

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 9 JUNE 2021  
title: HUMAN RESOURCE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS  
submitted by: JANE PEARSON – DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES  
principal author: MICHELLE SMITH – HEAD OF HR

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To ask Members to agree corporate Human Resource (HR) priorities for the Council for the next 12 months.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions:

- Council's Ambitions: The HR priorities support our ambition to be a well-managed Council and our core value to appreciate and invest in staff.
- Community Objectives: The HR priorities will contribute to the creation of quality, skilled employment opportunities and ensure effective and efficient service delivery.
- Corporate Priorities: See above.
- Other considerations: None.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members have previously been informed of recruitment and retention difficulties, sickness levels and staff development in our regular HR reports and via our Performance Indicators.

## 3 ISSUES

3.1 At the last meeting we provided a comprehensive report outlining the recruitment difficulties we have experienced over the last five years and Members asked the Chief Executive and CMT, in conjunction with myself, to review the Council's current pay structure and present options at a later date, to address current and future difficulties.

3.2 Since the meeting I have had a preliminary discussion with a Director of North West Employers' Organisation (NWEO) and one of their Associates with a view to them assisting us with a review. I am currently arranging a date for them to have a more detailed discussion with myself and the Chief Executive to progress this discussion further.

3.3 In addition, as Members have already highlighted their concerns regarding our pay structure it may be helpful for this Committee to establish a Working Group to consider the issue in detail and assist the Chief Executive, CMT and myself in the assessment of any options explored with NWEO, or any other suggestions to address pay within the Council. The Union would also be consulted on any options/proposals.

3.4 Also at the last meeting, Members received information regarding staff who had left our employment over the last 12 months. This showed that 32 employees had left in that period which included 16 voluntary resignations and 12 staff who had retired. Our turnover rate for 2019/2020 was 23.44% compared to 15.82% the previous year.

- 3.5 Our Workforce Profile data has always shown that we have an ageing workforce. Our last report, as at 31 March 2020 showed that 52% of staff were aged over 50 and nearly three quarters (71.5%) over 40. On average 35.7% of Local Government employees were aged 50+ whereas our figure was 55.8%. This, combined with having a number of staff who have worked here for many years, means that we need to take positive steps to ensure that we do not lose a significant amount of knowledge and skill as these staff leave/retire.
- 3.6 We also need to ensure that we invest in the existing workforce to build knowledge and skills for the future, as well as recruiting new staff who can bring fresh ideas or alternative experience that would be beneficial to the Council and our customers.
- 3.7 Investing in the training and development of staff is also something that would support career development for staff. If this could be coupled with opportunities for career progression within the organisation, it would help to make us a more attractive option for those seeking employment and improve our standing as a good employer.
- 3.8 In respect of our absence, the average days lost per employee for the year ended 31 March 2020 was 11.5. This was an increase on the previous years' average of 10 days per employee. Long-term absence accounted for 57% of the total days lost (perhaps another factor linked to an ageing workforce). The top two reasons for absence were musculoskeletal (excluding back pain) and stress, which had been the same in the previous year.
- 3.9 In our last staff survey conducted in 2019, staff were asked to identify the top 3 most important things that made somewhere a good place to work. Staff responses showed the top 3 to be: a nice environment to work in, salary and being valued by management.
- 3.10 The survey also asked questions about wellbeing and overall, 53% of staff said that they felt under a moderate or large amount of stress at work.
- 3.11 Another key issue for us in the coming 12 months and beyond, will be post Covid recovery. It is likely that we will continue to have an important role to play in any national post Covid recovery plans, as well as needing to ensure that our HR practice and procedures support staff as things return to normal and that any changes introduced over the last 12 months eg amendments to our Flexi Scheme, an increase in homeworking etc, are assessed to establish their impact on staff and services, and to see if there are measures that can be taken forward on a more permanent basis in the future.
- 3.12 At the last meeting, Members gave approval for staff to be offered the opportunity to be paid for accrued flexi in excess of 15 hours, as at 7 February 2021. 30 members of staff fell into this category and 17 of them took up the offer of payment. This came to a total of £5,098.12 (incl NI due).
- 3.13 Members also approved the same principle for staff who had accumulated annual leave in excess of 20 days as at 31 March 2021. 5 members of staff fell into this category and 6 of them took up the offer of payment. This came to a total of £19,516.59 (incl NI and Superann due).
- 3.14 Taking all this contextual information into account, I believe that the Council's HR priorities for the next 12 months can be consolidated into 3 key areas, namely:
- Recruitment and Retention,
  - Health and Wellbeing (including mental health and stress); and
  - Training and Development (to underpin and support the other two priorities).

The ongoing impact of Covid and the Council's return to normal service delivery is a theme that will have an impact across all three priorities.

3.15 I would ask Members for their support and commitment to these priorities.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources: No financial implications at present, but there will be cost/budget implications across each of the priority areas, these will be assessed and reported as and when they arrive.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – No technical, environmental or legal implications have been identified.
- Political – No political implications have been identified.
- Reputation – The reputation of Local Government as a key employer will be affected if the priority areas are not addressed as they are fundamental to being recognised as a good employer.
- Equality & Diversity – No equality and diversity issues have been identified.

#### 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Receive the report.

5.2 Agree that the 3 HR priorities for the Council for the next 12 months will be:

- Recruitment and Retention,
- Health and Wellbeing; and
- Training and Development.

and confirm their support and commitment to those priorities.

5.3 Establish a Working Group to work alongside the Chief Executive and the Head of HR, to review the Council's pay structure and make recommendations to this Committee, to address recruitment and retention difficulties linked to the Council's salary levels.



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HEAD OF HR

JANE PEARSON  
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES