

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 October 2014	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Workforce Strategy Update & Workforce Report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

On 2 July 2014 cabinet agreed the mission, new fairer future promises, the fairer future principles and the commitments of the council for the next four years. Our mission remains the same: delivering a fairer future for all in Southwark. We will do this, following the same core principles which we agreed with the public in 2011:

- Treating residents as if they were a valued member of our own family
- Being open, honest and accountable
- Spending money as if it were from our own pocket
- Working for everyone to realise their own potential
- Making Southwark a place to be proud of.

Over the last year the chief executive and I have met with staff groups across the council; and we have been struck by people's commitment and enthusiasm. Reaffirming our belief that our staff and residents have the creativity, talent and strength of purpose to overcome the challenges we face and make a positive difference. Despite extensive budget cuts, the council remains one of the largest employers in the borough. Last year our workforce actually grew following implementation of the decision to return customer services to the heart of what we provide.

The annual workforce report provides statistical information on areas of employee activity for the last year and provides some useful background to what has happened in the workforce arena. It tells me that regardless of the bad press sometimes given to the public sector, people still seek to work in local government. That we invest in people's learning and development. That we have a workforce which reflects the rich diversity of our borough. That our record on areas such as sickness management compare well with other London boroughs.

But in the same way as we have set ourselves difficult challenges in the delivery of services to our residents cabinet agreed a workforce strategy for 2013-16 which set some tough ambitions in relation to our workforce. These included engagement of more apprentices, controls on agency workers, increasing the numbers of senior managers who are from black and ethnic minority communities, further reductions on sickness. Progress will be monitored by cabinet.

The statistical outcomes are however only part of our story.

We have continued our commitment to the low paid: minimum £250 for those earning less than £21,000, minimum pay at the London Living Wage. And have taken steps to ensure that pay remains competitive throughout our grades.

We have engaged and supported large numbers of apprentices in many areas of the council's services and with our contractors. Recognising and applauding their contribution to areas such as customer services and individual excellence through the Apprentice of the Year award.

For learning and development, the Council will build on its success in achieving silver Investors in People standard, with a plan for gold award by the end of the year.

We continue to place a high emphasis on ensuring the workforce reflects the community we serve. We recognise and support the commitment and contribution of the council's self managed staff equality and diversity group. We target development opportunities especially for staff from BME communities.

The council prides itself on having best practice and fair employment processes. But it is important we remain vigilant to ensure proper application at all times. We have built in some extra layers of scrutiny & monitoring to make sure staff are always being treated fairly and equitably.

We have delivered an extensive change programme and have supported people in this process through established procedures and working closely with the trade unions. Whilst the numbers have been decreasing, some people will leave on redundancy as a result of change. But where occurring we are committed to offering support to enable people to pursue future worthwhile careers.

From my meetings with staff, and the honest, sometimes challenging, feedback people give me. I know that working in Southwark can be demanding. But also that it's a vibrant place to work where people choose to make a career. I believe that we will build on the success of recent years, despite a period of austerity and budget challenges ahead, to work towards the fairer future we all seek.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the progress made against the council's workforce strategy and the actions that are planned for the year ahead, Appendix 1.
2. To agree the additional area noted the strategy; building a workforce to deliver next generation public services, Appendix 1.
3. To note the information that is contained in the workforce report, Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. Cabinet of 22 October 2013 agreed the Workforce Strategy 2013-16. This is a forward medium term view of the council's aims and ambitions in the management of its human resources. It is a dynamic statement which needs to change subject to prevailing circumstances (e.g. economic climate). As such it is reviewed at least each year to ensure it is contemporary.
5. The Equality Duty 2010 is supported by specific duties, which require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information annually demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty. Information must be published in a way which makes it easy for people to access it and, (for public bodies with 150 or more employees); to consider how their activities as employers affect people who

