REPORT OF PERSONNEL MANAGER

SUBJECT:
RETENTION OF INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ACCREDITATION

Purpose of Report

This report updates members on the Authority's successful retention of its Investors in People (IiP) accreditation at the recent review and invites any considerations arising from the assessor's report.

Introduction/Background

The Authority was awarded Investors in People (IiP) recognition in December 2000, and has subsequently retained the award at reviews in 2003, 2006 and 2009. Investors in People is a national quality standard which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

Re-assessment is required at intervals of not more than 3 years. The assessor visited the Authority in October to meet with the Chair of the Authority, the Chief Executive and a representative selection of managers and employees and to make his assessment.

Comparisons

Many private and public sector organisations have the IiP award, including Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia NPAs and Pembrokeshire County Council.

Outcome

The assessor concluded that the Authority satisfies all elements of the award and should retain its accreditation.

The assessment report (minus attachments) is attached as Annex A. The report takes a different format to previous years, with less repetition of 'evidence' relating to each indicator within the framework and more focus on suggestions for development.

The two 'weaker' areas suggested for strengthening were areas we were aware of and have initiatives underway to address. Members will note mention in the report of the work being carried out for us by an employee seconded from PCC for one day a week until the end of March to develop a revised management competency and development framework. Progress on this work will be reported to Audit and Corporate Services Committee in February.

Officers will develop an Action Plan to implement the assessor's recommendations and we expect a follow-up meeting with the assessor in around 18 months.

Financial considerations
The costs of assessment are budgeted and the costs of any improvement actions would fall within existing budget areas, such as training and development.

Risk considerations
There would be some reputational and morale issues if we had not retained the award or do not do so in future reviews.

Compliance
Retention of IiP was an action within outcome 8 of the corporate strategy.

Human Rights/Equality issues
Part of the assessment addresses issues such as fair access to opportunities for staff.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal
The IiP framework facilitates effective use of resources in developing staff to meet strategic needs.

Welsh Language statement
The assessment was bilingual where requested.

Conclusion
The assessor's report will be considered by leadership team and staff representatives group in December just prior to the Authority meeting and will form a useful basis for discussion with members.

Recommendation
Members are asked to consider and discuss issues arising from the assessor's report.

Background Documents

http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Pages/Home.aspx IiP framework and information

(For further information, please contact June Skilton 01646 624835)

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Consultees: Leadership Team

Annex A

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

REVIEW REPORT

for

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Prepared by: Neil Huxtable

Investors in People Assessor

On behalf of: Investors in People Wales
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Report date: October 2012

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Review Objectives

The following objectives were agreed during the planning stage of the review:
- Confirmation that the authority satisfies the requirements of the Investors in People core standard
- Staff views on the recent organisational restructure of the authority
- Best practice in the management and development of staff.

I have commented on each of these objectives below.

Confirmation that the authority satisfies the requirements of the Investors in People core standard

I was able to gather sufficient evidence to satisfy all aspects of the Investors in People core standard through a combination of examining relevant documentation and interviews with a representative cross-section of staff. The authority has a clear sense of purpose encapsulated in its vision, values and corporate aims. Planning processes and the corporate strategy are particularly robust. All staff interviewed were able to identify with the vision and values of the authority and had a good understanding of its aims and expected outcomes. Moreover all staff interviewed felt a sense of pride in working for the authority.

The authority is generous in its investment in learning and development activities and is an inherently fair employer. Both points were endorsed by staff during the course of the interview programme. Many staff made reference to the genuine attempts of the senior management team to involve them in decision making and in influencing the development of the authority as a whole. Staff on the whole also felt valued and recognised for their contribution to the authority especially within their work teams.

Although there was sufficient evidence available of compliance during the course of the review, two areas perhaps of the Investors in People standard that the authority could strengthen further concern the development of management effectiveness and a stronger process for the evaluation of learning and development and its impact on performance. The authority is currently taking steps to address management effectiveness. Accordingly to add value to the Investors in People review process, I have included below some further thoughts on management effectiveness and the evaluation of learning and development.

Effectiveness of managers
Definitions of managers' capabilities are described to a large degree within person specifications which form part of relevant job descriptions. Specimen managers' job descriptions examined as part of the review list the skills and aptitudes required of the job holder and include problem solving, creativity, interpersonal and negotiating skills, oral, written, numeric and IT skills and so on.

