

Human Resources and Organisational Development

Annual Report 2013-14



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Human Resources & Organisational Development

Annual Report 2013 - 2014

Report of: Head of Human Resources and Organisational
Development (HROD)

Committee: Audit & Standards Committee

Subject: HROD Annual Report
April 2013 to March 2014

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1. Introduction

This is the first published Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD) annual report. It highlights the contribution and achievements the service has made in supporting the organisation over the last 12 months, and sets out the focus of our activity for 2014-15.

Under the new leadership for HR&OD, our priority has been to ensure HR is fully contributing its professional expertise and providing services that effectively support the Corporate Plan priority of modernising the council.

HR's ambition is to:

- Invest in a skilled, trained and motivated workforce
- Provide value for money and efficient services
- Shape and drive workforce priorities
- Facilitate the development of organisation culture to match ambition
- Learn from our experiences and celebrate our successes

We recognise there are challenges for the service and improvements we can continue to make to ensure a more efficient and effective service that is meeting customer expectations. We hope that the broad range of activities set out in this report outlines our contribution over the last 12 months, provides an insight into the support, initiatives and developments we have been involved in and demonstrates our clear focus on providing the best HR&OD service we can to the organisation.

Our priorities and how we've been supporting you by living our values every day

One of our key roles has been supporting the roll out of our values and behaviours. As a team we have ensured these reinforce what we do and the service we offer.

Customer Focus

We have adopted the customer promise and actively seek feedback on our service. Feedback is taken seriously and helps us to identify improvements to services. We are developing a managers reference group, as part of our people plan and culture change work as another feedback mechanism.

Collaboration

The Head of HR & OD is a member of Finance & Resources Departmental Management Team (DMT), we work closely with colleagues in Finance and ICT to ensure that the use of people, technology and finance are more effectively joined up.

We work closely with managers, union representatives and workers fora representatives to develop the workforce improvement activities that will make a difference to organisational performance and ensure effective engagement is embedded in how we plan and deliver our service.

Respect

We act as a role model for the values and behaviours of the organisation. We set expectations of what we can offer as part of the service and if we cannot do things, explain why this is not possible. If our service falls short of agreed expectations we will ensure we respond in a timely and informed way. We also expect to be treated with respect and will challenge behaviour if it falls short of what the organisation expects.

Efficiency

In the last 12 months the HR Leadership team have worked together to reduce the overspend on our budget. An ongoing challenge will be balancing the available budget with the level of resourcing required to support the council in delivering the modernisation programme.

We continue to work with Business Process Improvement (BPI) methodology to review and enhance our services and improve customer experience. This is balanced with making the best use of our systems and technology to automate as much of the paper-based interventions as possible to give managers more control of information.

Creativity

We are continually seeking ways of working with partners to enhance our skills and knowledge and make the best use of opportunities to develop and share our services and work with other partners in the city and beyond.

Openness

We are working hard to ensure our data is open and to improve the content and accessibility of our workforce information. We are encouraging improved understanding of our services by being clear about what we can offer and encourage managers, staff and staff representatives to get involved with our services through working groups, focus groups and customer improvement groups.

Our Workforce

We provide services across our workforce, including to our community schools and academies. The headcount of staff employed across the organisation at 31 March 2014 was **9,478** (including 4,578 employed by schools). These figures exclude casual workers.

2. The Management and Structure of HR & OD

The Human Resources and Organisational Development service provides technical, professional and advisory support for the organisation to ensure consistent high quality employment practices to assist all council services to deliver the commitment contained within the corporate plan.

Our service includes the following delivery teams:

HR Business Partnering: provides HR support through a dedicated HR Business Partner working with each directorate. The role of the HR Business Partners is to provide strategic support challenge and advice to the Directorate Management Team to support the achievement of corporate and business plans. An example of the support provided around workforce planning is activity undertaken to deliver a customer lead service redesign and culture change programme in the planning department. In addition HR Business Partners will commission support from across HR to ensure an effective service is provided that meets the needs of services.

HR Advisory Services: provides a comprehensive professional service to managers across the organisation and in schools on a wide range of HR issues. This includes providing advice and support with HR procedures and related case work such as attendance management, discipline, grievance, and performance management, change management and reorganisations/restructures.

