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To: Personnel Committee

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Subject: People Strategy 2017-22 Evaluation

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper provides Personnel Committee with an evaluation of the current People Strategy and areas that have been accelerated in response to the pandemic, the results of which will form the foundation of the next 5-year strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The current People Strategy 2017-2022 was the first overarching employment strategy expressed in a single document in KCC and sought to set out the organisation's expectations for its workforce. It presented how we aimed to position ourselves as an employer; a 5-year plan for how we intended to recruit, retain, develop, and manage people performance and what improvements we would expect to see. Personnel Committee originally agreed the Strategy in July 2017 and has received annual updates on progress in subsequent years. This report will provide the final and aggregate evaluation of this Strategy.
- 1.2. The Strategy sets out a vision: *“to make the most of our staff and their talents. We need to ensure that we have a skilled and motivated workforce which is flexible and innovative and works with our communities and partners to deliver services and find solutions where necessary.”*

Alongside some guiding principles:

Business & Outcome Focussed
Flexible
Build our Capacity
Leadership
Innovation
Collaboration,

its collective aim is to maximise the capability and contribution of all staff.

- 1.3 Attached in Appendix 1 is the detailed analysis of each of the 8 specific outcomes in the People Strategy.

2. Context

- 2.1 Whilst the Strategy provides a clear focus for the HR & OD function, there are critical roles for all in the organisation. Managers have a fundamental role to play in the employer/employee relationship and crucially in delivering the ambitions contained in the People Strategy.
- 2.2 Our senior Leadership are expected to understand and commit to the importance of the Strategy, its component elements and the investment being made in our workforce. However good the Leadership and Management, though, delivery of services are made through staff and therefore their engagement in the strategy is essential. Their experiences with us, as their employer, should be positive and they continue to be the biggest single source of employer advocacy. Our Trades Unions have a significant voice and role to play in support of the strategy and its implementation for staff. This has been a positive relationship on this issue throughout the past 4 years.
- 2.3 Finally, there is the role of the HR & OD function to ensure there are supporting frameworks, standards, development and provision of advice and guidance. The Strategy has helpfully framed the offer the function has made, set priority activities, and created a single narrative for employment in KCC.
- 2.4 The Strategy was intended to run the full 5-year period but the response to the pandemic provided an opportunity for the organisation to 're-set' itself as an employer. To achieve this, it was agreed that elements within the strategy would be accelerated, and lessons learned from the response and recovery used to enable a new vision to be launched in 2022.

3. Underpinning Strategies

- 3.1 There are 3 core strategies that provide a framework for delivery..
- 3.2 **Organisational Development** - the creation and delivery of a suitable development plan for the workforce. Tailored programmes such as Leadership & Management and Commissioning, as well as embedding our culture and values are key strands of this work, ultimately ensuring that we have sustainable growth in the capability of our staff.
- 3.3 **Resourcing** - ensuring we have the right people in the right place at the right time; developing the necessary flexibility to respond to business need; maximizing the investment in recruitment as well as utilizing our organisation design principles to help build inherent strength and flexibility to our structures.
- 3.4 **Health & Wellbeing** - is an area that has seen considerable investment of effort and has altered during the past 4 years. It intends to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of all staff, ideally providing proactive interventions but also managing the consequences of staff's experiences and circumstances.

4. Outcomes

- 4.1 There were 8 specific outcomes that the People Strategy intended to realise and demonstrate achievement. They are.
 - Staff Development – to meet predicted future requirements

- Pragmatism – in our approach to risk in people management (reduce process, empower managers, and support quicker decision making)
- Manager Conversations – with staff take place with a focus on outcomes
- Good People Management – managers appreciate and undertake their full people management responsibilities
- Improved Engagement – through capitalising on employee’s specific skills and capabilities
- Awareness of the Employment Offer – so employees engage with it in a way that works best for them and the Authority
- Resource Management – respond to resourcing issues quickly and effectively
- Better Recognition – employees are rewarded and recognised in a way the increased engagement and performance

5. Progress and achievements

- 5.1 The move the organisation has made in the four years from 2017 has been significant in terms of its culture, its approach to people management, the development of skills alongside adaptability. When the pandemic broke all of these were demonstrated as the People Strategy with its drive towards the key outcomes above demonstrated how strong a position the organisation was in, not only to deliver services to the residents of Kent, but also to adapt in the face of the most significant challenge to the organisation’s business continuity that it has faced for many years.
- 5.2 Some of the key elements activities that got us to that position can be seen in:
- a) Good Conversations: staff survey results, and other indicators, have shown the activity to move towards more trusted conversations in the organisation has had a significant impact on employee engagement and performance
 - b) Workforce Planning: the development of our learning and training offer, including the implementation of the Social Work Academy and the development of our apprenticeship offer, has seen significant focus and uptake in the upskilling of our workforce. Alongside this we have been adaptive in our approach to recruiting and retaining key staff
 - c) Development of e-learning: has supported our workforce planning with significant levels of engagement from employees
 - d) Organisation Design Principles – developed to reflect our learning from the current strategy but will go forward to underpin the new one
 - e) Inclusion – we have seen significant movement in the profile of inclusion and diversity in the organisation and well as fundamental progress to becoming an inclusive employer – which has had a positive affect on engagement and performance
 - f) good employee relations management – through many of the elements above managers have better engaged with their staff to ensure that employee relations are effective and conducive which helps in staff working with and for their managers

- g) Health and Wellbeing: the support provided in the organisation has developed significantly over the lifetime of the strategy, particularly in terms of supporting mental health at work. This culminated in the Council recently receiving a Kent and Medway Healthy Workplaces Gold Award – with special mention of our mental health support
- h) flexible working – the organisation had started to gradually move towards people working in a more flexible way, in terms of how, where and when they work, and this provided an effective basis for the Authority to shift more fundamentally over the last year and a half to embrace this style of working

6. Evaluation and assessment

- 6.1 The detailed assessment of the entire Strategy is contained in Appendix 1. The sources of data have included staff surveys, individual feedback, engagement levels – particularly in Learning & Development.
- 6.2 The ultimate test and assessment of our achievements has come in our response to the pandemic. Our resilience, flexibility, engagement levels, capability and collaboration has been impressive and undoubtedly a result of so many of the elements of the Strategy.

7. Future scope

- 7.1 There is more work to do on several issues. By its strategic nature there is an inevitable evolution from the existing People Strategy to the next edition. We have started to see a difference in our ambition to be an inclusive employer. More is required on ensuring our culture and values are recognised and included in developing the underpinning policy and practice. This will include making accountability even more prominent and a reality.
- 7.2 We have made a significant investment in our management development which will need to be maintained for our existing and new managers over the coming years. We will need to continue to enhance managerial confidence as much as competence.
- 7.3 Other areas to continue will include workforce planning, maximising the pay and recognition tools we have available to achieve our ambition of being an employer that people want to join, stay, and make a difference in and to.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The progress the Council has made as an employer through the lifetime of the People Strategy has been significant. It has been very helpful to have had such a collective narrative and coordination of such activity. It has provided the organisation with a significant platform to ensure that our employees deliver the best possible services to the people of Kent. It has also provided a firm foundation for the continued development of a progressive and adaptable strategy that will help the Council meet future challenges through its workforce.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Personnel Committee are invited to note the achievements of the People Strategy and its overall evaluation.

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Background Documents: The People Strategy

<https://kentcountycouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/KNet/kentdocuments/People%20Strategy%202017-2022.pdf#search=People%20Strategy>