



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT

OADBY AND WIGSTON **BOROUGH COUNCIL**





Key Information

Assessment Type	3-year liP Assessment – Core level
Investors in People Specialist Name	Tracey Thompson
Visit Dates	24/02/2014 - 26/02/14
Assessment Enquiry Number	ENQ – 91334 - JRXWZH

Conclusion

I have assessed this organisation and in my opinion it continues to meet the requirements of the Core Investors in People standard. I am therefore pleased to confirm that this accreditation will be retained for a further three years.

I would like to thank Lynne Middleton and her colleagues for organising the assessment days. My thanks also go to those who were interviewed and for the honesty of their answers. I also received a warm welcome from everyone I came into contact with.

Tracey Thompson Investors in People Specialist

Milestone Dates

Review of Continuous Improvement Plan (18-month continuous improvement meeting)	August 2015
Date of Next Full Assessment	February 2017

Commercial in Confidence





improving performance

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The Organisation

As stated in the annual governance statement, the broad aims of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council are to promote

- · A good quality of life for all residents
- A clean, green and safe environment
- A successful economy.

The Council is a democratic organisation that is elected, in its totality, every 4 years. It consists of 26 Councillors who make all of the Council's decisions. The organisation has the following strategic objectives;

- Protect and continue to deliver the good quality, consistent, value for money front line services provided to residents, particularly weekly refuse and recycling collections.
- Enhance the green environment of the Borough so that residents are able to take full advantage of it.
- Revitalise the town centres through development and by retaining free shoppers car parking.
- Work with the Police to create a safer Borough where people feel more comfortable and at ease.
- Improve community engagement including listening to and delegating more to the three town forums.
- Work with others to try and improve the health and wellbeing of the residents of the borough.
- To work smarter to deliver the efficiency savings needed to meet the large reductions to the Council's budget.

A restructuring exercise took place approximately 3 years ago in order to save money. This has been a challenging time for the Council. There is an acknowledgement from all levels in the organisation, however, that the Council is "leaner and fitter" than it was 3 years ago. The organisation now has approximately 250 staff, including Councillors.

Project Objectives

The IiP Specialist agreed the objectives for the assessment at the planning meeting with the Head of Resources and the Human Resources Officer. These were agreed as follows:

- 1. To carry out a Core Investors in People Assessment;
- 2. To identify strengths and any aspects for continuous improvement.

During the days on site the Specialist interviewed a cross-section of 30 people, which represented a 12% sample of the workforce; this is within IiP UK guidelines. The Investors in People assessment is intended as an organisational continuous improvement tool and the emphasis is therefore firmly on providing feedback and suggestions that will challenge the organisation to make further improvements to the way it manages and develops people. The content of this report reflects this purpose. The Specialist has taken the decision not to include staff quotations in order to avoid the possibility of any comments being traced back to individuals.





Executive Summary

A summary of the main strengths and development aspects within the organisation has been provided below. More detailed feedback has been included within the main body of this report.

Please be aware that the suggested continuous improvement aspects are merely suggestions and ideas for enhancing the overall effectiveness of the organisation. Many refer to only slight adjustments that could be considered.

Strengths

- 1. A well-regarded and effective induction process.
- 2. Management training in revised people management policies, for example, disciplinary issues, has been very well received.
- 3. Essential training in aspects such as Equality and Diversity and First Aid is well planned and implemented.
- 4. A high level of support overall is offered to individuals regarding their training and development; this is one of the strongest aspects of working life at the Council.
- 5. People value that fact that the Council is a small place and that people know one another. It has a friendly and helpful culture which is well regarded.
- 6. Strong communication at Head of Department level via regular fortnightly meetings. The "silo" approach which was operating in previous years is considered to be gradually reducing.
- 7. The monthly newsletters from the Chief Executive are considered to be useful and give a good insight into current events.
- 8. Team meetings are acknowledged to be useful and help keep people up-to-date.
- One-to-one meetings are considered to be a strong point of working life at the Council, giving people a regular opportunity to discuss good performance, aspects for improvement and any concerns.
- 10. People have an excellent impression at their selection interview stage; this process is handled in a way that is professional, friendly and helpful, which has aided decisions to join the organisation.





