

## Minutes of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

11<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 at 3.30pm  
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

**Present:** Councillor P Hughes (Chair);  
Councillors E M Giles and Underhill.

**Apologies:** Councillors Edis and Hickey.

**In attendance:** D Carter (Executive Director – Resources);  
R Luckman (Head of Human Resources);  
M Stanley (Business Partner – Resourcing);  
J Seehra (Human Resources Development Partner);  
G Ditta (Graduate);  
O Houlston (Graduate).

### 8/18 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

### 9/18 **Recruitment processes and initiatives for addressing an aging workforce**

The Board received a presentation on a range of human resources related matters including recruitment, engagement, workforce planning and Investors in People.

In 2008 the Council had almost 7000 employees, following the national reduction in local government funding since that time there were approximately 4600 employees. Over that time the average age of an employee has remained at 46 years.

A key aspect of employee engagement was the annual survey, with response rates having increased consistently over the last four years; Sandwell was now slightly above the national average response rate for local government.

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In order to address uncertainty caused for employees by the Government's austerity programme the Council had introduced a 'Job Promise'. This initiative was designed to prevent compulsory redundancies, with employees instead transferring to fill vacancies elsewhere in the Council where they had transferable skills. To date this had resulted in savings of over £1million in redundancy payments, with over 90 employees transferring to alternative posts. Members welcomed this initiative and noted that a report seeking approval for the third year of Job Promise was due to be considered by Cabinet at its April meeting.

To assist the Council with its workforce planning there were numerous strands including the planned leavers scheme, ongoing staff development opportunities and representation at recruitment fairs and events.

The Council offered a range of opportunities for young people:-

- Apprenticeships;
- Higher apprenticeships;
- Summer Internship Programme;
- Sandwell Graduate Development Programme;
- National Graduate Development Programme.

Two of the graduates on the programmes attended the meeting and provided an overview of their backgrounds, how they found out about the programmes, what attracted them to Sandwell and what their experiences had been like since joining the programme.

The Board was informed that the Council has recently achieved Investors in People Silver status. This status was only held by 5% of all organisations assessed for Investors in People and Sandwell was the first West Midlands local authority to achieve silver. Across the assessment framework the Council had achieved silver, except for 'creating sustainable success' which had been assessed as gold. By achieving silver status, the Council was comparable with the best organisations, including successful multinational companies.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- Councils were complex organisations employing people across diverse professions and services. This could impact on average ages as some professions required longer periods for an individual to become fully qualified or accredited.

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- 9.8 million of the UK's workforce was over the age of 50, which was approximately a third of the nation's workforce.
- Sandwell was experiencing 7-8% of its workforce leaving per year, this compared with a sector benchmark of 14.3%.
- Human Resources officers worked to maximise responses to the annual employee engagement survey. This included focussing efforts on areas of the workforce that did not typically have access to computers as part of their role – for example tradespeople and carers.
- There were positive levels of engagement through the survey across all age groups within the Council's workforce.
- The workforce was currently across three generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials. With the removal of retirement ages this was likely to become a four-generation workforce in the future.
- The Council endeavoured to attract as many apprentices and graduates from Sandwell as possible, however it was not possible to restrict entry to these schemes by location.
- In order to make effective use of the apprenticeship levy the possibility of working with the third sector in the borough to help them pursue apprenticeships was being investigated.
- The work experience opportunities at the Council were not limited to secondary school students, but could be used by others, for example to help people transfer skills to different career opportunities.
- There were opportunities to work with other major employers in the borough to make various work experience, internship and apprentice initiatives easier for local people to access.
- The Summer Internship programme took on 10-12 participants each year and the Council had been successful in recruiting locally for this programme.
- The Council used social media and marketing in colleges across the region to highlight employment opportunities to local young people.

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- Human Resources were discussing with the Director – Education, Skills and Employment how best to engage with school students in Year 9, as this was when the students decided what course subjects to take for GCSEs. This could be as part of a raising awareness about the wider ‘public sector offer’ working with partners such as the Police, Fire Service and NHS.
- Issues previously identified around recruitment in some service areas in the Neighbourhoods directorate were expected to be addressed as there was a service redesign being undertaken by the Director.
- Sandwell Children’s Trust was responsible for the recruitment and retention of social workers going forward.

The Board thanked the officers for attending the meeting and providing in-depth answers to the questions raised. Members thanked the graduates for attending and sharing their experiences about the Graduate Development Programmes.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the potential of local authorities and local employers working together on apprenticeships, internships, graduate programmes and other initiatives be referred to the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a potential area for review;
- (2) that the following topics be included in the scrutiny work programme:-
  - (a) Diversity and Inclusion;
  - (b) the use of the Apprenticeship Levy;
  - (c) Peer Review and Investors in People action plans.

(Meeting ended at 5.15pm)

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