in relation to all aspects of their employment, ensuring that employees' needs are met and that efficient and modern services are effectively delivered both now and in the future.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**6.1** There are no additional financial or procurement implications associated with this report. There are funding streams associated with the initiatives mentioned in this report but these are already secured.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** A robust approach to workforce planning ensures that the Council identifies current and future needs and identifies potential risks to the council at an early stage. This proactive approach allows strategies and policies to be developed that ensure the continued delivery of best value services.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** A full EIA is not required in relation to the Council Workforce Plan as individual assessments will be undertaken in relation to each area of work referred to as it is progressed.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1** The Strategic Leadership Group have been involved in the development of the plan through preparation of the Delivery Plans and this report and associated appendices have been provided to the relevant trade unions on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Further consultation will take place in relation to the future review of the Workforce Planning Framework with the Joint Trade Unions.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** This contents of this report and the workforce planning process supports the Council's aim to make the best use of both financial and human resources resulting in a positive impact upon service provision.

### **Victoria Rogers**

Chief Officer - People & Technology

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022

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<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Council Workforce Plan Progress update 2021/22 Appendix 2 – Workforce Profile 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 Appendix 3 – High Level Workforce Action Plan – 2022/23
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Council Workforce Plan 2017-2022 Strategic Lead Area Workforce Plans 2017-2022 Strategic Workforce Planning Framework
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	None