Suggested continuous improvement aspects derived from interviews

- 1. During the assessment it became obvious that not everyone has seen the Corporate Plan in the format which had been provided to the IiP Specialist. People were particularly interested in the bullet-point comments which related to details within each strategic objective. Therefore, consider summarising the aims, vision, strategic objectives and bullet points in a two-page document, rather than having this information spread across different documents. Ensure that the new document is reviewed by the relevant stakeholders before distributing to staff, so that the relevant parties have had the opportunity to provide an input into the plan. During interviews, there were some comments regarding the fact that in previous years there had been more consultation on the plan, whereas it has been compiled for this year at a faster rate than previously. There is therefore an opportunity for greater consultation. During the assessment, some people commented that although there are strategic priorities it would be good to know what the Council as a whole is trying to achieve; in addition, more information about the direction of their teams would be useful. One person summed up a view which is experienced by others: they have a "satnav without the road".
- 2. Although Departments have Charters for their respective areas of work, specific improvement objectives or targets for each Department, and for the Council as a whole, could be made clearer. A small number of people mentioned that there could be "a stricter approach to putting customer needs first". Ensure that Heads of Department discuss and agree the improvement objectives with their teams and review these, perhaps monthly. Team learning objectives could be agreed at this point. During interviews there were a few comments relating to the fact that Departments do not have obvious improvement goals.
- 3. Consider creating a situation where every employee can then relate their work to one or more of the strategic objectives and then to their related department improvement targets. Consider using one of the one-to-one meeting occasions, perhaps annually, for line managers to have a discussion with each of their team members regarding their contribution to the strategic objectives and improvement targets, to which their own individual objectives should relate. Goals and targets for individuals could be made clearer in some cases.
- 4. During the assessment, several people mentioned that in their opinion the staff group isn't working as well as it could. Consider if it is necessary to always have the meetings chaired by senior management as there is a perception that these meetings are a little formal and that some people might be afraid to say exactly what they feel. In addition, consider clarifying the aims of the staff group and publicising these. There is also a view that staff sickness does not need to be on the agenda.
- 5. During the assessment, a few people mentioned that they felt that top management could communicate more; for example, to distribute a summary from their top management meetings in order to indicate whether or not a decision has been made regarding current issues, particularly to the Heads of Department. In addition, there were a few comments relating to the fact that the organisation seems to be managed from the Heads of Department downwards. Whilst empowerment is appreciated, more direction would be also.
- 6. A few people expressed their frustration that it can take changes or decisions a long time to occur. Top management could consider what can be done to alter this perception.
- 7. A few people mentioned that they feel that they are capable of more responsibility and could be consulted a little more regarding their thoughts and ideas. Line managers could therefore check such aspects occasionally during one-to-one meetings.





- 8. During the assessment, several people mentioned ideas for cost savings and improvements to the way things are done. Consider encouraging teams to have the following item, perhaps quarterly, on their team meeting agenda: "What could we do even better, regarding the service we give to both our internal and external customers?" A few people mentioned that they can find it hard to challenge the way the organisation works, either from fear of being considered negative or through a lack of confidence. Therefore, managers from the top downwards need to ensure that they react to different types of feedback in an impartial manner and to reinforce that they have a listening approach.
- 9. Although the majority of teams are having regular team meetings, some staff do not have these and would welcome them. Likewise, the majority of staff have regular one-to-one meetings, however there are some staff who do not have these, which is leading to demotivation in some cases. In addition, ensure that people know who their line manager is, as this was occasionally unclear during the assessment.
- 10. A very small number of managers are not perceived to be leading others in a motivating manner and are not respected. Appropriate development or action therefore needs to be taken in such cases.
- 11. Consider if the ratings related to the interview selection process could be made more transparent.
- 12. Although the "silo" approach is reducing, consider if Heads of Department could "talk to each other more", as this sentiment was expressed by a small number of people. In particular, people referred to the fact that more opportunities for joint working could perhaps be achieved so that resources and knowledge could be shared more often.
- 13. Consider reviewing the information on the company's "F" drive as there is a view that it contains a high amount of old data.
- 14. Consider if requests to officers via the customer services route is the most efficient use of resources.
- 15. Consider if it is beneficial to the overall running of the Borough for Scrutiny to be disbanded.

