

Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 3 July 2020

Present: David Williams (Chairman)

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Jeremy Oates
David Brookes (Vice-Chairman)	Ian Parry
Mike Davies	Bernard Peters
John Francis	Stephen Sweeney
Colin Greatorex	Susan Woodward (Opposition Vice Chairman)
Johnny McMahon	

PART ONE

6. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2020

A question was raised on page 3 paragraph 5 which related to the testing of patients in hospital prior to them returning to or entering Care Homes. The Clerk was asked to seek clarification on when the testing started.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. Gender Equality Update

The Committee considered the presentation which provided an update on the actions taken to advance equality and inclusion for the workforce and Elected Members.

There had been significant analysis undertaken to understand the reasons for the gender pay gap. It was explained that the gap would fluctuate due to the makeup of the workforce or the number of women in senior management roles. Gender imbalances in different roles would affect the pay gap.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that a Strategic Resourcing Manager had been recently appointed and they would be reviewing recruitment policies to ensure that the most was being done to attract diversity. The People Strategy would also be used to encourage a positive working environment to attract people from different backgrounds. Flexible working and family focused policies were all helping to make the work force more flexible and the authority a more desirable place to work.

The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Development Programme was set up in 2017 to create a healthy and high performing team culture in the department. Evidence shows

that a more diverse workforce is more productive, creative and innovative. Looking at workforce data it was clear that the department had a challenge in terms of women in leadership roles and succession planning with less than 5% of the work force aged under 30 (whereas 11% of the County population is between 19 and 29 years of age). In terms of Gender equality the EIS department has focussed on a range of initiatives to improve the culture including: reverse mentoring, women in leadership workshops, new parent mentoring and succession planning. Reverse Mentoring has had a significant impact on the “junior staff” who are mentoring senior managers, as well as improving the leadership skills of those senior managers.

Members felt that equality was a much bigger issue than just gender and needed to be considered more widely. It was noted that the Elected Members Parental Policy would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, and Members requested that all aspects of equality be included in their future work programme

Following a question on the “smart working environment” initiatives and the gender balance of take-up, it was reported that this tended to be dependant of the job role. Appropriate equipment had been provided to all staff regardless of gender, to enable them to work most productively in the safest environment.

With regard to the apprenticeship levy and the effect Covid-19 had had on the overall Apprenticeship Strategy, it was reported that the County Council had been affected in a similar way to all authorities. The Strategic Resourcing Manager would be working on how to further advance the strategy and levy. Information on the apprenticeship gender split would be forwarded to the Committee for information.

Regarding pay gap it was noted that as a top tier authority the Council was very similar to others but there tended to be a larger difference in District and Boroughs. This could be due to data being sensitive to changes throughout the year and between different authorities, an example was give of a female Chief Executive being appointed that could reduce the pay gap in an authority significantly. It was therefore felt important to look carefully at the types of job role and grades within an authority. Acknowledgment was made to different tier authorities having different job roles which made it difficult to compare.

Following a question on the number of employees who had accessed the Menopause initiatives, the Committee was informed that the data was not at hand and that it would be provided after the meeting.

Members of the Committee felt that the County Council needed to be as open and welcoming as possible in all areas, including Elected Members and Political candidate selection.

The role of Schools inspiring pupils from an early age and good quality careers advice provided to encourage pupils to aspire to any role and challenge stereo typing was discussed.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) That the presentation be received;
- b) That the Chairman and Vice Chairmen work with officers to include all aspects of Diversity and Equality in the Committees work programme;

- c) That the following information be forwarded to the Committee:
- The apprenticeship gender split
 - The number of the workforce who had accessed the Menopause initiatives.

9. Covid-19 update

The Leader of the Council gave an update on the current position regarding Covid-19 activity. The previous Cabinet report of 17 June was referenced as background document.

The Leader made particular reference to:

- There being a need to radically rethink the ways of working during the early days of lockdown, with digital technology making significant developments in the previous few months. 70 % of the workforce were working from home, an increase of 350% with a network capacity increase of 500%.
- Increase costs to the authority and reduced income.
- Personal Protective Equipment support and training for care home staff.
- The need to understand the impact of the virus and lockdown in order to manage recovery.
- The operational backlog.
- The number of opportunities created including having to accelerate the transformational programme: agile working; culture of trust; sharing data and intelligence.
- The need to revise the Corporate priorities.
- Rapid decision making.
- Staff and community resilience.

Following a question on the Local Outbreak Control Plan, it was explained that there were no extra powers at the moment to deal with any local lockdown, but the authority was learning from others. The data needed for test, track and trace to operate effectively was not available as yet, but the situation was improving nationally. At a local level, information sharing had increased and was working well.

Referring back to slides in the previous item, a question was asked on the impact of Covid-19 on gender. A study carried out in Lichfield had shown the adverse impact on women in respect of childcare, home schooling, domestic abuse etc. This research would be shared with the Committee for information. Monitoring the effects of the crisis would continue and as would supporting all those in need.

With reference to the Secretary of States recently announced government funding for summer activities, a Member asked what this was for and how this could be spent. The Committee was informed that some funding would be available at community level for local projects and it was important to keep community groups and the voluntary sector engaged and moving forward. All groups would be thanked for their support and would be encouraged to continue and grow after the pandemic. Assurances were given that recovery plans would be inclusive and that all communities including the East Staffordshire BME community would be included.

There was concern that the workforce needed to recover and regenerate before any potential spike later in the year.

If any significant change to service were required as a result of the recovery programme, they would be subject to a full Community Impact Assessments (CIA).

A CIA on possible repercussions of isolating was discussed and Members were informed that communities could be asked about their feelings on engagement, which could highlight any problems for the future.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) That the update be noted;
- b) That the study carried out in Lichfield which showed the impact of Covid-19 on women be shared with the Committee.

10. Work Programme

The Committee agreed that at the next meeting on 31 July, the results of the working group on Member Parental Leave and the Integrate Performance reports for quarter 4 (2019/20) and quarter 1 (2020/21) would be considered.

The Local Outbreak Control Plan was requested at the September Meeting.

A question on the membership of the committee was asked. The Interim Scrutiny and Support Manager agreed to review emailing lists to ensure they were correct.

It was felt that any lessons learnt from the Community Impact Assessments, discussed under the previous agenda item, should be considered by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen for possible consideration at the Committee.

The Committee was asked to appoint members to the MTFS working group. The Leaders of the Political Groups advised that they were happy for the previous years membership to continue.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) That the report be received;
- b) That any lessons learnt from the Community Impact Assessments should be considered by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen for possible consideration at the committee;
- c) That the following Members be appointed to the MTFS working Group 2020/21:
 - Charlotte Atkins
 - John Francis
 - Colin Greatorex
 - Johnny McMahon
 - David Williams
 - Susan Woodward

Chairman