

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPLOYEES****WORKFORCE RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY STRATEGY AND ACTION  
PLAN****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Elected Members on the progress of Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy Action Plan and next steps.

**Information**

2. The Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and associated Action Plan was approved by Personnel Committee on 18 November 2020. The strategy aims to ensure that the Council continues to develop its strategic approach to having the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, with the right development and support in place, to deliver the Council's published priorities and objectives outlined in the Council Plan and within the context of managing and delivering services in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.
3. The strategy sits within the context of cross-cutting transformation, an increasingly challenging financial position and the ongoing Covid situation requiring us to work differently and more efficiently. It recognises that the Council's workforce is its most valuable asset, and this position has been reinforced by the contributions of so many during the Covid outbreak. Their safety and that of service users continues to be of primary importance. It also recognises that some people have continued to work with little change since the pandemic outbreak whilst for others the changes have been significant, and that this situation is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
4. The strategy provides a platform to define the "new normal" for the Council's workforce and address how the Council's future workforce will be developed and supported to respond positively and flexibly to the new challenges emerging as we respond to the further phases and recovery from the pandemic. The strategy provides a route map to transition to a new People Strategy to support delivery of the new Council Plan which is currently being developed.
5. The Workforce Resilience & Recovery Strategy is underpinned by a set of core principles and is broadly divided into the following themes:
  - Organisational culture

- Leadership development
- People development
- Employee health and well-being
- Smarter working and the working environment.

6. This strategy has been developed through the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Group which draws its membership from across the Council's departments. A distributive leadership approach is used with focussed task and finish groups to develop and implement specific proposals within the action plan that would build on and develop existing work underway corporately and in departments. This ensures wider buy in and avoids duplication of effort. Priority workstreams include recognition and reward; developing a homeworking package of measures; review of employee health and well-being support, organisational and individual resilience and internal communication and engagement with employees.

## **Key Actions**

7. Over the last few months, a number of actions have been taken or are proposed to progress the activities listed in the Action Plan. Details are set out below:

## **Communication and engagement with employees**

8. A key aspect of the implementation of the strategy is communication and engagement with employees from across the Council, including front line workers. The work undertaken as part of the various priority workstreams of the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Action Plan focuses on a range of activities which seek to maintain and build on levels of existing employee engagement and commitment. To support this aim, the work to develop a Council Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy is underway and a draft version with an associated action plan will be brought to a future Personnel Committee for consideration and approval.
9. Over the course of the last 15 months, several measures including well-being surveys and a series of virtual Question and Answer sessions with Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team members have been instigated to engage more collaboratively with our workforce and seek their views which has helped shape our response to covid and will further inform the future of work as we move towards recovery and beyond. These exercises have enabled us to discuss the culture of the organisation and to understand our employees' experiences of what it is like to work for Nottinghamshire County Council. Members will consider a separate report later in the meeting to find out about the findings of latest workforce check-in survey undertaken in April 2021.
10. A Reward and Recognition event has been arranged to take place in July 2021 at Rufford Country Park to recognise the work of employees who have gone above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic. The date of this event is subject to change due to weather or change in national Covid 19 restrictions and government advice. This is the first event in what is intended to be an ongoing programme of activity to recognise and value the work of Council employees. This includes reviewing and updating the long service award scheme and developing further corporate reward and recognition events, in addition to the activity already underway in departments.

## **Learning and development**

11. Whilst all face-to-face training activity was suspended at the beginning of lockdown, the Council have continued to provide the learning opportunities via online learning or through the virtual classroom environment. During the early stages of pandemic, the focus of learning and development activity shifted from the Council's existing wide-ranging development programme to a focus on equipping employees to move to delivering critical front-line services. Over 45,000 units of on-line training in areas such as infection control, basic social care, safeguarding and other refresher training were provided to ensure critical services could continue to operate in the early phases of the pandemic. This was supported by essential face-to-face training in areas such as lifting and handling.
12. We have continued to work with our external training providers to move the Council's overall development offer to virtual arrangements enabling the full training programme to now be reinstated to ensure that as much of the current training programme usually available can still be accessed and completed as move towards recovery. In addition, we have continued to respond to requests from departments and have added other opportunities to the training catalogue such as Bereavement Support training, additional financial advice and a wealth of online support materials relating to wellbeing.
13. Work is now underway to ensure that employees and managers have the tools, techniques and are equipped to work in new ways going forward as part of the Council's hybrid working approach. This will include refreshed leadership and management training to develop confident leaders able to operate and empower staff to work differently, collaboratively and encourage innovation and creativity in a climate of inclusivity, trust and high performance. This will be supported by further guidance, toolkits, training and development for our employees to embed digital and key skills and approaches necessary for this new working environment.

