

Subject:	Our People Promise – Developing Our Employer Offer
Date of Meeting:	Policy, Resources & Growth Committee
Report of:	David Kuenssberg, Executive Director Finance & Resources
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Ward(s) affected:	All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 In order to observe a duty of care towards staff and maintain workforce productivity during an ongoing period of financial constraints and change, there is a clear need for council employers to ensure that staff morale and wellbeing are maintained. Failure to do so will logically lead to a diminution in the quality of services on offer to local residents, as well as adverse effects on staff.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the progress of Our People Promise, the programme of work to implement a clear and improved offer from the council to its staff, and to establish and fair and inclusive culture where expectations around how we work are clear.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee (PR&G) notes progress made over the last 12 months in implementing Our People Promise.
- 2.2 That PR&G approves the continuing programme of work on the council's offer to its staff.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Where Our People Promise came from

- 3.1 After the health service, the council is the largest employer in Brighton & Hove with approximately 4,300 staff directly employed, and a further 4,600 in schools.
- 3.2 The council's need to create a reputation as an exemplar employer is important to ensure:
- there is a fair and inclusive working environment that ensures the experience of staff is positive and we attract and retain a diverse workforce;
 - there is a culture that supports staff to be their best;

- we are able to recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver services and meet the diverse needs of the city's residents and visitors; and
 - the council is a high performing organisation.
- 3.3 Reduced budgets mean that we will increasingly achieve results by collaborating with our partners, sharing services, and enabling residents. As an employer we need to ensure we are developing our staff to meet these challenges. With a more diverse workforce we have the potential to engage better with a wider range of communities and to gain from the full range of talent in the city.
- 3.4 In July 2018 PR&G approved Our People Promise as the programme of work to improve the council's offer to staff. Since then extensive activity has been undertaken under the five work-streams outlined in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.5 Our People Promise was established to address a number of issues identified from our 2017 staff survey and other workforce data. The key issues were:
- Staff wanted to feel more valued with a greater focus on wellbeing, and have a clearer sense of direction and for change to be managed more effectively;
 - An above average sickness rate for 2017/18 of 10.57 days against a target of 9.7 days with 16% of sickness attributable to mental health issues, and a further 26% cited as unspecified (see **Appendix 2**);
 - Recruitment and retention issues in some roles across the council (e.g. social work and planning) and evidence to show this has links to our pay and benefits package;
 - Our workforce equalities profile is not reflective of the community we serve, and whilst some improvements had been made, these had been slow and not kept pace with the changing make-up of our community; for example 6.86% of staff were from a BME background against a target of 9.1% taken from the 2011 census (see **Appendix 3a and b**);
 - An ageing workforce who may require additional health and wellbeing support, and difficulty attracting younger staff through our recruitment processes. Over 40% of the workforce in March 2018 were over 50, whilst less than 10% were under 30 (see **Appendix 3a**).
- 3.6 The LGA peer review (April 2017) acknowledged the important role that our trade unions play in the future of the organisation, but that the need to improve relationships was recognised by all. The development of Our People Promise through co-creation is key to this. We are working jointly with our trade unions on shared aims such as improving the wellbeing of our workforce, and increasing the informal resolution of disputes through early intervention and the use of mediation.

Approach

- 3.7 A key under-pinning for this work has been its co-creation theme - with staff and other stakeholders to ensure we are creating something sustainable and meaningful, rather than a 'top down' programme that staff may struggle to buy

into. Stakeholders here include representatives from both trade unions and the Workers Forums, officers from the front-line and 'back office', managers, and representatives from the HR, equalities, communications and public health teams.

Measuring success

- 3.8 The activity that underpins Our People Promise is measured against a series of indicators which show how our employment offer and the experience of staff is improving (**Appendix 4**). These measures include absence rates which have reduced by 4.4% over the last year, and formal casework where a reduction of 15% in formal grievance case work has been achieved.
- 3.9 Our 2019 staff survey shows improvement in staff satisfaction and engagement, which continues a trend of improvement since 2015 (see **Appendix 5**). Of particular note are:
- An 11% increase in positive responses to the statement 'I feel valued by the organisation'.
 - A 10% increase in positive responses to the statement 'I believe the organisation cares about employee health and wellbeing'.
- 3.10 The diversity profile of the organisation continues to improve (see appendix 3), but much more slowly than is desirable. We have recently launched our Fair and Inclusive action plan (see **Appendix 6**), developed in partnership with our staff and Trade Unions to more proactively address issues related to our workforce profile and the experience of staff from minority groups, in particular BME and disabled staff. Progressing with this plan will be a priority over the coming year.

