

# Review of workforce planning at **Powys County Council**

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised under the direction of Lisa Williams, Gareth W. Lewis, and Sara Leahy, under the direction of Huw Rees.

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# Summary report

## Summary

### What we reviewed and why

- 1 Powys County Council (the Council) have set out their aspirations for the future in their corporate transformation document: 'Vision 2025'. The Council has further aimed to transform their workforce and ensure the workforce has the right skills, behaviours and structures to support the delivery of Vision 2025.
- 2 Previous audit work undertaken at the Council considered the wider transformation programme. In a previous review we concluded that 'The Council is making transformation a higher priority, but it needs to better define and communicate its vision and programme for transformation and ensure that planned actions are of sufficient scale and pace.' Our review will build on this work by looking at the workforce aspect of the Council's transformation programme in more detail.
- 3 We undertook this review to seek assurance about the Council's workforce planning approach including whether the Council has:
  - a. introduced workforce planning at strategic and operational levels;
  - b. embedded workforce planning as part of the Council's business planning process; and
  - c. created a robust workforce plan that clarifies the direction it needs to take to transform the structure, behaviours and capabilities of its staff for the long-term to have a lean, focussed and agile organisation.
- 4 The project was undertaken through a combination of document reviews, observations, focus groups and interviews with officers and councillors. The focus groups included separate sessions with heads of services, a selection of managers with responsibility for implementing and using workforce planning and a focus group with a selection of the Council's Workforce and Organisational Development (WOD) team members involved in workforce planning.
- 5 We undertook the review between October 2019 to March 2020.

### What we found

- 6 Our review sought to answer the question: **Has the Council developed a robust and effective workforce plan?**
- 7 Overall, we found that stronger workforce planning means the Council is better placed to support its transformation objectives.
- 8 We reached this conclusion because:
  - a. through its new approach the Council has improved its understanding of its current and future workforces;
  - b. comprehensive workforce plans for all services are now in place, however quality is variable; and

- c. the Council intends to review its workforce plans and has identified areas to improve the overall process.

## Proposals for Improvement

### Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement we have identified following this review.

Proposals for improvement	
P1	<p>For the Council to consider improvements to the communication aspects of the workforce planning including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clarify how the three strategic-level documents will be communicated to the wider organisation;</li><li>• continue ongoing engagement with the wider workforce to communicate both the corporate and the service level vision for the workforce; and</li><li>• increase the engagement from services with the facilitated sessions.</li></ul>
P2	<p>The Council should action the improvement areas it has identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensure all 12 service level workforce plans are consistent and comprehensive;</li><li>• complete the analysis of the local labour market;</li><li>• complete a formal lesson learnt exercise;</li><li>• confirm the succession planning arrangements;</li><li>• improve workforce planning tools; and</li><li>• further integrate workforce planning with the Integrated Business Plans.</li></ul>

# Detailed report

## Stronger workforce planning means the Council is better placed to support its transformation objectives

### Through its new approach the Council has improved its understanding of its current and future workforces

9 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- transforming the future workforce is one of nine projects within the Council's Vision 2025 transformation programme. Within the Council's project on transforming its future workforce, workforce planning is one of the key pillars. This illustrates the importance the Council has assigned to workforce planning in helping to deliver transformation.
- the Council has shown an understanding of workforce planning's importance and assessed workforce as a high risk on its Strategic Risk Register. The Council sees the significant long-term changes in the working-age population impacting on its ability to recruit and retain employees. The mitigating actions within the risk register and the longer-term focus of workforce planning shows the Council is taking appropriate steps to help address this risk.
- the Council developed a new seven-step approach to workforce planning for 2019-20. The Council recognises that this was the first round of workforce planning using the new format. The Council's new approach has allowed it to gain an understanding of its workforce and environment, including analysing the wider context of changes that will impact on the workforce as well as data analyses of its current and future workforce profile.
- as part of the new approach, the Workforce and Organisation Development (WOD) team offered facilitated sessions to support services through the new process. However, not all services engaged with the facilitated sessions as fully as they could have.
- from the information contained in the 12 service level plans, the Council has developed three key strategic documents:
  - the Strategic Workforce Plan – sets out the Council's vision for its people, outlines the composition of its current workforce and discusses its plans;
  - the Corporate Workforce Resourcing Plan – details the service level and corporate level actions identified from the workforce planning process to be monitored by the workforce futures board; and
  - the Corporate Workforce Development Plan – outlines the Council's plans for meeting the development areas it identified in the service level Training Needs Analyses (TNA).