There is an exciting development currently underway in regard to management effectiveness. This is being spearheaded by an officer seconded from Pembrokeshire County Council who amongst other initiatives is in the process of developing a competency framework for all managers within the authority. This work will only help develop the role of managers and is in line with the requirements of the Investors in People standard.

The standard itself requires that organisations determine the capabilities managers require to lead, manage and develop their colleagues effectively and also the learning priorities of the organisation to ensure that managers attain such competencies. The intentions to develop a

learning network in South Pembrokeshire with other organisations so as to identify and satisfy collectively management development needs is an innovative solution in this regard.

In support of this initiative, I would recommend that responsibility for learning and development becomes a key area of accountability for line managers. This would embrace agreeing team and individual learning needs, determining appropriate solutions and undertaking an assessment of the impact of learning undertaken on the competence of both individual team members and that of the team as a whole. Doing this would free up the human resources function to spend more time on the strategic evaluation of learning and development and more general matters of organisational development.

A related development would be the introduction of coaching skills for managers. This would enable managers to develop the knowledge and skills of their colleagues in ways appropriate to the needs of individual staff members and the team as a whole and have the overall effect of improving performance throughout the authority. If the authority were to adopt internal coaching, coaching skills could be made one of the essential characteristics of effective leadership and management. Every line manager could act as a coach to those staff for whom they are responsible.

There is much literature available on coaching as well as a number of professional bodies. In essence effective coaching is based on a number of broad principles that can be summarised as follows:

- Coaching is used to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes of the person being coached
- Effective coaching is based on asking the right questions, namely questions to urge people to consider and think deeply about matters for themselves in order for them to be in a situation to transfer any knowledge, skills or new approaches gain from coaching to new situations on their own
- Sharing experiences, some good, some bad, are key to coaching, especially where the coach is able to relate experiences and situations that have happened in the past to help the person being coached to avoid some of the problems and enjoy similar successes as experienced by the coach
- Frequent reviews are important in any coaching process in order to assess progress and experiences. Doing this will allow people to review their learning and decide how they can continue to apply it in the future
- Coaching should not be a short lived, unplanned occurrence. Coaching sessions should be planned in terms of timing, length, objectives and results. In this way the whole process becomes more purposeful and constructive.

Although the authority has not elected for an Investors in People framework assessment, some of the additional requirements of the framework in relation to management effectiveness are well worth considering. In addition to the requirements of the core standard, the framework recommends that:

- Organisations not only determine the current capabilities required of managers but also future requirements to reflect changes taking place in the organisation
- Individual managers are reviewed against such competencies and receive regular feedback on their performance
- The organisation's leadership and management strategy is closely aligned to its business strategy and takes account of external good practice
- All staff are encouraged to develop leadership capabilities.

Evaluation of Learning and Development
This is an area that the authority could strengthen further. Currently attendees of learning events complete an evaluation form which is forwarded to the central human resources department. Collated documentation is assessed and decisions reached about the overall

effectiveness of the particular learning in question are reported to the senior management team. Where adverse assessments arise, decisions are taken about the future use of the learning providers in question. Moreover the department prepares an annual corporate evaluation of learning and development which itemises learning priorities identified in the annual learning plan and provides a narrative account of achievements in relation to each.

I have stated above when describing management effectiveness that learning and development should become less centrally dependent and more of a line management responsibility. This recommendation would equally apply to the evaluation of learning and development and would allow the central human resources function to concentrate more on the evaluation of the overall impact of learning and development on the performance of the authority as a whole.

One of the main refinements that could be introduced at individual, team and authority wide levels is the use of measureable and quantifiable objectives for learning and development so that meaningful assessments can be made of the costs and benefits, value for money and the actual return on investment gained from learning and development undertaken. I have included in appendix B some general notes and templates on the evaluation of learning and development which may prove of assistance in this context.

