

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 11TH JULY, 2024

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 19TH JUNE, 2024

“156 UPDATE ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY (DCR) –

The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of current work and progress against the People Strategy and was presented to the Committee by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

The current People Strategy (brought before Cabinet in February 2023) was a key strategic enabler, setting the vision and direction for all people related activity across the organisation.

Aligning with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Five ways of working, it made a clear statement about how the Council valued and treated its staff and the culture it wished to foster. It also outlined how everyone would be provided with a supportive and nurturing working environment to achieve and support the vision of 'Working Together for a Brighter Future'.

The Officer advised that the People Strategy had 3 over-arching themes, strongly aligned to the Corporate Plan, Annual Delivery Plan, Wellbeing Objectives and Project Zero. Those were:

- Redesigning for Responsiveness,
- Striving for High Performance, and
- Driving Employee Experiences.

The Officer drew Committee's attention to the key activities within the above themes, as sectioned within the report, to inform the Committee of progress and provide the opportunity for discussion on future projects and areas for ongoing improvement.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Chair raised two questions as follows:

- Would the Council be looking to develop its recruitment and selection processes to support neurodiverse applicants?
- With there still being gaps within certain occupations across the Council, were the Council making efforts to develop its existing workforce?

In response, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that they were passionate about making developments in the Council's recruitment and selection processes to support neurodiverse individuals and that pictorial analysis of the Council's recruitment processes would be taking place which

could suggest changes to some of the Council's current practices. The Council was already making efforts to grow its current workforce and had seen real success within its Social Care Programme, Fast Track to Care Programme and the Quick Start Programme to date. The Council had also taken steps to increase its apprenticeship programme and to encourage apprenticeships from graduates across various sectors of the Council.

Councillor Carroll then referred to Section 2.32 of the report in relation to diversity networks and expressed their concern that the Council seemed to be continuing efforts to promote the Council's Diversity Networks in contrast to recommendations raised by Welsh Government following a recent independent review panel in March 2024 which found that diversity network schemes were not effective.

In response, the Officer advised that the specific statement Councillor Carroll made from the report they could see working in partnership with the Networks and there was evidence of improvements for the Council's workforce with the establishment and use of its various networks. The Council was not ignoring the UK Government's report but recognised that its networks were not just operating within isolation and would be happy to discuss the matter further with Councillor Carroll following the meeting.

The Leader of the Council also added that they themselves had attended a lot of the Council's networks events and had witnessed them being highly beneficial to the individuals involved first hand. Therefore, current networks had the full support of the organisation to support Council staff. The Leader had recently attended training on being an ally and/or a proactive by-stander which highlighted the importance of political leaders being seen to support all areas of society.

In response to a subsequent comment from Councillor Carroll that the comments of the Leader and Officer appeared to be contradicting each other, the Chair summarised that the Officer and Leader were stating that they were working together and requested that a report be brought back to Committee on the benefits and positive impacts on the Council's diversity networks.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the report as presented, on progress against the Council's People Strategy, feedback provided and discussions on future activity moving forward, be noted.

(2) T H A T the comment of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be referred back to Cabinet as follows:

- A report on the benefits and positive outcomes of the Council's Diversity Networks, as referred to in paragraphs 2.32 – 2.34 of the report, be circulated to all Elected Members of the Council by email in due course.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report to inform Committee of the progress against the People Strategy and future plans moving forward.

(2) To enable the Cabinet to consider the views of the Scrutiny Committee on progress being made under the People Strategy.

Attached as Appendix – Report to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee: 19th June, 2024

Meeting of:	Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	19th June 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Update on the People Strategy
Purpose of Report:	To provide an overview of current work and progress against the People Strategy
Report Owner:	Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	OD and Learning Team
Policy Framework:	The report is a matter for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current People Strategy (brought before Cabinet in February 2023) is a key strategic enabler, setting the vision and direction for all people related activity across the organisation. • Aligning with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Five ways of working, it makes a clear statement about how the Council values and treats its staff and the culture it wishes to foster. It also outlines how we will provide everyone with a supportive and nurturing working environment to achieve and support our vision of 'Working Together for a Brighter Future'. • The People Strategy having 3 over-arching themes, strongly aligned to our Corporate Plan, Annual Delivery Plan, Wellbeing Objectives and Project Zero. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redesigning for Responsiveness - Striving for High Performance - Driving Employee Experiences • This report is brought to draw Committee's attention to the key activities within the above themes, to inform the Committee of progress and provide the opportunity for discussion on future projects and areas for ongoing improvement. 	

