

**To:** Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 **Item No:**

**Report of:** Simon Howick  
Head of Human Resources & Facilities

**Title of Report:** Learning & Development update report

**Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:**

Following a request at the January 2013 VAP Scrutiny Committee, this report summarises how the Council, through its organisational learning, training and development programme, can move people through the organisation to achieve their full potential

**Report approved by:**

**Finance:** Nigel Kennedy  
**Legal:** Jeremy Thomas

**Recommendation(s):**

**Members are asked to:**

- 1. Note the learning & development opportunities and strategy outlined in this report**
- 2. Note the ring fencing of training budgets and ensuring that the cost per head investment in staff has been maintained at the same level year on year**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The January 2013 Equalities update report to VAP Scrutiny Committee outlined both the current and proposed initiatives the Council has committed to in order to continue to recruit and retain a diverse workforce that better reflects the local community. One of the Committees' recommendations was for a further report on how the Councils training programme could help to facilitate the career development of staff.
- 1.2 This report will provide a commentary on the main programmes already in place to support career development opportunities at all career grades. It will also outline proposed future initiatives.

## 2. Headlines – Learning & development opportunities

- 2.1 The employment lifecycle gives examples of the range of learning opportunities open to all employees:

| Lifecycle stage                                | Opportunity   |
|--|---|
| Workforce plan (identifies need to hire)       | Vacancy/ succession planning and potential knowledge transfer through internal "grow your own" principle  |
| Recruitment process                            | Council and job related learning in preparation for interview / selection<br>Feedback about performance   |
| New starter                                    | Induction<br>Apprenticeship<br>Work experience<br>Work placement  |
| Learning the role /<br>Established in the role | Personal development plan<br>Mandatory training<br>On the job training<br>Corporate training programme<br>Coaching/ mentoring<br>Appraisal / 121's (feedback) |
| Career development                             | Continual professional development (CPD)<br>Secondment/ partnership projects<br>Promotion   |

## 3. Strategic measures – Learning & Development

- 3.1 **Strategy** – the Council's Organisational Development Strategy sets out the following objective:
- To attract, retain and develop a high performing and motivated workforce, where excellence in people management and development helps cement the Council as an employer of choice*

It also outlines a 'develop our people' theme and action plan currently in progress, which includes:

- Develop and deliver a comprehensive L&D programme fit for purpose in supporting 'Good to Great' – using it to bridge any gaps in employee capability
  - Ensure the right systems, policies & processes are in place and that these reflect our vision and values throughout all people management activity
  - Develop our talent – from apprentices to leaders of today & tomorrow
- 3.2 The success of this strategy will be measured by a forthcoming Investors in People (IiP) Gold assessment planned for May 2014
- 3.3 **Investment** – The Council continues its commitment to staff development by ring fencing its corporate learning budget, which remains at £475k per annum (an increase in the per-head investment. Putting this in context, recent CIPFA 2011/ 2012 Value for Money sector benchmarking against all other local authorities placed the Council's investment of 1.3% of its total pay bill in training staff and investment of an average of 3.2 days per year in learning and development for each full time equivalent employee in the median performance quartile for the sector. Significant other unrecorded training undoubtedly increases this figure.
- 3.4 **Training programme** - a blended learning approach to personal development if offered, with over 20 workshops, newly implemented 'i-Learn' e learning modules (with over 100 staff already linked into these), action learning sets, sector specific continual professional development (CPD) courses, a management develop programmes, regular compliance training refreshers, tool box talks for front line staff, and brief bites workshops to directly support line managers in their day-to-day management of staff and understanding of key policies.
- 3.5 From March 2013 the latest corporate training menu includes specific courses on developing transferable skills such as Emotional Intelligence, Assertiveness, Innovative Problem Solving, How to Influence & Negotiate, and Managing Projects. Other courses being developed include Business Partnering. All courses can be combined as part of a modular package and the OD team can put together bespoke service team development days. A recent example saw the Finance management team spend two days working through a programme of how to be effective consultants and persuasive communicators, and how to practically apply coaching and mentoring skills including supporting team members. City Leisure, Business Improvement, Human Resources and Housing have all utilised this type of development day.
- 3.6 **Performance and development** - a new appraisal system is in place from March 2013 that will give staff even more ownership of their performance, learning and development: with training directly aligned to a self-assessment against the new Values and Behaviours Framework and with more frequent bi-monthly meetings for staff to discuss progress against objectives and places more emphasis on managers have honest and constructive discussions with staff.