Additional suggestions from the Specialist:

- 16. Consider if employing Heads of Department on an interim basis is the best route for maximising staff motivation and engagement.
- 17. There seems to be an atmosphere of slight mistrust at the Council, which may be due to the extensive restructuring which has occurred. Top management are to concentrate on communicating what they can, although it is respected that some information will need to remain confidential.
- 18. At the assessment feedback meeting, there was a discussion regarding the importance of values in an organisation. For example, "Openness and Honesty"; "Giving Good Service", whether external or internal, and "Respecting Others" were discussed. The Chief Executive had also mentioned that the following behaviours are expected at the Council: professionalism, integrity, good communication and consideration of the impact of their work on their colleagues. Therefore, a set of 6 values, together with associated behaviour statements could be produced (say, 4 or 5 per value), so that people are clear regarding the behaviours. Perhaps the staff group could be tasked with drafting





these with a facilitator. The values and behaviours can then be used annually to discuss any strengths or development aspects with individuals, which could in turn form the basis for goal-setting for the year.

- 19. Line managers could consider different ways of recognising staff performance. Currently, praise and thanks, although critical to the motivation of most people, are the main methods used. Perhaps opportunities could be taken to "celebrate" when improvement targets have been met in teams, even in a low-key way.
- 20. The impact of learning and development on the achievement of Council goals is understood, however in the Specialist's opinion this could be strengthened. Consider having, once a quarter, an item on management team agendas regarding the benefits they have seen (or experienced themselves) from the implementation of learning, development or training.





Evidence against the Investors in People Standard

Planning (IiP Sections 1-4)

1. Business Strategy

The organisation has a 2014 Corporate Plan which summarises its strategic priorities. In addition, each department of the Council produces a Charter which sets out its aims and objectives, the strategic priorities to which these link and also what each department has achieved in terms of its targets set. The Specialist found that although not everyone had seen the Corporate Plan document, people were certainly aware of the strategic priorities. There is now an opportunity to review the plan and to develop some forward-thinking objectives and targets (please refer to item 1 on page 6).

The Chief Executive discussed how the Council aims to develop public self-reliance and how top management will be learning from Charnwood Borough Council regarding the implementation of the Government's Transformational Government strategy. This will result in a requirement for Council staff to be trained in new IT systems in order to help their customers. The Chief Executive also described the ongoing challenge of juggling the aspirations of the Councillors and the public with what the Council can deliver.

Regarding representative groups, the Specialist found that there are good relationships with the UNISON and GMB representatives and that they are consulted on policy changes. Regular meetings with the Council's committee members take place and new sessions have been introduced in order to increase the connection the between Councillors and staff, for the benefit of both parties.

During interview, people confirmed that the 7 strategic priorities have been in existence since 2011 and that their service plans link to one or more of the priorities. There were a few comments relating to the fact that the planning process regarding the Corporate Plan used to be more consultative in previous years.

Regarding communication in the organisation, the Chief Executive sends out a newsletter regularly with payslips, so that everyone is included. People also appreciate the briefings that their managers give them after management meetings, which are provided by the majority of managers.

2. Learning and Development Strategy

Top managers described how the development of line managers has been a priority over the last year, particularly with respect to their understanding and application of newly updated policies, for example, regarding disciplinary matters.

