

Minutes

**Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy
Overview Committee
Tuesday, 7 November 2017
Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



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Come into effect on: Immediately (or call-in date)

Members Present:

Councillors Scott Seaman-Digby (Chairman)
Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)
Jazz Dhillon
Wayne Bridges
Duncan Flynn
Henry Higgins
Robin Sansarpuri

Apologies:

Councillors Beulah East and Raymond Graham

Officers Present:

Chris Scott, Service Delivery Manager (Early Intervention Services for Children and Young People)
Mike Talbot, Workforce and Organisational Development Manager
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr East and Cllr Graham.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 were approved as a correct record.

36. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that all items would be considered in public.

37. EMPLOYEE INDUCTION AND RETENTION REVIEW

The Council's Workforce and Organisational Development Manager was in attendance at the meeting to speak to the Committee as part of the review's witness session.

The Committee heard that the Council monitored both voluntary and involuntary turnover on a quarterly basis, and that turnover of staff is beneficial to an organisation as new staff members can bring with them new ideas, which improves innovation, while a low turnover rate can lead to stagnation. Furthermore, "exit interviews" were ready to be implemented at the Council, which will help Human Resources to better understand the reasoning behind employees' decisions to leave the organisation.

It was confirmed that the target for voluntary turnover within the Council is 10%. Last year, the Council saw a 10.5% turnover rate, and this year it currently stands at 11%, although the period that historically has seen the most turnover has already passed, so the figure may yet decrease. By including involuntary turnover in this turnover figure, it rises to roughly 18%.

Members heard that staff turnover in specific areas of the Council were monitored and reported on a monthly basis. This allowed the organisation to implement retention schemes in areas of concern that ensured the Council did not see higher rates of staff turnover than desirable. One such scheme took place in Children's Social Care, an area which nationally saw a high turnover rate, and involved financial remuneration for those employees who confirmed that they would remain at the Council for a specific period. This "tie-in" was one year, as it was agreed this worked better than two years, which was used previously. These retention payments were also used for critical employees who were halfway through delivering a project. In these cases, a retention payment could be placed on an employee, based on a percentage of their salary and post, and this payment would be repaid in full if the employee left the organisation before delivering the project.

It was noted that 64% of staff were on permanent contracts, but there are trends to suggest that agency staff are actively looking to remain agency workers, and were not looking for permanent employment. The Committee heard that, nationwide, people are choosing higher pay rates over better job security, and despite not being eligible for pension contributions, agency staff were still able to receive annual leave and other benefits, while also having pay parity with permanent staff. However, it was confirmed that long-term employees preferred the whole benefits package they receive over the hourly rate, and instances of employees looking to become agency workers are rare.

Responding to Members' questioning, it was confirmed that situations had arisen where a senior member of a team had been headhunted and had taken some of the Council's employees with them to their new place of employment, but it was noted that this has also been a recruitment tactic by the Council as it used existing networks to find potential staff members.

The Workforce and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that the overall package received by employees was very competitive, the pension contribution was unmatched, staff received better annual leave than the average that increased after five and ten years of service, and employees received four days of free parking, which was rare in London. It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Employee Forum to review other staff benefits, such as online discounts and

reduced ticket prices for events. Furthermore, the provision of wellbeing activities at the Council, such as yoga, was good for work culture. Members also heard that the Employee Forum was involved in allocating money to improve the Civic Centre and work environment.

With regards to remuneration, the Committee were informed that benchmark salaries in key policy areas were monitored to ensure that neighbouring authorities did not increase pay and challenge the organisation for key employees. Meanwhile, the Council remained in the top quartile of social care payers, which eliminated money as a potential hurdle when employing staff in these key roles.

Councillors heard that potential improvements could be made to flexible and mobile working as this was considered very attractive to new roles in today's society and would improve competitiveness, particularly among social workers, who received very flexible working at other organisations.

It was confirmed to Members that the Council maintained a strong commitment to professional development, and access to training, among other development opportunities, was very advanced. Responding to questioning, the Workforce and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that with regards to the Council funding employees' Professional Education Training, the Council enforced a two-year "tie-in" period.

The Committee was informed that it was important that the culture and reputation of the organisation was visible to staff, and that there was a level of self-fulfilment that came with working for the Council and engaging with residents.

Members agreed that the witness evidence received at previous meetings suggested that the induction process was fit for purpose, and the intranet system was working well, but retention strategies may require enhancing. It was, however, noted, that there was not much in the induction process with regards to new staff members engaging outside their own department.

The Committee noted that a series of questions regarding staff induction and retention were to be sent out to private companies in the Borough to better understand the approach taken by private companies to these two aspects of staffing, and this evidence would be collated ahead of the next meeting and incorporated into the review.

Councillors noted that the review was heading towards its final stages, with recommendations and the final report due to be brought before the Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

RESOLVED: That the witness evidence was noted, and the review progressed to its next stage.

38. HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING REVIEW

At the meeting of the Committee on 21 September 2017, approval was given to the Committee's next review topic on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in the Borough.

The Council's Service Manager for Targeted Programmes in Early Intervention and Prevention Services was in attendance at the meeting to speak to the Committee as part of the review's witness evidence.

Members heard that Targeted Programmes is a division of the Early Intervention, Prevention and SEND Services, commissioned to engage children, adolescents, young adults and adult parents who are vulnerable to negative outcomes in relation to their life experiences. It responds to priority groups identified as being at risk of social, health, and economic exclusion, including young people who self-define as LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Questioning). Within this context, Targeted Programmes was commissioned to deliver two key programmes that sought to benefit the lives of LGBTIQ young people: 'OUTreach' drop-in service, and 'KISS' Sex and Relationships Education Programmes.

