

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7th October 2013
Report of: Head of Human Resources
Title: Investors in People Re-accreditation, Watford Borough Council

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet about the outcome of Watford's Investors in People reaccreditation in 2013. No decision is required.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The report contains no recommendations.

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Report approved by: Cathy Watson, Head of Human Resources

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet with the outcome of Watford's recent Investors in People reaccreditation, highlighting identified areas of strength and setting out areas of focus for the future.

3.2 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update cabinet with the outcome of Watford's recent Investors in People reaccreditation, highlighting identified areas of strength and setting out areas of focus for the future.

The Investors in People (IIP) assessment was conducted during week commencing 8th July. The assessor was Robert Thomson who also conducted Watford's previous assessments in 2006 and 2010. Robert's experience at Watford has enabled him to see progress over a seven year period; this will however be his last assessment at Watford in view of his forthcoming retirement.

3.3 The Level of Assessment

Since 2009, Investors in People has offered accreditation at a number of levels: the Standard, which Watford achieved in 2006 and 2010, and three higher levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. These levels are designed to provide a framework for further organisational improvement.

For 2013, Watford decided to be assessed against the Bronze level of accreditation. This entailed providing evidence against 65 criteria rather than 29, and it also required Watford to choose a specific theme to be assessed against. In view of the business context, Watford's chosen theme was Managing Change.

3.4 Initial Concerns

In some respects Bronze could arguably be seen as a cautious choice bearing in mind the positive IIP report in 2010 and the quality of organisational development initiatives launched in Watford since then. However, The Investors in People assessment at Watford traditionally coincides with a turbulent time in the organisation: in 2010 this was pay and grading and the implementation of Shared Service; in 2013 the assessment followed closely on the heels of the outsourcing of the front line services and ICT. Despite the efforts put into communication, concerns remained about staff morale and its impact on the Investors in People interview sessions.

3.5 The Process

During the week of the assessment, Robert Thomson interviewed 36 staff who represented a range of roles across the services, and he also reviewed a substantial amount of written evidence – including business strategy, policies, processes, and staff communications.

3.6 The Outcome

Despite initial concerns about morale, Watford achieved the Bronze standard of accreditation, and received an extremely positive report from the assessor, who commented:

"It became evident, however, during the assessment interviews that there would have been the opportunity to accredit WBC at a higher level of The Standard."

Many of the council's practices and initiatives were praised and no areas were identified as needing improvement. It is especially pleasing that despite the level of change, no negative evidence was recorded about levels of morale and engagement

3.6.1 5.1 Highlights

The full report is attached as an appendix. However the assessor especially highlighted the following areas of strength:

- Clearly communicated Core Values
- The Staff Excellence Awards (SEA)
- The 'STEP' leadership and management programmes
- The Performance and Development Review (PDR) process and its clear linkage to the new competency framework, 'How We Work'
- The Skills Audit at section head level
- The use of KPIs across the organisation
- Culture of continuous learning
- Strategies, policies and procedures to promote equality and manage diversity
- Work Life Balance strategy
- Management Effectiveness
- Culture of openness and trust: the communication skills of the MD and the Heads of Service

- Communication such as Extended Leadership Team, 'Wat's Up' staff newsletter; Core Briefs; Managers' Forum
- The Elected Mayor, the MD and his ELT are recognised as inspirational leaders
- The Managing Change group and the Step Change framework
- The use of staff surveys
- Learning and Development strategy and provision including qualification support

3.6.2 **Opportunities for further improvement:**

- Continue to embed the value of the STEP programmes and extend its reach to officers and non-managers
- Continue to develop the Performance and Development Review process to fully embed the How We Work framework
- Consider the engagement of apprentices to support skill building and resilience for succession planning
- Use of the structure offered by the higher levels of Investors in People accreditation to add momentum to Watford's planned improvements.

Plans are already in place for several of these areas:

- Stepping Forward – a suite of development programmes for non managers – will launch in Q4
- Planning is already in place to gather feedback about the new Performance and Development Review process and build improvements into the 2014 cycle
- Apprenticeships are under consideration currently
- The success of the 2013 reaccreditation does suggest that Watford could seek assessment against the Silver or Gold levels at the next review. This will be considered, taking into account the costs and benefits of the higher level assessment

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

The cost of the reaccreditation process was £3600 . This takes account of consultancy fees. The only other costs were staff time in attending the interviews and in planning and managing the process.

The costs of reaccreditation at silver and gold levels would be higher, reflecting a longer assessment process:

Silver: £4500

Gold: £5200

- 4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance (Shared Director of Finance w.e.f 1st August 2013) comments that the costs for the reaccreditation can be accommodated within the existing approved budgets.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

There are no legal issues associated with the Investors in People process.

4.3 **Equalities**

There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

There are no risks associated with this report.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Report from the Investors in People Assessor

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

File Reference

None