During the assessment, work to review Customer Services was underway. The aim is for staff in the Benefits section to become "enablers" rather than "answer-providers" for the public through the use of a new CRM system and coaching from Customer Services staff. One of the aims of this piece of organisational development is to reduce the frequency of customer visits to the Council office and to streamline administration. Going forward into 2014 - 2015, there will be new software and also skillset exercise will be carried out for the relevant staff.

Resources have been allocated for management training in a new performance management framework which will enable managers to set clearer SMART objectives and manage poor performance. This new performance management framework will be introduced in April 2014.





There is a corporate training calendar which demonstrates that the performance management training has been planned. Other training, which is important for the Council as an organisation, includes Manual Handling and various types of Health and Safety training, is well planned and recorded.

In order to develop greater positivity in the Council and to support people after the restructuring phase, the top management recently provided training and considerable investment for all staff in a session entitled "The Art of Being Brilliant".

3. People Management Strategy

The Chief Executive described how an environment for giving and receiving constructive feedback has been created by leading by example, demonstrating approachability and the fact that a staff group has been set up specifically to listen to the workforce viewpoint. The Chief Executive also described how he also drops in on staff meetings and writes a monthly newsletter.

Regarding Equality and Diversity strategies in the Council, the Chief Executive described how this aspect has been over-complicated and that a new model will shortly be introduced. Top management described how Equality and Diversity policy is applied during recruitment.

People commented that they consider the Council to be a fair place to work and that recruitment and selection processes are fair. (See also point 1 on page 6).

4. Leadership and Management Strategy

Top management described the following attributes that are expected of managers: flexibility, adaptability, professionalism, good communication and good people management. Top managers also described how they have empowered their Heads of Department to deliver their services and to share their ideas.

Managers commented that a programme to develop important management skills has been planned; for example, they are looking forward to training in report writing and presentations and are aware that the aim is to standardise the management approach to these.

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Action (IiP sections 5-8)

5. Management Effectiveness

Top managers described how they have involved line managers in the management of disciplinary matters in order to fully embed their learning regarding the updated policy.

The majority of people stated that they respect and trust the management at the Council and also that they have regular one-to-one meetings with their managers. There is no annual appraisal process; however people confirmed that the one-to-ones provide them with the opportunity for sufficient feedback on their performance and the opportunity to raise any concerns.

When managers provide clear goals and direction, a few people described how motivating it can be "when we're all pulling in the same direction". Please refer to item 3 on page 6 for further comment on this important aspect.

6. Recognition and Reward

The Specialist found that managers are recognising work performance with praise and thanks which are given verbally or by email and cards. An extra day's annual leave was given last year to all staff, as a special "Thank you" for last year's work, which was appreciated. Secondments are provided, and in addition honorariums are given when someone has made a special contribution. Regular one-to-one meetings and appraisals help to give people a sense of value. People also appreciate the reports that are provided with promotion recommendations.

7. Involvement and Empowerment

On the whole, people do feel trusted. Heads of Department confirmed that they have the opportunity to challenge during their meetings with senior management. On balance, people feel that they can challenge the way things are done and are trusted to make decisions within the scope of their role. Some managers are very good at encouraging people to make suggestions for improvement or change; others are less effective at this aspect (see points 7 and 8 on page 6).

A situation which worked well was one where, during the restructuring phase, people were consulted regarding the number of staff required; people felt that their views had been taken into account by HR and senior management.

8. Learning and Development

This is one of the strong points of working life at the Council. Training and development for individuals is very much encouraged; professional courses are funded where there is a joint benefit. The Council is considered to be a good employer in this respect. During interviews, several people commented that they do consider that they are continuously learning.

After training events, people are required to provide comments on their effectiveness on a feedback form. The recent management training in disciplinary and capability matters has been considered to be very effective and managers confirmed that it is helping them to manage such aspects. Also, after the training in Welfare Reform, people are applying new ideas at work.





