

Appendix 1

D222315 - Internal Audit of Workforce Planning

Internal Audit engagements are conducted in conformance with the
Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

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Purpose and Scope of Review

Provide assurance for Section 151 officer, senior management and inform the Annual Internal Audit report and Annual Governance Statement. Reviewing policies and procedures in place, looking at how Human Resources (HR) are looking at Corporate and Service risk registers around capacity and resilience of key roles: -

1. To consider the Councils Leadership and Management Development process, looking at the People Strategy in place which outlines the culture, standards, and expectations of the workforce, in line with the CEO Principles.
2. To review the Councils Recruitment and Retention Policy to see if it is still fit for purpose.
3. To evaluate how the Council is promoting itself as a high performing and empowering workforce to encourage people to join the authority or staff to remain.
4. To review the Council's current /future arrangements around developing a Flexible and Agile Workforce.
5. To look at how the council is supporting staff with Health and Wellbeing matter.

Audit Opinion

The review confirmed there are robust HR initiatives and strategies in place to support the Corporate Workforce Plan. Agile policy and guidance is on target and is on the agenda to be presented to Cabinet in May 2023, with a target of June 2023 to go live. Leadership conferences have been reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with a timetable in place for the next 12 months. The review of Leadership Conference is required prior to one to one's being carried out and performance indicators are being monitored. Succession planning is carried out routinely and a decision has been made to draft a formal plan by the end of April 2024 to support managers.

The HR department had a number of vacancies within the team, and are in the process of recruiting SLT members, which is priority. Therefore, the development of some policies and guidance has been delayed. Management induction is a mechanism for supporting and upskilling new managers on policies, procedures, tools and systems has also been delayed until September 2023. These delays pose a moderate risk (See Issue 1).

The One Council Approach is making good progress, corporate induction and new starter provisions are functioning well and Welsh Unions Learning Funding (WULF) ensures regular courses, which are well advertised and also includes a good provision of management courses. The Operational Development specialist (OD) helps identify skills gaps so that future provisions offering bespoke training can get underway. Discussions are ongoing to support the Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh courses are promoted for employees to develop their skills.

Testing confirms that HR have taken a proactive approach to recruitment with regular workshops being held for CSS/CS vacancies and in September 2022 a job fair organised by HR proved successful. The number of staff on a career pathway has doubled in the last three years and managers are seeing the benefits of career pathways as managers are growing their own and filling skill gaps as well as retaining staff. New adverts and person specifications for vacancies have been streamlined to encourage more applicants and employee benefits are advertised well.

HR are demonstrating a strong commitment to support Health and Wellbeing. There is a mass of resources and policies which are easily assessable and publicised well. There are

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dedicated Mental Health first aiders in each department listed on the intranet. HR have identified the need to ensure the list is current and intend to schedule reviewing this on a 6 monthly basis. Policies are updated regularly, but we advise going forward, that the date of review and next review date should be recorded on the front cover, as it was not always clear during testing (See Issue 2)

The Staff Council continues to be effective, having been used as a consultative body for communicating messages such as NWOW and the Corporate Plan.

Based on the scope of our review, we give a 'Medium' assurance overall.

Details of the definitions of the ratings used in our report are included in Appendix 2.

Medium Assurance ●	Minor weaknesses in management of risks and/or objectives but no risk to achievement of objectives
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Action Plan

Issue 1 – Not all Policies and Procedures are in place. - Moderate Risk ●

Vacancies in HR team and other priorities have led to delays of actions covered in Point 1 of the Corporate Workforce Plan which includes: the Peoples Strategy, Leadership Strategy, Succession Planning and Managers Induction.

The three specialist vacancies in HR have now been filled, so HR are confident that the People Strategy and Leadership Strategy should be in draft by the end November 2023, anticipating approval by January 2024 with a roll out at the end of March 2024

See Root Cause 1 for more detail.

Priority	Agreed action	Responsibility	Deadline
	1.1 Peoples Strategy to be drafted		30/11/2023
	1.2 Leadership Strategy to be drafted (which forms part of the Peoples Strategy)		30/11/2023
	1.3 Succession Planning to be drafted		01/04/2024
	1.4 Management Induction to be drafted		30/09/2023

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Issue 2 – Not all strategies are fully operational. – Moderate Risk ●

Vacancies in HR department and other priorities have led to delays of actions covered in Point 2 of the Corporate Workforce Plan. The review identified there is a Recruitment and Selection Policy in place was reviewed by the previous post holder but has not had a full review recently.

There has been a lot of work completed surrounding support for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Mental Health first aiders and Menopause champions are in place, however the list of mental first aiders on the intranet is out of date and needs updating along with identifying service mental health champions.

