

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

HR and communications unit work plan and focus

22 April 2013

1.0 Purpose of Report and Introduction

1.1 This report outlines the main work focus of HR and Communications teams.

HR work inevitably continues to focus on supporting restructuring and change particularly around the One Council Programme. Work is on-going on the future workforce in terms of composition, size, qualifications and skills. The programme of work to automate and streamline employee admin processes continues on track with significant changes due for completion during 2013, and further developments resulting from the One Council workstreams are progressing well.

Good communication with and involvement of staff at a corporate and local level on changes affecting them continues to be important.

2.0 HR work to support on-going budget savings

The scale of Directorate restructuring has reduced over the last year with significant restructuring now coming from One Council workstreams.

The Council's workforce continues to reduce and 2013 will see a number of restructures concluded with most affecting management structures other than business support which impacts on over 600 admin and support staff. This restructure has been planned for a number of months and vacancies have been held whilst detailed proposals have been developed. This means that although the proposed structures removes some 70 posts, once long term vacancies are removed there are only 10 posts less in the new structure. The pay grades are different as the new structure implements a standard job description and grading structure to replace the numerous variations which currently exist.

2.1 Work to better align staff resources to workload and service activity

Part of the One Council workstream on HR and Workforce Development is a piece of work to better align staff resources to activity. This involves developing an improved approach to workforce demand, allocation and scheduling to more accurately determine staff resource requirements in relation to changing demands including:

- Developing a framework model for workforce planning and scheduling
- Reviewing staff/contract types for direct hire (full-time, part-time, annualised hours) and peripheral staff (relief, volunteers, agency, work experience, internship) and define best use of these contract/staff.

- Utilising flexible working arrangements to increase productivity e.g. working from home/local office creates increased work capacity and reduced travel time
- Work to automate and standardise staff scheduling processes/ arrangements to enable self-serve for managers and staff, reduce processing time and increase productivity.
- Review resource demand forecasting and scheduling processes.
- Review key workforce data to link to workforce planning and scheduling e.g. planned and unplanned leave (e.g. sick absence, annual leave, staff turnover) and include in resource planning and scheduling model.

2.2 Terms and Conditions

The changes to terms and conditions which started in 2011 to deliver savings of £2 million are now well embedded. To recap these included: 2 days unpaid leave, the removal of increments for those at the top of the pay band who are not performing satisfactory including too much time off and the removal of overtime pay.

Arguably the historic “offer” local government provides as an employer with small but steady annual pay increases, a good pension scheme and a reasonable level of job security and stability has changed but as yet has not been clarified or replaced. Staff have been asked for their views on how the County Council can improve the employment benefits available to staff without increased cost. There is already a good voluntary benefits scheme available via the intranet and further work has been undertaken to improve the professional and personal development opportunities for staff. The County Council still has much to offer staff in terms of opportunities for personal and professional development, engagement and input and fulfilling roles which make a difference to people’s lives. It is considered that the County Council still offers a package of terms and conditions even in the current climate, which for example with leave entitlement, access to flexi time and support when ill and the changed local government pension scheme can still be defined as a reasonably “good” package. Based on staff feedback it may be that further benefits such as improved access to skills development could be introduced at no cost.

3.0 Moving managers to greater self-reliance in managing their teams

The restructure of HR Services in mid-2012 continues the move to greater self-reliance of managers in managing their staffing issues. The HR service has a new case management system which analysis queries and requests for support from staff and managers. This analysis will be fed back to directorates as part of workforce performance data and used to identify training needs for managers on staff management. The system for HR advisors shows a total of 2245 calls in Q4 (including schools) of which 767 were enquiries and 288 new cases (excluding schools). The main categories for the new cases were attendance management (23%), restructures (18%), resolving issues at work/grievances (17%) and disciplinaries (16%).

When managers contact the HR Service team for support they receive telephone advice and face to face follow up support if needed. To further support managers a range of manager skill sessions on attendance management, developing performance and disciplinary management have been delivered in recent months with over 100 managers attending.

4.0 Systems Developments

Developments continue to move all staff management process on line including;

- **E Contract acceptance** – where staff access and accept their contract online.
- **Staff Processes automation** – a suite of automated processes has been reviewed by a manager focus group with three processes released in April (leavers, developing performance/capability and flexible working). The next set (attendance management, disciplinary and induction/probation) is currently being reviewed for release in May/June.
- **Recruitment communications** – This communicates with managers automatically as a vacancy progresses. As a result of manager feedback a further development to allow managers to see a summary of all stages of vacancy as well as the current update is being developed.

These developments make good use of the investment in EDRMS on staff e-personal files building on existing e-leave, e.pay and expenses and eCRB accessed via Myview on the Intranet. The timeline for on-going developments is at Appendix 1.

5.0 Consideration of future workforce needs.

Work is on-going to assess and determine the Council's current and future workforce needs in terms of structure, numbers, training requirements, skills development, qualifications and flexibility. Each Directorate has looked at its various and changing workforce needs and these have been pulled together into a draft organisation wide annual Workforce Plan. This includes specific sub plans for areas such as recruitment and training. The provision of a full costed training plan is a step forward detailing training and development needs, how these will be met and at what cost across the whole workforce.

6.0 NYCC Apprenticeships

NYCC appointed 70 apprentices to core vacancies in 2012 which is an increase on the previous 2 years when less vacancies, significant restructuring and redundancy affected the available opportunities for young people.

There has been a large increase in the number of young people appointed to front line Health and Social Care roles, with 20 apprentices appointed to these positions during 2012 compared to only 3 apprentices appointed in this occupational sector during 2011 and 3 during 2010.

