

## Minutes

**Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy  
Overview Committee  
Thursday, 15 June 2017  
Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



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### **Members Present:**

Councillors Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)  
Beulah East  
Jazz Dhillon  
Wayne Bridges  
Duncan Flynn  
Raymond Graham  
Henry Higgins  
Robin Sansarpuri

### **Apologies:**

Scott Seaman-Digby

### **Officers Present:**

Neil Fraser - Democratic Services Officer  
Chris Mansfield - Deputy Director of Planning and Transportation  
Muir Laurie - Head of Business Assurance  
Nigel Cramb - - Manager, Partnerships and Business Engagement  
Mike Talbot - HR and OD Service Manager  
Darren Thorpe - Strategic Sourcing Manager

## **4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Seaman-Digby (Councillor Richard Mills in the Chair).

## **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 11 April and 11 May 2017 be approved as a correct record.

## **7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

## **8. MINOR REVIEW I - FUTURE REVIEW TOPICS & SCOPING REPORT**

Mike Talbot, HR and OD Service Manager, introduced the scoping report for the first minor review of the municipal year, on the topic of 'Employee Induction and Retention.' Members were reminded that the topic was supported by the Committee at its meeting of 11 April 2017.

Mr Talbot highlighted key points from the report, and Members were informed that in the 2016/17 financial year, the Council's total employee turnover was 17.7%, with 503 staff leaving across the year. The employee headcount at the end of the year was 2840. However, voluntary turnover was 10.3% (293 resignations) whereas non-voluntary turnover was 7.4% (210 leavers), for the reasons as set out in the report (retirement, dismissal etc). It was expected that these turnover figures would remain broadly similar over the next 4-5 years.

Redundancy and efficiency was confirmed to be the most significant reason for non-voluntary leaving, with efficiency explained as the dismissal of a staff member unable to adapt to changing requirements of the role, rather than due to the removal of the role itself.

Members were informed that staff leaving was not always a negative, and that often this allowed the Council the opportunity to undertake staffing and efficiency reviews. In addition, the more staff that left voluntarily, the less staff would need to be asked to leave on a non-voluntary basis. It was highlighted that an ageing workforce could result in stagnation that could prove harmful, and a regular influx of new staff with fresh viewpoints and new ideas was healthy for an organisation.

Staff members were more likely to leave within their first year of service than at any other point, with 23.7% of leavers having less than one year of full service. Additional work was needed to understand why this was the case, though it was suggested that this may be due incorrectly describing the role or Council culture. The exit interview tool, available from July 2017, would provide additional data once live.

Regarding the induction process, the Council utilised an online e-learning system to manage staff induction packages. This was available for new permanent staff, agency workers, and managers. The induction process included a checklist to monitor the delivery of essential information and the completion of required activities. These included health and safety exercises, training policies including data protection, and a meeting with the Chief Executive. Higher graded officers were given a formal introduction to the Hillingdon Improvement Plan (HIP).

Due to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining permanent children and families social workers, an enhanced induction was introduced in the C&YPS directorate, which included a face-to-face meeting with the Director of Social Care and the Deputy Director of Children's Services.

The induction events were confirmed to be on a timed schedule, so it was highlighted that some new starters would need to wait longer than others for certain activities (such as meeting the Chief Executive.) In addition, Mr Talbot clarified that

meetings held as part of the induction process were initially within teams/departments, before widening to include colleagues in other service areas.

Members sought clarity on whether the Council was sufficiently acting on ideas submitted by staff, and whether this could have had an impact on the number of staff leaving. Mr Talbot confirmed that all staff members were encouraged to submit ideas, often via 'money box' suggestions. All ideas would be considered, as it was recognised that innovation was the only way that the Council would be able to properly make the service changes that were required.

Lines of enquiry for the review ahead were proposed as set out in the report. Members agreed to the proposals, and suggested that, if possible, witnesses be sought that included a new starter within their first year of Council employment (3-6 months), an employee with a disability, and someone from the private sector who could provide a comparison to public sector inductions.

**RESOLVED: That the draft scoping report be noted.**

## **9. COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIPS SCHEME**

Mike Talbot, HR and OD Service Manager, introduced a briefing note updating Members on the Council's progress following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and Apprenticeship targets for public sector organisations.

The Committee was informed that the annual apprenticeship target for public sector organisations within scope of the legislation was 2.3% of the total workforce headcount. This included employees within community schools, which was challenging as there was limited opportunity to create apprenticeships within smaller community schools.