Testing evidenced that policies were updated regularly however version controls or review dates should be updated when making even minor changes to documents.

See Root Cause 2 for more detail.

Priority	Agreed action	Responsibility	Deadline
	2.1 Review recruitment policy with consideration being made to increase content in relation to retention		31/03/2024
	2.2 Ongoing work in relation to the onboarding process for iTrent to continue		to be included in HR system specification 31/12/2023
	2.3 Schedule / Practice into keeping Mental Health First Aiders on Itranet current		

Appendix 1 – Root Cause Analysis

Root Cause 1 – Policies and Procedures outlined in Corporate Workforce plan not yet in place.

Policy/guidance development have been delayed due to other priorities or obstacles i.e. Senior Leadership recruitment, new HR staff members being trained on relevant systems to develop the policy/guidance.

The People Strategy has been delayed by 3 months. Draft will hopefully be ready by the end of November 2023 and approved by January 2024, with the rollout carried out at the end of March 2024. This also applies to the Leadership Strategy; which will be part of the People Strategy.

A formal Succession Planning Strategy is not yet in place and looking to draft a written process by April 2024. Succession planning is however carried out as part of the council's workforce planning.

Agile working Policy and guidance is on target and due to be reported to Cabinet briefing and the Full Cabinet in May 2023; hoping to go live in June 2023, with the rollout of drop-in training/information sessions for managers.

Leadership conferences have been reviewed with CEO & SLT. A timetable for the next 12 months has been agreed and is in place.

The Management Induction programme is delayed until the end Sept 2023.

Root Cause 2 – Not all Strategies are fully operational

Recruitment and Retention Policy

There isn't a specific recruitment and retention policy in place however there is a Recruitment and Selection Policy. Reference to retention is minimal within the current policy only making mention that it is the responsibility of the recruiting manager to perform a positive induction.

The current on-boarding process has been put on hold and will be considered as part of the new HR System specification due in the next 6 months.

Support Health and Wellbeing Strategy

There is a lot of work gone into supporting health and wellbeing however this too, has been delayed due to the aforementioned priorities and difficulties.

Mental Health First Aiders and Menopause Champions have been introduced. Service Mental Health Wellbeing champions have not been appointed yet.

HR recognise that the list of Mental Health First Aiders on Intranet needs to remain current as some named first aiders on the intranet have since left the authority.

Appendix 2 – Definition of Ratings Used Within the Report

Assurance Levels

High Assurance ●	Risk and controls well managed and objectives are being achieved
Medium Assurance ●	Minor weaknesses in management of risks and/or controls but no risk to achievement of objectives
Low Assurance ●	Significant weaknesses in management of risks and/or controls that put achievement of objectives at risk
No Assurance ●	Fundamental weaknesses in management of risks and/or controls that will lead to failure to achieve objectives

Action Plan Priority

Priority	Impact	Timescale (indicative)
P1	Action is imperative to ensure that the objectives for the area under review are met	To be implemented immediately. Explanation to Governance & Audit Committee should timeframe extend beyond three months
P2	Requires action to avoid significant risks to the achievement of objectives within the area under review	Implemented as soon as possible. Explanation to Governance & Audit Committee should timeframe extend beyond six months
P3	Action to enhance controls or improve operational efficiency	Implemented within six months. Governance & Audit Committee will be advised if longer timescale is necessary and/or justified

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Risk Assessment Criteria

Risk Severity	Escalation Criteria	Likelihood & Impact
Moderate ●	Risk containable at service level – senior management and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may need to be kept informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event is almost certain/likely to occur in most circumstances with very low impact • Event is likely/possible to occur with low impact • Event will possibly/unlikely/rarely occur with medium impact • Event rare and may occur only in exceptional circumstances with high impact
Major ●	Intervention by SLT and / or Corporate Executive Team (CET) with Cabinet involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event is almost certain to occur in most circumstances with low impact • Event is almost certain/likely to occur in most circumstances with medium impact • Event will possibly/unlikely to occur at some time with high impact • Event rare and may occur only in exceptional circumstances with very high impact
Critical ●	Significant CET and Cabinet intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event is almost certain or likely to occur with high impact • Event is almost certain/likely/possibly to occur with very high impact

Report Recipients

- Corporate Director Governance and Business
- Interim Head of Corporate Support Service People
- Lead Business Partner - Organisation Development
- Chief Executive Team
- Scrutiny Coordinator
- Chair-Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Lead member for Corporate Strategy Policy and Equalities
- Governance & Audit Committee

Internal Audit Team

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Key Dates

Review commenced	March 2023
Review completed	May 2023
Reported to Governance & Audit Committee	25 July 2023