Recommendations

1. That Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee consider this report.
2. That Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee consider the progress against the strategy and provides feedback and discussion on future activity moving forward.
3. That Corporate Performance and Resources Committee refer this report and their comments to Cabinet for their consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To make Committee aware of the progress against the People Strategy and future plans moving forward.
2. To enable the Committee to consider the progress and provide the opportunity for discussion.
3. To enable the Cabinet to consider the views of the Scrutiny Committee on progress being made under the People Strategy.

1. Background

- 1.1** The People Strategy was presented to Cabinet and agreed in July 2023 following an extended period of consultation (minute C57 refers).
- 1.2** It set the strategic direction for all People related activity moving forward and was presented alongside a workforce development plan, which provided an outline of activity that would be undertaken and the proposed timelines.
- 1.3** This paper seeks to provide the Committee with the opportunity to review the progress against the workforce plan and in line with the People Strategy.
- 1.4** Whilst the report does not document all of the work undertaken, it seeks to draw the Committee's attention to the key themes and provides an update on the areas of focus for the remainder of 2024.
- 1.5** The People Strategy and wider Workforce Plan are referenced in the Background Papers to this report.

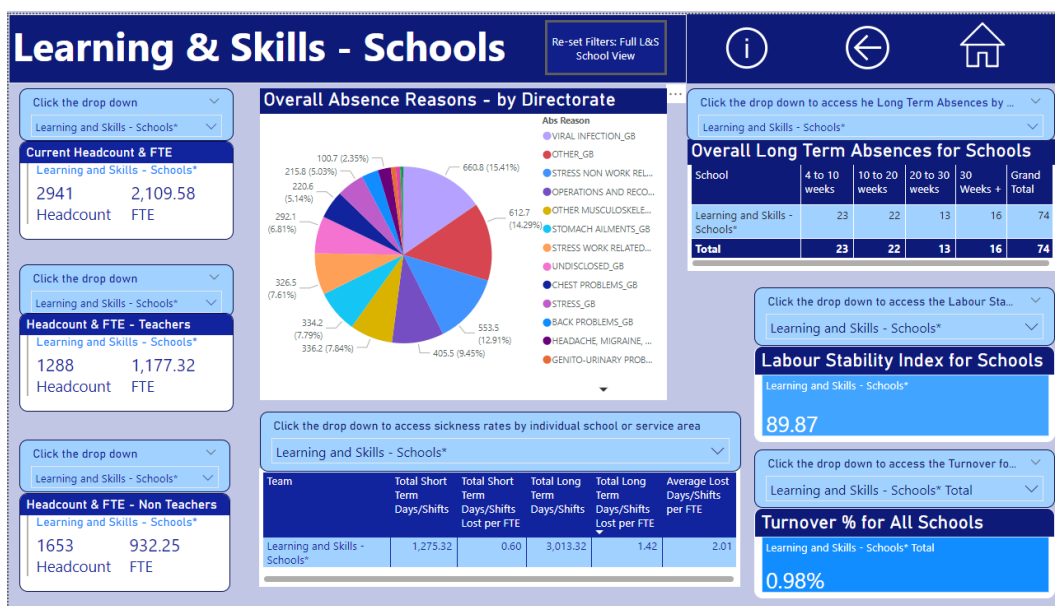
2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** As above, the People Strategy has been focused into three themes, for ease of reference the key progress and development have been grouped within a theme as per the Workforce Implementation Plan. The themes are:

- Redesigning for responsiveness
- Striving for high performance
- Driving employee experiences

