

Workforce Development Strategy

January 2022 to December 2027



Strategy owned by HR & Training



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Aim of the Strategy

This workforce development strategy outlines how we will develop our workforce to ensure we are able to meet the changing demands that are likely to be placed upon us over the next five years. To ensure that we can continue to provide quality services. In order to achieve this, we need to understand the makeup of our current workforce and anticipate our future business needs so that we can develop our approach to meet those ever changing demands.

This is a high level document which anticipates where change may be required. It has been developed by using a range of data sets, meaning it is evidence based, and it is supported by a 3 year action plan. This action plan outlined the activities and projects which will deliver of the changes outlined in the strategy.

However, our operating environment is constantly changing, as we are continuously influenced by external changes, challenges and developments. Therefore, as we work through the action plan we will consider how we can, at all levels of the business, adapt quickly and embrace change by listening to the experiences of our staff and regularly reviewing our plans.

Introduction

Our workforce is our greatest and most costly asset. Our employees are at the heart of everything we do so it is imperative that they are motivated, engaged and high performing. In order to achieve this we must ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills in the right place so that we can continue to “serve people and improve lives”. To deliver against this promise we need to develop our approach in the following five areas:

Current Profile

We need to know and understand our starting position by reviewing the data we already hold to set the scene for the changes we need to make.

Knowing our Workforce

We need to make decisions based on the views and experiences of our employees by gathering data such as surveys and forums on how staff feel and performance data so that we can understand what they need from us to deliver the best services they can.

Recruitment

How we advertise and attract during recruitment is key to ensuring we employ the right people. Providing an effective induction programme for all our new recruits is also key as it sets the relationship off to the best start by providing an excellent first impression and helps us embed our values in everything we do.

Retention

We need to work to retain quality staff by ensuring they are supported, invested in, listened to, valued and treated consistently and fairly. Our HR team are experts in their field and they will be key to providing the technical and practical support to deliver this strategy. They will;

- Ensure we have trained and supportive managers who lead by example,

- Be a trusted source of support to all employees seeking advice and guidance,
- Be equally adept at the soft skills of management as well as providing a pragmatic and empathetic approach to delivering a service which supports the workforce, and
- Have the interests of the organisation at the heart of all they do to ensure our workforce remains committed, motivated and high performing.

Our Role as an Employer in the Community

As an organisation we are a significant local employer, with over 500 employees, and we deliver a unique and diverse range of services. As such we have an excellent story to tell and a role to play in the community as both an advocate for work in local government and as a supporter of local talent through programmes such as the apprenticeships and traineeships.

Current Profile

We have access to baseline data on the demographic makeup of our workforce (such as gender, age, hours of attendance, protected characteristics and employment status) but we need to consider whether we are collating the right data and have the systems in place to collate all the information we require to plan for the future.

The following provides an overview of the makeup of our workforce as of September 2021. This is a snapshot as the profile is constantly changing but this is valuable to inform this strategy, and this data will be gathered and analysed to inform the annual review of this strategy and action plan. The breakdown of the data supporting this strategy is in Appendix 2.

Total Workforce

Headcount (Contracted Employees)	Full time equivalents (FTE)	Headcount Zero Hour Contracts (Relief Workers)
550	511.53	66

Relief workers are used to cover short term resourcing pressures. 91% of our relief workers are based within our heritage and culture business unit, 8% are in Environmental Services and 1% in parking services.

Workforce by Type of Contract

Contract type*	Percentage
Full-time	80%
Part time	20%
Permanent	96%
Fixed term/ temporary	4%

N.B. The percentage of fixed term/temporary contracts does not include reliefs.

The majority of our employees have full time, permanent contracts. There are positive benefits to having a mix of full and part time workers, the need is different in each business unit. The current mix appears to work well and there is no evidence to support the need for a move away from the current split.

Workforce by Gender

Sex	Percentage
Female	52%
Male	48%
Full time – Female	35%

Full time – Male	45%
Part time – Female	17%
Part time – Male	3%

We have marginally more women than men across the organisation with significantly more women working in part time roles.

Workforce by Age

Age	Number of Employees	Percentage
up to 20	14	2%
21-30	83	15%
31-40	91	17%
41-50	113	21%
51 to 60	194	35%
61 and above	55	10%

It is important to use this data to identify specific service areas in the organisation that may be at risk of losing a quantum of employees to retirement in a similar timeframe.

