

Report to: **Personnel Committee**



Date of Meeting 17th October 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Investors in People

Report summary:

This report summarises the findings and planned actions as a result of the Council's Investors in People (IiP) reaccreditation which took place earlier this year.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Committee note the findings and endorse the proposed actions.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the findings of the Investors in People reaccreditation inform the Council's approach to the deployment, management and development of its people.

Officer: Jo Fellows, HR Manager jfellows@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☒ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Medium Impact

The agreed actions may have equality, diversity and inclusion impacts. Where these relate to changes in policy or practice, an equality impact assessment will be developed.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Failure to implement actions linked to the Investors in People findings may have an impact on employee relations and therefore it is important that developments are regularly shared with staff, as the action plan progresses, and the Council continues to seek employee feedback. This report will also be shared with UNISON at Joint Staff Forum.

Links to background information n/a

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
 - ☐ A greener East Devon
 - ☐ A resilient economy
-

Report in full

1. East Devon District Council first achieved Investor in People (IiP) accreditation in 2006 and was awarded the Gold standard in 2012 and Platinum in 2019. In early 2023 the Council underwent reaccreditation, which consisted of the following process:
 - Context meeting with SMT+.
 - Online staff survey – achieving an 82% response rate in 2023, compared to 80.65% in 2019.
 - Development of a 'Storyboard' to showcase actions taken since the last accreditation in 2019 – the first time the Council had produced this.
 - On site interviews by the IiP assessor with a random sample of 44 employees, over four days.
2. Following this process, the Council was awarded the Gold standard, with a number of the themes now being considered at Advanced rather than High Performing level. This report summarises the key findings and proposed actions, which will be taken as part of the wider Council Plan and Peer Review work.
3. A summary of the IiP Standard is at Appendix 1.
4. **IiP Findings**
 - 4.1. The IiP reaccreditation report highlighted that the following Indicators were particular areas for some improvement, although there remained some positive features:
 - 4.1.1. **Leading and Inspiring People** – People are clear about the organisation vision and purpose but trust in leaders has slightly reduced and staff still feel that leadership capability could be improved. The 'golden thread' was described as continuing to be 'as strong as ever' and people 'are very clear of where the organisation is heading and how much they feel part of the journey'. It was recognised that a 'sense of connection' has been particularly challenging during recent years with the pandemic and there is a need to redevelop this.
 - 4.1.2. **Managing Performance** – The 'golden thread' remains strong but there are inconsistencies in some areas around how performance is managed. The assessor noted that 'people were able to articulate quite clearly what is expected of them in both their day to day duties and the behaviours expected of them. The thread that runs through the organisation's vision, mission and values is not only visible but lived and breathed through the golden thread'. They also stated that the 'performance management culture has matured since the last IiP assessment'. However, there were some inconsistencies in management practice regarding poor performance that were highlighted, which linked with the need to further develop management capability in some areas.

4.1.3. **Building Capability** – There a wide range of excellent learning and development opportunities available but people are struggling to find time to utilise them. The assessor stated that 'there is most definitely a learning and development culture within EDDC and this is evident at every level', with the improvements to workforce planning supporting this.

4.2. The report identified the following Indicators as areas where some improvement may be helpful:

4.2.1. **Living the Organisations Values** – The Council's values remain important to the organisation but there are some inconsistencies in practice. The survey found that 83.5% of staff fully agree that their 'behaviour reflects the organisation's values' and the assessor commented that 'your people do share your values and hold them in high regard. They know they are a differentiator and that they underpin your reputation'. However, although two of the values indicators remain at high performing, there has been a decline in overall scores and feedback highlighted inconsistencies with how some staff felt that the values were demonstrated in practice.

4.2.2. **Recognising and Rewarding High Performance** – The work undertaken to improve pay rates through the Reward Review is recognised but there are inconsistencies in how performance and contribution are valued. The Reward Review has had a positive impact, with staff feeling that 'their views were actively sought during the consultation period'. The report also highlights how Worksmart, staff development and external recognition are all helping. For example, 'everyone I spoke to shared with me how flexible the organisation has been', people 'have been rewarded...(through) identifying their potential which led to promotion' and 'you have received external recognition (that highlights) the incredible work you do'. However, inconsistencies were highlighted – 'people did share with me their personal experiences of how the reward and recognition culture are embedded or in some cases not embedded at all'. The report recommends that leaders invest more time in their people to get to know what motivates them and the recognition mechanisms are actively used by all managers.

4.2.3. **Delivering Continuous Improvement** - Delivering continuous improvement remains strong, but there needs to be greater individual accountability to support this and there needs to be time set aside to reflect and learn. The assessor commented on the 'incredibly strong culture of 'making things happen' albeit people believe this has lapsed since the pandemic'. However, the report states that there is an opportunity 'to encourage more people to take responsibility for improving the way 'we/I' do things', although it is recognised that 'most of the people I met spoke to me about how they are always looking for ways to improve but don't always have the time to work on them or have the resources available to push things through.' The report recommends that time is built in to reflect upon and improve practice, giving people time 'to be more proactive...(to) think and not just react'. Opportunities through the learning and development offer and other routes, to continue to 'look outside the organisation' also remain important.