Redesigning for Responsiveness

- 2.2** Focusing on our five ways of working, this theme seeks to address our plans for the long term and the alignment of our workforce requirements to our future wellbeing objectives. Through reviewing the ways in which we work, we will further develop our collaborative approach, simplifying our processes.
- 2.3** We will seek to attract and recruit the best people through a modern, open approach to recruitment. This will include improved recruitment materials and development opportunities. Our selection processes will be improved by the use of statistical information to enable departmental recruitment processes to be flexible and reflect their needs.
- 2.4** Work continues to improve our approach to strategic workforce planning across the organisation and will continue to become a key focus in line with the review of our Corporate Plan and be a key aspect of the target operating model element of the Reshaping Programme.
- 2.5** Current progress includes the roll out of Strategic Workforce Planning training, provided to key stakeholders and delivered by the LGA. This includes our strategic leadership team, with an ongoing programme for review in place as part of the senior leadership team's forward working programme.
- 2.6** Our HR business partner team are aligned to support all our directorates (and schools) and attend all directorate DMTs. Across the last year each HR business partner has been working with directorates to establish a SWOT analysis based on operational needs and future plans. This is supported by the development of structured succession plans and the identification of critical skills and single points of dependency.
- 2.7** To support the above, we have developed (and continue to evolve) HR dashboards which are discussed at monthly DMT meetings. This includes key information for departments (and schools) on absence data, establishment figures, vacancy gaps, completion of required training and exit interviews. Dashboards are also shared with our senior leadership teams, again as part of their ongoing forward work programme. This allows a directorate to focus in on areas and make more informed decisions based on evidence. The following provides a snapshot of one of the screens from the dashboard.



- 2.8** With the appointment of our new Digital Learning Consultant within the Organisational Development team working closely with Head of Digital and Digital colleagues, we are also creating a plan for how we can improve digital literacy across the Council. This is aligned closely to the delivery of our Digital Strategy and seeks to maximise the use of our Microsoft 365 licences and digital capability across the Council. Within the HR and OD service, project reviews are underway to improve and streamline our own practices, specifically in relation to recruitment and retention. Our aims are to embrace innovation and digital transformation to streamline our work processes and provide opportunities for the team to become more proactive when advertise vacancies and exploring aspects such as links with education and diversity and inclusion. This work has also been necessary as part of our cost saving initiatives given the pressures on the Council's resources.
- 2.9** Initial reviews have been undertaken across the Council in relation to our recruitment practices. This has seen trial periods, supported by our trade union colleagues in aspects such as amending our initial stage recruitment processes, for example to remove the application form and accept a CV. Trials commenced with recent Heads of Service vacancies alongside vacancies within social care, which has seen an increase in the volume of applications for these roles in comparison to roles which require the completion of an application form.
- 2.10** Moving forward, the next few months will see the establishment of a revised recruitment strategy and a renewed focus on job descriptions and person specifications. Recruitment activity will be more focused on values and behaviours as well as technical competence and will build a strong brand narrative to support departments where recruitment has always been more difficult. For example emphasis will become more on the strong links to supporting our communities.
- 2.11** Work also continues to develop at a pace in relation to the review of our Health and Safety Policies and processes with a tracker developed of all policies which

have been reviewed, are under review or pending review. Regular reports on H&S activity, key risk and audits undertaken are shared with the Corporate Director and Chief Executive for oversight and awareness.

- 2.12** In addition, our forward work programme seeks to continue the development of strategic workforce planning and establish the creation of a People Board to track activity against the workforce plan and develop key metrics for tracking performance. As noted above, this will be a key contributory element to the target operating model theme of the Reshaping Programme. We will also be embarking on key projects to review our agency expenditure and consider more innovative options for recruitment and attraction models which could draw sources of income.
- 2.13** A further project is in its infancy considering how we can maximise the features available following the implementation of Oracle Fusion.

Striving for High Performance

- 2.14** We will ensure the provision of enriching learning opportunities for staff at all levels who wish to develop themselves, balancing role-related skills and organisational need with personal development. We will build and develop a strong cadre of leaders whilst providing wider enriching learning opportunities accessible for all.
- 2.15** Career pathways will be supported by effective role design, succession planning, coaching and mentoring, joining up workforce planning and a sustainable resourcing model.
- 2.16** The following provides updates of specific strands of activity within this theme.

Learning Café

- 2.17** Since a refresh and review of the Learning Café in 2023, the network has increased in numbers and participation, with active groups across 9 themes agreed by the groups attending. These strongly align with our Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan and include aspects such as Leadership & Management and Sustainability. The groups meet regularly to share insights, learning and create a plan for sharing their passion for their topics.
- 2.18** The Learning Café development has seen the creation of the MS365 Handy Hints emails, which provide short videos, hints and tips to readers on how utilise functions more effectively. Feedback has been great, and we are now looking for ways to improve the reach across the Council beyond the Network.
- 2.19** The Development Programme continues, with a variety of learning opportunities having been offered to staff, with a peak across May 2024 aligned with Learning at Work events.

Volunteering

- 2.20** Following the launch of the Volunteer Policy in 2023 we have continued to provide individual and group sessions for staff. The scheme gives (non-Chief Officer) employees one paid day off each annual leave year to volunteer for their

chosen charity or local community project, which support communities within the Vale of Glamorgan.