Sickness Absence

Average FTE (full time equivalent) Sickness Days – Whole Council		
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
8.07	6.98	5.3

Our average sickness absence has reduced year on year since 2018 and it remains significantly lower than many other East Midlands Councils. This is despite the increase in the average number of employees from 420.92 FTE in 2019/20 to 503.39 FTE in 2020/21. This increase was following the TUPE transfer back in house of our housing colleagues in February 2020. The reduction in sickness absence is comparable with regional trends, with many other local authorities within the East Midlands reporting a downturn due to the increase in hybrid working. This allows employees greater flexibility to work from home when feeling a little under the weather and the reduction of transmittable illnesses such as coughs, colds and flu.

Staff Turnover

Staff Turnover (% of workforce)		
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
11.82%	10.11%	11%

N.B. it should be noted that reliefs are included in both the numerator and denominator for this calculations

This shows a consistent average of employee turnover, which is healthy in any organisation as it demonstrates a good balance between retaining our skills and allowing new employees with fresh ideas to help us to continually improve and evolve. Our current employee turnover is on a par with what we would expect and we compare well with our Nottinghamshire district and borough counterparts and the UK average of approximately 15% a year.

Knowing your workforce

It is important to keep dialogue open, honest and regular to ensure a workforce remains engaged, motivated and high performing. There is no single way to understand a workforce. Instead there is an infinite mix of formal and informal tools you can use to understand the needs and views of staff.

The considerations below are more formal ways to gain understanding of our workforce which we commit to but they will compliment rather than replace the informal value driven way we interact as an organisation. As an organisation we utilise team meetings, one to one meetings, business manager meetings and tool box talks these are operated across the organisation and happen regularly.

Appraisals

Appraisals do not replace informal conversations, formal supervisions or 1 to 1s which happen frequently throughout the year. Our appraisal process, which is a mix of reflecting on the previous year's performance and planning for the coming year, is undertaken annually to fit with our business planning cycle. We recently introduced team appraisals, where large teams have undertaken the same activities, and these have worked well. We will continue to use them as an effective way to have a formal annual two way discussion.

We are improving our appraisals further by developing different formats for Directors, Business Managers and other managers to ensure the appraisal process provides us and the employee with the outcomes and information needed to understand and drive performance.

We are considering creating an online appraisal process as part of an individual's HR record once our new HR system is in place. This will be combined with a review of our appraisal form. Previously we have consulted with business managers to shape the appraisal form but for this review we will consult via a staff forum to consider a wider cohort of views. This is to recognise that although appraisal process is a business tool but it should also be meaningful to the employee.

Shaping our Roles

We will continue to use our current 'Job Evaluation schemes' but we will review our local conventions to ensure they remain fit for purpose and we will introduce job families to group roles of a similar type to give them equal weight and status. This will help to;

- Keep salary costs under control by ensuring we do not make decisions which lead to inequalities and claims for regrading in other areas, and
- Have a transparent and equitable approach which promotes harmony over grades.

Staff Surveys

We will continue to undertake annual staff surveys with a mixture of repeated standard questions (to understand trends) and bespoke questions that focus on current workforce matters. We will continue to supplement these with ad hoc surveys as required to listen to staff and demonstrate our commitment to being open, trustworthy and transparent. We will ensure that survey results are shared with the workforce in a timely manner and provide regular updates on any activities that we undertake in response to employee feedback.

Over the last few years there has been an increased level of participation in staff surveys, which is the result of a clear communication about what actions are taken based on the feedback. We will continue to build this trust by remaining committed to this approach.

Staff Consultations

A Joint Consultative Committee is in place as formal mechanism to consult with the recognised trade unions on changes to policies and structures and formal processes are in place for consulting with employees affected by structural changes. Whilst these work well, we will continue to arrange staff forums to consider relevant issues and ensure that the entire workforce is able to contribute to and shape workforce policy changes and working practices.

Performance Management

Employee performance directly affects the level of service we give to our customers and residents so it is important that we know how our teams and individuals are performing. There is no 'one way' to determine levels of performance; it is measured in different ways for different roles. Our hybrid working arrangements mean that we need to have systems in place to measure performance across the organisation. The HR team will continue to work with Business Units to identify appropriate set of performance management tools for their services, which pay regard to our values and how employees demonstrate them.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

People want to work for employers with good employment practices that make them feel valued and give them the autonomy to make their best contribution. We will review and develop an equality and diversity policy that looks at flexible working and job design to enable us to attract and retain a wide pool of talented people. As well as designing appropriate and fair people practices, we will create an open and inclusive workplace culture in which everyone feels valued and respected by their colleagues, and where contribution is recognised and people are free to be innovative and creative in all they do. To support this we will improve our data collection to ensure that we meet all of our legislative requirements and fully support our employees with protected characteristics.

