

SUBJECT:	PEOPLE STRATEGY
MEETING:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
DATE:	6 June 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with a copy of the People Strategy, which is one of a suite of enabling strategies that sit underneath the Community and Corporate Plan. This should enable the committee to seek assurance about the effectiveness of the authority's enabling strategies in supporting the delivery of the authority's ambition.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee use the report to seek assurance that the enabling strategies sitting below the Community and Corporate Plan provide sufficient clarity and direction to ensure that the authority's resources will be deployed effectively and in alignment with its purpose and objectives.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Community and Corporate Plan established a clear purpose for Monmouthshire to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. This strategy is underpinned by a series of enabling strategies including the Finance Strategy and Asset Management Strategy and Plan. Together these should ensure that all of the council's assets and resources are aligned behind its purpose.
- 3.2 The People Strategy creates the framework for us to support and develop our colleagues so that everyone's contribution can be maximised. The strategy highlights the opportunities and challenges we face. It also describes the things that need to be in place for our colleagues to thrive and succeed.
- 3.3 Monmouthshire is an attractive place to live and work which has a positive effect on our ability to recruit and retain good people. The authority benefitted from early adoption of agile working approaches and digital technology which gave us an advantage in the recruitment market. However, the pandemic accelerated the adoption of these approaches by others meaning they are now commonplace. We no longer stand out as we once did and need to work hard to ensure we remain an employer of choice.

- 3.4 The nature of the workplace and the workforce is changing across the UK and globally. Younger workers are less likely to remain with an employer for life in favour of portfolio careers. They are not as focused on final salaries and are more likely to job-hop to increase their earnings. We do not currently have the development opportunities in place in all areas to achieve this, although there are notable exceptions such as Social Care and Health which has benefitted from the Social Care Workforce Development Grant for many years.
- 3.5 We have increased the size of our workforce over the past ten years, but our employee budget has only gone up by around 1%. The increased staffing is being afforded by grants for specific projects. This creates a risk that we are increasingly dependent on unsecure and short-term funding and therefore more vulnerable if they were to be removed. It also creates challenges for colleagues who find themselves employed on a series of short-term contracts that deny them the stability they are seeking.
- 3.6 We also need to understand the challenges and opportunities afforded by automation and generative artificial intelligence. These bring significant potential to improve productivity and greater equality in earnings in some professions. However, we are also aware that it can result in the reinforcement of historical biases that exist in society. It should be used to complement the compassion, empathy and problem-solving skills of our colleagues with the decisions that affects peoples' lives being made by colleagues rather than computers.
- 3.7 During the development of the strategy, we've been talking to teams about the things they need to succeed in the workplace. These range from things such as autonomy and a clear purpose which occur frequently in academic research through to better weatherproof clothing for staff working outdoors. The strategy sets out a bit more detail on these things. What was evident through these conversations was the passion colleagues had for Monmouthshire.
- 3.8 All of this has informed the development of a series of objectives focused on our culture, capacity, capability and the contribution. These are shown under six themes:
- Involved and Informed – A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve.
 - Diverse and Inclusive – A workforce with a diverse range of experiences, skills and backgrounds where people can be themselves.
 - Learning and Developing – People can access the training they need to do their job and the development opportunities to take the next step in their career.
 - Recruiting and retaining – We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people.
 - Well-being – Colleagues have access to the resources to manage their own well-being and can access tiered support to help them back to work if they experience sickness related absence.
 - Innovative and creative – People have the mindset, skills and support needed to develop and implement the solutions to the biggest challenges facing the council and the communities we serve.

- 3.9 These objectives will be delivered through an action plan which is attached as an appendix. These include:
- Launch a new e-recruitment system to improve process efficiency and improve the recruitment and onboarding experience for recruiting managers and potential and new employees.
 - Pilot and roll-out a new appraisal scheme so that we can ensure clear alignment between the work of our colleagues and the priorities of the council – and use this to develop a training needs analysis.
 - Launch the new e-learning system to ensure staff can access the training they need to do their current role and the development opportunities they need to take their career to the next level which improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our back-office processes.
 - Build on our recently attained Disability Confident Employer status to ensure we attract and retain a diversity of talent and reduce the disability pay gap.
 - Continue to develop and promote our Well-being offer and staff benefits package.
 - Support Staff to take action to reduce their carbon footprint – both in the workplace, at home and while travelling.
 - Improve our use and analysis of workforce data.
- The actions will continually evolve in response to feedback and emerging best practice.
- 3.10 The People Strategy will achieve nothing if it remains a series of pixels on a screen. Our colleagues need to live and breathe it. It will be communicated in a variety of bite-size chunks appropriate to the location and audience. If we are successful, we would expect to be able to see this in a number of key metrics including increased job applications and reduced sickness absence.
- 3.11 Our people are our most important asset. They are the means by which we achieve almost everything we do in our communities. If we get this right, then we will create and sustain the conditions and culture in which they thrive and succeed.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 To ensure that the authority's resources are aligned with the delivery of its purpose.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The strategy itself does not require any resource commitments above those already in place. However, people are arguable our biggest single resource with payroll costs of around £100M. We have choices about *what* the people in our employment do – that it set by the community and Corporate Plan, as well as legislation and political direction. Of equal importance is *how* they do it. Not making effective use of this resource carries significant opportunity cost in terms of the capacity, capability and contribution made by our workforce.

6. CONSULTEES:

This draft strategy has been shaped by engagement with groups of staff and discussions with Cabinet. It has also been presented to the Joint Advisory Group

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

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