4.2.4. **Creating Sustainable Success** – The Council continues to focus on the future and understand the external context. Staff talked to the assessor about how they are 'fully committed' to the organisation, how it cares for their wellbeing, that they have a positive impact on communities and people are confident about the future, with 68.7% of staff strongly agreeing to the statement that 'my organisation has a plan for the future'. However, although 'people confirmed during conversations...that EDDC's approach to change is open, inclusive and well communicated' there was a feeling that 'so many changes have been forced on the organisation in the past few years', for example as a result of the pandemic, that this has had an impact on whether people feel that they are embracing or being forced to change.

4.3. The following Indicators remained High Performing:

4.3.1. **Structuring Work** – The Council continues to empower and involve people, with high engagement evidenced by the survey response rate. The assessor states that ‘there is a strong culture of supporting and encouraging people to make decisions’ and ‘it is the norm to try new things, put forward new ideas and take positive risks’. However, they recommend that to retain high performance the Council ‘continue to develop open and honest relationships between leaders and their teams’ and perhaps consider leaders acting as ‘mentors for their colleagues on a peer to peer level’ to support this’.

4.3.2. **Empowering and Involving People** - Work is well structured and there are regular reviews of roles and opportunities for autonomy and collaboration. This has been developed further through the introduction of improved workforce planning and by the Council ‘continually reviewing your workforce, ensuring that they have the right skills, in the right place at the right time’, with the assessor seeing ‘huge development in this area since our last review’, despite ‘extremely challenging times’. However, the report recognises that ‘more can be done to make career mapping more visible and clearer’.

4.4. Although there are areas for improvement and despite the change from Gold to Platinum, the Council’s average scores from the staff survey remained high, compared to the average for the sector. This is also highlighted in the liP report which states that the 2023 reaccreditation outcome ‘is testament to the whole EDDC’s team ethos of working hard, showing passion, caring for those whom they serve and a genuine desire to keep things going in the most difficult times.’ The report also acknowledges the ‘unprecedented and challenging circumstances’ that the Council has experienced since the 2019 assessment.

4.5. The report also highlighted that both the Housing and StreetScene survey results had improved significantly from the last review, which the assessor stated was also endorsed through the onsite interviews. The assessor stated that ‘people recognise that there are still challenges ahead in Housing and there always will be, but the overall feedback was positive and extremely encouraging’. She commented that ‘the StreetScene team were happy and enjoying their roles, (with comments such as) ‘best job I’ve ever had’ and ‘I love working here’’. The service level survey data will be analysed further and provided to service management teams to inform the 2024/25 workforce planning process.

5. Proposed Actions

5.1. The following actions are proposed and will be progressed as part of the Council Plan, service and workforce planning and Peer Review work:

- 5.1.1. Review and continue to embed the Council’s Values and Behaviours Framework.
- 5.1.2. Determine resource requirements to support achievement of the Council Plan and reflect in service and workforce plans.
- 5.1.3. Review the leadership and management development offer, initially for senior leaders (linking to the recent Council Motion) and then cascading to others.
- 5.1.4. Review the performance improvement policy and guidance and provide refresher training for managers.
- 5.1.5. Review Performance Excellence Reviews (PERs) and 1:1s to ensure consistency in application and completion, individual accountability is explicit and acted upon and high performance and potential are recognised and appropriate actions taken.
- 5.1.6. Continue to communicate the learning and development offer and keep it under review, informed by workforce plans, staff feedback and organisational developments.
- 5.1.7. Continue to monitor mandatory and other training take-up and impacts.
- 5.1.8. Continue to develop and embed workforce planning to mitigate against recruitment, retention and succession planning challenges.

- 5.1.9. Progress 'grow our own' project plan to support career pathways and succession planning.
 - 5.1.10. Continue to monitor pay rates through external benchmarking and analysis of people data reports.
 - 5.1.11. Continue to embed the post pandemic Star Awards scheme and consider how this could link to PERs.
 - 5.1.12. Re-establish regular staff surveys.
 - 5.1.13. Continue to progress Worksmart action plan to embed and evaluate impact of post pandemic working arrangements.
 - 5.1.14. Continue regular communication with staff, through Stay Connected, Staff Awareness Sessions and other means.
 - 5.1.15. Continue to develop the HR Business Partner role to provide proactive support to service area managers, including supporting workforce planning and coaching managers to develop their competence.
6. The IIP reaccreditation process has provided a good insight into the Council's current culture and the views of employees. The timing of the reaccreditation has also been useful, allowing the actions to be progressed alongside the new Council Plan and to inform the Peer Review. Committee will continue to be informed of progress.
-

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications in the recommendations.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Appendix 1 – the liP Standard

liP assess against their standard which is based on good practice. It focuses on three key areas:

- Leading - this is about effective leadership, how we live our values and behaviours and how we empower and involve staff.
- Supporting – this is about managing performance, recognising and rewarding high performance and structuring work to enable clear decision-making and to encourage collaborative working.
- Improving – this is about building capability through developing staff, delivering continuous improvement and creating sustainable success through embracing change.



Levels range from:

- Developed – that there is evidence that the indicators are in place and understood.
- Established – that there is evidence that the indicators are being engaged with and activated.
- Advanced – that there is evidence that the indicators are being used and are creating positive outcomes.
- High Performing – that there is evidence that the indicators are fully embedded and continuously improving.

To achieve Platinum status an organisation has to evidence High Performing in a significant number of areas.