

**From:** Shellina Prendergast – Cabinet Member for Communications, Engagement and People  
Amanda Beer – Corporate Director People & Communications

**To:** Personnel Committee – 10 November 2020

**Subject:** People Strategy 2017 to 2022

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** None

**Future Pathway of report:** None

**Electoral Division:** All divisions on the basis the staffing population cover the entire county.

**Summary:** This paper provides the third annual update on the 5-year People Strategy.

**Recommendation(s):**

Personnel Committee is asked to discuss and note progress made.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The People Strategy was agreed by Personnel Committee on 3 July 2017 with a commitment to track its progress to ensure it is delivering its intended purpose.
- 1.2. The People Strategy sets out, over a 5-year period, how we will recruit, retain, develop, and manage people performance, where this fits with other relevant strategies and what our 'guiding employment principles are.
- 1.3. The strategy provides a single, concise narrative for KCC as an employer, for staff and managers with the 'valued and engaged employee' at the heart of the strategy.
- 1.4. This report covers the period to the end of 2019/20. However, for context, during the subsequent pandemic and in light of the County Council's strategic reset there has been work undertaken to adjust and accelerate the programme of delivery so that the strategy is delivered by 2021. This will be reflected in next year's report however the activity covered by the following analysis provides a significant foundation for that work to commence.

## **2. Progress in the first three years**

- 2.1 There are 4 core components:
  - Organisational Development (OD)
  - Resourcing

- Workforce Health and Wellbeing
- Employment Offer

2.2 Attached, in Appendix 1, is an illustration of how we are delivering against these four elements along with our diversity and inclusion objectives that underpin every aspect of the People Strategy.

2.3 **Organisation Development** – Over the past eighteen months focus has been given to the three workstreams in the leadership strategy designed to address different elements of leadership and to interrogate the leadership competencies and behaviours defined:

Our evaluation has been centred around: Have we got the right capabilities for the future? How far do they show up in day-day leadership practice in KCC? What is the intelligence telling us to inform next steps?

The evaluation process was a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The findings tell us:

<p><b>When we are at our best:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We communicate, share our vision, and provide positive, inspirational leadership.</li> <li>• We have a focus on ownership and empowerment at all levels.</li> <li>• We collaborate, build trust, provide clarity and are authentic.</li> <li>• We are curious about recognising differences and possible conflict.</li> <li>• We are customer and outcomes focussed</li> <li>• We are passionate, motivated, and developmental.</li> <li>• We are positive and strengths orientated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Why are we not at our best all the time? Why do we see gaps in the way we show up as leaders?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our challenging context could be a factor.</li> <li>• This could be creating a tendency to ‘grip the system’ and ‘send things down the line’.</li> <li>• Corporatisation of the public sector.</li> <li>• We are not good at managing conflict and calling out bad behaviour – acceptance of the ‘status quo’ (a particular insight from the 360 workstream).</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are participants in this work now feeling empowered to do to positively impact their leadership, despite the challenging context?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking up safely</li> <li>• Influence up and across</li> <li>• Take a stand without being aggressive</li> <li>• Provide authentic leadership, particularly when changes impact me as well as my team</li> <li>• Facilitate problem solving in others, not just providing the answers</li> <li>• Make roles clearer to support greater accountability</li> </ul>	<p><b>How did the leadership workstreams support the positive changes in your leadership practice?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space to reflect</li> <li>• Takes me out of my comfort zone</li> <li>• Good to know I am not alone</li> <li>• Peer learning has been very powerful</li> <li>• This represents a break from the status quo, it is counter-cultural in a good way</li> </ul>

**What do we see when we now think appreciatively about leadership in KCC?**

- Despite our challenges we are serious about developing people
- There is a huge commitment to public service
- Some leaders interpret the 'rules' in way that allows for an extremely supportive environment

**What we need to take into the future:**

- Curiosity and learning
- Empowering – not just providing answers
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Inspiring
- Drive for results
- Inspirational
- Customer focused

2.4 **Next Steps** – Analysis of the evaluation data above, lessons learned from Covid-19, insights from earlier Staff Surveys, recent Pulse Surveys and various engagement events have been conducted to ensure we can maintain the positive and collective response to the pandemic at the same time as identifying actions that will enable recovery and deliver the people elements of the reset:

Drawn from the design principles, the evaluation and insights collated, we have identified the future leadership traits which are the embodiment of our new values as well as the management capabilities that describe the knowledge, skills and mindsets required that collectively will inspire and enable our future cultural aspirations and deliver our strategic reset through our people. These are a natural progression and firmly build upon the first two years of the strategy.

Evaluation on other OD workstreams, building capacity and capability, workforce planning and workforce development can be found in the Appendix.

2.5 **Resourcing** – The resourcing strategy looks to ensure that KCC has a modern, supportive, business focused and inclusive approach which results in right people, right place, right time doing the right things in the right way.

Over the past year we have recruited a more diverse workforce in a number of areas including, disability and ethnicity and have appointed good quality candidates which has been borne out by the increase in the number of staff achieving higher appraisal ratings.

We have reduced the use of temporary contracts and the use of agency staff which has provided more opportunities for permanent staff to develop and move within the council.