- 2.21** Staff can support any charity or Vale of Glamorgan Council service that operates within the Vale of Glamorgan Council area. For example, care homes, day centers, education establishments or any other locally focused activity.
- 2.22** Alternatively, staff can volunteer for a charity of their choice with links to the local community upon agreement of their line manager and provided it aligns to our Corporate Plan and Wellbeing objectives.
- 2.23** The 2024 Calendar of Volunteering Events is underway, with a small number of staff engaging with those events already run. Although the number has been small, the feedback from those participating has been good: "I've really enjoyed my volunteer day outdoors planting flowers in Romilly Park with the parks team. They were really welcoming, and it was great to see the results of our hard work at the end."
- 2.24** Our current offering supports our Parks team to get involved in the Floral Harmony event, enhancing the beauty of our formal parks. Previous opportunities have included tree planting, beach clean ups, support for the poppy appeal and work with other charitable organisations.
- 2.25** Further details can be found on the Council's intranet Staffnet pages via the below link.

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/StaffnetPlus/en/Staff-News-Stories/2024/May/Join-Us-for-a-Blooming-Great-Day-of-Volunteering.aspx>

Performance Management and Succession Planning.

- 2.26** The Chief Officer Performance Appraisal Process and wider 'itsaboutme' process have been refreshed and revised, increasing touchpoints for staff members and providing further opportunity for self-reflection, peer review and 360 feedback. Initial feedback has been received for the 2023 year and revisions are being made moving forward to continue to improve the process.
- 2.27** Wider development opportunities continue to include engagement with the Academi Wales Winter and Summer Schools for leadership development and apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation in key areas such as customer service and digital.
- 2.28** The focus in the coming months will be on further development of the Learning Café and Welcome to the Vale (induction) programme. Following recent consideration by this Committee, work is also underway to review aspects of required learning and ensure this is fit for purpose moving forward. A paper will be brought to this Committee on options for required learning during the Autumn period.

Driving Employee Experiences

- 2.29** We wish to support our staff to be creative and transformative and the best they can be by developing supportive and collaborative working environments that

allow our staff the freedom to thrive and thus support those most vulnerable within our communities.

- 2.30** We wish to continue to address areas of inequality and embed behaviours and processes that promote a culture of inclusivity and equality of opportunity, taking into account all protected characteristics.
- 2.31** Working together we will build upon the strong collaborative relationships formed through partnership working. We will be agile in our working practices and speed of response, open to new ideas and ready to listen, learn and adapt.

Diversity Networks

- 2.32** Monthly meeting take place with our Network groups (Diverse, Abl and GLAM) to review key aspects of work, such as the below Reward Strategy as well as policy development work so our revised policies will be written in more inclusive language and give greater consideration to the future ways of working. One of the next policies to be reviewed is the Special Leave policy amongst others.
- 2.33** Key outcomes from the work with the networks has seen engagement with all our staff to update their personal details, including support and guidance to encourage staff to complete the equalities information around protected characteristics. This will support our current work in the development of equalities dashboards, to monitor activity in recruitment and succession for example to ensure all our staff have equal opportunity and our processes are accessible for all. It will also support the Welsh Government Commitments in aspects such as the All Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan and allow us to track key activity at the Vale Council.
- 2.34** In addition we are currently rolling out reverse mentoring opportunities as a direct result of feedback from our recent International Women's Day event and learning from the Infuse Programme. We have recently matched interested parties with members of the strategic leadership team.

Reward and Benefit Review

- 2.35** External engagement with future recruits, for example within our schools, the Youth Forum, our network groups and from staff feedback and workshop sessions that were held across the autumn of 2023 have helped to shape a revised reward offering that is more fit for purpose, relatable and attractive to support recruitment and retention of staff moving forward. This has led to the development of a refreshed reward and benefit offering. There are currently no additional financial implications to this, and our reward offering will now be communicated and shared in five agreed themes. These themes being Pay, Communities and Culture, OD and Learning, Sustainability and Wellbeing.
- 2.36** Reviews will continue and may include new additions in 2025. Recent improvements have included increasing the opportunities for staff to join the Cycle to Work scheme in the summer period, following advice and guidance that such additions can support the change in behaviours to increase adoption of sustainable commuting. In addition to local based discounts, supporting our local

business, the most recent being a local garden centre providing opportunity for discounts on items linked strongly with the sustainability theme.

