

Agenda Item 33.

TITLE	Covid-19 Response - Staff Redeployment
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Communities, Insight and Change - Keeley Clements

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme enabled WBC to adapt and respond to the immediate pressures on service delivery requirements created by Covid-19. This resulted in a formal process to focus resources in a way that provided targeted support to those areas of our community most in need during the period March – September 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the programme undertaken and offers comments.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

During the response phase (March-September 2020) the establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme enabled (at its peak), 107 staff members to be formally redeployed to support those business critical areas enabling the continuation of statutory services and providing a tailored response to the emerging needs of residents, businesses and the voluntary sector throughout the borough.

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic required an urgent response by WBC to assess the immediate impact that this was likely to cause and as such provide agile solutions that would best enable us to continue to provide statutory services and support the needs of our residents, businesses, voluntary sector organisations and staff.

The development of a formal staff redeployment programme is an example of one of the many agile solutions implemented by WBC enabling the deployment of much needed resources to those critical areas as and when they emerged throughout the initial response period.

At its peak, a total of 107 staff were formally redeployed through this programme which equates to approximately 10% of our total employees. The flexibility and willingness of staff to undertake new roles and learn new skills whilst managing their own personal response to the pandemic showcases the key behaviours and skills that we continue to strive towards throughout WBC.

Analysis of Issues

An Agile Resourcing Solution

Critical to a successful covid-19 response was to ensure we had an agile resourcing solution that would enable us to divert staff and resources to priority and emerging areas. As such a framework document outlining the key principles of redeployment was drafted and agreed by CLT to enable the establishment of a formal staff redeployment programme.

Demand Management & Approval Process

To ensure equity and oversight of resourcing requests, a formal approval process was established for both demand management and resource release. A daily request list was circulated to ECLT to review and discuss at Directorate level and resources proposed and released to meet the requests.

Requests for resources were supported by a brief outline of the key requirements of the role and any essential skill requirements. Individuals were identified on this basis using both knowledge of the substantive role, Directorate suggestions/solutions and any individuals who had put themselves forward to volunteer for redeployment where they could be released.

Resourcing requests were both internal and external from our voluntary sectors partners e.g. CAB & The Link

Resource Tracking & Support

A central resourcing tracker was established to ensure all resourcing requests were logged as well as tracking those staff who were redeployed into new roles. Details such as assignment dates, In going & Out going Directorate, role description and key skills required were also tracked and as such enabled a daily snapshot of our redeployment position to be issued. See Appendix A for an example.

A redeployment agreement was sent to all redeployed staff and both their interim and substantive manager which ensured staff were supported during their redeployed assignment and clarified the role expectations on all parties during the period of redeployment.

Additionally, a redeployment survey was sent to all redeployed staff to check on their wellbeing during their assignment and any staff who indicated a concern received a follow up phone call and in some cases, staff were released early from their placements and backfilled and/or signposted to our Employee Assistance Scheme.

Closing the Redeployment Programme

The redeployment of staff was designed to be a short term programme providing an agile resourcing response to Covid-19 pressures. As such, a formal redeployment withdrawal agreement plan was agreed by CLT to release staff back to substantive posts by the end of September and any longer term resourcing pressures were to be identified and addressed by a longer term solution.

As part of the Redeployment principles framework, a proposal has been developed and agreed to ensure any staff who were required to undertake a higher graded role for the period of redeployment receive the appropriate backdated honorarium.

Feedback on the Redeployment Programme

Jake Morrison (CAB) commented on “the high level of commitment and flexibility displayed by WBC staff, especially as the new roles were delivered virtually.”

Staff redeployment stories were posted as part of the regular Covid-19 all staff weekly newsletter with staff commenting on the enjoyment and satisfaction of being able to contribute to the WBC response

Establishment of a redeployment principles framework and governance over release approvals and demand prioritisation helped to establish a centralised approach to redeployment to maximise the success of its outcome (approx. 10% of the workforce redeployed at its peak).

Future Provision and Improvements

In the event that it becomes necessary to recommence the redeployment programme, we have retained and cleansed all tools and templates associated with the programme.

A list of all staff who were redeployed by area and skill set has been retained should we need to re-assign staff quickly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	Yes	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	Yes	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Honorarium to be paid to those redeployed staff undertaking a higher graded role for the period of the redeployed assignment.

Cross-Council Implications

The Redeployment Programme enabled WBC to provide an agile and targeted response to ensure the continuation of statutory services delivery during March – September 2020. Staff were redeployed between Directorates and joint ownership and decision making was taken at CLT to agree priority placement and staff release. Closer partnership working was fostered with our voluntary sector partners during this time with staff redeployed to support these organisations enhancing understanding on both sides of the valuable role and contribution working together can make to better serve our community in the longer term.

As staff were able to be redeployed, this enabled us to deliver services in new ways to ensure we maximised the support we were able to give our residents and could priorities demand. For example establishing the Community Hub and having welfare check teams on the ground making door to door welfare calls to our most vulnerable residents. Utilising staff who were in the large part unable to deliver their substantive roles due to Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a cost effective way of continuing to delivery statutory services and emerging demand as well as resulting in feedback from staff who felt they were undertaking a meaningful role and contribution to the WBC response to Covid-19.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Due regard was given to the WBC duty under the Equality Act. The establishment of a formal redeployment programme provided staff who were unable to undertake their substantive role due to lock down restrictions or the requirement to shield at home with an opportunity to undertake a redeployment assignment where appropriate.

Redeployed staff were equipped to work remotely with provision of a mobile phone and/or laptop where this had not been issued as part of their substantive role and to receive appropriate training to undertake the redeployed assignment.

The ability to redeploy staff to priority areas also enabled WBC to provide a high level of support to our most vulnerable residents, for example, being able to follow up with door to door welfare calls to those vulnerable residents who didn't respond to initial phone calls. Alternative ways of being able to contact our residents enabled us to have a greater impact and range on supporting our borough.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

None

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