

**The Highland Council**  
**Finance, Housing and Resources Committee**

Agenda Item	<b>24</b>
Report No	<b>FHR/46/14</b>

**26 February 2014**

**Public Sector Workforce Planning**

**Report by Depute Chief Executive**

**Summary**

This report proposes actions relating to workforce planning in response to an Audit Scotland report.

**1. Background**

1.1 Workforce planning is the process that organisations use to make sure they have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. To manage their workforces effectively, organisations need to have up to date information on:

- The number of people that they employ to carry out different tasks
- What skills the workforce has and where there are gaps
- What skills and staff will be needed to delivery future services and priorities

1.2 In November 2013 Audit Scotland published the audit report [Scotland's Public Sector Workforce](#). The aim of the audit was to assess if public bodies are effectively managing changes to their workforce. Based on a review covering the period March 2009 to March 2013 the report makes a number of key recommendations which are addressed in this report.

**2 Analysis**

2.1 The audit report found that over the period March 2009 to March 2013 workforce across the Scottish Public Sector (SPS) was reduced by 7% in terms of full time equivalent employees. (The average reduction across all Scottish Councils is 10%). In the same period the Highland Council workforce has been reduced by 19.8%. The transfer of Highland Council employees to NHS Highland, as part of Integrated Care, and to High Life Highland, accounted for a 15.5% reduction. A further 4.3% reduction was achieved through a number of other means, including budget savings, service reviews and natural staff turnover. (Highland Council reductions have been calculated from analysis of the quarterly Staffing Watch statutory performance indicator data).

2.2 In line with other Scottish Sector Public employers Highland Council has taken a number of actions in order to manage workforce numbers and costs. These include:

- Vacancy management
- Scrutiny of job evaluation re-grading
- Reducing use of overtime
- Budgeting controls
- Service reviews

2.3 Workforce planning is a mainstream activity of Highland Council. Major change exercises such as Integrated Care and the establishment of Highlife Highland as well as corporate improvement activities such as the development of Business Support have been supported by successful planning. The November 2013 audit report makes a number of helpful recommendations around the nature of workforce planning, particularly around visibility and scrutiny.

2.4 Through the Corporate Improvement Programme Business Support Project, Directors will be required to agree a benchmark establishment of posts and employees that reflect current staffing budgets, which will thereafter be maintained in the Resourcelink HR/Payroll system.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 In order to address the recommendations of the audit report the following actions are proposed.

3.2 A consistent approach to workforce planning should be implemented across all Council Services. Plans at Council, Service and Section level should be integrated and presented in a consistent format.

3.3 Workforce plans should forecast expected staff numbers, skills needs and cost on a basis consistent with the Council's budget planning process and timetables. They should monitor the age of our workforce and prepare for peaks in departures from employees leaving due to retirement.

3.4 Workforce plans should be prepared by Services as part of the long term budget planning process, to help support budget decisions and service planning, in partnership with the trade unions, and scrutinised by elected members.

3.5 The Head of People and Performance should develop guidance, toolkits and template reports to facilitate workforce planning.

### **4. Supporting Actions**

4.1 It is proposed to take a number of supporting actions in order to support effective workforce planning:

- a. Provide training and other support for managers on the use of Workforce Planning toolkits and template through Learning & Development
- b. Deploy HR Service Business Partners to work with each Service to assist with analysis of workforce data and to identify section level plans and the managers responsible
- c. Service Directors to agree Service Learning Plans to identify and meet development and skills shortage requirements as a result of the workforce analysis. (Plans at Council, Service and Section level should be integrated and presented in a consistent format.)
- d. Share the outcomes of workforce planning across the Council to ensure consistency and flexible use of staff and resources within and across Services

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal, equalities, carbon clever/climate change or business risk implications associated with these proposals. The resulting workforce management plans will be the subject of equality screening and impact assessments.

## **6. Recommendations:**

Members are asked to:

- 6.1 Agree the consistent approach to workforce planning outlined in sections 3 and 4.

### **Signature:**

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Cathy Christie, Learning & Development Manger

**Date:** 9 February 2014

Background Papers: [Scotland's Public Sector Workforce](#), Audit Scotland, November 2013