The Government had confirmed that employment agencies would be levied 0.5% workforce costs on any workers placed on assignments. Agencies had since confirmed that they were unable to sustain this cost, and would be seeking to renegotiate contracts and placement costs, resulting in passing the financial burden onto Local Authorities and other organisations hosting temporary workers.

There was no penalty for failing to utilise the levy, beyond the loss of the funds, but there were consequences for public sector organisations failing to meet their apprenticeship targets. In such an instance, the organisations would be required to write to the Government explaining why the target had not been met, how due regard for the target had been demonstrated, and what measures were in place to ensure the target would be met in subsequent years.

It had been identified that the Council could 'offset' the cost of the levy by converting vacant posts to apprenticeship posts, due to the relatively lower salary costs required for apprentices. The 18 posts already converted to apprenticeships would enable a workforce cost reduction of £183k.

In addition, existing staff could be re-trained through apprenticeships. In the last financial year, 34 existing employees attended first-line supervisory and

management training funded by accessing government apprentice scheme grants. Similarly, 6 employees were trained in social care, and 18 employees attended business administration and customer care training. It was confirmed that, if this was replicated for the year ahead, using the levy, then these 58 employees would count towards the Council's apprenticeship target. Together with the newly appointed apprentices, this would ensure that the Council achieved the apprenticeship target (excluding schools).

Members sought clarity on whether apprentice roles would go on to be filled by new apprentices, once the previous apprenticeship had been completed. Mr Talbot confirmed that this was the case, with apprentice roles ongoing. However, it was highlighted that the Council endeavoured to retain newly qualified apprentices (dependant on a vacant role being available). Succession plans and contracts with agencies allowed the Council to hold vacant roles until a suitable apprentice completed their apprenticeship.

In addition, Members requested confirmation of whether apprenticeships were offered to local residents. In reply, it was confirmed that most apprentice roles were filled by local residents, though a small number were filled by people who lived outside of the Borough. Recruitment was targeted at local residents via the media and local fairs, and it was felt that local residents were preferable as they were likelier to remain under Council employment once they qualified. Logistics, including travel time and feasibility, were discussed as part of all interviews.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

## **10. CROSSRAIL TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT**

Nigel Cramb, Manager - Partnerships and Business Engagement, updated the Committee on how Crossrail was stimulating Town Centre development. In terms of the wider economic development opportunities being created by the development of the Crossrail scheme, Mr Cramb endeavoured to set the wider context.

From the mid 1970s, Hayes had seen long-term decline in the manufacturing sector, with the most high profile loss being EMI, which employed a workforce in excess of 14,000 and occupied approximately 150 acres. Other prominent employers, such as Fairey Aviation and Nestles, had since closed. However, the growth of Heathrow and airport-related employment somewhat mitigated the impact of the decline of the area's manufacturing industries. Nevertheless, the closure of the factories left Hayes with underutilised employment land, including that of the former EMI enterprise.

Pre-Crossrail, Hayes saw considerable investment in the 1990s and early 2000s, including development of the High Point Village by Ballymore, the creation of the employment park in Blyth Road by The Blackstone Group, JER Partners and Resolution Property, and the former Safeway's headquarters complex, which was developed to become Hyde Park and the home to Rackspace.

Town centres along the Crossrail line, both to the east and west of London, had been the recipients of investment before Hayes and West Drayton, with Ealing a

good example of a town centre that, due to its closer proximity to London, was already benefitting from the potential of Crossrail.

Since then, the proximity to the Crossrail station had been a major factor in investment, seen in the U+I Group's acquisition of the London Gate site in April 2011. The site acquired for the £250m worth of mixed-use development, including residential, commercial and community facilities.

This was followed by a number of other investors such as SEGRO and their residential partner, Barratt London, who had secured the Nestles site and were planning to deliver a mixed use residential / commercial scheme. It was expected that additional residential developments and subsequent employment opportunities would be forthcoming as people moved into the area to populate such developments.

Challenges to the Council included striking the appropriate balance between residential and commercial building development. In addition, the conversion of ageing 'low annual yield' employment sites into residential developments could result in owners only interested in profit over a short time period, rather than year-on-year levels of income. However, it was noted that many of these low yield sites provided a range of local employment. Crossrail's connectivity and speed was expected to increase employment opportunities to some residents, however, it was too early to judge the impact of Crossrail on employment.