The team also provide advice and support to managers and staff in resolving disputes and conflict informally through access to a workplace mediation scheme. We also contribute to development of the people management skills of managers through a range of training interventions and coaching for managers.

People Centre: provide human resource administration for the council's directly employed workforce. This covers maintenance of the staffing establishment on the HR & Payroll System (PIER), advertising vacant roles, administering and tracking recruitment processes and pre-employment checks, issuing contracts of employment. Amendments to the contracts of existing employees, inputting, up-dating and taking people off the council's payroll as individuals are appointed, move/change jobs, take leave such as maternity or are absent due to sickness. The team also manage the processes for leavers. In addition a small team deal with all administration for the council's two pension schemes; the Local Government Pension Scheme and the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Policy and Projects is a mix of specialisms from HR policy, equalities, pay and job evaluation and undertakes a range of project work and research / advisory activities in order to provide a coherent framework of policies and processes to ensure that the council is regarded as a good employer able to attract, retain and motivate a skilled workforce.

Health and Safety undertake a range of assurance activities such as audits, inspections and accident investigations. The team are the first point of contact with enforcement and regulatory agencies. Other functions include providing advice and guidance through a duty officer scheme and ensuring appropriate policies and guidance are in place. The team work with city partners as part of the Safety Advisory Group and the Major Incident Support team to plan and respond to incidents and events in the city.

Occupational Health and Wellbeing: support the welfare of staff through the provision of an occupational health service and employee support program which includes health surveillance, monitoring and promotion. The service is based on a model of early referral and intervention to provide advice to support employees to remain in the workplace.

The team also provide a wellbeing service linked closely with Public Health to provide information and advice on key issues affecting health and wellbeing. In addition a staff counselling, information and advice service is available to all employees to offer support on a wide variety of subjects and issues.

Workforce Development provides the majority of learning and development, qualifications and elearning across the organisation and wider adult and children's social care workforces. Policy development and project work are also a feature of our work eg revised supervision policies for social care and work staff.

3. Supporting Corporate Priorities

What have we been doing this year and how have we been supporting you?

We provide support to services in planning and managing their workforce

We have supported services and management teams by:

- Running a voluntary severance scheme across the council. A total of 111 staff took advantage of the scheme resulting in a saving of £1,765,874.
- Supporting DMTs with analysis of their staff survey results by providing bespoke support to each directorate to help them understand their results and plan actions to address issues identified.
- Negotiating and implementing a new pay and allowances scheme for the council's local government National Joint Council (NJC) workforce, that was fair, transparent and consistent.
- Supported the organisation through the process of consultation and dispute when putting in place the new allowances.
- Supporting DMTs with budget proposals, Value for Money (VFM) targets. The HR implications of the 2014/15 budget proposals have been assessed by the HRBP team and support has been provided to directorates to manage the implementation of these proposals. A full equality impact assessment was completed on the proposals using more detailed data than in previous years. This supported both decision making on proposals and planning for implementation.
- Advertising approximately 1,000 posts, issuing new or amended contracts to approximately 3,000 individuals and undertaking all necessary pre-employment checks.
- Providing directorates with workforce data and management information highlighting trends/patterns within the data to identify future action.

We have supported and overseen the council's vacancy management process and facilitated the recruitment of new employees to vacancies. We have also worked with services and employees to co-ordinate redeployment activity finding suitable job matches for staff.

We have supported key organisational changes to meet corporate and business plan priorities. Through working in partnership with services to plan and implement their changes, we have supported effective outcomes. Major change we have supported include:

- integration of Adult Services with Health,
- implementing major initiatives in Children's Services such as the MASH and Early Help Hub
- the future delivery model for our cultural services
- round changes in Cityclean
- service re-design in Planning,
- Supported 58 restructures/reorganisations across the council (33% of these in schools)
- Provided advice and support to managers on a range of employee relations case work in the workforce as follows:

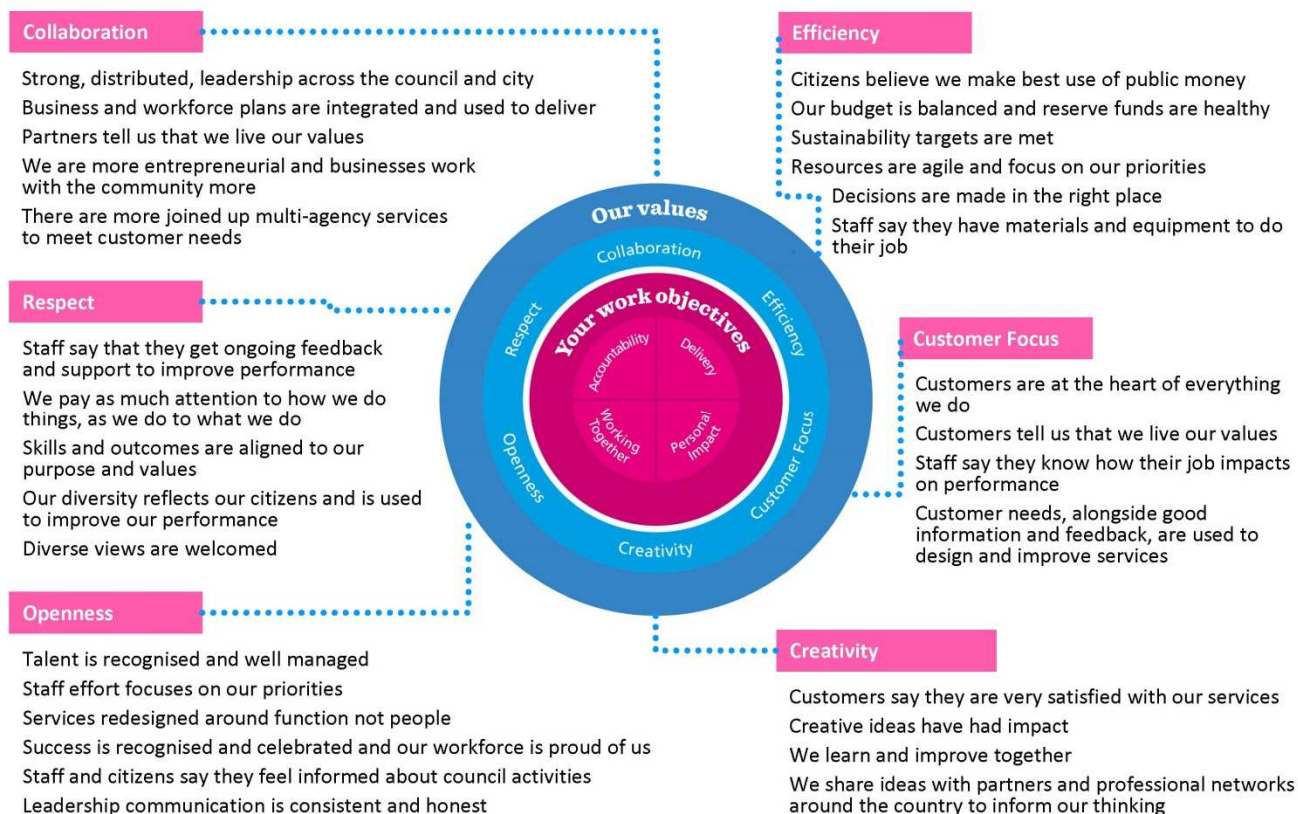
Disciplinary	154
Performance/Capability	29
Grievances	60
Probationary	10
Sickness Absence	163
Total	416

(26% of these cases were for schools staff)

We helped agree an approach to changing the culture of the council

We worked with the organisation and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to understand the current culture within the organisation and describe the required future culture.

ELT endorsed an approach to culture change and performance improvement in November 2013. Our approach to cultural change is known as 'Living our values, every day', it has 14 key activities and it exists to help modernise the council – Priority 4 of the Corporate Plan.



We worked to embed our values through the way we manage individual performance

Our time has been spent supporting leaders and senior managers to advocate, demonstrate and develop a culture within the organisation that improves performance.

In March 2013 we launched new Performance Management Guidance and forms. The new process is more user-friendly and is formed around our work priorities and values.

In July we ran pulse survey to 170 staff, the results told us:

56% of respondents felt more motivated after their PDP and 121 conversations.

45% of respondents felt our values have made a difference to their PDP and 121 conversations and 45% stating they had made no difference.

From this we believe the organisation is halfway toward people knowing about the values and them having a positive impact on into people performance conversations.

We have lead on the development of an Equalities Action Plan following GHPO report

The publication of the Global HPO Report on the council's relationship with its BME staff and the communities of Brighton & Hove has led to significant work being undertaken. We have taken ownership to lead and coordinate the Workforce Equalities action plan developed in response to the Global HPO report.