- 3.7 Developing talent** – in 2012, the Council doubled the number of apprentices across all service areas. There are currently 21 apprentices, with financial commitments in place of £200k in 2014 and 2016 to recruit two more cohorts.
- 3.8** The corporate targets for increasing apprentices are: 13/ 14 = 20, 14/ 15 = 22, 15/ 16 = 24, and 16/ 17 = 26. The ambition is to develop all apprentices to a position where they can be succession planned into career routes within the Council
- 3.9** 50% of all new starters in 2011/ 2012 were under 35 and staff under 39 now comprise 37% of the workforce. The number of BME applications has doubled to 17% of all applications amounting to 10 % of all new starters. The introduction of on line recruitment in October 2012 through the iTrent system has seen this trend continue, with over a quarter of all applicants from BME groups since October (29%) with 10% appointed overall. This means that the Council can start to develop broader professional development opportunities for underrepresented staff groups using positive action principles contained within Section 159 of the Equality Act 2010
- 3.10** The Council has a number of career graded roles that open up the opportunity to recruit at the entry levels within grades and for staff to build careers from scratch, where successfully completing training or qualifications triggers movement within and up the grades.
- 3.11** There is the potential to review other posts to see if career grading would enhance career choice and growth. Career grading has worked well when balanced with proven traineeships and annual agreements with Oxford Brookes University for student placements as an integral part of a degree programme, such as those developed by City Development and Environmental Development, that may then see talented staff recruited into the Council. Law & Governance have recently recruited a Trainee Solicitor and service areas can also start to look at partnership secondments as well as internal secondments as excellent options for career development.
- 3.12** All internal staff shortlisted for vacancies have access to interview coaching as a positive action principle to assist them to achieve the next step on their career progression. The Council increasingly uses Thomas (psychometric) Profiling to give feedback to staff as part of their self-awareness around personal strengths or gaps around behaviours. This analysis can play a strong part in setting smart behavioural objectives as part of the appraisal process and in alignment with the new values and behaviours framework which will be a golden thread connecting all internal training courses.
- 3.13** During 2013 the Council will introduce a talent management strategy which will identify and engage with staff with “high potential” and develop their potential in a planned and structured way.

**3.14** The Council is also investing in training a coaching cohort (to Institute of Leadership & Management Level 5) in order to establish a coaching network from September 2013. This cohort will play a growing role in supporting all staff development, including leadership and management, and the skills of the new coaches will be maintained through the selective use of experienced external coaches and best practice links with the Oxfordshire Coaching Network. It is also hoped that the coaching cohort can stimulate wider mentoring and networking, with managers taking greater responsibility for mentoring staff

#### **4. Broader learning and development aspirations 2013-2015**

4.1 As reported to VAP in January 2013, we aim to increase the number of posts where speaking a second language adds significant benefit to customer service delivery, makes community engagement more effective and provides a further opportunity to increase the diversity of the workforce.

4.2 Progress targeted professional development for underrepresented staff groups (such as BME and women employees) and enable more diverse competition for middle and senior management roles.

4.3 Continue to work with trade unions to make available Skills for Life literacy/ numeracy and ESOL courses to provide additional support to existing staff to gain greater confidence with communication skills and to open career pathways.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Noting the Council's existing budget commitments to corporate training (£475k) and a further £400k investment in apprentice cohorts from 2014-2018, there are no anticipated additional financial implications at this stage.

#### **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 The Council needs to ensure it meets the Public Sector Equality Duty principles, and specifically those to advance equality of opportunity when planning learning, development and talent management.

**Name and contact details of author: Jarlath Brine**

**List of background papers:  
Organisational Development Strategy  
Corporate Equality Scheme 2012 - 2015**

**Version number: 1**

This page is intentionally left blank