

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **21 February 2024**

Report Subject: **Workforce Strategy 2021-2026**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S Thomas - Leader / Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J. Prosser – Head of Organisational
Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	14.12.23	07.02.24			18.01.24	21.02.24		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide progress against the Council's Workforce Strategy delivery plan for 2022/23, progress to date in 2023/24 and deliverables for 2024/25.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's Workforce Strategy 2021-26 ('the Strategy') was endorsed at Council on the 29th July 2021 and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Strategy is a key enabler in delivering the Council's ambition, the Council Operating Model, and key priorities. It has a focus on the future, integrating the Council's vision, objectives and financial planning arrangements. It links service outcomes with the workforce required to deliver them and an on-going understanding of how the workforce should look in the future through continual review, re-alignment and measurement of how outcomes are achieved. The Strategy aims to ensure we have the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right level, at the right cost and on the right contract to deliver its short and long-term objectives.
- 2.3 The five-year Strategy is underpinned by an annual delivery plan that supports its implementation. The delivery plans are developed and prioritised following engagement with key stakeholders including senior management and trade union representatives. Engagement will be with Headteachers in the new year following the end of the action short of strike.
- 2.4 The Strategy sets out five priority outcomes for the workforce:
- Healthy culture, effective leadership
 - Excellence in management across the Council
 - A highly motivated and engaged workforce
 - Evidence based decision making, planning and delivery
 - Modern 'Employer of Choice'

2.5 The delivery plan for 2022/23 focused on supporting the future working model - “Agile Services delivered by an Agile Workforce” and set out the key actions under each of the priority outcomes. The key actions delivered in 2022/23 are set out in Appendix 2 and include:

- Annual workforce profiles published and an internal review of recruitment and retention, diversity and age in the current workforce to support the development of directorate workforce plans.
- Introduction of a new workforce planning framework. All Directorates have workforce plans that feed into the Workforce Delivery Plan for the Workforce Strategy.
- A leadership development model has been developed and discussions have taken place with a neighbouring authority with a view to developing a joint delivery model.
- A review of agile working has been carried out which engaged the workforce through a pulse survey, a series of focus groups, a dedicated session with trade unions to gain feedback and suggestions for improvement. Facilitated workshops with the Corporate Leadership Team and Wider Corporate Leadership Team focussed on developing actions to improve senior leadership visibility and the opportunity for collaboration across the workforce.
- Review of the Agile Working and Flexible Working policies commenced.
- Equal Pay audit commissioned and carried out with the draft report due summer 2023.
- Further development of the ITrent HR/Payroll system with the implementation of working patterns and a development plan in place in readiness for 2023/24.
- A facilities review was completed of the Agile Working hubs. Action plans are in place for all hubs to make improvements and a management structure developed as part of the Corporate Business Support Service.
- Medium / long term actions developed as part of corporate decarbonisation plan.
- Continued focus on wellbeing with for example; Weekly Wellbeing bulletins published including a range of provisions for supporting staff wellbeing, Care First awareness sessions for managers and Mental Health Wellbeing sessions for employees.
- A range of policies were developed and implemented which included a suite of Disciplinary policies, pay policy, employer supported volunteer policy.
- Annual review of sickness absence reported to CLT, Scrutiny and Cabinet.

2.6 The delivery plan for 2023/25 has been developed and builds on the progress (appendix 3) of the previous year and takes account of the key national, regional and local drivers, workforce trends and financial challenges that will be facing the Council. In addition, it has taken account of the Wales Audit Office Review, Springing Forward which was reported in 2022/23. The new framework for workforce planning prioritises the recommendations above and was rolled out at a directorate level, key themes and actions from this process have been aligned to the Strategy priority outcomes. These include recruitment and retention, workforce planning and wellbeing. The delivery plan for 2023/25 is attached at Appendix 3.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report and delivery plan has been reviewed and prioritised with the Corporate Leadership Team and was considered at the Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee on the 18 January 2024. The Committee supported Option 1.

3.2 **Option 1:** The Cabinet to review and note the progress against the 2022/23 delivery plan and endorse the 2023/25 delivery plan.

3.3 **Option 2:** The Cabinet to review and note progress against the 2022/23 delivery plan and considers the 2023/25 delivery plan making suggestions/amendments for improvement.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Strategy aligns to the Corporate Plan and supports the delivery of Council priorities. It has been drafted in accordance with, and to comply with key employment legislation such as, the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and to promote and support workforce wellbeing.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**

There are no direct budget implications with the review and development of the delivery plan. Any financial implications linked to the priorities will be scoped out and considered as part of the implementation of the delivery plan.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

The Strategy is a strategic plan to ensure the Council has a fit for purpose workforce to deliver services in line with Council priorities for the future.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The workforce is critical and the most important resource the Council has in delivering services to the community. The Strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment to its workforce and aims to create a good place to work – developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our community is critical in the Council's ability to deliver ambitious outcomes.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

The health and safety of the workforce is a key strand in the Workforce Strategy and delivery plans. There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Performance information and data as at the end of March 2023:

Headcount 2953, Council 1650, Schools 1303

Labour turnover Council 15.05%, Schools 8.55% (academic year 2022/23)

Council – 34% agile workers, 8% homeworkers, 58% service based (frontline workers)

69% of those who declared describe themselves as British, Welsh, Scottish, English, Northern Irish – 500 staff with no declaration

Average days lost per employee due to sickness 15.45 days with the top 5 reasons for sickness:

- 30.94% psychiatric/mental health
- 21.1% Musculo-skeletal and injuries
- 11.21% Covid 19
- 6.93% gastro- intestinal
- 5.72% infectious disease

33% short term sickness and 67% long term sickness

6.2 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

There has been engagement with the Corporate Leadership Team, Elected Members and Trade Unions in the development of the Strategy. The Corporate Leadership Team has shaped and prioritised the delivery plan in line with Council priorities.

6.3 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

The Strategy is a 5-year commitment aiming to create a good place to work.

6.4 **Preventative focus**

Not applicable

6.5 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Continued collaboration at a local, regional and national level to ensure that delivery actions in the Strategy are modern and in line with any legislative changes.

6.6 **Integration (across service areas)**

The Strategy will continue to promote a 'one Council' approach.

6.7 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

Medium to long term workforce actions have been developed as part of the corporate decarbonisation plan.

6.8 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

The Strategy will actively promote equality of opportunity and diversity in the workforce and as an organisation.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Strategy has an annual delivery plan and this will be monitored on an annual basis by the Corporate Leadership Team, Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2026

Appendix 2 – Workforce Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-23 Headline Achievements

Appendix 3 – Workforce Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-24 and 2024-25