

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology****Corporate Services Committee: 8th September 2021**

Subject: Council Workforce Plan 2017-2022: Annual Action Plan 2020/21**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 2020/21 in delivering against the Council Workforce Plan;
- Note the workforce profile as at 31st March 2021 and the key changes;
- Note the planned actions for 2021/2022; and
- Note that 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 29th 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;
- The current workforce profile, examining any changes over the last year (Appendix 2); and
- A high level action plan for 2020/21 (Appendix 3)*.

*This will continue to be reviewed regularly due to the COVID pandemic and the impact of this on services and planning.

- 3.3 Progress updates are submitted to Corporate Services Committee on an annual basis, outlining progress to date and actions for the year ahead. The progress update (Appendix 1) and the action plan for 2021/22 (Appendix 3) are attached.

- 3.4 Workforce annual actions plans, for each Chief Officer Area are submitted to the relevant Committee as part of the Delivery Planning process.

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 annual action plans highlight the areas identified to be addressed over the 5 year period of the Council Workforce Plan, 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 Progress over the last year

4.2.1 As expected, the principle focus over the last year has been the COVID-19 pandemic and our response, 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 and individual service plans submitted to committee 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 are considering the opportunities and benefits of commercialisation, cross service working and shared services as appropriate.

4.2.3 In 2021, West Dunbartonshire Council was named as 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 from hundreds of entrants from all over the country. 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 now facilitating this. 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 service review process was introduced to further support continuous improvement. This programme uses a range of tools which encapsulate service design, maturity assessments and employee engagement. This information is gathered and reviewed to identify improvements, to ensure services are efficient and make best use of resources. Each review informs the next and these are going from strength to strength, developing a robust and effective process across services. To date, four reviews have been carried out in Waste, Working 4 U, Housing and Repairs contact centre and Procurement with a priority list that will eventually cover all services. This approach supports and promotes better use of data, informed decision making and improved people practices.
- 4.2.5** 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 work in a more cohesive fashion, promoting a one council approach in projects such as Integrated Housing Management System, Digital transformation and Employee Wellbeing.
- 4.2.6** 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 and team 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 in the coming year.
- 4.2.7** With a high percentage 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 27 teams and currently has 673 users with a full phased roll out across the council to be completed by June next year.
- 4.2.8** A full on-boarding review was intended to be delivered in 19/20 and while the project team was set up and initial meetings took place, this project was delayed by other priorities and carried forward to 21/22. This project seeks 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 is to create a positive inspiring, informative and seamless journey from application to appointment and the first stages of employment. The group recommenced in August. An induction App was also created and has gone live to push out helpful organisational information that would assist employees in the first few months and this will be launched after the summer recess.
- 4.2.9** Since its' launch in late 2020, the workforce planning console has been successfully rolled out to the senior management network. This allows managers to see the workforce information for their reports and uses real time data direct from the Workforce Management System to assist decision

making. Continuous improvement allows for feedback and development of this console and a running programme has been developed. It also allows for the removal of, now unnecessary reports, that have been replaced by the console.

4.2.10 The 'Inspiring Leaders Programme' will restart this year (it had been halted due to COVID, and the suspension of face to face delivery) and People and Change will continue to support succession planning discussions, the development of leadership competencies and promoting a coaching ethos across the council. There are new leadership development opportunities commencing this year for middle/senior managers to further support succession planning and ensure dynamic leadership across the organisation.

4.2.11 Building on the positive equalities work already demonstrated such as flexible working and disability confident, a detailed action plan has been developed. This ambitious plan sets out how the equalities actions will be achieved over the next 4 years 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 where individuals feel that they can bring their whole selves to work and individuality is recognised and celebrated. The action plan straddles many facets, including data and system development, communication, learning and development, policies and procedures.

With an equalities representative as a key member of the on-boarding group there will be a focus on equalities to refine, ensure continuous review and improvement, reducing and removing barriers to employment for minority groups and implementing positive action.

4.2.12 With a revised approach to supporting employee wellbeing implemented in 2019/20, the focus in 2020/21 was to consolidate the key changes made to the infrastructure of the Employee Wellbeing Group and to realise the benefits brought by these changes. This included but not limited to clearer lines of communication through the Wellbeing Advocates and Wellbeing Managers groups, to ensure that 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, opportunities were provided that enabled employees to reflect on and build their resilience during what was a professionally and personally challenging time. 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 being named as one of Scotland's Top 10 Flexible Employers in 2020/21.

