

Workforce

Planning review of

progress

Brighton and Hove City Council

Audit 2008/09

December 2008



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Introduction

- 1 Council members and staff are faced with the challenge of continuously improving services with limited financial resources in a rapidly changing environment while subject to a high level of public scrutiny. This demands the very best management of the staff at the Council's disposal. This can be enhanced by maintaining up-to-date intelligence on the skills they need to deliver local services, the level of skills within the Council, and what is needed to bridge any skills gaps or shortages.
- 2 This report is a review of progress against recommendations made within the Audit Commission's Workforce Planning Report 2005/06. Progress was assessed against the following questions.
 - Does the Council have an up to date and meaningful Human Resources strategy that is linked to corporate aims and objectives?
 - Does the Council have a workforce plan?
 - Are there arrangements for succession planning to ensure relevant skills are not lost to the Council?
 - Has the Council identified its key skill areas?
 - Has the Council adopted any innovative techniques to address workforce planning?

Background

- 3 In 2005/06 Brighton & Hove City Council identified shortcomings in using HR and workforce planning to build capacity and these featured as potential areas of risk to the Council. Sickness rates were comparatively high and the Council was facing recruitment and retention issues in some key staff groups which affected the delivery of some services. Progress overall had been slow in developing key human resource policies and strategies, particularly workforce and succession planning and this prevented the Council's staffing resources being confidently and securely aligned to its needs.
- 4 The Audit Commission's 2005/06 report on Workforce Planning identified thirteen recommendations for improvement. These were broadly in relation to the Council's:
 - overarching people strategy;
 - workforce plans;
 - approach to succession planning;
 - knowledge of skills base and use of competencies; and
 - equality and diversity in employment.
- 5 The most recent Corporate Assessment Report 2006 also identified management of the Council's human resources as an area for improvement, it found workforce development to be weak.
- 6 The Council's new corporate plan (2008-11) states that the Council wants to be an 'employer of choice' with both a strong reputation and good people management practices. This includes:
 - 'Modernising our pay schemes to make them fair and comprehensible;
 - transforming our HR approach through new technology, reducing costs and allowing more flexibility in how we manage our business;
 - increasing our staff satisfaction and thereby improve the quality of services delivered;
 - increasing the number of apprenticeships/trainee schemes that lead to local people working for us and partner organisations in the city.
 - ensuring that we continue to make progress with good diversity in our workforce; and
 - developing a comprehensive people strategy to ensure we have the workforce that we need into the future'.

Audit approach

- 7 The fieldwork has been carried out through reviewing key Council documents and interviewing senior officers. The findings are being fed back to the Council in the form of an agreed report.

Main conclusions

- 8 The Council is putting in place the right building blocks to enable it to meet both its present and future workforce challenges. This has taken some time and has yet to make an impact but it means that the Council will be in a stronger position to bridge its skills gaps or shortages in a strategic way.
- 9 The Council's new corporate plan 2008/11 sets out a clear commitment to be an employer of choice and workforce planning is identified as a key priority. The new draft People Strategy is in the early stages of development and synergies with the draft Workforce and Organisation Development (OD) Plan are developing. Because the people and workforce strategies are still in development, stakeholders have yet to be fully involved to ensure they have a common understanding and are fully engaged with the process. The Council is supporting its People Strategy through investment in HR systems and resource modelling.
- 10 The draft Workforce and OD plan is based on research and local intelligence and is aligned to the corporate plan but has yet to be supported by an action plan. Not all directorates have workforce plans in place, but the Council has set itself a target to be compliant with the Investors In People Standard by the end of 2008. The Council is in the process of identifying how corporate 'priority actions' inform Directorate Pay and Workforce Action plans by strengthening links between them. Templates are SMART but not yet embedded across the Council.
- 11 Plans for succession planning have been considered but have yet to be implemented.
- 12 The Council has recently refreshed and re-launched its business planning framework, including Personal Development Plans (PDP), based on good practice, to ensure greater consistency and ownership amongst staff but this has yet to make an impact. Latest data suggests that approximately 68 per cent of staff have a PDP, PDPs are an effective tool to establish the skills base of the Council and are presently not being used to full effect.
- 13 The Council has achieved only level 2 of the Equality Standard but is actively working towards achievement of Level 3.

Does the Council have an up to date and meaningful HR strategy that is linked to corporate aims and objectives ?

- 14 The Council's new corporate plan 2008/11 sets out a clear commitment to be an employer of choice. It sets out the Council's ambitions to ensure that:
 - internal processes for managing people are consistently strong and effective;
 - modernise pay schemes to make them fair;
 - transform its HR approach through new technology whilst reducing costs;
 - increase staff satisfaction;
 - increase the number of apprenticeships/ trainee schemes that lead to local people working for it and partner organisations;