This area of work has a core focus in the Corporate Plan and we have worked with representatives from our trades unions and workers forums through the Workforce Equalities Group, to seek feedback and challenge on our action plan. The progress on the plan is regularly reported to ELT and is overseen by Executive Director of Finance & Resources in her capacity as the Executive Leadership Team's Equalities Champion.

We have recognised that the Global HPO report highlighted that some of the perception of HR was not positive and we have worked through the Workforce Equality Group and to create more positive trusting relationships and continue to do so.

Some of the comments were related to management actions and processes and it was recognised that the term "HR issues" was in some cases being used as shorthand for these. It has been important to set expectations of how HR policy and advice supports managers but does not override the line manager accountability to manage workforce issues.

The first year action plan was designed to provide a sound base of transparent management information on which to then establish informed actions in year 2. Work has included improvements in how our workforce profile is broken down and now includes information by grade and contract type. The new OPD report enables senior managers to compare their workforce profile against the council as a whole, which supports directorates in meeting their new equalities targets.

The completed BME needs assessment is influencing how we engage with the communities of Brighton & Hove to ensure that we work towards a council that reflects the communities it serves.

It is accepted that the first year focus, whilst the right one, has meant that the equalities profile of the workforce will not have been greatly changed. A full report on the progress of the Workforce Equalities Action Plan in 13/14 was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 12 June 2014.

We have lead on the review and implementation of a new allowance and expenses scheme

Following the 2010 implementation of Single Status for all employees on NJC terms and conditions, we have implemented a new allowance and expenses scheme for these staff in October 2013.

There were many months of preparation and consultation with the unions starting in February 2013. Managers met with affected staff to explain the new scheme and assess the impact on them. This information along with feedback received directly from staff was collated centrally and fed into the final stage of the negotiations. This was a challenging time during which industrial action was taken at Cityclean. Ongoing negotiations resulted agreement and implementation.

The new scheme is transparent and simple. It is easier to understand, easier to administer and easier to submit claims, with fewer opportunities for incorrect payment, giving greater assurance over the council's financial affairs.

We have undertaken a review of our casual and agency staffing

Our work in mapping the council's casual workforce alongside its use of agency staff provides a much clearer picture and facilitates better workforce planning as well as providing improved recruitment and management of these individuals.

Casual Workers – Considerable work has been undertaken to understand our casual workforce and align them to our permanent and temporary workforce. Casual recruitment now follows our normal recruitment processes to ensure good practice and enable data collection and analysis. We have also implemented the council's new allowance and expenses package for our casual workforce. The roll-out of new employment contracts has started, following consultation with local managers and trade unions, in April 2014.

The casuals process was also mapped last year and the normal recruitment process is now followed for all casual appointments across the Council.

Care Crew and Admin All Areas and Contact Supervisors are the largest groups of individuals who work flexibly across the council. All staff now have an identified manager to provide supervision and ensure the relevant training needs are identified and completed. We are working with Adult Social Care services in trialling the use of peripatetic contracts within the service to ensure we have a flexible workforce for the future that can quickly adjust to service changes.

Agency Workers and Interim staff – These workers are provided through a managed service contracted through Guidant Group. Detailed reporting is provided to directorates on a monthly basis to enable them to monitor and manage use of agency workers within their areas.

4. Staff Engagement

We implemented the 2013 Staff Survey

The 2013 Staff Survey ran during 4 – 22 November 2013 and we had largest response rate ever. All staff had the opportunity to complete the survey either online or on paper. In total 2,563 responses were received out of a total of 5,277 staff, giving an overall response rate of 49%.

We facilitated conversations with the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Corporate Management Team (CMT) to look at the feedback and agree the main priorities for the organisation.

Our three main priorities are:

- Improving management capability - through training, and providing the right tools for the job
- Improving the reach and effectiveness of communication and engagement with our staff community
- Building personal resilience - in particular to support during times of change

We influenced these three priorities to be stated as 'key areas of focus' in our 2014/15 Corporate Plan and are therefore in every business plan to encourage action and improve staff confidence that their feedback is being listened to and acted on.

The staff survey is now an annual exercise and will be used to monitor our progress on cultural change and modernisation.

