

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology

Audit Committee: 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

---

**Subject: Best Value Thematic Report: Workforce Innovation**

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the findings of the external audit analysis of the Council's approach to workforce innovation.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and the two accepted recommendations.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The 2023 Local Government Overview notes that councils have never faced such challenges. It accurately reports that demands for Council services have increased in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and funding is continued to reduce in real terms. Workforce pressures are being seen across the country and are particularly difficult when recruiting in a competitive labour market, employee turnover and high sickness absence levels are further increasing pressures. The attached report sets out Forvis Mazar's analysis of the council response to current workforce challenges through building capacity, increasing productivity and innovation.
- 3.2 Given the recognised challenges with funding and limited resources, it is encouraging that the audit evidences many positive initiatives and further reinforces that the approaches taken are aligned with good practice.

### 4. Main Issues

#### **Workforce strategy and priorities**

- 4.1 This aspect evaluated how effectively the council's workforce plan is integrated with its strategic plans and priorities. The audit concluded: the council's workforce planning strategy is aligned with its strategic plan and supports the "our council is inclusive and adaptable" strategic priority. The council could make better use of data available at organisation and service level, and through the workforce planning console, to identify future resource needs and improve succession planning. There is a recommendation associated with this area.

#### **Digital technology and the workforce**

**4.2** This aspect examined how effectively digital technology has been used by the council to support workforce productivity and improve service quality and outcomes. The audit concluded: the council recognises that digital transformation can help it deliver services more effectively and improve productivity. It has made some savings and efficiencies from improvements in how it uses technology. The council is working to improve the digital experience and accessibility for employees and promote a culture of digital awareness.

#### **Flexible working and other innovative staff deployment**

**4.3** This element considered how effectively the council is using hybrid and remote working and other innovative working practice such as a four-day week to achieve service and staff benefits. The audit concluded: the council has a well-established approach to hybrid and flexible working. It has made savings through its use of voluntary severance and early retirement schemes. The council has used its redeployment register to find suitable roles for those displaced by service restructures. There is a recommendation associated with this area.

#### **Developing future skills and capacity**

**4.4** This element assessed the innovative practice the council is using to develop its future workforce capacity and skills needs and manage staff reductions in line with its priorities. The audit concluded: the council faces recruitment challenges and is exploring different approaches. This includes using its graduate programme to resolve difficulties hiring specialist staff. The council can demonstrate savings and benefits from its measures to develop skills and capacity.

#### **Joint workforce arrangements across services and partners**

**4.5** This section considered what progress the council has made with sharing roles or functions across its services and/or with other councils and partners. The audit concluded: the council shares services with other councils in three main areas, with benefits including improved resilience. It is looking to expand existing arrangements and has identified potential for further ICT collaboration.

#### **Measuring the impact of workforce planning**

**4.6** This section considered how effectively the council is measuring the impact of its workforce planning approach. The audit concluded: the council actively monitors the progress of its workforce planning strategic actions and reports progress annually.

### **5. People Implications**

**5.1** Innovative practice is essential in attracting and retaining talent as well as ensuring service delivery is modern, accessible and efficient.

**5.2** Two recommendations were proposed, both of which mirror work planned for delivery in 24/25.

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

**6.1** There are costs associated with innovation and these are currently within budgets.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** There is a risk of failing to invest in adequate resource to maintain the current level of innovation. There are already areas where innovation is restricted due to available resources.

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

**8.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** Discussions with the Trade Unions featured as part of the information gathering by External Audit colleagues.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** The proposals set out within this report will assist the Council to deliver against its strategic priority 'Our Council – Inclusive and Adaptable' by contributing to the underpinning objective: 'Our Council is adaptable and focused on delivering best value for our residents'.

**Victoria Rogers**

Chief Officer People & Technology

Date: 7 August 2024

---

### **Person to Contact:**

**Appendices:** 1. BV Thematic Report

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Wards Affected:** None