4.2.13 Full details of the progress made against actions are contained in appendix 1.

4.4 The current workforce profile,

4.4.1 The current workforce profile 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 There was further review of the Senior Leadership structure, introducing an agile model as agreed by the Recruitment and Individual Performance Committee on 29th September 2020. The Chief Officer areas are as follows:

- Citizen , Culture, and Facilities
- Education, Learning and Attainment
- Housing and Employability
- People and Technology
- Regulatory and Regeneration
- Resources
- Roads and Transportation
- Supply, Distribution and Property

4.4.3 When compared to the same period last year, there has been a headcount increase of 72 across the council. This change is accounted for by a significant increase in permanent headcount (117) and a decrease of 29 fixed term contracts and an overall reduction of 16 apprenticeships. Reviewing the comparison data it is clear that overall the workforce continues to steadily grow, with the bulk of the increase in Education Learning and Attainment, due to the Early Years expansion and additional funding from Scottish Government for COVID recovery.

4.4.5 It is good to see a continuation of growth in permanent employment, which is a positive development, providing security and stability in times of uncertainty.

4.4.6 The overall sex profile remains largely unchanged with an overall split of 27.3% male and 72.7% female.

4.4.7 Over recent years there has been a gradual increase in men working part time. The percentage of men working part time has increased from 17% in 2015/16 compared to 21.6% in 2020/21. This is a positive development which shows a move to more modern ways of working with men accessing flexible retirement and part time working in ways that were previously not so evident.

4.4.8 Turnover has increased from 7.9% last year to 8.3%. 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. It would appear that turnover is now returning to previous levels of circa 8.5%.

4.4.9. This year the data showed that 3.9% of the workforce were working past the age of 65. This is an increase of 1.4% 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.

4.5 High level action plan for 2021/22

4.5.1 Appendix 3 outlines the high level action plan for 2021/22 identifying many council wide initiatives. These initiatives will feature in the delivery plans of services as appropriate along with their service specific actions.

4.5.2 With the workforce planning console embedded into the service planning process, this year will focus on continuous improvement of data and improving the organisations future focus. Concentrating on projective data and scenario planning while reviewing and simplifying the workforce planning framework and guidance to managers will support this.

4.5.3 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.

4.5.4 Continuous improvement initiatives, such as Lean six sigma, service design, coaching and mentoring and leadership development has been successfully embedded and this will continue now as core organisational deliverables. Services will also 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 future proof the plans for service delivery, continued succession planning and talent management will be key in further supporting this.

4.5.5 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.

- 4.5.6** 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 will continue this year, supporting improved data usage, understanding and promoting new and efficient ways of working.
- 4.5.7** 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 year 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 workstyles. Currently 30% of previously office based employees are now working remotely and all employees have the opportunity for more flexible styles of working.
- 4.5.8** This year there will be 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. Peer support groups/communities have been developed to allow for collaboration and networking e.g. wellbeing advocates and MS Teams ambassadors.
- 4.5.9** The on-boarding review is planned for 21/22 building on the work already undertaken, analysing all aspects of recruitment from attracting candidates to integrating a new employee into the organisation and demonstrating its' culture. Part of this project will also involve influencing how WDC is viewed and rated as an employer. This is paired with the development work, embedding and improving the exit interview process to provide an insight into the environment within services. Any trends will be identified and inform future action(s).
- 4.5.10** An increased focus on supporting the internal recruitment market. Increasing and devising employee development opportunities, succession planning and growing internal talent pools and career development plans.
- 4.5.11** 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
- 4.5.12** Reporting on the changing working environments as employees are supported to work from home, work more flexibly and balance their work and personal commitments, as the country moves into the recovery and renewal phase of the COVID crisis and beyond.
- 4.5.13** Communication frameworks have had to change and evolve 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.

4.5.14 Service Redesign programmes – the main vehicle for pushing this area forward will be the Fit for Future Programme but this can also be 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.

In addition, service managers are reviewing workforce planning, 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.

4.5.15 In 2019/20 a verification exercise was carried out to understand the composition of the workforce with a disability. This was undertaken using the Workforce Management system and a manual, paper exercise was also planned for early 2020. However this was halted due to COVID and now that restrictions are being lifted with recommence.

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

4.5.17 Full details of the 2021/22 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 17th August 2021.

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.

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Date: 11th August 2021

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Council Workforce Plan Progress update
Appendix 2 – Workforce Profile 31st March 2021
Appendix 3 – Action Plan – 2021/22

Background Papers: Council Workforce Plan 2017-2022
Strategic Lead Area Workforce Plans 2017-2022
Strategic Workforce Planning Framework

Wards Affected: None