

North York Moors National Park Authority

Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

19 May 2014

People Management Strategy 2013 - 2015

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of progress against the current People Management Strategy.

2. Background

2.1 At the February 2013 meeting of the Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee, Members considered and approved the draft People Management Strategy (a copy is available on the Members' extranet or on request). The Strategy was developed in recognition that ensuring the effective management of Members/staff/volunteers and maximising the effectiveness of the training and development budget are key priorities to support the delivery of Business Plan objectives.

2.2 The People Management Strategy focuses on 4 key areas:

- **Developing the organisation** – developing strong leaders, engaging with staff to enable them to change the way in which they approach their jobs by encouraging personal responsibility for decision making.
- **Making connections** – ensuring that all groups are able to work together across organisational boundaries by providing more opportunities to work together to share knowledge and experience and improved communication channels.
- **Supporting improvement** – supporting organisational change in order to improve services.
- **Being a good employer** – ensuring that the Authority is an organisation where people are rewarded and motivated, challenged and developed and treated fairly and consistently.

2.3 The purpose of this paper is to briefly summarise the actions that have been carried out in each key area during the first year of the Strategy.

3. Progress

3.1 The actions carried out to date are as follows:

3.1.1 Developing the Organisation

- The Leadership Development Programme (LDP) run in conjunction with the Beech Consultancy has been delivered to 40 managers in two different formats. An initial group, including the Chief Executive, Directors and other senior managers had a more intensive programme which provided time to evaluate how the organisation had managed and dealt with the changes required by reductions in the DEFRA grant.
- The main learning themes from the LDP have also been shared with the rest of the staff - this has looked in particular at feedback, coaching, what makes a successful team and how individual roles within a team can contribute to this.
- All managers who took part in the LDP have had the opportunity to develop their coaching skills and consider its use as a style of managing others in their teams to encourage them to find their own solutions to work issues. Six managers have

further developed their coaching skills to establish a core of staff who have the skills to use coaching techniques in a variety of situations with other staff.

- The programme has been well received and Departments are actively using the skills developed to resolve the various issues that they currently face. The revision of the appraisal scheme will ensure that the key learning areas from the LDP are used as part of performance assessment.
- The range of opportunities for volunteers has widened significantly to enhance the services that we can deliver. There is now a strong team of volunteers supporting the work of the team running the Gallery at the Moors Centre and the events programme. Volunteers are now a part of the staffing mix at both Visitor Centres.
- Relationships with higher education establishments are being improved and opportunities for graduates and undergraduates have been developed – there is a graduate trainee post within the Conservation team and students have also joined for 6-12 month periods to carry out research for us and provide them with material for their dissertations. Internships are also now available and our first undergraduate intern will be working at the visitor centres in the summer of 2014.
- The Skills Workshops continue to be a real success. The monthly workshops are led by staff who share their skills on a particular topic with their colleagues and underpins the improvement of staff core skills, particularly in relation to ICT. Other subjects have included finance, people management, Freedom of Information, Data Protection Act plus many more. The development needs highlighted in appraisals are used as the basis for the topics covered in the workshop programme.

3.1.2 Making Connections

- The 2012 staff survey was completed by 70% of staff and as well as providing useful comments on how change was managed, have also resulted in a number of specific actions taking place as well as informing the guiding principles established for the revised appraisal scheme.
- Cross-departmental training days have been re-invigorated to give staff the opportunity to meet with and discuss issues with colleagues whom they would not normally work with.
- The Chief Executive regularly spends time at Departmental meetings to ensure that he is available so that staff can easily discuss issues with him.
- The monthly Directors' meeting is now every two months. In the intervening months, there is a management team meeting. This group consists of 3rd tier managers, chaired by the Chief Executive, and is used to make decisions at an appropriate level and also as an important sounding board. This has enabled Directors meetings to concentrate on more strategic and less operational issues.
- Staff have told us that as individuals they respond to a variety of different communication methods. Communication methods have been revised generally – the monthly staff newsletter, established in 2010, is sent directly to all staff. Feedback about this low cost initiative continues to be excellent.
- Communication with staff is frequent, open and honest with regard to the financial difficulties facing the Authority. This includes staff meetings, open sessions for staff to attend, Departmental meetings, the staff newsletter, formal letters and so on.
- The Authority's approach has been to engage positively and encourage staff to come forward with their thoughts and ideas. Anecdotal feedback suggests that staff view this approach positively.
- The Intranet has continued to be developed as the source for up to date advice on a wide range of work related issues including employment related advice via the Personnel area. .
- The Volunteers' extranet has continued to be developed to complement the existing Volunteers' newsletter. This enables an easier flow of information to and from Volunteers and is key to the effective organisation of work tasks.