GOOD NEWS

In your role:



I KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT GETTING MY JOB DONE **95%**

I AM CLEAR WHAT MY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE **89%**

I AM CLEAR WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME **84%**

I AM AWARE OF THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

UP 16% TO **48%**



Communications:

I THINK COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN MY SERVICE AREA ARE GOOD

UP 12% TO **48%**



UP 12% TO **67%**

I FEEL INFORMED ABOUT COUNCIL ACTIVITIES, NEWS AND EVENTS

I REGULARLY HEAR NEWS OF WHAT'S HAPPENING FROM MY MANAGER

UP 10% TO **63%**



TO WORK ON

48% (DOWN 13%) BELIEVE THE SURVEY IS A VALUABLE EXERCISE

26% (DOWN 4%) ARE CONFIDENT THE COUNCIL WILL ACT ON THE ISSUES RAISED



I FEEL VALUED BY THE COUNCIL



I FEEL THERE IS A CLEAR SENSE OF DIRECTION IN THE COUNCIL



We have aligned the key engagement activities

The organisation engages staff in variety of ways. During 2013 we have worked with ELT and colleagues in internal communications to align our cross council engagement activities to ensure they are integrated, consistent and supportive of one another.

Engagement Activities include:

- Senior Mangers Forum – three times a year
- Staff Survey – October each year
- Staff Roadshows – October each year
- Staff Consultation Forum – meets quarterly
- Departmental Consultation Groups
- Corporate Health & Safety Committee – meets quarterly

5. Partnerships

What have we been doing this year and how have we been supporting you?

We provided Organisational Development expertise to the Neighbourhood Governance / Community Collaboration approach

We supported the transfer of learning from the Neighbourhood Governance pilots into ongoing ways of working in Community Collaboration through supporting colleagues, external partners and residents. This involved facilitating interactive exercises to help understand the culture of how we all worked, looking at learning under the headings of:

- Structure
- Systems/Processes
- People
- Engagement and Communications

One of the key outcomes has been the increased reference to our Values and all parties beginning to increase discussing what contribution we will all make to culture change and improving ways of working in collaboration. OD is continuing with its support for the community collaboration agenda as a key aspect of BHCC's modernisation

We are working on the agenda for integrated working with health

We are supporting the Better Care programme in Brighton & Hove by chairing the HR partnership workstream. Better Care offers the opportunity to improve services to some of the most vulnerable residents in the city, placing them and their carers at the centre of their own care. It will transform how local health & social care services are delivered so that people are provided with better integrated care and support.

We have worked with job centre plus and the leaving care team to increase apprenticeships and work placements for young people.

The council has committed to embedding 70 apprenticeships across the council. Presentations have been undertaken to engage young unemployed people in the apprenticeship opportunities offered by the council through our partnership arrangements with Job Centre Plus. All our opportunities are communicated to areas such as: Leaving Care Team, Youth Employability Service and Youth Offending Service.

We have worked with our partners to prioritise individuals such as lone parents, those leaving care and the long term unemployed and have a process which guarantees interviews for children leaving care for whom we have a corporate parent responsibility.

The National Apprenticeship Service continues to be a partner in sourcing training providers for our apprenticeships. The numbers of apprenticeships continues to rise with 37 apprenticeships in place and a further 30 in planning.

We have worked with our partners to ensure the health and safety of those living in, working in and visiting the city.

The health and safety team work closely with **East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service** to discuss any potential deficiencies as they conduct their audit programme

Safety Advisory Group we attend all the Safety Advisory Group meetings and working with partners such as emergency services and transport organisations. We advise on the potential impacts as the calendar of events unfolds in the city.

Major Incident Support Team we advise on issues during incidents that may affect the safety of our residents, visitors and our staff. During the last year we have provided support in responding to the following:

- Storm surge and the Patcham floods,
- Advising on the health & safety implications during Fire Service and Cityclean industrial action.
- Planning and councils incident liaison for March for England
- Advising on planning for major incident planning exercises in partnership with the Civil Contingencies team
- Responding to major incidents in the city including – chemical incident at Cardinal Newman High School

Risk Management Steering Group – working together with Civil Contingencies, Public Health, Insurance and the Risk Manager this group ensures effective co-ordination of risk management issues, resources and strategies. The work of the group has helped to inform the organisation's strategic risk register.