The Service Manager confirmed that, in 2013, a report entitled "An Assessment of Homophobic Bullying and Health and Wellbeing amongst Young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in Hillingdon" was produced, and identified a range of concerns amongst LGBTIQ young people; the report was well received but never formally adopted into policy. Early Intervention, Prevention and SEND Services responded to the recommendation that stated the Council should "offer a social network group for young LGBT people in a safe environment", through the establishment of new public-facing services for LGBTIQ young people.

The Committee was informed that the Council established a LGBTIQ programme in partnership with MOSAIC Youth Centre, which was branded 'MOSAIC Hillingdon' and launched in September 2014. The programme was delivered as an informal drop-in activity, but despite the activity of the Council and MOSAIC to publicise the programme, an initial level of interest was not maintained. The loss of staffing capacity to deliver the programme and MOSAIC Youth Centre's funding challenges meant that it was agreed to terminate the partnership, and the programme closed in 2016.

It was noted that in early 2017, Targeted Programmes established a directly-managed programme for LGBTIQ young people, provisionally branded as 'OUTreach LGBTIQ Programme'. This programme is currently delivered on a bi-weekly basis for an hour, and to date, seven young people are engaged on a sustained basis. The Target Programmes' Sexual Health and Wellbeing Programmes unit also deliver a range of sexual health and relationships education programmes for young people, which are commissioned by secondary schools, young people's centres, residential children's homes, and young adult hostels in the Borough. These programmes address issues relevant to all young people, have engaged over 850 service users since April 2017, and are delivered using 'sexual identity-neutral' language to avoid a presumption of heterosexuality and present LGBTIQ identities as being of equal validity with a range of sexual orientations.

Members asked how many schools, youth clubs, or other outside bodies had been visited, and officers stated that this figure would be confirmed and the Committee following the meeting.

Responding to questioning from Members, officers confirmed that the youths targeted by the OUTreach programme were aged eight and above, but if this became an issue for those below the age of eight, they could also be approached. The sexual health and wellbeing programme was targeted to those youths aged 12-13 and over, to ensure that it was developmentally and age appropriate. It was also confirmed that the interaction between young LGBTIQ people was a balancing act, as inclusiveness was welcomed but many preferred to attend groups for LGBT youths only to improve their confidence, before speaking to other groups that include heterosexual youths. The programmes work to help develop individual capabilities, and confidence is very important to this.

It was noted that secondary school pupils would be more likely to come into contact with LGBTIQ youths, as pupils of this age move towards peer groups and better understand their identity, often socialising with more like-minded people, but it was vital to ensure a culture of acceptance and normality around LGBTIQ issues. The Service Manager confirmed that society on the whole is now much more accepting of LGBTIQ people, and the work of the Targeted Programmes Team tended to take place in problematic areas, with those involved in the programmes more likely to be socially isolated.

The Committee commented that it was vital for positive affirmation at these programmes, and asked whether youths who engaged in homophobic behaviour or language were ejected from the youth clubs. It was confirmed that this would be the case, and the youth groups were fostering a culture of acceptance, noting that there were signs at the youth clubs which informed anyone who engaged in abusive behaviour that they would not be able to remain at the group.

Councillors heard that in the autumn of 2017, the OUTreach programme offer will expand to a weekly session, to be delivered in accordance with consultation outcomes with current service users, and the OUTreach satellite programme at Uxbridge College will continue to be developed in partnership with the college Student Union. Target Programmes will develop its preventative education programme to offer a defined 'menu' of issues-based services for young people, and within this 'menu', a wider range of LGBTIQ-specific workshops will be created to specifically address Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic bullying.

The Committee agreed that it was vital to be more proactive talking about LGBT issues, and ensure that intolerance was not tolerated.

RESOLVED: That the witness evidence was noted, and the review progressed to its next stage.

39. UPDATE ON REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION - SAFETY AT THE CIVIC CENTRE

At a previous Committee meeting, Councillors requested an update on the 2011 review into "Personal safety of Members of the Council when meeting with members

of the public". Comments were sought from the Group Offices and officers responsible for security at the Council, and the comments were outlined in the report.

The Committee noted the responses, and commented that bag checks and physical checks did not take place when members of the public attending meetings at the Civic Centre. It was requested that this suggestion was presented to the next Whips meeting.

Councillors agreed that when safety issues arise, they are dealt with very well by officers and security staff.

RESOLVED: That the report was noted, and the following action taken by officers in consultation with the Chief Whips:

1. Remind Members, that if they had concerns over a particular constituent they are in contact with, the Group Offices can confidentially check the Council's Restricted Persons Register to establish whether further contact should be made;
2. Update the Personal Safety Protocol booklet to include the above, along with the emergency phone line and details of rooms with panic alarms;
3. Re-send the updated Personal Safety Protocol;
4. Recommend to the Head of Democratic Services that a workshop for Members regarding personal safety be added to the 2018 Induction arrangements; and
5. Consult on bag checks and physical checks for members of the public who are attending meetings at the Civic Centre.

40. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED: That the forward plan was noted.

41. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018

RESOLVED: That the work programme was noted, subject to the following changes:

- The report regarding Volunteering in Hillingdon be moved to the meeting on 7 March 2017.