Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 21 September 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor R Auluck (Chair)

                         Councillor J Blundell
                         Councillor B Gittins
                         Councillor R Lakha
                         Councillor J Lepoidevin
                         Councillor S Nazir
                         Councillor T Sawdon

Employees (by Directorate):

People   S Fry, Workforce Inclusion and Diversity Lead
                         G Haynes, Head of People and Culture
                         S Newing, Chief People Officer
                         S Pitt, Educational Psychologist
                         E Quansah, Organisational Talent and Change Lead

Law and Governance   V Castree, C Taylor

Apologies: Councillors McNicholas and Ruane

Public Business

6.   **Declarations of Interest**

     There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

7.   **Minutes**

     The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 July 2022 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

8.   **HR Update - People Plan 2019-2022**

     The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources introduced the item, explaining that key achievements had been delivered on by the HR Service despite the challenges of the pandemic. The Cabinet Member referred to good progress in apprenticeships, saying the Council's Apprenticeship Levy spend was well above the national average and the tenth highest proportion of levy funds spent in England, which was remarkable.

     Members of the Board asked questions and received responses on the following:

- The apprenticeship levy could not be used to pay salaries however, it had been used to support traditional apprenticeships and had enabled a significant number of the workforce to upskill and obtain formal qualifications. Successful outcomes of the apprenticeship levy included sharing the levy with SME's in Coventry, ensuring the levy was utilised and maximised in the city.
- Spend for the apprenticeship levy had been used to recruit social workers and lawyers however, there had been challenges with recruitment for other types of apprenticeships.
- Formal qualifications had been funded through the apprenticeship levy.

Members requested information on how many of the apprentices had joined the Freeman's Guild and a breakdown of apprentice outcomes.

The Board received a presentation which covered the achievements of the People Plan in Year 1 and Year 2 highlighting areas of achievement in:

- Employee engagement
- Employee health, safety and wellbeing
- Implementing Diversity and Inclusion
- Pay, reward and recognition
- Workforce development talent
- Digitally enabled
- Supporting the organisation
- HR response to the pandemic

Members of the Board asked questions and received responses on the following:

- Half of the workforce was able to work from home and it was anticipated this would continue.
- Sickness absence figures had temporarily reduced however, they had increased again. There were hot spots in certain areas however, support mechanisms had been put in place.
- Attendance at training had increased due to it being available online.
- The vacancy rate of 16% appeared high in comparison to the English Authorities Rate of 8%. Comparable figures from the West Midlands Authorities would be sourced. There were recruitment challenges and vacancy hotspots in certain areas of the workforce.

Members requested vacancy rate Metrics from West Midlands Authorities.

Members also requested information on how many applicants were received for each vacancy in key areas, whether jobs were advertised locally, regionally, nationally or internationally and whether any new areas of recruitment were experiencing issues. Information on how high-quality services were being maintained despite agile working was also requested.

RESOLVED:

1. **To note the progress being made by the HR Service in relation to year 2 actions outlined in the People Plan 2020-2022.**

2. **Identified the following to be added to the work programme:**
   - **Apprenticeships (March 2023)**

3. **To note the progress being made by the HR Service in relation to progressing year 2 actions outlined in the People Plan 2020-2022.**

4. **To note the contents of the draft People Plan for 2022-2025.**

5. **That the Board receive:**

   - **Metrics from West Midlands Authorities linked to those included in the People Plan 2022-25.**
   - **Additional information on vacancy rate.**

6. **Identified the following to be added to the work programme.**
   - **Managing an agile workforce**

9. **Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Update**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources introduced the item, explaining Coventry City Council was diverse, inclusive and an organisation which did not tolerate racism in any form.

The Board received a presentation providing an update on Diversity and Inclusion including TIDE assessment and re-assessment feedback results, the workforce D&I strategy 2021 – 23, D&I communications and data, diversity and inclusion activity, race equality code and anti-racism training, under-represented groups within the workforce and positive action programmes (Ignite and Calibre).

Members of the Board discussed the progress of the Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Update, questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters raised in the briefing note and Officer's presentation including:

- Anonymised recruitment and its impact and outcomes.
- How progress could be measured through training which was changing the culture of the workplace and in turn the service provided to the city.

Members requested clarification on the rationale behind Diversity & Inclusion being split between HR (workforce) and Public Health (City).

Members also requested a further update on Workforce Diversity and Inclusion including information on anonymised recruitment and information on levels of spend, plans for Diversity and Inclusion and outcomes.

RESOLVED:

1. **To note the progress being made on Workforce Diversity and Inclusion.**

10. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

The Board noted the Work Programme.

RESOLVED to add the following to the work programme:

- **ER VR**
- **Workforce Diversity & Inclusion**

11. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.55 pm)