- 2.37 Members can access this information via Staffnet+ using the following link and an extract from the site is provided for Members' awareness.

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/StaffnetPlus/en/Employee-Benefits/Cycle2Work-Scheme/Cycle2Work-scheme.aspx>

More Cymreus

Staffnet+ > My Vale Rewards

MY VALE REWARDS

My Vale Rewards

Welcome to the 'My Vale Rewards' hub, your go-to destination for discovering the perks of being part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Our employees are the driving force behind our success, and we are committed to your growth, satisfaction, and overall well-being. Use this hub to find out about all the opportunities, benefits, and support available to you as a Vale of Glamorgan Council employee.

- PAY AND REWARD**
Pay and reward
Information on basic pay, pension, annual leave, annual leave purchase, childcare vouchers and shared cost annual voluntary contributions.
- COMMUNITY AND CULTURE**
Community and culture
Information on our employee brand and corporate strategy, staff networks, culture book and volunteer policy.
- OD AND LEARNING**
OD and learning
Information on career growth and development, the Learning Café, apprenticeship opportunities, IDev and performance appraisal.
- SUSTAINABILITY**
Sustainability
Information on Project Zero, the cycle to work scheme, car pool scheme, hybrid working, local discounts and supporting local businesses.
- EMPLOYEE WELLBEING**
Employee wellbeing
Information on discounted gym memberships, employee assistance programmes, occupational health, access to vaccinations, wellbeing days and wellbeing champions.

- 2.38 Later in the year plans are being made to roll out the biannual employee survey. The findings from this, alongside recent and planned activity under the Public

Participation Strategy will help inform the development of the new Corporate Plan.

- 2.39 Work is also underway in refreshing our wellbeing offering and the created of a revised Wellbeing strategy, linked strongly to this will be the review of our absence processes and how we can continue to support our staff to be the best they can be to support our communities.
- 2.40 Committee are recommended to consider this report and refer any comments along with the report to Cabinet for their consideration and oversight of the work underway.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 The People Strategy and supporting documents all align strongly to the Corporate Plan and our Wellbeing Objectives, seeking to provide the foundation and direction of travel of all people related activity to provide a nurturing and supportive working environment for our staff to provide the best possible service to our citizens and the communities we serve.
- 3.2 The Strategy and supporting documents take into consideration our Reshaping Programme, Project Zero and Public Participation Strategy and aims to be an enabler for much of this activity. The strategy will be reviewed and refreshed following the review of our Corporate Plan for 2025.
- 3.3 The Strategy reflects on a period of significant collaborative working, firmly embedding this within the next steps the organisation will take.
- 3.4 Our People Strategy seeks to provide the foundation and direction of travel of all people related activity to provide a nurturing and supportive working environment for our staff to provide the best possible service to our citizens and the communities we serve.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 There are no climate change and nature considerations as a direct result of this report, but aspects of the People Strategy contribute positively to the Council's work in these areas, for example, via volunteering.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications in providing the update to the People Strategy. However, it should be noted that certain activity and developments that sit below the strategy, such as the review of our pay and grading structure, the embedding of our volunteer policy and review of Special Leave Policy may have financial implications. These would be presented as

appropriate for Members' consideration in due course and will be fully cognisant of any future cost pressures.

Employment

- 5.2** The People Strategy sets out our overarching strategic approach and the direction of travel in relation to how we recruit, engage and develop our workforce.
- 5.3** It provides a foundation for the continued development of our employee culture and aims to support the development of an environment based on inclusivity, trust and mutual respect. Allowing our employees to flourish by being themselves and providing a nurturing supportive environment for our staff to develop to their full potential, be the best they can be to deliver excellent customer service to our communities and citizens.
- 5.4** The development and implementation of the People Strategy and key activities that sit below it is seen as best practice, providing transparency on the approach to the delivery of People services and providing a 'lens' to our staff and potential staff on the type of organisation we seek to become.
- 5.5** A clear and transparent People Strategy and operational implementation plan (the Workforce implementation Plan appended to the Strategy) provides the mechanism to measure and audit activity, to deliver continuous improvement and a transformative culture.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.6** There are no direct legal considerations arising as a result of this report. The equalities aspects of the Strategy are reflected in the body of the report.

6. Background Papers

People Strategy & Supporting Documents, Cabinet, 20 July 2023

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2023/23-07-20/People-Strategy.pdf