

Strategic Workforce Priorities Consultation Update

Purpose

For information.

Summary

This report summarises the approach that the LGA will adopt in setting out the key strategic pay and workforce priorities for the sector. The priorities are based, amongst other things, on responses received to the recent consultation paper *Great People for Growing Places*. The responses were very positive and will enable us to refine our support programme.

Recommendation

That Members of the Resources Board note the report.

Action

As directed by members.

Contact officer: Naomi Cooke
Position: Head of Workforce
Phone no: 0207 664 3299
Email: naomi.cooke@local.gov.uk

Strategic Workforce Priorities Consultation Update

Background

1. Early in 2018, the LGA committed to identifying the key national pay and workforce strategic priorities for local government, having last produced a strategy some eight years ago. In order to develop the new priorities we undertook an extensive on-line consultation exercise under the banner *Great People for Growing Places*. We also reviewed our available workforce data and had extensive conversations with Government, professional organisations and senior officers.
2. We are now in a position to set out a shared vision for the workforce the sector needs to develop over the next decade. Every council will have its own ideas of course but an agreed general vision helps us carry out our work on behalf of the sector and helps us all think strategically about the workforce.
3. We took evidence also on the key themes that need to be addressed to achieve the agreed vision and on priorities that the LGA should have under each theme in when providing support to employers.

Responses to the consultation

4. We received responses from 68 councils and individuals/other organisations to the online consultation which break down as follows:

Type of respondent	Number of responses
Shire County	11
Shire District	15
Metropolitan District	8
London Borough	3
Unitary	18
Welsh Unitary	1
Other	12

5. We believe that the spread of respondent councils makes the sample representative. We have not used the “other” responses, which are mostly from individuals, in the detailed analysis of work priorities because ours is a membership organisation for councils, however we have referred to them in the analysis of the more general questions such as about the overall vision. We have also taken account of written comments from “others”.

Support for our overall vision

6. We asked councils and other interested parties to tell us whether or not they broadly supported the vision we set out. **95 per cent of respondent councils offered their support.** We feel that this is sufficiently emphatic to declare that we will use the basic vision to inform our work at a national level and the general sense of direction we will promote for the local government workforce. We don't want to waste the observations that some people offered however.

7. So our agreed, slightly revised national vision is for a workforce that is:
 - 7.1 **Productive** – affordable, effective, efficient, motivated, flexible and able to thrive in the digital world.
 - 7.2 **Joined-up and collaborative** – working in adaptable structures and teams that are properly integrated across all the different organisations providing services on a partnership basis.
 - 7.3 **Involved in co-designing and co-creating user-focused services** – so that the ideas and experience of the people most involved in services day to day can be fully utilised in ensuring that their work is focused on what users really need within budget constraints.
 - 7.4 **Truly valued and respected** – supported throughout the stages of life and career and able to enjoy good quality benefits as well as fair pay.
 - 7.5 **Diverse** – reflecting the communities it serves and making use of all the talent in those communities.
8. One of the main areas of debate amongst those who offered comments was about the scope of the vision as much as the language or whether or not it is comprehensive. We stated in the consultation that as an organisation our main remit covers the directly employed workforce but quite rightly, people made points about the changing nature of service delivery across communities and partnerships. We believe that the vision can be discussed, adapted and used as a core framework across partner organisations but we have adapted some wording to strengthen this point by referencing collaboration and partnership.
9. An interesting point was made about the need to be productive whilst also doing the right thing. We believe that the combination of factors in the vision should lead to efforts being focused correctly on the priorities set by communities but we have made changes to reflect this by adding something about effectiveness and some further detail on design of services. Some respondents highlighted the importance of the digital future and we have reflected this with some more emphatic wording.

Priorities for future work

10. As well as the overall vision for the workforce, the consultation document included five key themes which we suggested that the sector needs to focus on to achieve its aims:
 - 10.1 **Great leadership** that is visionary, ambitious and effective and the development of leadership skills at all levels.
 - 10.2 **Organisational change and development** that is focused on people, their wellbeing and resilience.
 - 10.3 **Kills development** that is truly innovative and focused on combining organisational and individual needs.

- 10.4 **Improved recruitment and retention** outcomes based on proper planning and use of best practice techniques.
- 10.5 **Pay and reward** systems that attracts and retains talent, motivating and helping people throughout their careers.
11. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they supported these key themes. On average, **95 per cent of respondents** supported each of the themes which is a very positive response.
12. The detailed discussion of each theme included a set of suggested priorities for the LGA's support programme, working with partners at a national level to help deliver change under each theme and so achieve the workforce vision over the next few years. Respondents were asked to rank the priorities in order of importance for them.
13. A clear set of priorities for our work programme emerged under each theme. This will be discussed in detail in the full report but we have identified a series of ten actions that we will focus on as immediate priorities:
- 13.1 The sector needs to ensure that its workforce development goals are shared and pursued with partners.
- 13.2 The basic working culture across local government and its partners still needs considerable change and improvement with a focus on new ways of working, especially in the new digital world.
- 13.3 Further research and sharing of information on best and new practice is very important and the LGA needs to lead this on behalf of the sector.
- 13.4 Managing and developing internal talent, especially those with leadership potential at all levels requires even more effort.
- 13.5 Political and managerial leadership development remains a key focus and must involve partner organisations, with particular emphasis on change and performance management and political relationships.
- 13.6 Making optimum use of apprenticeships at every level is very important.
- 13.7 Resources for skills development are strictly limited and so continued innovation in skills programmes is needed, with a particular emphasis on all things digital.
- 13.8 Further reform of pay structures is needed to make them both fair to individuals and relevant to organisational needs.
- 13.9 Individuals also need much clearer career structures which demonstrate opportunities and allow for planning.

- 13.10 There are endemic recruitment and retention problems in key specialisms and more debate is needed about how to solve these in the long term, although a focus on the other priorities should be helpful.
- 13.11 Significant weaknesses remain in approaches to ensuring the diversity of the workforce, especially with regard to people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities.

Immediate actions

14. Each one of these priorities is a challenge, though they are familiar and considerable efforts have been put into them already. The sector needs to take stock of what to do next and we will continue to report on the issues. The immediate step for us will be to publish a report setting out the strategic vision and priorities, with recommendations for councils and action commitments for the LGA. We will follow this with updates on our work programme in the coming months.

Implications for Wales

15. Steps are being taken to ensure that Welsh authorities are able to benefit from our strategic work priorities through discussions with the WLGA.

Financial Implications

16. The outlined activities are within the work programme and therefore have been budgeted for.

Next steps

17. Members are asked to note the report and officers will continue to update the Board and discuss priorities over the coming meeting cycle.