Staff views on the recent organisational restructure of the authority
This was one of the key objectives set for the review. The authority underwent a significant reorganisation in 2011 that involved the reconstruction of the senior management team, the creation of area responsibilities within the national park region and the differentiation of traditional roles, especially that of ranger and warden. As requested I asked several questions of staff interviewed in relation to the restructure to determine whether misgivings identified in a staff survey conducted while the reorganisation was unfolding still persisted. Here is a summary of staff's views:

- There was a general acceptance by staff interviewed that the authority needed to change in the way it was organised and operated
- The majority of staff understand the purpose of the reorganisation and why it was necessary although some interviewed were still unsure of how the reorganisation would work in practice
- The rationale and anticipated benefits of the reorganisation are accepted by the majority of staff interviewed
- The strengthening of certain functions within the authority e.g. planning, have been welcomed by staff interviewed
- Many site based staff have seen little change in the way they fulfil their roles and responsibilities
- Confusion over the relationship between the role of park ranger and park warden was felt by some staff
- A desire on the part of staff to understand in greater detail the purpose of each function and department following the reorganisation and the need to generate better interdepartmental co-operation.

Some of the reservations expressed above will hopefully be addressed by the whole staff meetings planned for the near future where emphasis will be placed on roles and responsibilities of different departments and functions within the organisation. Moreover as staff become more familiar with new working structures their understanding of how new arrangements work will become clearer.

One possible approach to enhance understanding between the various functions (Delivery, Discovery, Direction and Development Management) within the authority would be to develop effective internal customer-supplier relationships between them. The Customer Service Excellence Award (which the authority intends to achieve) makes reference to

customer journey mapping to attain a greater understanding of customer needs and how best to address them. The concept of the internal customer-supplier will not only bolster co-operation between the new functions but will also be of value in providing evidence to attain the Customer Service Excellence Award.

The authority could develop internal customer-supplier relationships between sections and departments as well as individual employees. A logical approach to determining internal customer-supplier relationships from both a departmental and individual perspective could include the following steps:

- Each department (or individual staff member) determines who are its internal customers
- Establish their needs and expectations
- Agree measures with internal customers to meet their needs and expectations
- Assess capabilities to meet needs and expectations and take steps if they are in some way deficient
- Monitor changes in needs and expectations
- Formally review with internal customers how needs and expectations have been met and prepare a corrective action plan where deficiencies become evident.

Linked to the existing initiative on developing competency frameworks, specific change management competencies could also be developed at all levels of seniority throughout the authority to facilitate the change process.   Here is one particular competency framework I have seen applied successfully elsewhere. It defines competencies managers should posses in order to lead change successfully, categorised under cognitive, functional and personal/social competencies.

Cognitive competencies represent managers' abilities to exercise reason, perception and judgement. They include the following categories:
- Divergent thinking,
- Critical thinking,
- Creativity,
- Problem solving,
- Strategic thinking,
- Analytical skills, and
- Numerical abilities.

Functional competencies are qualifications and skills that an individual needs for every day problem solving or to perform defined tasks and activities. They include:
- Language and communication skills,
- Information technology skills,
- Career planning skills,
- Managerial skills, and
- Decision making skills

Personal and social competencies - the third dimension - consists of competencies, which enable an individual to establish and maintain relationship with others:
- Self-direction,
- Interpersonal skills,
- Teamwork skills,
- Compassion,
- Integrity,
- Personal and social values.

A first step would be to define in detail the core elements of change management competencies – ideally with the involvement of both managers and staff – and include them as part of the general competency development initiative. The authority's staff appraisal system as well as the proposed 360 degree feedback could be used to assess change management competencies as a precursor to the introduction of learning and development initiatives designed to enhance change management skills at all levels in the authority.

In conclusion whilst the authority would appear to be managing change reasonably well, as borne out by the staff interviews, in order to add value to the Investors in People review process I have included in appendix D some well known change management models that may be of assistance to the authority in facilitating the ongoing change process.

Best practice in the management and development of staff
Under this general objective I have highlighted two areas, namely communications and performance management as being worthy of comment.

Communications
This was a subject considered as part of the review. Some reservations had been expressed over communications by staff both in the results of the last staff survey and in feedback from new staff in relation to the induction process. I made a point therefore of seeking staff's views on communications during the course of the review. The overall response was quite positive.

Certainly at section and department levels most staff take part in regular team meetings where local issues are discussed openly. Staff also welcomed the whole staff meetings as a means of conveying information about the authority as a whole. However as I have stated above some staff were still unsure of how the new reorganisation would work and how they were expected to contribute.