- a joint strategic workforce planning manager post exists to facilitate collaborative working between Powys Teaching Health Board and Powys County Council. The aim of the post is to address the longer-term challenges facing the health and social care workforces in Powys including recruitment, retention, training and education of the workforce. There is clear alignment between the Council and the Health Board on planning the health and social care workforce.

## **Comprehensive workforce plans for all services are now in place, however quality is variable**

10 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council has acted at pace to produce 12 service level plans in the first year of its new workforce planning approach. This new approach represents a significant improvement on the previous process, which included nearly 40 different plans across services and was described by the people we spoke to as 'a tick box exercise'.
- The seven-step approach to workforce planning has included a thorough process with the following elements and steps:
  - understand the business or service areas and its direction;
  - analyse the workforce;
  - identify the gap;
  - design the model / requirements to meet demand and match gap;
  - recruit, retain and succession plan;
  - produce a training and development plan; and
  - develop the workforce plan and monitor.
- part of the role of the WOD team is to support the process of workforce planning, the team assess each plan against a quality assurance checklist, provide tools for workforce planning, and facilitate sessions to guide managers. The facilitated sessions enable staff to understand workforce planning, help them analyse their current and future workforces, and provide challenge to their views and thinking. While engagement from services was variable for the first year, the WOD team plan to offer further facilitated sessions for the next round of workforce planning in 2020-21.
- the new workforce planning process has allowed service areas to take actions to fill identified gaps. The new approach has enabled services to identify 'hard to fill' posts and develop strategies to recruit and retain employees, for example through 'grow our own' initiatives. The Council has also developed an apprenticeship pool as a method of recruiting new employees.
- the people we spoke were aware of the need to succession plan. However, the Council has not yet developed a formal method for capturing these

actions. It intends to develop wide-ranging succession planning arrangements in the next round of workforce planning during 2020-21.

- the Council recognises that not all 12 service level workforce plans from the first year are fully robust. The 12 plans include variable levels of information and understanding about respective service areas. The Council has identified a small number of plans that require further work and intends to ensure that all 12 plans contain a more consistent level of information going forward.
- the WOD team has completed a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) exercise at service level. The service level TNAs have allowed the Council to draw together and articulate its corporate development needs in one, overall summary.
- the workforce planning process runs alongside the Council's new Integrated Business Planning (IBP) process. The Council has identified the need to further strengthen the link between workforce planning and the IBP process for the second round of planning using the new approach during 2020-21.

## **The Council intends to review its workforce plans and has identified areas to improve the overall process**

11 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council's seven step workforce planning approach included a step on 'developing the plans and monitoring'. The workforce plans included actions for service areas to take to review and progress the workforce planning outcomes.
- staff recognise the new workforce approach enables workforce planning to be discussed regularly through the year. We were told that the services will hold meetings to monitor the implementation of their operational workforce plans. Services also noted that support was available from HR business partners at these service level meetings.
- the Council has a clear intention to repeat the workforce planning process. We spoke Council staff across the organisation who were aware that the process would be repeated for 2020-21.
- while the Council has not yet completed a formal lesson learnt exercise on workforce planning, it has reviewed and revised its 2019-20 approach and has changed the workforce planning process from seven-steps to four-steps for 2020-21. The Council also recognises there were issues with the workforce planning templates. However, it has plans to improve the tools and to deliver a more user-friendly format. This demonstrates the WOD team has listened to feedback from services.
- the Council has not yet analysed its current local labour markets but has plans to complete this work during 2020 in association with the Joint Strategic Workforce Planning Manager.

- both the Council and the Health Board have identified the need to simplify their joint strategic workforce planning approach for the forthcoming year. Both have plans to move towards a four-step process, which will further help improve alignment of the two organisation's workforce approach.
- the Workforce Futures Board monitors the delivery of the corporate actions arising from the workforce plans through six-weekly meetings. In turn, the Workforce Futures Board reports quarterly to the overall Vision 2025 transformation board.



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