Key activities to build on

- 3.11 Experience to date has shown that there are a number of work streams which have had a real impact. Examples under each include:
- Wellbeing** – the launch of an information sharing sessions on menopause for both women, and also for managers in supporting their staff through the menopause. this received very positive feedback and has opened up a topic that was previously not openly discussed;
- Reward** – the launch of 'My Staff Shop', a benefits portal providing staff greater access to discounts and offers;
- Fair and Inclusive** – embedding our offer of mediation and achieving a 15% reduction in formal grievance casework;
- Development** – the launch of a Leadership Development programme and a new rated performance process to improve the quality of leadership across the organisation;
- Good place to work** – the launch of a new recruitment system that makes our jobs more accessible and allows for the anonymization of applications to support progress with recruiting a diverse workforce.
- 3.12 Other priorities for Our People Promise over the coming year include:

- The full roll-out of the Leadership Development programme, and developing the wider management development offer, including the mandatory training that newly appointed managers will undergo;
- Developing proposals as part of our pay review work, which will include options for changes to our pay line and other non-pay benefits for member consideration;
- Refreshing the wellbeing activity to focus on sleep, mental health, financial wellbeing and pensions and to carry out a wellbeing survey in January 2020;
- Implementation of the Fair and Inclusive action plan, focusing initially on a campaign around racism co-created with our BME workers forum.

Appendix 7 has more detail of the full work programme.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Our People Promise is supported by modernisation funding (see financial implications), HR resources, and support from other teams across the council. The possibility of engaging external support was considered, but this option would be more costly and less sustainable. In addition, our commitment to co-creation with staff is seen as vital to its success – in preference to, for example, using external consultants which risks expertise not being internally embedded. Our People Promise is not intended as a one-off piece of work, rather a programme that will continue and iterate in response to new challenges that emerge over time.
- 4.2 The option of leaving our employer offer as it was does not address the issues identified in **Section 3**, and would have a detrimental impact on staff.
- 4.3 It is therefore concluded that this work should be progressed with existing resources, supplemented as necessary with regard to specific projects by modernisation funding. Any additional funding is subject to a business case and ongoing governance by the Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board and Members Modernisation Oversight Group.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Engagement has taken place with our recognised trade unions, a range of staff via focus groups, our workers forums and the council's leadership teams.
- 5.2 The Fair and Inclusive Plan includes a community engagement work stream, and further work is planned with communities to encourage applicants for council jobs from diverse backgrounds.
- 5.3 The 2019 staff survey and 2018 wellbeing survey also provide an important source of information from which to prioritise work, and a higher than ever response to the survey was achieved by collaboration with union and forums to encourage completion.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The available information shows that Our People Promise is having a positive impact on staff and the wider organisation. The views of members on the plans outlined in **Appendix 7** are sought.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 During 2019/20 the development of 'Our People Promise' will be supported by up to £0.200 million modernisation funding within the available funding envelope approved by full Council in February 2019, which is a continuation of the same level of modernisation funding available in 2018/19. Any support will be subject to approval of a business case by the Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board (CMDB) as required by full Council. **Appendix 8** shows the main areas of expenditure or committed spend from April 2018 to March 2020. The business case will identify the performance measures and indicators by which success will be monitored, and are summarised in **Appendix 4**. There are no other financial implications arising from this work which will be supported from existing resources across the organisation.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 28/06/19

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council is under a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination (the Public Sector Equality Duty). The implementation of Our People Promise would be evidence of the Council's compliance with that duty.

Lawyer Consulted: Carol Haynes

Date: 24/5/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The Our People Promise (OPP) programme is designed to underpin central elements of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion agenda in relation to staff, customers and the city.
- 7.4.1 The council has a role as civic leader, with legal duties to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. All communities in the city need to be confident that their voices are represented, know that services meet their needs fairly, and feel that the council is an employer of choice.
- 7.4.2 Where staff have a better understanding of the needs and assets of diverse communities (from their own experience and through learning and development) they provide better services: in more appropriate, accessible and inclusive ways. They are also more likely to get it right first time.

- 7.4.3 Staff of diverse backgrounds and experiences bring diverse perspectives and strengths. At a time of significant change and financial pressure for the council this is a vital asset that promotes creativity and innovation contributing to ensuring we are a modern council.
- 7.4.4 All staff must be confident that they can be themselves at work and feel valued and a sense of belonging, supported by an inclusive culture that identifies and removes barriers and creates opportunities and career development and progression.
- 7.4.5 The OPP work programme will support all these aims and bring benefits to council employees as well as to the reputation of, and trust and confidence in the council across the city.

Sarah Tighe-Ford

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 None identified

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. OPP work completed in 2018/19
2. 2018/19 sickness data
3. Workforce equality profile
4. Measures for Our People Promise
5. Staff survey results
6. Fair and Inclusive Action Plan
7. High level work plan 2019/20
8. OPP Budget spend