In April 2012 the Executive approved funding of £400k to support the provision of apprenticeships in the local economy. This provided a wage subsidy for 53 apprenticeships, and employability training as a precursor to employment. Of the apprenticeship opportunities established 20 are posts in NYCC and Community Libraries and 2 in NYCC Outdoor Education. The remaining are with partner organisations and small/medium sized employers, some of which are contractors in NYCC's supply chain.

In addition to apprentices the council provides the following support predominantly to young people;

- work experience placements for school students (Year 10) as part of their statutory educational provision in addition to requests from Sixth Form/College students, Graduates and young people who are unemployed and wish to develop their skills.
- Work with JCP's (Job Centre Plus) initiative to provide (unpaid) placements for young people (18 – 24) with little or no work experience. Placements last between 2 and 8 weeks, normally providing between 25 and 30 hours of work experience per week. 9 young people have access these placements in NYCC to date.
- Support to North Yorkshire Police by providing 9 newly recruited Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) with a 2 week work experience placement in a community setting to help them to understand local services.
- For graduates a Graduate Talent Pool is in operation to manage speculative applications from Graduates. Managers can recruit from this Graduate Talent Pool at their discretion for vacancies at certain bands with graduates appointed on the standard terms, conditions and relevant salary grade of the post. 7 graduates have been recruited in this way to date. There is also access to Internships as a training and learning opportunity for graduates wanting to gain experience and develop skills in order to progress their career. Internships are available to managers as a short-term resourcing solution which is an alternative to agency staff and external recruitment. These can create potential long term staffing solutions as interns can progress into the established post dependant on performance. There is no guarantee of employment on completion of the internship. The recommended duration for an internship is 12 weeks in order to provide adequate time for the individual to become familiar with the role and develop beneficial skills and experience. Interns are paid positions.

7.0 Communications

Internal communication - Over recent months, a number of One Council changes, particularly in the area of Business Support, have involved a significant amount of communications with staff - from the those staff directly affected, through to the teams they support and to senior managers. Keeping staff up to date on proposals, developments and the implementations of a number of changes has been an important part of the One Council activity. This has involved face to face workshops, events, question and answer sessions, as well as significant signposting to more information on the intranet.

With the number of channels and volume of messages to staff about various changes increasing, there is a focus on providing these in a more regular and timely manner. Proposals have been drawn up for regular quarterly updates, particularly from support services in Central Services, bringing together summaries of changes, particularly focused around HR work, and how these will affect staff, and what action they need to take.

As an important part of the wider cultural change for staff, communication with managers across the organisation has continued to be a priority, with a number of

different channels being used and a specific managers event being planned for later in the year.

To support staff in their need to find information easily and in an accessible way, to be able to self-serve in a number of administrative areas, as well as to work more collaboratively, a project to deliver a new intranet has begun. Planned to be delivered by the end of the year, the new intranet will engage with staff, providing the ability to work together across the council and solve problems, to carry out business processes, as well as search out and find information quickly. The development of the new intranet will involve staff from across the council, in a number of different services and at different levels.

External communication - Communication to residents continues through a number of different channels. The council continues its relationship with Johnston Press, with monthly pages in six local newspapers, as well as providing all local media with news and information. The use of social media has increased significantly, with many more residents interacting with the council through a number of different channels. A major improvement programme for the council's website is now underway, which will retain the current system on which it is built, but will improve its content and focus the provision of information from a residents' perspective, rather than the council's. The reviewed and updated website will be ready by the end of September, 2013.

8.0 One Council Changes for HR

The HR and Workforce Development One Council workstream has completed a number of reviews and restructures which taken together has delivered savings of some £0.5 million with further changes and savings to be achieved in both areas in later phases.

A new Employment Support Service - In July'12 the following administration teams were co-located at County Hall; payroll, training admin, recruitment admin, pay and reward admin, HR systems admin, schools HR admin and occupational health admin.

A series of process reviews with staff and managers including a manager survey helped design the new service with processes streamlined and standardised throughout the employment life cycle, and, where possible, automated.

The teams which were brought together have now been restructured and a new Employment Support Service introduced on the 1st April 2013. Some examples of service improvements include:

- One point of contact for all of employment administration needs including; recruitment, ID badges, pay, employment contract;
- Automatic communications from the recruitment system to alert managers at all stages of the recruitment process
- Integration of the recruitment system with the HR/payroll system to speed up the new starter process;
- The ability for managers to increase or decrease hours, and process leavers using MyView;

- Electronic pre-employment health questionnaire to speed up the recruitment health clearance process
- New streamlined policies and forms for shortlisting and notification of successful candidates during the recruitment process.

The workforce resource profile of the new service is designed to cope with the peaks in demand associated with statutory and other time driven demands such as payroll, recruitment drives and year end. In addition the re profile of work allocation has increased the number of staff dealing with key volume processes meaning that the number of staff dealing with processes such as recruitment has increased from 5 to 35 which should significantly improve the service to recruiting managers and applicants.

Training and Workforce Development – All team were restructured in July bringing together all training and qualifications delivery into one unit which is responsible for the procurement and delivery of all training and development across the County Council. This has resulted in saving by removing duplication, improving procurement of training delivery for specialist services where needed and better use of internal training capacity. Directorate Heads of HR are now responsible for directorate workforce development which commission training requirements from the central training unit in accordance with the new workforce development and training plan. Further changes are underway to bring together a single team and arrangements for qualifications for staff across the Council including NVQ provision and to better refine Training and Development plans to maximise capacity and spend making further savings.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 That Members note the ongoing HR and communications work plan and focus.

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Background Documents: None

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Systems Programme of Work Timeline 2013/2014 (Showing target completion dates)