People commented that the induction process is effective. Those who have joined the organisation within the last 18 months who were interviewed had particular praise for the way the interview process was handled.

Review

(IiP Sections 9-10)

9. Performance Measurement

Top managers were able to describe the benefits experienced from the resources allocated to training and development activities. For example, the Head of Corporate Resources has undertaken a Masters in Employment Law. She subsequently produced a set of "people" policies which have been credited by ACAS as being "sound and robust".

As a result of management training in grievance and disciplinary matters, such matters are now being progressed at a faster rate. More managers have been trained as investigative officers, which has assisted this.

Regarding the considerable resource put into training in "The Art of Being Brilliant", during interviews the majority of people confirmed that they found this training useful in that they are endeavouring to project more positivity into their work, which was clearly happening in several cases.

As a result of the coaching provided to the Benefits team by Customer Services staff, less double-handling of documents and also less return visits from Customers have been reported. This has been acknowledged at Head of Department level.

10. Continuous Improvement

Since the last IiP assessment, several aspects relating to people management have been developed. For example, flexi-time changes, an improved car parking facility and a new telephone system have all been introduced through listening to staff. In addition, a new template has been produced for Department team meetings, in order to ensure a consistent approach to the items discussed. There is a view from middle managers that "they are trying to make things more uniform" and that team meetings are very much encouraged.

There is a view that the Council is aiming to "do the right thing" for its staff. It is hoped that this report provides a guide to further improvements. Several people also commented that the cuts and restructuring have improved the organisation in the sense that people are more focused on priorities. Others mentioned that things are not "swept under the carpet as much" and that managers are starting to listen more intently and resolve situations.





IIP Continuous Improvement Plan

This continuous improvement plan was discussed on 31 March 2014 between Mark Hall, Anne Court, Kalv Garcha, Lynn Middleton and Tracey Thompson. It will be reviewed by September 2015.

Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit	Timeline	Solutions/Support
Please refer to the points on the IIP report on pages 6-8 for a fuller explanation of the actions recommended below.				All actions below will be carried out by the stated person(s) responsible.
1. Consider summarising the aims, vision, strategic objectives and bullet points into a two-page document.	Mark Hall is to prepare the document and consult with Councillors and HoS.	Agreement and buy-in to the plan	End April 2014	Draft document attached sent for consultation 2.07.2014
 Specific improvement objectives or targets for each Department, and for the Council as a whole, could be made clearer. 	To agree department improvement goals (a minimum of two per department). Anne Court is to produce this with the HoS.	Agreement and buy-in to the plan	End June 2014	Target will emerge from Corporate management sessions which commenced in June 2014.
3. Every employee can relate their work to one or more of the strategic objectives and related department improvement targets.	Kalv Garcha is to cascade the performance management training and to knit points 1-3 together into the training.	Staff motivation	End August 2014	Performance Management training scheduled to all employees in June / July 2014.
				The HR software system will empower employees by





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Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit - Why	Timeline	Solutions/Support Available - Who
				improving access to critical information whilst revolutionising HR strategy through advanced performance management and process improvement.
4. Consider if it is necessary to always have the meetings chaired by senior management. In addition, consider clarifying the aims of the staff group and publicising these.	Consider who else could lead the staff group meetings. Clarify the aims of the staff group: terms of reference will be produced by Mark Hall, Kalv Garcha and Anne Court. The staff group members will meet before each staff group meeting to discuss the items they need.	Staff motivation	For the May 2014 meeting	
5. Top management to communicate more, for example, by distributing a summary from their top management meetings.	Mark Hall is to disseminate top management meeting minutes. Kalv Garcha is to review the minutes for HoS.	Development of greater trust	From April 2014	
 b. Top management could consider what can be done to alter the perception that changes or decisions can take a long time to occur. 	case. The above actions in item 5 will help. Management to be more aware of the importance of getting back to people regarding the status of decisions.	Staff motivation	From April 2014	
7. Managers could check to see if their staff would like to take on more responsibility.	The new performance management process supports items 7, 8, 9, 18 and 19. (Kalv Garcha).	Staff motivation	End Aug	This can be discussed and identified by Managers during regular 121s and at the annual appraisal stage.