We have worked successfully with schools to provide services through our SLA

We work in partnership with schools and Academies in the city providing a range of traded services to including HR advice, HR, payroll and pensions administration, Health & Safety and Occupational Health and Wellbeing services.

The Teacher Pay & Appraisal Model Policy and guidance documents incorporating the government performance management and pay reforms were formulated during 2013 involving detailed consultation with head teachers and teacher unions.

We provided timely advice to headteachers and governing bodies on managing industrial action during October 2013 and March 2014. Schools have been kept up to date with HR issues via the School Bulletins, termly Heads HR Briefing and more regular Business Manager & Bursar Briefings.

We also work closely with Education & Inclusion to provide specialist support to Governors and schools that the council is working with to provide additional support to improve standards.

Through established Service Levels Agreements we provide HR support to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, South Down's National Park and the Bilingual School for payroll services.

6. Wellbeing

What have we been doing this year and how have we been supporting you?

We have been managing the contract for Occupational Health service and employee assistance programme

The Occupational Health and Counselling Services contract was awarded to Team Prevent UK in March 2012. Since that time we have been working to embed the contract and we have delivered:

- A secure Occupational Health online portal to submit & receive occupational health information for management & HR.
- Improvements to Staff Counselling service, the provision includes unlimited freephone telephone access, **24hours a day, 365 days a year**, including information & advice from citizen advice bureau trained staff.
- Formalised contract review and improvement meetings

Through the Occupational Health we have:

- Provided **1426** appointments (referrals and reviews) and 114 staff Did Not Attend
- Undertaken analysis of the **top three reasons** for referral which were, **medical condition, work-related stress** and **depression**.
- Focused on awareness raising to reduce the referral time (absent to point of referral), which has reduced to **35 days** from **54 days** last year.

Through our Employee Assistance Programme:

- **871** people have contacted the service, 367 for telephone counselling, 460 face to face counselling, 25 online counselling and 1 episode of critical incident debriefing.

We are supporting the council's sustainability strategies

We are implementing actions as part of the Health & Happiness objectives of the One Planet Living strategy which includes; initiatives on emotional wellbeing, active living, stop smoking, increasing uptake of flu vaccinations.

We are supporting the effective management of absence and stress in the workplace

We have reviewed our absence management practice across services and have involved key stakeholders through surveys for staff and managers, attendance at the workers forums and meetings with the unions. As a result of this work a revised approach to attendance management is being implemented across the council.

7. Corporate learning & development

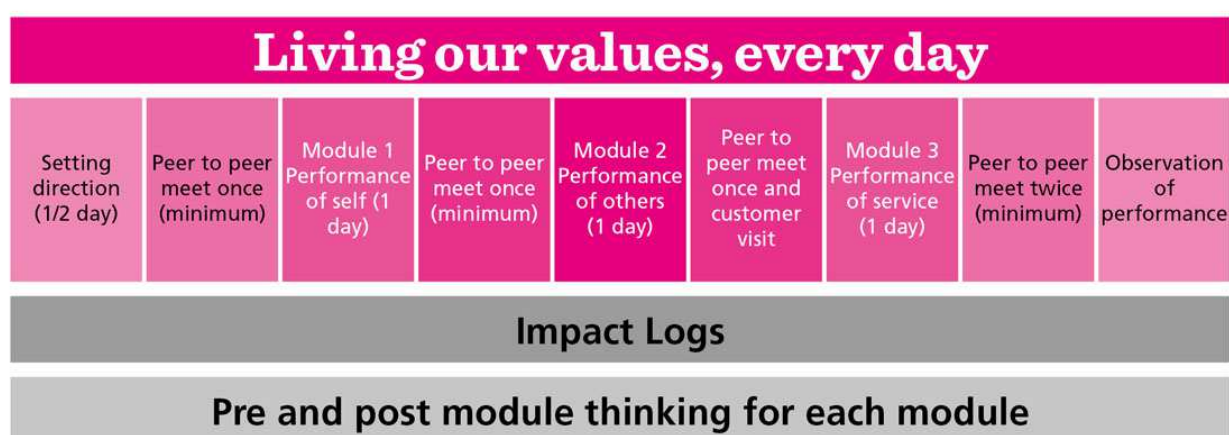
What have we been doing this year and how have we been supporting you?