Members were concerned that certain areas, such as Pinkwell, had seen significant increases in property and rent prices. This had resulted in some renters, many of whom were subsidised by the Council, being evicted due to being unable to meet their rent obligations. In addition, many new investors in the area were choosing to keep their properties vacant, having only purchased properties in order to sell them on for a quick profit.

In response, Chris Mansfield confirmed that this was a result of the impending Crossrail, together with Central London's need for additional housing being pushed out to Greater London, and that some of these outcomes were inevitable. However, certain areas were being safeguarded from investment as the need for balance of homes vs. workforce areas was recognised. The proposed new SEGRO application, if approved, would include a requirement for a significant amount of affordable housing within the scheme. Such requirements were likely to be replicated in future schemes. In addition, many schemes were now required to be mixed-use, to provide residential, business and community facilities.

The issue of businesses requiring skilled workforces being replaced by comparatively lower skilled industries such as bars and restaurants was raised. Members inquired as to what Hillingdon was doing to promote industries requiring a highly skilled workforce.

Mr Cramb confirmed that whilst Hayes had experienced a change in its employment makeup from the manufacturing heyday of the 1960S there were examples of Hayes based high tech companies requiring a highly qualified workforce. The new Rackspace development and the Central Research Laboratory on the Old Vinyl

factory site would employ a workforce that would be well above entry level, and the Council was supporting similar schemes from U+I Group and other organisations to bring the manufacturing industry back to the area. Evidence of this could be seen from the development of the Old Vinyl site, and it was expected that this development would attract further similar investment moving forward.

Members sought clarity on whether there was sufficient provision for community services such as GPs and schools to cope with the increased residential developments within the area. It was confirmed that research was being undertaken to identify the infrastructure needed to support services such as public health, schools, and public transport, and officers were confident that service demand could be accommodated. Future planning applications would also be requested to include Section 106 contributions to mitigate any negative impact of their development.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

#### **11. LBH ACTION ON MODERN SLAVERY ACT**

Darren Thorpe, Strategic Sourcing Manager, updated the Committee on actions taken by Hillingdon relating to the Modern Slavery Act.

Members were reminded that, following the previous report on Modern Slavery at the Corporate Services and Procurement POC meeting of 2 February 2017, a request was made for an update on the Council's supply chain.

The Committee was informed that the Council's procurement process addressed the issue of modern slavery through documentation, such as the Invitation to Tender and Selection Questionnaire, which sought answers from potential providers / bidders regarding how they abided by the Modern Slavery Act.

With regard to existing contracts, staffing issues such as turnover and pay and conditions, (e.g. zero hours contracts) were monitored, particularly for high risk areas such as Social Care. In addition, officers cooperated with the Home Office where activities such as trafficking or slavery were suspected amongst companies located in the Borough. Any provider found guilty of an incident would be barred from tendering for future contracts.

Hillingdon staff was encouraged to carry out training modules on ethical procurement.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

#### **12. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS REVIEW - TACKLING SOCIAL HOUSING FRAUD**

Chris Mansfield, Deputy Director of Planning and Transportation updated Members on the impact of the review into tackling Social Housing Fraud, undertaken in 2014/15. Mr Mansfield was updating the Committee on behalf of Garry Coote, Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager, who was unable to attend the meeting.

The main findings and recommendations on the review, and their subsequent actions, were relayed to Members as set out in the report.

With regard to the final recommendation, 'that officers be asked to include a Social Housing Fraud Policy within the Council's Anti-Fraud Strategies and Policies', it was confirmed that a draft Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption Strategy had been taken to the Audit Committee in March 2017 for comment, and was still in the process of being updated, for final approval later in the year. Muir Laurie, Head of Business Assurance, confirmed that a Social Housing Anti-Fraud Strategy was to be produced as part of this exercise.

Members requested details of how the team's work in reclaiming council homes was impacting fraud cases moving forward. It was confirmed that a number of benchmarking exercises were being conducted to review performance versus neighbouring authorities, though it was recognised that each authority was unique. It was expected that as the team's reputation grew, instances of fraud would reduce.

Regarding recommendation 3e, Members asked for confirmation that witnesses were counter-signing tenancy agreements, as per the recommendation. In Mr Coote's absence, officers were unable to confirm this, but agreed that an answer would be forwarded to Members after the meeting.

Members asked officers to convey their thanks to Garry Coote and his team for all of their efforts.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That officers ensure an answer to the Committee's question regarding recommendation 3e be forwarded to all Members by email.

**13. FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED:** That the forward plan be noted.

**14. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018**

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be noted.