3.1.3 Supporting Improvement

- Vocational training (in addition to apprenticeships) is developing strongly and is mentioned elsewhere in this paper. The Authority has twice won the Regional Apprentice Employer of the year award for its apprentice schemes and has been listed three times in the National Top 100 apprentice employers in the country.
- Apprentices are seen as an essential part of our staffing mix and are a part of 'how we do things here'. A new advanced apprenticeship has been established within the finance team and is working very well. New partners have been found to ensure that the northern conservation apprentice team can continue.
- External funding has been sought and is expected to be successful in enabling us to recruit Tourism apprentices to work at the Visitor Centres. External funding has also assisted in enabling an ICT apprentice to be recruited for the first time this summer.
- A review of the appraisal scheme is being conducted and will incorporate key learning from the LDP. A number of informal discussion sessions were held with staff and principles for the new scheme have been agreed with staff and approved by Members. Further work will continue to ensure that a new appraisal scheme is up and running for 1 January 2015.
- The use of Citrix software has enabled the Authority to develop the capability for the ICT network to be fully accessible from home environments. This very cost-effective solution gives the Authority the opportunity to review working practices, taking all of the pros and cons into account. It is expected that this review will take place over the next 12-18 months before any final decision is made.
- The Authority's management of its staff was seen as a positive influence in the external Customer Service Excellence assessment that took place in May 2013. The way in which the Authority engages with disabled groups, volunteers and puts the customer at the heart of service delivery were awarded the highest possible score in the assessment.
- The Ideas group has been re-invigorated and has a mix of new and more experienced staff that are actively encouraged to make their suggestions regarding income generation and cost savings.

3.1.4 Being a Good Employer

- The Authority's relationship with UNISON remains positive, with UNISON being generally supportive of the stance taken in dealing with the current financial difficulties. Meetings will now be held on a monthly basis and will enable formal lines of communication with staff representatives to be open and easily accessible. The formal process by which staff changes will be made will be the subject of discussion and negotiation with UNISON with the outcome expected to be the development of a robust but fair process.
- The Voluntary Redundancy Scheme is currently running to give staff the opportunity to leave the Authority to pursue other interests and will enable the Authority to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies that will have to be made for 2015/16 and beyond.
- Although a number of staff will be made redundant either voluntarily or compulsorily, the Authority has secured the services of a specialist outplacement company who will provide bespoke assistance to staff to enable them to find alternative employment.
- Sickness absence rates continue to be relatively low, with all longer term absences being managed sympathetically but proactively - these have now all been resolved. The annual absence rates for 2012/13 and 2013/14 have been four days per full time equivalent member of staff. This compares well with both the public and private sector norms. Stripping long term absence out of these figures gives an underlying rate of two days sickness per annum.
- The Health and Safety Group continues to meet every two months and the work of this group has been strengthened including representatives from the Volunteer

Service and Visitor Centres. Access to regular health and safety training has been widened by the use of cost effective and high quality on-line training resources.

- The Authority's Health and Safety provision is supported by regular external checks, the latest of which has praised the level of work carried out while making a number of practical recommendations. This has formed the work programme for the health and Safety group for the coming year. Members have asked for and will receive twice yearly updates on this important subject.
- The Authority has continued with the staff benefits scheme run in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council. This has included access to schemes such as Green Vehicle Leasing, Cycle to Work and Childcare Vouchers as well as a range of lifestyle benefits. The cost of the scheme is approximately £1 per person per year.
- Staff have been encouraged to look after their own health through cycle to work and a number of other informal initiatives organised by staff themselves.

4. Future Work

- 4.1 The Authority's financial position for 2015/16 and the staff implications that arise from resolving budgetary issues will be the main focus for HR work in the coming 12 months. It is likely that the nature/structure of the organisation will change in the future and people management will need to be sufficiently flexible to positively manage a greater integration of paid staff and volunteers, the potential of employment of staff within 'arm's length bodies', the likely development of a creative agenda to develop alternative sources of income and so on. As all this continues, effective people management will need to become an even higher priority for the Authority. The People Management Strategy is regarded as a flexible document which will change in line with the Authority's priorities. It is envisaged that the Strategy will be re-written to ensure that it links strongly with the revised Business Plan and Members will have the opportunity to see this early in 2015.

5. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 5.1 The strategy will be delivered within the current and future staff related budgets.

6. Sustainability Appraisal

- 6.1 A Sustainability Assessment is not required because the report is an information report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no significant legal implications to the issues outlined in this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

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Background documents to this report

File Ref.

1. Business Plan 2012 - 2015
2. People Management Strategy 2013 - 2015