

## Workforce Strategy - Update

### Report by Gary Fairley, Head of Finance and Integrated Service Support

#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Council with an update on the Workforce Strategy (2017-2022). It sets out progress made since the introduction of the Strategy in December 2017 to ensure Midlothian Council continues to have a workforce that is able to deliver positive outcomes for the people of Midlothian.

#### 2 Background

Midlothian Council along with all other Councils in Scotland is required to complete a workforce strategy. Both Audit Scotland and the Council's external auditors expect to see a workforce strategy that clearly sets out plans for the workforce over the medium term. The 2019 Best Value review acknowledged the Council has a Workforce Strategy and the need to develop that further to complement delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council has clearly articulated the objectives of its Workforce Strategy, specifically, to ensure it has the right **people** in the right **place** at the right **time** and who have the right **skills, knowledge** and **attitude** to provide excellent services confidently and competently. The Strategy clearly articulates a range of actions that the Council already has, and continues to, deliver, to achieve these key objectives.

The Workforce Strategy is complimented by individual service-level workforce plans. These plans ensure that both the short and longer term strategic objectives of the service are articulated, future workforce requirements are clearly understood and relevant interventions are in place or planned to secure the required workforce to deliver services. The Council recognises however that ongoing work is required in this area to ensure its service-level workforce plans continue to align with the longer terms service demands, change programme and reflect the financial context the Council operates in. The service-level workforce plans must continue to be at the heart of service planning if we are to fulfil the commitments we have made to our communities.

In June 2019, Council approved a new Senior Leadership Structure. The appointments of the Executive Director posts are now complete including the Chief Officer posts within the new People and Partnerships Directorate with the appointments for Place in progress.

### **3 Workforce Strategy – Outline of progress to date**

The Council's Workforce Strategy (2017-2022) was approved by Council in December 2017 and can be found here [Midlothian Council December 2017 Workforce Strategy](#)

The Workforce Strategy has thirteen themes. For ease, each theme is detailed below together with details of the significant progress that has been made within each theme since the introduction of the Strategy in December 2017.

The Workforce Strategy is supported by a range of workforce data. The Council-level insight is set out at Appendix 1. Each service also has this level of detail available and which can be interrogated to give a greater understanding of service-specific workforce issues.

#### **3.1 Workforce Theme 1: Employee Terms and Conditions**

- Reduced in-work poverty through implementation of the Investing in our Workforce agenda;
- Implemented a suite of progressive people policies. A number of new policies have been developed including Gender Based Violence; Sexual Harassment Policy; Menopause Policy and; Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy;
- Reduced staff absence levels (Q2, 2018: 3.56 working days lost. Q2, 2019: 2.12 working days lost per employee);
- Implementation of a revised Business Travel Policy to support sustainable travel models;
- The Council has maintained the Healthy Working Lives Award at Gold level which it has held since October 2013. The elements required for this award are now very much embedded in Midlothian Council;
- The recent introduction of the Wellness@Midlothian agenda is centred around the wellbeing of the people employed by Midlothian Council and so sits at the heart of the Workforce Strategy and works in synergy with the Great Place to Grow campaign aiming to create a step shift in our organisational culture creating new ways of thinking and increasing the engagement levels of our employees. Many exciting initiatives have taken place including the creation of a Mental Health First Aiders Forum, wellness classes, training courses for managers and staff on mental health and building resilience. These actions have started to embed understanding and support of mental health and wellbeing at the heart of how we do things at Midlothian; and
- Introduction of an enhanced package of non-financial benefits for local government workers.

#### **3.2 Workforce Theme 2: Employee Performance**

- The Council's Performance Management process 'Making Performance Matter' is embedded throughout the Council for local government workers with approximately 3500 local government employees, including those involved in frontline service delivery, participating each year. The process links the Council's priorities to every role not only considering if objectives were achieved but *how* they were delivered. In 2018/19 29.5% of participating employees have

been recognised as delivering 'High Performance' and a further 7% as 'Outstanding';

- Ongoing dialogue and support between employees and managers has secured 'below standard' ratings over the period at less than 0.6%;
- Well established performance management system in place for those on SNCT terms and conditions, i.e. PR&D; and
- The Council has a well-developed and embedded employee engagement practice throughout the Council with an employee survey response rate for 2018 of 50%, an increase from 42% in 2016. It is recognised however that there is still room for significant improvement in engagement practice in parts of the workforce and the Council needs to develop and implement tailored interventions to achieve this.