We have increased the use of secondments and apprenticeship training, provided significant learning and development opportunities, and continued the emphasis on good conversations as our approach to managing performance. As a result, when staff were asked about their work, 80.1% of respondents in the staff survey felt positive about their work overall. The majority of the staff (81.9%), were satisfied with the job that they do and 85.9% felt that they could do their job effectively.

Whilst the OD strategy focuses on resourcing and recruitment it also influences and is influenced by a number of other aspects of the People strategy including organisational values and behaviours, leadership and management, diversity and inclusion, workforce planning and performance management.

- 2.6 The **Employment Offer** aims to provide KCC with the ability to distinguish itself in the employment market and ensure that employees' engagement with the organisation is maximised, with the intention that service delivery is enhanced as a consequence and KCC has a framework to deliver statutory compliance.

The strategy has a focus on reward and benefits but also pulls in the influence of a number of other aspects of the People Strategy, including leadership and management, learning and development, organisational culture, and inclusion.

The staff survey had some really strong results regarding employees' perspectives on many aspects of this employment offer. Where the Council did not perform strongly was in relation to its pay and benefits. The percentage of positive responses in relation to pay and benefits was about 50%. Whilst employees' relationship with the learning and development offer was more positive than this the Authority could do better in relation to how it operates as part of the offer.

These outcomes should be viewed in the context that recruitment to roles remained buoyant in 2019/20 and services have the ability to improve competitiveness in certain markets through the use of market premia. The Council always has the option to significantly improve its offer but that has to be considered within the finances available. Whilst people are not so happy with the rewards and benefits the underlying turnover figure was consistent, if not slightly lower, than previous years and commensurate with an organisation such as KCC.

- 2.7 **Health & Wellbeing.** The 2019 staff survey revealed positive improvements in the level of staff engagement. A key focus on the continuing development of better, trusted conversations was reflected in the survey results, which sit alongside work done through the year on the role of the line manager. Other areas that drove the improvements included wellbeing & work/life balance, leadership and management and feeling valued by the organisation. There was also including a significant change in respondents being positive about being able to manage their workload and strike an effective work/life balance with over 70% reporting this.

The Health and Wellbeing strategy also focuses on seeing a corresponding decrease in the levels of staff sickness absence. However, over the last three years we have seen sickness levels increase by a total of one day per fte. As such absence management remains a particular focus of both managers and the HR & OD function.

The days lost per fte has increased by nearly half a day per person in 2019/20. However, the profile has changed. Mental Health absence is still the second highest reason for people taking time off but has reduced from accounting for 20% of days lost to 16.5%. This reduction can be seen in the context of the work that has been done on the Time to Change action plan that was developed in the previous year. The Authority has also seen movement in the profile of adjustments put in place for staff, with significantly more support available for people with mental health difficulties. The area of sickness absence that saw a rise over the last year is ailments as a result of stress, that are not mental health related.

- 2.8 **Diversity and Inclusion** – the organisation aims to have a diverse workforce that is as reflective as possible of the communities it serves. The percentage of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic employees in the organisation is greater than the percentage of residents in Kent (taken from the last census) and the proportion of new appointees who are Black Asian and Minority Ethnic continues to be higher than the percentage of incumbent staff. The percentage of people who tell us they are disabled continues to be much lower than we would expect. The profile for LGB+ staff reflects that of our residents. The Council continues to see that over three quarters of its workforce are women with sixty percent of the leadership group (KR13+) – the population of Kent is roughly 50:50.

The average age for our employees is 45 years. Over 45% of our employees are aged over 50 and this increases to 56% for the Council's leadership group. Just over 16% of the Authority's workforce are under 30 years. However, people under 35 years make up just under half of the Council's new appointees.

The approach to determining how inclusive the Council is multifactorial as a range of indicators are required to enable an evaluation of this element of the equality objective. As a starting point the staff survey asked a number of pertinent questions about how valued and respected staff feel. There were improvements from the previous year on scores which were significantly high. However, when the survey was cut by protected characteristics disabled staff were much less positive about these indicators.

When looking at other factors alongside these results both disabled and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic staff had slightly higher levels of turnover than the KCC average. Both groups of staff had a lower percentage than the rest of the Council's employees receiving excellent and outstanding in their TCP ratings which may be reinforced by both group's perspectives on the pay and conditions through the survey. However, the number of adjustments put in place for staff has increased over 40% in the last year. Disabled staff were also significantly less positive about access to development, levels of engagement and their relationship with their manager.

### 3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The People Strategy has given the organisation a single narrative and co-ordinating framework for all HR & OD Policy and development activity. It also provides a strong guide for future related work given the explicit clarity of the aims and principles. This third year has seen an increasing amount of activity in each of the 4 core elements with scope and sense of direction for continued investment. Whilst there have been some significant positive changes as a result of the delivery of the strategy there are still areas that require work to enable the Council to achieve its goals.
- 3.2 Ultimately the success of the People Strategy will be dependent upon managers performance in effectively managing people.

#### 4. Recommendation(s)

##### Recommendation(s):

Personnel Committee are invited to note the progress made in delivering the People Strategy.

#### 5. Contact details

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