Exit Questionnaires and Interviews

We send an exit questionnaire to any employee who voluntarily leaves the organisation and offer an exit interview with a member of the HR team with any employee who would like one. We will supplement this by proactively reaching out to selected individuals to undertake exit interviews; where requested to by a Business Manager or Director, where there is a service which has seen an unusual high turnover rate or where there is other information which may indicate a good opportunity for organisation learning. As an employee leaves the organisation this provides an opportunity for a candid conversation which can help us improve.

Data

We are in the process of procuring a new HR/Payroll system which will help us to record, extract and report on workforce data. A range of data sets will be reported to SLT and to members through the performance reports on a quarterly basis. As a minimum the report will

include sickness, turnover, vacancies, equalities and age profiles to ensure that any issues are highlighted early for appropriate action to be determined and undertaken. This will help us to spot trends early and consider the appropriate action.

Recruitment



As an organisation we provide an extensive range of services, meaning that we need a diverse, talented and skilled workforce to deliver those services. Our values are strongly embedded within our organisation so it is important that our candidates not only have the right skills but also the right attitude to align with our values.

We need to collect and analyse data on who applies for our posts to ensure that we are maximising our recruitment potential, assessing response rates and ensuring that we have the right calibre of applicants who mirror our diverse community.

Assessing Vacancies

When advertising a vacancy we should never assume that a like for like replacement is appropriate. We need to work closely with our managers to ensure that job descriptions and person specifications accurately reflect the roles and that they are graded correctly. We also need to consider the types of contract required, for example, could we engage an apprentice or graduate for the role, use a career-graded post to assist in succession planning or utilise an annualised contract to meet the peaks and troughs of the workload. We commit to only using agency workers where we have identified short-term business needs and insufficient capacity or knowledge to undertake the work.

Attractive Advertising

We need to review how we advertise our vacancies, making adverts fresh, engaging and attractive and promoting the many benefits to working for us. Local authorities are unique in the wide range of roles and skills we require to operate effectively and our approach to attracting the right candidates needs to be adapted to the role being advertised.

Opportunities should be placed to target the highest number of quality candidates for the role and this should be supported corporately with a corporate budget to fund advertising in professional publications when appropriate. We also need to consider diversity when placing adverts as our aim is to have a workforce that represents the people we serve.

We are committed to a time and cost effective advertising approach which hits the right audience first time. As such we will undertake a full review of how and where we advertise jobs, including use of platforms other than Jobs go Public.

We will create an employer brand, which is visually appealing and uses language which promotes the many positives of working here at the Council.

Selection Methods

As well as traditional interviews, we will use a range of activities (commensurate with the grade of the post) including but not restricted to; assessment centres, presentations and occupational testing.

First Impressions Count

The process of applying for a role should give a great first impression of us as an employer. We will develop comprehensive candidate packs that provide details of our structure, ethos and values and we will use new systems to ensure the process is professional and seamless.

We also need to be flexible when recruiting to roles. We have evidence our bureaucratic application form deters candidates from applying. So we need to move away from the requirement to use the standard application form and use other methods such as CVs and video applications. However, where an application form is most appropriate, we will refresh our form to make it simpler and easier to complete. We also need to be more proactive in providing support to help applicants apply if appropriate.

Induction

An effective induction process will help a new starter settle quickly into their role. A good induction process should start before an employee joins us, combining all housekeeping activities such as provision of an ID card and defining ICT requirements with the development of a tailor-made, comprehensive induction programme. This should include a base pack of information covering who we are, how we work and how we will support the individual in their first 3 months with us. Corporate elements of the induction will be led by the HR team such as completing online training and an introduction with the Chief Executive, the business manager will lead a more informal on the job training and meeting the team.

We will refresh our induction process to ensure the above activities are included as standard for all our new employees and the HR Team will support line managers to ensure these activities are undertaken within their first 3 months at the organisation.