### **3.3 Workforce Theme 3: Recruitment and Retention of Employees**

- The Council's Recruitment & Selection policy is currently subject to major review to ensure the Council appoints individuals who are versatile and adaptable, have skills that are in short supply and are capable of challenging and driving organisational change. It will also focus on adopting accountability profiles with key outputs or result areas to establish a truly flexible approach to work;
- A great deal of work has been undertaken by services to reduce the reliance on agency workers, contractual overtime and fixed term employees;
- The November 2018 employee survey highlights positive feeling about the organisation in general with people reporting a sense of pride about working for Midlothian Council. People reported a positive awareness of the challenges the Council faces over the next few years; and
- A Council-wide corporate induction programme was launched in September 2019 to ensure our greatest asset receives a warm welcome to the organisation and the expected standards of behaviour are set at an early stage. Fifty new employees have attended the two sessions that have run to date.

### **3.4 Workforce Theme 4: Reshaping the Workforce**

- Successful implementation of a Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement Scheme in 2017;
- Fundamental review of the Policy for Managing Change, including the introduction of a robust process for managing and supporting those employees who find themselves in a redeployment situation;
- A significant number of service reviews have been undertaken to ensure the Council transforms to meet the changing needs of the community we serve and the financial challenges facing the Council; and  
As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy work continues to progress alternative means to deliver services in tune with the 9 Drivers for Change.

### **3.5 Workforce Theme 5: Health & Social Care Integration**

- A separate workforce plan exists for the Midlothian Integration Joint Board which captures specific actions with respect of the workforce within the Council, NHS and the independent and voluntary social care partners.

### **3.6 Workforce Theme 6: Expansion of Learning and Childcare**

- In response to the expansion of early learning and childcare provision to 1140 hours by 2020 a workforce development and training team plan has been developed incorporating; commitment to recruit, train and support 120 Modern Apprentice Childcare Development Workers in early learning settings; develop and roll out a programme of training for Senior CDW staff to develop skills to support staff and Modern Apprentices; develop and deliver the courses in the Early Learning and Childcare Professional Development training directory; develop and deliver induction and core training for all CDW's and Senior CDW's; support and co-deliver Nat 5 childcare and play based courses in all high schools and facilitate work experience for all Nat 5 students; provide support and training opportunities for childminders; develop and provide 60 HNC childhood practice places for Midlothian Council staff looking to change careers; support and co-deliver LLE childcare courses with LLE staff.

### **3.7 Workforce Theme 7: Building Leadership Capacity**

- Through its new Chief Executive, the leadership journey, built on the Leadership Pathways Programme contained within previous People Strategies, sets out clear expectations for the Council's leadership cohort including the recently initiated 'Uplifting Leadership' Programme. This Programme will contribute to the ongoing development of a leadership cohort that can raise performance and respond to the challenges the Council faces; and
- Shift change in internal communication to staff ensuring employees are well informed on the organisation's priorities and progress and thereby positively impacting employee engagement.

### **3.8 Workforce Theme 8: Digital Leadership**

- The Digital Office are in the final stages of consolidating findings and plan to present the findings back to CMT early in the New Year. The findings from the digital maturity assessment and the user satisfaction survey (that is due to be issued imminently) will help to reshape and refresh the current digital strategy for Midlothian Council.

### **3.9 Workforce Theme 9: Delivering Excellence and Talent Management**

- This theme provides a key link which ensures that service-level workforce plans are at the heart of service planning. The focus will be on ensuring service-level workforce plans have the appropriate interventions to develop our employees, develop talent for both current and future roles with a focus on opportunities to bring on board young people; and
- Investment has been made in developing the Leadership cohort with the introduction of the 'Uplifting Leadership' programme.