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Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit - Why	Timeline	Solutions/Support
8. Managers could be more pro- active and supportive of staff suggestions for improvement.	See above	Staff motivation	End Aug	HR to devise an employee satisfaction survey, which will provide Managers with the knowledge and tools to build positive employee relations and a positive work environment.
9. Ensure that team meetings and one-to-one meetings occur regularly for all staff.	See above.	Staff motivation	End Aug	Promoted and encouraged throughout the Performance Management training. Team meetings to take place 6 weekly.
10. Kesolve management performance issues.	Top management is to resolve this (Kalv Garcha).	Staff motivation	End Aug 2014	Promoted and encouraged throughout the Performance Management training and through the robustness of HR polices (Capability, Absence Management etc). The HR software system will feature
				automated prompts for

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Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit - Why	Timeline	Solutions/Support Available - Who
				appraisals and 121s. Definable outcomes of employee's learning will be automatically updated onto their personal profile upon completion, of which the employee will be able to view via the employee self serve module.
the interview selection process could be made more transparent.	HR will streamline this.	Staff motivation	End October 2014	The Recruitment and Selection policy is being revised in September (in line with the Committee planner). It will be designed to assist Managers to recruit and select the best candidate for a vacancy. In doing so will also enable them to take account of Equal Opportunities, Equality Act 2010 and ensure compliance with UK Immigration legislation.
				It will also incorporate a

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Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit - Why	Timeline	Solutions/Support Available - Who
				series of key competencies that is required of the successful candidate.
12. Heads of Department to continue to reduce "silo" approach.	Heads of Service will work on this.	Sharing of experience and resources	Ongoing	
13. Consider reviewing "F" drive data	Progress is being made, starting with a "P" drive for policies.	Clarity and streamlining of data	September 2015	
14. Consider if requests to officers via the customer services route is the most efficient use of resources.	This is will part of the customer services review. There will be a Councillor working Group. (Mark Hall to organise).		End Sept 2014	This will form part of the Customer Service transformation.
15. Consider if it is beneficial to the overall running of the Borough for Scrutiny to be disbanded.	A political decision has been made concerning this.		N/A	N/A
16. Consider if employing Heads of Department on an interim basis is always the route for maximising staff motivation and engagement.	This has been a learning experience – we hope to have no more Interim Heads. We had the opportunity to continue with the current Interim Heads but declined this.	Staff motivation	From April 2014	
17. Top management are to concentrate on communicating what they can, although it will be respected that some information will need to remain confidential.	See item 5.	Staff motivation	From April 2014	
18. Consider defining and introducing values and behaviours.	This will be part of the Performance Management process (Kalv Garcha).	Clarification of the expected	August 2014	Promoted and encouraged throughout

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				Service Politicalice
Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions – How, and the person responsible	Potential Benefit - Why	Timeline	Solutions/Support Available - Who
		behaviours and culture at the Council		the Performance Management training.
				The Staff Group have also defined term of reference which incorporate values and behaviours.
19. Line managers to consider different ways of valuing others and celebrating successes.	This will be part of the Performance Management process (Kalv Garcha).	Staff motivation	August 2014	Management Team to consider the requirement for corporate training on "team building, collaboration and communication".
20. Consider having, once a quarter, an item on management team agendas regarding the benefits they have seen from the implementation of learning, development or training.	Top management to instigate this. The benefits of learning and development activity can then be discussed within each Service.	Staff motivation. The impact of the resources invested will be evaluated.	From end April 2014.	

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Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

The Investors in People Framework

The Evidence Requirements

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The Evidence Requirements – 39 indicators achieved for Core Recognition

Key:

The Core Investors in People Standard

Your Choice from the Investors in People Framework

Not part of the Investors in People Framework

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