We will also develop additional induction elements for new managers, to help them settle quickly into the organisation and provide them with the tools and information they need to be successful in their roles. Where possible, we will also assign “buddies” of a similar grade/business type to all new managers and, where appropriate we will arrange for them to be mentored by other managers in the Nottinghamshire Councils area.

Apprentices

Apprenticeships offer both the employee and the organisation a great deal of benefit. It provides us an opportunity to ‘grow our own’ in areas where we have an identified need. It also provides a great route into employment for local young people and demonstrates the council living its values.

We will move away from an ad hoc approach to recruiting apprentices and instead we will undertake an annual review of our current apprentices and evaluate what is working well and what can be improved. We will use this opportunity to determine where there is an identified business need for further apprentices to be recruited.

It is important that we look across the organisation as a whole, determine where there is business need either because there is difficulty in recruiting, we see expanding demand, we have an aging employee profile, or a combination of these factors. The assessment will be led

by HR and it will be evidence-based. These posts need to be corporately funded to ensure it is business areas who meet this need that gain apprentices.

We will liaise closely with schools to ensure we have a range of apprenticeships identified annually which meet the timescale of the academic calendar. The high level of support we currently provide to apprentices throughout their time with us will continue, and they will continue to have a dedicated HR coordinator as their point of contact.

Retention

Employee turnover should not be viewed as a negative. A healthy and progressive organisation needs new skills, knowledge and expertise to continually improve and evolve. However, high employee turnover can indicate dissatisfaction with us as an employer, as with any organisation we have some key roles which would be difficult to fill should we fail to retain our current occupants. Our current turnover rate of 11% is on a par with our Nottinghamshire district and borough counterparts. In order to maintain healthy level of turnover we will work on the following areas;

Working Practices

We will continue to offer an excellent working environment with a competitive level of remuneration, a generous annual leave allowance and membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme. We will actively promote our family friendly policies and our hybrid working arrangements and keep them under review to ensure we continue to keep abreast of societal and employment expectations.

Positive Culture

Culture is difficult to define and difficult to measure. Our culture is underpinned by our values, however simply having a set of well-meaning words will not influence a positive culture. We believe that we embody our values, and our staff have confirmed this by feeding back that they value our culture, particularly the wide range of support offered through the pandemic.

We will build on this value led culture by continuing to;

- Actively promote our values,
- Demonstrate our values through our leadership team,
- Embed our values in our appraisal process,
- Use our values as a tool for recruitment,
- Continue to offer a wide range of health and wellbeing opportunities for employees,
- Continue to offer staff recognition through the annual staff awards and less formal opportunities such as 'thank you' week and 'hug in a mug',
- Continue to offer ad hoc opportunities to engage as teams and the wider workforce in social and other events, and
- Build in events and opportunities to take us through into the new normal and getting us back to together face to face where appropriate

Training

As an organisation we are committed to having a highly skilled workforce. The right training in a constructive way is proven to not only improve performance but is something staff value and helps us retain our staff.

As an organisation we will move away from an annual call for requests for training to a more cross cutting strategic approach where we identify skills gaps. Any skills gap will change over time as the requirements of the organisation change.

There are currently identified skills gaps in the following themes

1. A broader understanding across the organisation of the green agenda and our climate change aspirations
2. Customer service skills across the organisation where we have so many teams who interact with customers
3. ICT skills, data from our service desk tells us that a proportion of issues reported relate to gaps in knowledge and skills
4. Equalities and diversity, it has been many years since we undertook any organisation wide training in this, since which the agenda and landscape has significantly changed.
5. Political and Reputational awareness, with a wider recruitment outside the local government arena we need to ensure that especially our more senior officers are cognisant of the implications of working in local government

We will continue to ensure all areas of the organisation have provision for any mandatory training required and address any requirements for training to address skills gaps within in specific service areas.

This will be supplemented by a comprehensive internal training programme, which clearly sets out all the opportunities staff can access and which are mandatory for whom, and on what frequency.

We will look to balance all of these with succession planning and personal development needs.

Importantly we need to evaluate the training, any staff will be required to fill in a simple on line form to determine how effective they found the training and the provider. We will record all training undertaken and qualifications attained on our new HR system to ensure we understand where there are gaps and link these back to appraisals.

Personal Development and Succession Planning

Training is very much focussed on what skills officers require to deliver what the business needs right now and the immediate future but it is important that personal development and succession planning is analysed to ensure the Council has the skills to meet its future needs.