## **Employee health and well-being support**

14. The employee health and wellbeing action plan was refreshed and approved by Personnel Committee in September 2020 to include new measures directly linked to the Covid-19 situation and fill any gaps in our provision. This enabled us to support our employees' wellbeing and resilience and organisational resilience as we responded to the pandemic. The most recent survey results tell us that more work is required to promote the package of measures already available, review and develop this with greater input from employees from across the Council to ensure their needs are met and they continue to feel valued and supported by the Council.
15. During the pandemic the Occupational Health Unit have continued to operate their service, delivering support and medical advice to managers and employees. Utilising available technology, clinic appointments have been carried out on a telephone referral basis.
16. In order to further support staff during this difficult time a 24-hour counselling help line was launched which staff could access quickly and directly without management referral. A range of additional tools, information, training and support on mental health issues has been made available to staff to supplement the existing materials. This includes signposting staff to new materials as they are being developed by organisations such as Mind and other organisations

specialising in this field. Particular attention is being paid to supporting staff with bereavement, in either a personal or work context, with additional tools and materials.

### **Smarter working and the working environment**

17. The Action Plan has a specific strand on smarter working which will further embed the principles of flexible working across the Council's workforce. Discussions with Timewise, managers and trades union colleagues helped us to recognise that working flexibly is something many employees' value and that it can also benefit the Council and people for whom we provide services. We were accredited as a Timewise employer on 11 December 2020. This accreditation is awarded in recognition of the commitment the Council has made to increasing opportunities for flexible working for our workforce. Timewise is the recognised sector leader in developing innovative solutions around flexible working and therefore the Council wanted to align itself with their accreditation process to demonstrate ongoing commitment to meet the expectations of our workforce as a modern public services employer whilst continuing to meet priorities for service delivery.
18. The Working from Home Hub was launched to share tips and resources with our employees for better and more productive working from home. The Hub is being updated with supporting guidance for hybrid working and to signpost employees to additional support and advice available externally. The Workforce Resilience and Recovery Group will continue to work with the Smarter Working programme team to develop and implement the Council's new Hybrid Working Policy once approved.

### **Other Options Considered**

19. The option of not reviewing the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Action Plan in light of learning from our response to the pandemic could be considered but this would mean that the Council's workforce would be poorly placed to respond to current and future needs as we move into the next phases of covid, then recovery and the "new normal".

### **Reason for Recommendation**

20. The previous People Strategy and underpinning information in the Workforce Plan provided a framework for Members and senior officers to make informed decisions in respect of budget setting and future resourcing requirements in a world before Covid-19. However, the pandemic has created a new set of challenges and opportunities to move more quickly towards new ways of working. It is anticipated that the way we are working now will continue indefinitely and become the "new normal" and we need to consider what changes are required to ensure our workforce are adequately prepared, supported, equipped and developed for the immediate future. The Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and actions to deliver this will ensure the foundations are in place and help the Council and its workforce transition to a revised People Strategy developed to enable the delivery of the new Council Plan, once this is approved.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Data Protection and Information Governance**

22. There is no personal information about named individuals contained within the report.

### **Financial Implications**

23. There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report.

### **Human Resources Implications**

24. The Human Resources implications are implicit in the body of this report. The future success of the Council relies on our ability to plan effectively our future resourcing requirements and to recruit and retain employees with the necessary skills and experience to deliver in the current emergency and on the future commitments made to the citizens of Nottinghamshire.

### **Smarter Working Implications**

25. Findings of the latest staff survey will inform the development of future vision for Smarter Working which takes account of changes to working practices and staff culture since the COVID-19 Pandemic began.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Members:

- 1) Consider the progress on the implementation of the Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy and the further actions identified and agree to receive further updates on progress.
- 2) Approve the development of a revised People Strategy to support implementation of the new Council Plan once this has been approved.

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director – Customers, Governance and Employees**  
**Chief Executive's Department**

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#### **Constitutional Comments (KK 16/06/21)**

26. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

#### **Financial Comments (SES 16/06/21)**

27. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

#### **HR Comments (JP 17/06/21)**

28. The human resources implications are implicit in the body of the report and will continue to be the platform for employee engagement with the Corporate Leadership Team, departmental leadership teams, the workforce and their nominated representatives.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

#### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All