

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

19 July 2023

COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD

Workforce

It is early days for a complete picture of the new Council's workforce data but we can confirm a whole workforce of 10,659 employees (over 18,000 including schools).

75% of the workforce are on NYC terms and conditions with 25% on TUPE protected arrangements. The majority (75%) are on established contracts with 8% on temporary arrangements and 17% are casual / relief.

The average age of the workforce is 47 with 35% of the workforce over 55, and 4% under 25. Minority ethnic workforce is 3.8% compared to North Yorkshire population 3.3% (Office for National Statistics).

As we start the life of the new council it will not be possible to do historic like-for-like comparisons on trends such as sickness absence; turnover; and agency spend. We are, however, busy pulling together data such as this and identifying areas where we can improve. Further detail will be available in quarterly reports to the Executive as well as in my future statements.

Finance

100 days in to the new Council we have achieved some critical milestones...our finance teams area still organised around the legacy councils and have been working to finalise the 22/23 statement of accounts which I am pleased to report are largely now done. 6 of the 8 statements have been published on the Council's website and discussions are now on-going with the various audit firms on plans for concluding the 24 outstanding audits.

After some initial teething problems on financial systems and processes, with the extra support put in place things have settled down but more fundamental change is needed. One of the challenges in bringing together eight councils is to retain financial grip and that means having a single view of the new council's finances. Functionality has therefore had to suffer in some areas but this needs to be seen as a temporary state of affairs. Proposals to improve our systems and ways of working are therefore a high priority (eg automating our ordering and payment processes) for initial transformation and that work will start in the next quarter.

As a result of having a single view of the council's finances, however, we are on track to receive the first quarterly budget monitoring report at the Executive in August. This will be a major milestone for the new council and will no doubt bring with it stories of both success and challenge. On the issue of challenge I can also report that in-depth discussions are taking place to identify savings opportunities across the council for 2024/05 and beyond as we prepare for the Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan. as part of this approach I will be meeting with my Executive Member colleagues and Corporate Directors to ensure that there is a clear focus on the art of the possible when it comes to savings opportunities while ensuring that we continue to deliver the best we can for our residents.

I have committed to updating members on a regular basis as to progress on savings. As Members will have seen to the report to the Executive on 2 May 2023 future savings of £3.8m are anticipated on Senior Manager costs for tiers 1 to 3. This will be updated at the quarterly monitoring report on 29 August.

Property

I reported in my last Statement that a key area of opportunity following Local Government Reorganisation is the rationalisation of the council's operational assets, and I can confirm that good progress is being made in this area. An initial project to deliver a number of 'quick wins' is underway including proposals to vacate a small number of properties by transferring services into the main Civic Centres in Harrogate, Scarborough and Richmond where there is capacity, and mothballing certain areas of office accommodation in Malton, Hambleton and Skipton. The space vacated through these proposals will be appraised for potential future uses, including a review of opportunities to utilise it to enhance service delivery, deliver corporate priorities, generate rental income or deliver capital receipts.

High level data on all Council occupied operational sites such as offices, depots and customer service hubs are in the process of being collated and this will inform the wider, longer-term programme of asset rationalisation; allowing potential savings opportunities to be quantified and factored into future year budget projections. Non-financial considerations, such as carbon reduction targets, will also be key drivers in the decision making process for this programme.

I have established a cross party Member Working Group to provide political input into this process and an inaugural meeting has been held. A second meeting is planned and will consider a set of principles to be applied to the longer term rationalisation programme.

Technology

NYC Technology Services has spent this first quarter year of our new organisation getting to know what 'working as one' really means. This includes:

- finishing some day one projects, such as the ongoing work to ensure our finance systems function effectively,
- completing some essential upgrades that which will improve technology stability for our users, including standardising the management of our firewalls so we are less reliant on costly third parties.
- and planning for the consolidation of our systems.

The current complexity of multiple versions of systems, and all of the separate networks, means that we are getting some unexpected (and sometimes widespread) outages when we are making changes. Because we cannot predict them accurately, we are introducing a period of 'stability prioritisation' limiting change to only what is absolutely essential to make sure that we do not unexpectedly negatively impact the wider organisation.

And finally, an important benefit of being one NYC service has started to become visible with technology staff now working together across the region. Teams and individuals have been supporting each other by working in different locations, helping to fill knowledge, skills, or capacity gaps, and while doing so they have been building individual and team knowledge and forming a strong one team approach to drive forward the consolidation and transformation plans for the service.

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