We worked to embed our values by implementing a new management development programme for all managers across the organisation

Feedback from our People Strategy conversation with staff from across the organisation during 2012 and our 2013 staff survey told us that a key priority for us is to improve the capability of our managers. We designed and delivered the first strand of the 'Living our values, every day' programme to the top three tiers of the organisation. This was launched on 11 February 2014.

The first group of thirty learners included the Chief Executive, the Executive Directors and their direct reports – members of the Corporate Management Team. The programme focuses on performance improvement of ourselves, of others and service.

Here is an overview of the content of the programme



A key challenge for our organisation is to ensure as well as having the right people in the right place, we also need to ensure they have the right skills to help them do their job. Continued development is a key part of this. We have supported you by providing:

We have supported our workforce by delivering training and development activity enabling our staff to enhance their skills and achieve qualifications

- **14000 places** have been provided on **1200 courses** with an average attendance rate of 11 delegates per course. A further **3919** elearning modules have been completed saving the council **£117,000** when compared to classroom based training.
- A health and safety training programme was developed to support the needs of staff across the organisation. Over **23 different courses** have been delivered through **107 training events** to **1152 delegates**. This includes bespoke training events which have been tailored to meet the specific needs of teams and services.
- **192** qualifications have been completed across children's, adults and housing services including:
 - 89 QCF qualifications
 - 84 Social Work CPD modules
 - 19 Bursary qualifications

- **109** people managers in children's social services completed a coaching and mentoring programme to improve their approach to supervision and performance management.
- We have maximised the use of internal training rooms, **saving the council an estimated £200,000** on external hire costs.

We have supported the recruitment and development of social workers by delivering

- Successful implementation of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Social Work student placements in Adult Services and work continues with Children's Services to establish a similar SLA for 2014-15 onwards. **43 student placements** were supported across BHCC and schools in 2013-14.
- In partnership with ASC and CS we have co-ordinated the annual intake of **22 newly qualified social workers** on the assessed and supported year of employment and generate income of approx. **£80,000** in support.
- Creation of a Social Work Continuing Professional Development Strategy group with the Principal Social Workers.

We have worked with partners to develop and deliver training

- In the autumn a multi-agency safeguarding adults conference was held attended by 150 people.
- Disclosure & Barring service event held to support managers in understanding their responsibilities in the light of the Protection of Freedoms Act (2012).
- Partnerships and funding have provided large scale industry events to happen in Brighton & Hove which include the Social Care Showcase and Dementia Showcases. **Over 1000 people attended** to network and hear quality guest speakers across a wide range of subjects.
- We delivered joint Fire Risk Assessment training to a mixed cohort of staff from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Brighton & Hove City Council to increase opportunities for joint working and networking.

8. Policy and assurance

What have we been doing this year and how have we been supporting you?

We analysed PDP activity recorded on the HR system PIER

We helped the organisation understand how managers use PIER to record Performance Development Plans activity on the HR system, PIER.

From June – August 2013 we worked to identify how the PIER system could be used to produce meaningful data on people performance activity and we identified that PDP completion recorded on PIER for permanent staff was 60.19%

We have worked with finance to create an establishment process for the council

The new establishment process was implemented on 1st April 2013. Through this every staff change is properly authorised and budget is aligned to match the costs. This is an on-line process developed by HR and finance working together to design the process. This governs all other HR transactional processes and a working group has been set up to review and improve the system based on our first years' experience.

We have rolled out on-line time and expenses

Following successful pilots in 2012 managers in over 90% of our services can now authorise claims online. They are input by the employee directly into PIER and authorised by the line manager each month. This simple electronic authorisation process provides complete visibility for the employee and a full online history of claims. HR resources are deployed on vetting the payroll rather than inputting data. This has also been piloted in 12 schools to date. This new process, combined with the new allowance and expenses scheme, provides improved transparency and greater efficiency.

We successfully implemented Real Time Information and Auto-enrolment and the new Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Pension Scheme

Our payroll and systems team successfully implemented changes to our processes necessary to comply with HMRC requirements to send all payroll transactions to them in real time (RTI – real time information) and to comply with pension auto-enrolment. We also wrote to all staff eligible to be members of the LGPS pension scheme to inform them of the changes to the scheme from April 2014.

We reviewed and implemented a number of policies and guidance including:

Pay Policy Statement

We produced the council's annual pay Policy Statement as required under the Localism Act 2011. This was approved firstly by full council and is published on the website together with a range of data on pay as a public document.

Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure

This was reviewed following extensive discussions with Workers' Forums, managers, investigating officers, trade unions and HR colleagues. This is coupled with the publication a new workplace mediation scheme that any employee can access as a mechanism for trying to resolve grievances and disputes without recourse to formal procedures.

Raising Concerns in the Public Interest Policy (Whistleblowing)

This policy was reviewed and there were a number of changes designed to improve awareness and understanding of how and when the policy should be used, including the change of name. There are also new flowcharts to show how the council will respond to a concern that is raised under the policy.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

We updated our recruitment policies and processes to comply with changes in the Disclosure and Barring Service requirements to ensure we continue making relevant criminal checks on job candidates and those working with vulnerable groups.

We have also coordinated the Basic Disclosure checks for Revenues and Benefits staff in order for the council to achieve Code of Connections (CoCo) compliance in line with the Cabinet Office British Personnel Security Standards guidance in October 2013.

Health and Safety Policy and Guidance

We have co-ordinated the review of the policy which is signed by the chief executive and endorsed by the Leader of the Council and Elected Member lead for Health and Safety. This policy sets out the commitment to health and safety together with roles, responsibilities and arrangements which are communicated through departmental management teams.

We undertook and responded to a range of assurance activities

Payroll Assurance

The 2013-14 internal payroll audit provided **substantial assurance** on the effectiveness of the internal controls over the operation of the Payroll system.

Health & Safety Assurance

A priority for the health and safety service continues to be supporting the organisation in ensuring a proportionate approach to risk management is adopted. The range of functions undertaken by the council and our delivery partners in some instances, involves complex hazards that require robust risk management controls.

We operate a duty officer system which provides access to competent health and safety advice for all services, this has proven to be an effective mechanism for supporting services and ensuring continued compliance.

The team provide the first point of contact with regulatory agencies in particular: the Health & Safety Executive and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service when undertaking inspections, audits or investigations. The Health and Safety Executive continue their proactive inspection programme and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service undertake fire safety audits across the city.

A detailed annual health and safety report has been presented to the corporate health and safety committee outlining activity and priorities for the future. We can again report that no enforcement action has been taken against the council in the last 12 months.

The audit programme has seen a total of 197 undertaken as part of the 2 year programme. Support is provided where arrangements are found to offer limited assurance and where good practice is identified this is shared. A summary of assurance levels is highlighted below.

		Assurance Level				
Total Audits Required	Total Undertaken	No	Limited	Reasonable	Substantial	Full
207	197	0	21	123	50	3

9. Business Plan priorities for 2014/15 year

Our focus this year is delivering our five business plan priorities these can be seen in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: HROD Business Plan Priorities



We will **Support the Organisation** by providing a professional, responsive HROD function that supports the organisation and our partners in the management and robust performance of services and staff.

We will develop and implement a **People Plan** that enables the council to attract and retain a flexible workforce that is responsive to change with the right skills for the organisation.

We will support the senior leadership team of the council to advocate, demonstrate and develop a culture that improves performance. This work is framed by the 'Living our values, everyday' **culture change** programme.

We have identified key actions in response to the **HROD Staff Survey Action Plan**, these are to improve internal communication, improve our management capability and build personal resilience. Through these we aim to ensure we have a high performing workforce with the right skills and with improved staff satisfaction levels.

We will continue to develop our service through our **Internal HR Improvement Plan**, we have set up a performance board to monitor progress against key actions in our business plan. This will ensure that we offer our customers a positive experience and that we deliver high levels of service performance, delivered through efficient systems and processes.

10. Help us to help you

Delivering the best services for our city relies on ensuring we have the right people in the right roles doing the right things. HROD have a key role to play in supporting the organisation to achieve this. We need to ensure our service is agile and responds to the changing needs of the organisation. We have already established feedback mechanisms but recognise we need to go further.

How can you help? Get involved by telling us about what you think we do well and when things haven't met your expectations let us know about it. You can contact us by through our email address at: HRODCustomerFeedback@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

11. Conclusion

This report highlights a broad range of achievements and challenges over the last year for the HROD service. Whilst we recognise there are further opportunities for us to develop our service, there is also lot for us to be proud of. We will remain committed to focusing on supporting the organisation to deliver the commitments / priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.