Main conclusions

- ensure that the Council continues to make progress with good diversity in its workforce; and
 - to develop a comprehensive people strategy to ensure that it has the workforce that it needs into the future.
- 15** The corporate plan agreed in June 2008 identifies organisational development priorities such as - Value For Money (VFM), people management and IIP (including workforce planning). The Council has rolled out its VFM programme and HR is being restructured to provide a more client focussed role. The Council is concentrating on IIP which is being driven by the Chief Executive and is in the process of improving measures such as the use of PDPs; addressing staff survey results; introducing a new business planning process and refreshing its workforce plan. It is raising staff awareness via dissemination of individual planning folders to 3000 staff and is anticipating an IIP inspection in early 2009.
- 16** The People Strategy and Workforce and OD Plan are currently in draft and synergies between both documents are not made explicit. The draft People Strategy is aligned to the corporate plan and is a high level draft but with prioritised detailed actions/ targets and resources yet to be specified. Synergies with the Workforce and OD Plan are not clear and priority actions identified in the draft Workforce and OD Plan are not aligned to those of the draft People Strategy. Both these strategies will be presented to TMT in October 2008. Arrangements for communicating to stakeholders and monitoring both plans have yet to be defined.
- 17** Because the people and workforce strategies are still in development - stakeholders have yet to be fully involved to ensure they have a common understanding and are fully engaged with the process. The workforce strategy is currently being revised and in the coming months this process will include a full consultation with: services on business needs; staff (forums) on workplace issues; members on priorities for workforce planning and improvement; and trade unions. The Council plans to finalise both the Workforce and OD Plan and the People Strategy in October 2008.
- 18** The Council is in the process of identifying how corporate 'priority actions' inform Directorate Pay and Workforce Action plans by strengthening links between them. The work on single status and modernising pay means the Council is in the process of designing a future pay structure by matching its reward structures to the Council's immediate and long terms service priorities. It plans to complete the Job Evaluation exercise by October 2008.
- 19** The Council is supporting its People Strategy through investment in HR systems and resource modelling. The Council plans to procure an integrated payroll/personnel system by 2010, which will enable more timely real time and accurate data, for example improved data on the establishment - staff joining and those leaving.

Does the Council have a workforce plan ?

- 20** The draft Workforce and OD plan is based on research and local intelligence and is aligned to the corporate plan. It includes priorities but has yet to be supported by an action plan. A consultant has undertaken a diagnostic based on interviews with senior and middle managers from all departments regarding their current people/skill resources and projections of the skills base required in the future. This information has been profiled and informs the draft Workforce and OD Plan. The Plan's communication and monitoring has yet to be defined. The IIP Programme states that the People Strategy and Workforce Development Plan is to be launched but no timescale is included in the IIP programme dated August 2008.
- 21** Not all directorates have workforce plans in place. Workforce plans are in place for some departments including the Children and Young People's Trust and Finance and Resources. Corporately, there has been positive engagement of partners such as the Local Employment Partnership. But other service areas have yet to develop workforce plans, for example, Adult Social Care and Housing. The IIP Plan stipulates that all Directorate Plans are to have workforce development requirements clearly identified and linked to achievement of high level priorities by December 2008.
- 22** Workforce planning is being cascaded to team level but is not yet embedded. The Council's response to workforce planning is through the IIP process. The chief officers group - Management Team (TMT) agreed to adopt the IIP framework in April 2008. The People, Performance Implementation Group, made up of senior staff level champions from each directorate, meet on a regular basis and track departmental progress through the IIP Programme. SMART workforce planning templates have been developed as part of business planning but these are not yet consistently embedded. Team workforce planning templates have been redesigned to include links with higher level plans; development need; outcomes; priorities; costs and timescales. This revised business planning process is in line with good practice and is currently being rolled out Council-wide. This will be considered externally as part of the IIP assessment planned for early 2009.

Are there arrangements for succession planning to ensure relevant skills are not lost to the Council ?

- 23** The Council has considered succession planning but it has not yet been implemented. The Workforce and OD Plan revision includes mapping departmental issues such as succession planning. It is proposed that this work will be taken forward as part of the development of a recruitment and retention strategy later in 2008, which will look at, flexible working, salary sacrifice, non-financial rewards and policies on recruitment and selection.

Main conclusions

Has the Council identified its key skill areas ?

- 24** The Council has refreshed and re-launched its business planning framework (including PDPs) to ensure greater consistency and ownership but this has yet to be embedded. Presently development opportunities are not consistently outlined in divisional business plans and individual work plans (PDP's). A new business planning approach has been introduced to assure a high level of consistency and compliance. This is being re-enforced through disseminating individual planning folders to 3000 staff from August 2008. These include individual/team/divisional plans; a job description; person specification and personal development plan. The Council has taken a conscious decision to issue manual files to ensure consistency.
- 25** Latest data suggests that approximately 68 per cent of staff have a PDP, thus the Council is unable to comprehensively establish the skills of its workforce. The Council plans to increase this to 90 per cent by the end of the year through its work on IIP and development of business and individual plans. Internal audit will be undertaking a review in quarter 3 2008/09. The Council has taken a decision to not carry out a skills audit as it believes that once the new PDP scheme is consistently applied it will address skills gaps and ensure long term plans for responding to skills gaps are picked up through the workforce planning process. This will compliment skills knowledge obtained through Job Evaluation. A corporate learning and development programme will be linked to key priorities from September 2008.

Has the Council adopted any innovative techniques to address workforce planning?

- 26** The Council is rolling out a new business planning process based on good practice and is embedding management competencies for staff at management level. A holistic approach to competency based recruitment, appraisal and development is to be considered at a later stage. Management appraisal and development is based on the competency framework provided in the Management and Leadership Standards. A corporate learning and development programme to support the Standards was launched in April 2008 and is to be evaluated in the coming months.
- 27** The Council has achieved only level 2 of the Equality Standard but is actively working towards achievement of level 3. Key areas for improvement include:
- embedding Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs);
 - business planning has yet to consistently incorporate equality objectives;
 - equalities monitoring is not fully developed; and
 - the Council has yet to develop a joint action plan to improve recruitment retention and career development of staff from all parts of the community.

- 28** Strengths include work on developing a city wide equality scheme and establishing the City Inclusion Partnership (with statutory partners) in June 2008 (within the 2020 Community Partnership) to tackle equalities and inclusion citywide and is to be formally adopted by the LSP by September 2009. In 2007 the Council engaged the local community to design new branding for recruitment that would be more inclusive and attractive to potential employees from all communities and received a national award for this work. In response to bullying identified in the staff survey 2007 and as part of the Corporate Assessment, the Council has agreed to develop a new Dignity at Work framework but it has yet to make an impact.

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