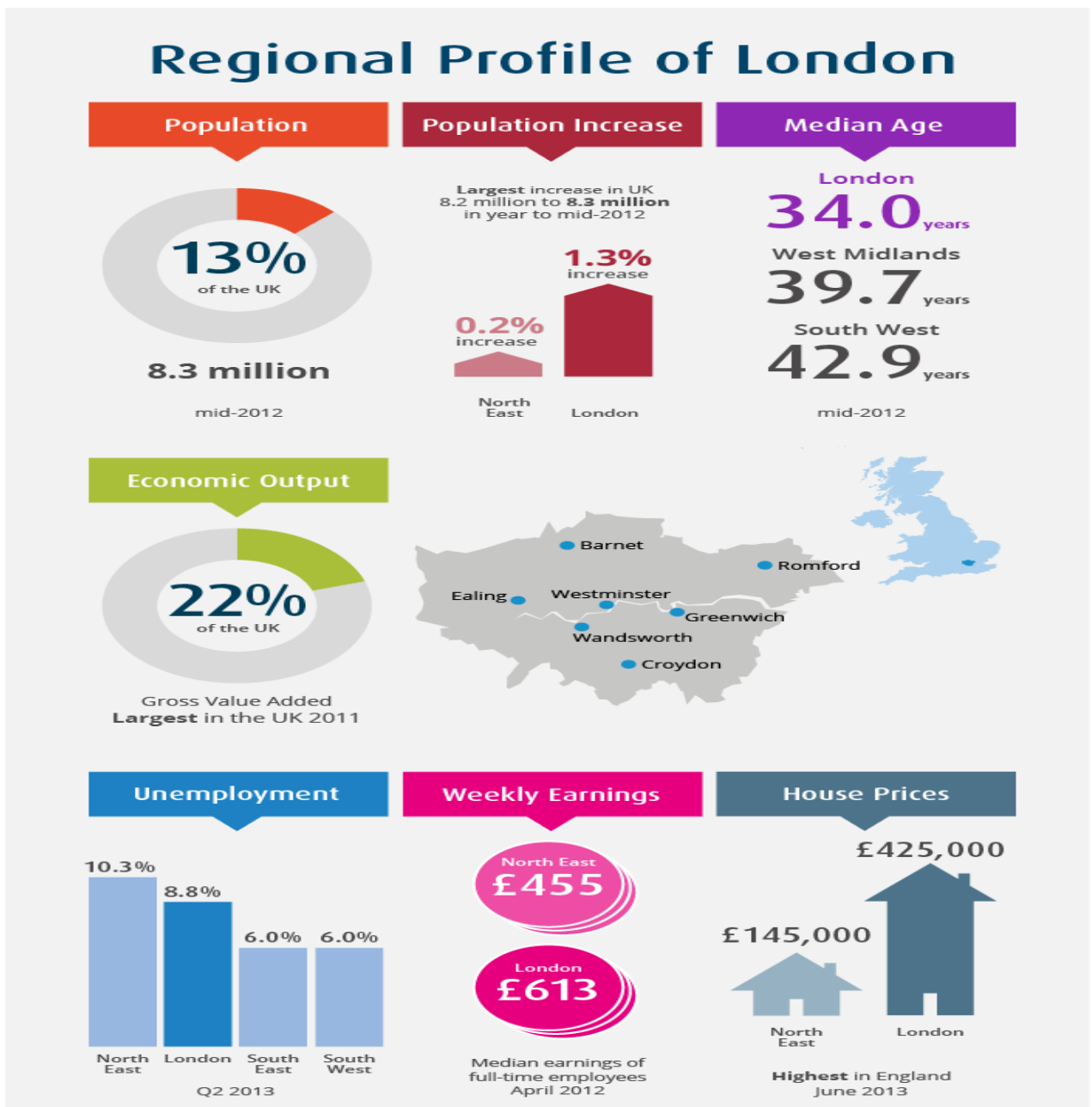
share different protected characteristics. Information to be published is not laid down but it is suggested could include the following, where this is attainable-

- make-up of the overall workforce
 - pay equality issues; in Southwark this is shown by profile at different grades;
 - recruitment and retention rates
 - learning and development opportunities
 - grievances and disciplinary issues for staff with different protected characteristics.
6. Published information could also include plans to address equality concerns within the workforce, and information from staff surveys. We address this via the overarching workforce strategy.
 7. In meeting this requirement, the council produces an annual workforce report which includes a range of Human Resources (HR) related data which is published on the council's website. For the 2013-14 the report is attached, Appendix 2.
 8. The Leader's foreword, above, will be included with the report on the website adding important context and articulating ambitions for our workforce in the year ahead.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

9. The workforce strategy update looks at progress in achieving objectives and sets out actions for the year ahead. Some of the objectives span the whole Strategy timetable, 2013-2016; and the progress at this stage is around putting in place the building blocks for further action. For example, we have put in place a system to record fill time in recruitment so that we can use this baseline, rather than anecdotes, to seek areas of improvement.
10. Some of the objectives of the strategy have been achieved year 1, e.g. the proportion of staff in senior posts from BME communities has increase by over 17% when compared to year 2012/13. But an increase in representation must be sustained and ideally built on further.
11. Some of the objectives have proved to be extremely challenging:-
 - Our agency numbers have shown an increase at year end 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. This has been impacted by increasing demand for staff from reorganised / new services such as customer services; there is some nervousness in filling posts permanently in anticipation of future budget restrictions; we face increasing competition from other employers for some staff e.g. social workers. We believe however that a 5% target is right.
 - Whilst sickness absence levels have again decreased we fell shy of our 5% reduction compared to previous year. As averages reduce the ability of the organisation to secure reductions becomes tougher. Again a 5% ambition is however reasonable and as well as ongoing management of existing cases, with the support of colleagues from public health we have introduced an employee health & wellbeing strategy.

12. Appendix 1 to this report also includes an additional area for the strategy, i.e. building a workforce able to provide next generation public services. The Workforce Strategy must be a blend between good quality, ongoing HR tasks; recruiting, paying people, supporting managers in managing behaviours; development activities; doing things differently. Whilst there is cross-over between other areas of the Strategy; public service and the council will change in the years ahead. To meet citizens' demands, government policy, our ambitions. To reflect that London is different for employers. A regional profile compiled by the ONS in 2012/13 illustrates this.



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Office for National Statistics

Policy implications

13. Some action points will require changes in HR policy, or more likely our approach to policies. Where necessary this will be subject to consultation and appropriate governance decision-making.

Community impact statement

14. Any policy changes will be subject to impact assessments.

Resource implications

15. There are no specific implications arising from this report. Existing resources are already in place to meet the strategic aims. Any actions arising which have resource effects will be subject to separate decision-making process and reallocation within existing budget allocation.

Consultation

16. The trade unions have been consulted on the attachments and this is ongoing.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (FC14/023)

17. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes the recommendations in this report, particularly around the additional area added to the strategy of “building a workforce able to provide next generation public services”.
18. Costs arising from training such as greater application of internal (ILM) accredited learning, the Leadership & Management Programme, and the creation of Housing Academy “pilot” to approach to creating structure pathways into the profession will be contained within the existing budgets for organisational development and the service departments.
19. The regular promotion of pension membership may lead to some increased costs to services, which must also be contained within existing budgets.
20. The report confirms that existing resources are already in place to meet the strategic aims, and that any actions arising which have resource effects will be subject to separate decision-making process and reallocation within existing budget allocation.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Workforce Strategy Update
Appendix 2	Workforce Report 203/14

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Bernard Nawrat, Human Resources Director	
Version	Final	
Dated	6 October 2014	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	6 October 2014	