This will not be restricted to offering formal training but will include opportunities to shadow other officers and to take part in mentoring and coaching (both internally and by using a reciprocal arrangement with other local authorities). We will map talent pipelines, so that we can see how and where people are moving and target high performing individuals who we believe have the ability and potential to progress within the organisation.

Health, Safety and Employee Wellbeing

As public servants some of our employees are often faced with verbal abuse and threats. We will review our working practices and training provision to ensure that we are fulfilling our obligations to provide a healthy and safe working environment for our employees and provide them with the skills, tools and confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

We will ensure that we provide, via either Business Managers, our Mental Health Champions or our retained Counsellors, the appropriate emotional support for any employees who have been subject to abuse from customers.

We will also continue to work with our colleagues in Health Improvement to raise awareness and provide support and advice on a wide range of topics throughout the year.

Reward and Recognition

We are committed to developing a wide range of reward and recognition activities. These not only help to retain staff but reflect our values and have a positive impact on morale.

We already hold annual staff awards which are very popular. Staff nominate colleagues within a set of categories, with flexibility to add additional awards where appropriate.

We will add to this with celebrations of achievement, which will include staff achieving qualifications, staff and teams receiving nominations for external awards and celebrate the fabulous amount of volunteering our staff undertake both inside and outside the organisation.

WE will completely review our long service awards. We currently offer this at 25 years as a £100 reward. The nature of the working life has changed, we will look to start long service awards at 10 years and progress in 5 yearly stages with appropriate increase in reward. Rewards will not necessarily be in cash but could include things such as coffee and cake with a friend on us.

We will ask staff in our next staff survey other reward and recognition activities they would like to see us undertake which are appropriate for a public service organisation.

Our role as an employer in our community

As an organisation, we are a significant local employer with over 500 employees. We deliver a unique and diverse range of services and we have an excellent story to tell. With many of our employees living locally, they understand the community and are great advocates for us.

Volunteering

We will continue to encourage employees to take up volunteering opportunities within the community as individuals but also as teams in ways that are both meaningful for them and the community. Potentially utilising the 1 day per year given to them to undertake community volunteering. These activities will provide excellent team building opportunities whilst embedding our values and culture and giving employees the satisfaction of knowing that they are making a real contribution to the people they serve.

We will also continue to encourage our community to get involved with the Council by providing volunteering opportunities in a range of areas and activities including our green spaces and cultural services. Volunteering provides residents the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills, enhance their CVs and make a difference in their communities this often supports their mental health.

Work Experience

We currently seek to accommodate work experience opportunities, where we receive a request, with on average 10 placements within the Council each year. We will proactively encourage a wider range of work experience placements from schools, colleges and the long term unemployed. As well as helping managers build meaningful programmes for those undertaking work experience, including providing statements/references for the individuals to use when seeking permanent employment. The programme for work experience will see each individual working across a variety of business units which meet their interests. This will give a much wider and experience and understanding of the work the council undertakes and help develop understanding of our work within the wider community as well as raising aspirations and hopefully inspiring some to come to work with us permanently.

Led by our colleagues in Economic Growth we will continue to offer support to schools, colleges and the long-term unemployed by attending jobs and careers fairs, providing work experience and kick-start opportunities, work trials and apprenticeships across the organisation. We will seek to ensure those that assist with this can inspire and create aspirations in a relatable way across the various platforms available.

Monitoring our progress

Our Workforce Development Strategy is bold and ambitious. Its lifespan is five years but we need to review it at least annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Therefore, the first review will be in January 2023. We also need to report our progress against the strategy and accompanying action plan on a regular basis to the senior leadership team, elected members and our employees.

Approval, Consultation and Review Timetable

Document title	Workforce Development Strategy		
Version number	DRAFT v.4	Protective marking	Official
Lead Director	Director Customer Services and Organisational Development		
Lead Business Unit	Human Resources		
Lead contact	Business Manager HR & Training		
Date approved (SLT)	December 2021	Date approved (Members)	Due at P&F 31.03.21
Reviews due:	January 2023 January 2024 January 2025 January 2026 January 2027		
Consultation			
Consultee	Date	Comments received	Material change requested (yes/no)
JCC	17.03.21	(yet to be undertaken)	
BMs	28.02.22	Noted, no changes suggested. BMs and wider staff to be engaged as action plan is undertaken	No