### **3.10 Workforce Theme 10: Employee Relations**

- Collaborative working is ongoing with our Trade Union colleagues ensuring they are fully consulted in the creation of people policies, service reviews and other matters affecting our workforce;
- Regular meetings between the trade unions and HR to ensure joint working on matters affecting the workforce;
- Structured meetings with the trade unions on a regular basis e.g. Works Committees, Divisional Consultative Group, Corporate Joint Working Group, Midlothian Negotiating Committee for Teachers and Joint Consultative Group;
- Significant progression on the lifelong learning agenda with a considerable number of courses having been and continuing to be delivered including: IT, mental health, financial awareness, supervisory skills, dyslexia awareness, meditation, communication. The lifelong Learning committee are Open University Champions ensuring staff have the best access to online courses;
- Through the lifelong learning committee monies have been secured from the Scottish Government's Workforce Development Fund with the following positive outcomes:
  - 24 employees from Commercial Services attending a train the trainer 4 day course at Edinburgh College;
  - 80 employees attending a Building Resilience 1 day workshop; and
  - 8 employees attending a Building Resilience Train the Trainer 3 day course to allow us to train and support employees across the organisation.

### **3.11 Workforce Theme 11: Midlothian as an Equal Opportunities Employer**

- Taken positive steps to reduce the gender pay gap (currently 2.32% down from 4.58% in 2015/16);
- Addressed all historic equal pay issues;
- Early integration of the Scottish living wage into its pay structure;
- Implementation of Gender Based Violence Policy, Sexual Harassment policy and participation in the ground breaking Equally Safe at Work accreditation process; and
- Significant review of the Council's Time Off policy and Flexible Working policy to promote flexible employment practices.

### **3.12 Workforce Theme 12: Managing an Ageing Workforce**

- Through a significant review of our range of people policies, a flexible approach to managing staff is strongly encouraged;
- The Council's Flexible Retirement Policy continues to be well utilised; and
- The Wellness@Midlothian agenda will continue to focus on initiatives and interventions specifically relating to the ageing workforce.

### 3.13 Workforce Theme 13: Volunteering

- The Council recognises the excellent contribution volunteers made – staff and volunteers working together for the benefit of our communities is a key strength in our approach to making Midlothian ‘a great place to grow’. Volunteering is a force for change – making a difference together. The implementation of a new ‘Volunteering’ policy, created by a cross Council and Third Sector Joint Working Group provides a framework and guidance for supporting those who volunteer and help Midlothian Council staff to grow the number of volunteer opportunities for those of all ages.

## 4 Conclusion

The Council has a clear understanding of where it is in relation to its Workforce Strategy and has clearly articulated plans for what it needs to do over the medium term to ensure it has a workforce to deliver outstanding services to our communities.

It is vital however that our Leaders continue to review and align their service-level workforce plans to ensure future workforce requirements relate to the Council’s strategic objectives including its financial priorities. Gap closing strategies must continue to be sought relating to recruitment, selection, training and retention with meaningful performance measures and targets for evaluation.

## 5 Report Implications

### 5.1 Resources

There will be financial issues which will arise as the workforce is reshaped and the required interventions progressed.

### 5.2 Risk

There are risks associated with partial/non delivery of the actions contained within the Workforce Strategy and accompanying service-level workforce plans. If the actions are not realised then this will have an impact on the future workforce and the Council’s commitment to achieve the right outcomes with our communities.

Effective measures to reshape and reduce the workforce are increasingly critical in supporting the Council to manage services within the resources available.

### 5.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

#### **5.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

The Workforce Strategy supports employees to be in a position to perform to the standards that are required to meet the performance outcomes identified in the Single Midlothian Plan and Service Plans. It supports a change in the workforce to ensure future service delivery.

#### **5.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

The Workforce Strategy will help ensure the Council can continue to have a workforce that supports a preventative approach when working with our communities.

#### **5.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

The recognised Trade Unions were consulted on the content of the Workforce Strategy and continue to be consulted and involved in the interventions and actions resulting from the strategy.

#### **5.7 Ensuring Equalities**

Assessing and responding to equality issues is a key aspect and is taken into consideration when implementing all aspects of the Workforce Strategy themes.

#### **5.8 Supporting Sustainable Development**

There are no direct sustainability issues arising from this report.

#### **5.9 Digital Issues**

There are no direct digital implications arising from this report.

### **6 Recommendations**

Council is recommended to:-

- Note the significant progress that has been made in terms of implementing key aspects of the 13 Workforce Streams;
- Note the review of existing service-level workforce plans following implementation of the senior leadership review;
- Note the commitment to continue to consult with the recognised trade unions on the further implementation of the Workforce Strategy and accompanying service-level workforce plans.

**Date 17 December 2019**

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