

Report to People Panel

Meeting Date: 12 January 2023
Portfolio: Finance, Governance and Resources
Key Decision: No
Policy and Budget Framework Yes
Public / Private Public

Title: **LGR – SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND ASSURANCE ON PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS**
Report of: Bibian McRoy, Head of Human Resources and Julie Kemp, Head of Workforce Development
Report Number: RD55/22

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the support available for staff during Local Government Reorganisation which takes effect on 1 April 2023.

Recommendations:

Scrutinise and comment on the information provided in the report.

Tracking

Executive:	Not applicable
Scrutiny:	Not applicable
Council:	Not applicable

1. Background

Since the UK government announced a decision on the chosen method of local government reform for Cumbria in July 2021, work has been ongoing on the first steps of this huge transition.

All seven local authorities, supported by the government, are collaborating on the complex operation to create the new authorities.

This is a huge change programme which will have an impact on every employee of the 7 sovereign councils.

Carlisle City Council already takes a proactive approach to wellbeing and change management, offering a wide-reaching programme of support to employees. The Council should be rightly proud of its support and investment which has laid a solid foundation to ensure that its staff receive effective support both leading up to and post the transition to the new authorities on 1 April 2023.

However the effect of such a change programme of such significant size is not underestimated and both new unitary councils are committed to providing ongoing effective support to the workforce to reduce the impact and support an effective transition.

2. Wellbeing support

Wellbeing support continues to be a high priority for the Council and consideration of the potential impact of the LGR change programme on colleagues has resulted in the Organisational Development Team providing additional support for colleagues at all levels within the Council.

This includes:

- Change Management courses for managers and employees.
- Resilience courses available to all members of the Council.
- Emotional Intelligence.
- Regular Wellbeing Newsletter.
- C.V development support and coaching.
- Interview skills workshops.
- Pulse survey.
- Dedicated LGR SharePoint with direct link to Wellbeing support.
- Regular communications and staff briefings on LGR.

In addition to the above a regular delivery of Wellbeing support has been delivered and this year we continued our focus on mental health and specific campaigns about the Cost-of-Living crisis with dedicated SharePoint page linking to advice and guidance and bespoke newsletter shared with colleagues during November 22.

Council employees have benefitted from a robust offer of Wellbeing support over the years and this has enabled the majority of people to deal with uncertainty and change with resilience. Employees are generally aware of support available, but we continue to remind our colleagues.

The Better Health at Work Award continues to be maintained and the Head of Workforce Development has submitted evidence to attain the maintaining excellence level.

The Council continue to provide the Employee Assistance Programme, referrals to Occupational Health, Counselling and Physiotherapy. In addition, we have trained First Aiders, Mental Health First Aiders, Health Advocates and Menopause Champions.

The EAP and the eLearning offer include information on a wide range of Wellbeing topics, which colleagues can access at a time to suite themselves. We know many colleagues have accessed some eLearning on the impact of change and resilience.

The HR Advisory Service Team continue to provide regular updates on the LGR process and guide Managers on handling any referrals for Mental Health Support. Managers are aware of support and meet with the HR Advisors to discuss concerns to ensure early interventions where possible are identified.

The offer of a wide range of support for staff wellbeing is expected to continue in a similar way to the current offer. All the Councils are signed up to The Better Health at Work Award and therefore it is expected that this commitment is likely to be carried forward.

A collection of all the Wellbeing activities and support from across all the Councils is being collected and recommendations will be made to ensure the priority of staff Wellbeing is maintained.

3. Communication

It is recognised that effective communications are key to supporting any change programme. Communications on the LGR transition include;

- Regular weekly newsletter from the LGR programme which is cascaded to all employees
- Is a main agenda item at the Chief Executives regular briefings for both managers and employees.

There is a process in place to support employees who do not have regular access to the in-person or online briefings. This process includes providing access to recordings on laptops in designated locations such as at Bousteads Grassing. Print outs of the

newsletters are placed on noticeboards in communal areas and relevant content is discussed at Toolbox talks. There is also a process in place to send relevant communications to employees who may be long term absent (any absence of 4 weeks or more such as maternity leave or due to sickness).

4. Risk

Increased absence due to the impact of change on individuals, this may create higher levels of anxiety and mental health conditions. The change workshops and resilience workshops have been designed to help staff understand the impact and consider actions' which they may be able to take to support their wellbeing. Managers have received training on mental health as an introduction and know when to discuss concerns and refer staff for support. A session will be delivered early next year at Management Briefing reminding Managers of how to open up conversations and refer staff for support.

Support for Employee Wellbeing is reduced and the impact this may have on absence and retention. The current offer of wellbeing support delivered across all Councils is currently being mapped, once data collected it is our understanding that a proposal will be made to the new Council for continuing support.

5. CONSULTATION

None

6. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Wellbeing continues to be a high priority and support continues to be made available.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

Supporting the wellbeing of the whole workforce contributes to the Carlisle Plan on many differing levels, including attendance, retention and therefore capacity to deliver against key themes.

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Appendices attached to report: None

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

FINANCE – There are no additional financial implications as a result of this report.

EQUALITY – Consideration of equality of access to all forms a key foundation of the support which has been put in place to support employees generally and in particular the transition to the two new authorities on 1 April 2023.

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – There are no implications as a result of this report.