In more general terms, communications is often cited as an area for development within organisations. Confusion can arise however, over the definition of the term. Its interpretation can vary between individuals within organisations.

To strengthen communications therefore, it is important to differentiate between individuals' communications skills – oral, written etc. – and communications structures and systems within organisations. The competency framework currently in the process of development will no doubt identify personal communications skills and enable the authority to introduce communications skills development programmes as required. During the review I discussed with the chief executive the merits of team briefing as an approach to organisational communications. Team briefing is widely used within organisations as a means of communicating a consistent message from the top of the organisation to all staff. It is based on a core brief supplemented by local briefs of relevance to individual teams within the organisation. I have included in appendix D some notes on team briefing which hopefully will be of help if team briefing is introduced.

Performance Management
This was another area highlighted during the course of the review. Currently all staff receive an individual performance review which reflects on previous performance of individuals and determines appropriate measureable performance objectives linked to the service plan and corporate objectives. There is a desire to strengthen further the authority's approach to performance management. The current work taking place on the development of staff competencies also intends to embrace 360 degree feedback. This is a welcome development which I believe will reinvigorate the current performance management system.

360 degree feedback itself is a form of performance management where employees receive confidential anonymous feedback from people who work around them. Usually this will

include the line manager, peers and staff who report to the individual concerned. A maximum of about eight to twelve people should be selected to complete an anonymous questionnaire (in writing or on line) which asks questions on a broad range of work related questions. Responses should be graded for each question (say on a scale of 1 to 4). The person receiving feedback would also complete the questionnaire as a self-assessment.

As well as providing comprehensive feedback on individual performance, another output of 360 feedback would be a personal development plan to address any areas for improvement identified. When done well, 360 degree feedback can form a very effective appraisal tool. The approach gives an opportunity for people to receive constructive feedback anonymously from colleagues that they may not otherwise be comfortable in providing. Moreover those receiving feedback will gain insights into the way that they are perceived and will offer opportunities for people to adapt their behaviour and improve their performance. If introducing 360 degree feedback, the authority could start the process with the senior leadership team and then if successful, extend it to all other staff.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – amongst others – have published useful guidelines on the introduction of 360 degree feedback which can be accessed through their website - www.cipd.co.uk.

Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

The key strengths and points of good practice highlighted by the review were:
- Clear vision and corporate aims supported by a comprehensive strategic planning process to which staff are invited to contribute
- The intentions to develop a learning network in South Pembrokeshire with other organisations so as to identify and satisfy collectively management development needs is an innovative solution in this regard
- Effective use of the employees forum in consultation and addressing matters of common concern
- Open management style with senior managers being readily accessible to staff to discuss issues and concerns
- Regular team meetings supplemented by periodic whole staff meetings to communicate a common message to the workforce as a whole
- Professional and dedicated workforce who take pride in the authority as their employer and readily identify with its mission and core values
- Strong commitment to staff learning and development at all levels of the organisation
- Recent developments in regard to the introduction of competencies and 360 degree feedback
- The intention of the authority to apply for the Customer Service Excellence award.

Continuous Improvement

The organisation is encouraged to consider the following areas for continuous improvement:
- Consider the development of recognised career paths for all staff within the organisation as part of a longer term succession planning strategy
- Clarify in greater detail the roles and inter-relationships between the various functions (Delivery, Discovery, Direction and Development Management) and in so doing develop internal customer-supplier relationships between each function
- Strengthen further the approach to evaluating staff learning and development especially by encouraging managers to take a more hands on approach to identifying team and individual learning needs, learning solutions and the evaluation thereof
- Make use of internal coaching as a key activity of staff learning and development

- As intended, introduce 360 degree feedback to supplement existing performance management processes
- Introduce team briefing as a means of supporting organisational communications
- Ensure that change management competencies form part of the new staff competency framework
- Consider a framework assessment at the time of the next Investors in People review in 2015 with the aim of achieving gold status.

Outcome

Having carried out the review process rigorously and in accordance with the quality assurance guidelines monitored by Investors in People Wales, I conclude that Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has succeeded in satisfying all elements of the Investors in People standard and therefore accreditation as an Investors in People is retained as from 11 October 2012.

Neil Huxtable

Date: 19 October 2012

On behalf of Investors in People Wales

Date of 18 month interaction: April 2014

Date of 3 year Review: October 2015