

Workforce and Organisation Development Strategy

To develop an engaged, agile workforce that is resilient into the future

2021-2024



Engaged Agile Resilient

Living our values

Introduction

This Workforce and Organisation Development Strategy is being published at a time of great change and challenge for Herefordshire Council. While our approach to change in recent years has been broadly incremental, the events of 2020 resulted in a rapid and fundamental transformation of our workforce and working practices.

The updated strategy therefore sets out our overall aim – **to develop an engaged, agile and resilient workforce** – and in doing so embraces the opportunities and addresses the challenges that our experience of 2020 has provided.

An engaged workforce is achieved by recruiting the right people to the right roles, clearly articulating how their contribution delivers outcomes for our county, providing a valued employee ‘brand’ and experience, and providing two-way communication about how we are doing.

An agile workforce is well skilled not just in a range of technical areas but also in a set of transferrable skills and attributes, allowing them and the organisation to adapt to changing demands – this is particularly true at a management level.

A resilient workforce is underpinned by robust wellbeing support, is able to cope with changes in demands, is prepared for them and feels confident doing so.

Our strategy sets out our ambition and agenda, and articulates the behaviours we are looking to develop in our workforce. This will be achieved through how we design, implement and manage the myriad of policies, process and practices that bring this strategy to life. Specific actions to deliver this are contained within associated plans at organisation, directorate and service level.

The strategy also recognises that some of the work we are currently doing provides great value but it is based on factors outside our control. These include central government policy, emergency/crisis response and sources of funding. We have therefore avoided reference to specific schemes and policies that are at risk of change during the life of this strategy. Specific examples of this would include requirements around action related to inclusion or schemes such as the apprenticeship levy.

This doesn’t mean we will not comply with current reporting requirements or take action to address the issues that exist. Nor does it mean we will not take advantage of specific programmes where they help us to achieve our corporate objectives. The strategy has been designed to allow us to adapt our approach without having to re-write it whenever a policy, statutory requirement or scheme changes.

Annual delivery plans provide the details of what we will do, and how and by when we will do it.

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Organisation priorities

Everything we do is aligned to our County Plan. We have a clear set of priorities and plans designed to improve the quality of life for the residents of Herefordshire which is captured in the County Plan as:

Respecting the past, shaping our future – we will improve the sustainability, connectivity and wellbeing of our county by strengthening our communities, creating a thriving local economy and protecting and enhancing our environment.

This is then reflected in our organisation's priorities around:

Community Strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together

Economy Support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources

Environment Protect our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live.

Our County Plan describes these priorities in detail and how they will be achieved. Our annual corporate delivery plan provides information on the specific actions we are taking year by year.

The financial context means that along with becoming more efficient we need to become more commercial in how we work. This means, over time, becoming self-funding by looking for ways to increase income, make savings and maximise the use of every penny we spend.

We have a passionate and committed workforce and that is evident in the way people engage in the work they do and the feedback we receive. We recognise this and we recognise that meeting the challenges that face us in delivering the ambitions of members will need us to find new and improved ways of doing things – to deliver services to the residents of Herefordshire and to meet our corporate ambitions.

Our Workforce and Organisation Development Strategy therefore outlines the work we will do over the next four years to support the delivery of the County Plan in how we recruit, manage, develop, reward and engage our employees, and ultimately achieve our aim of **developing an engaged and agile workforce that is resilient into the future.**

Engaged We are passionate about what we do and are prepared to use our expertise to achieve better outcomes for the people of Herefordshire. This engagement is evident in employees' loyalty and willingness to talk positively about the organisation and the work they are doing.

Agile We look for better ways of working and embrace them where we see they will help reduce costs and achieve better value for money. Being agile also means continuously improving what we do, recognising the cumulative

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value of small improvements. One of the ways we will do this is through our *Better Ways of Working* (BWOW) programme.

Resilient

As individuals and as an organisation we are prepared for different situations that we encounter, we are able to maintain services through them and, importantly, to learn from them.

Our approach recognises the responsibility of leaders to provide opportunities for people to thrive in their roles and in their careers. Furthermore, we understand that there is a mutual responsibility for staff to act in appropriate ways, to seek out and undertake personal development and to identify opportunities for us to improve how we work. We also recognise and value the different contribution that diverse perspectives bring – this goes beyond measures of workforce diversity to include how we respect and manage different styles of working.

We believe that continuous improvement at a personal, team, service, directorate and organisational level are intimately connected and mutually dependent.

The way we will achieve our aims is explained later in this document under six areas of activity.



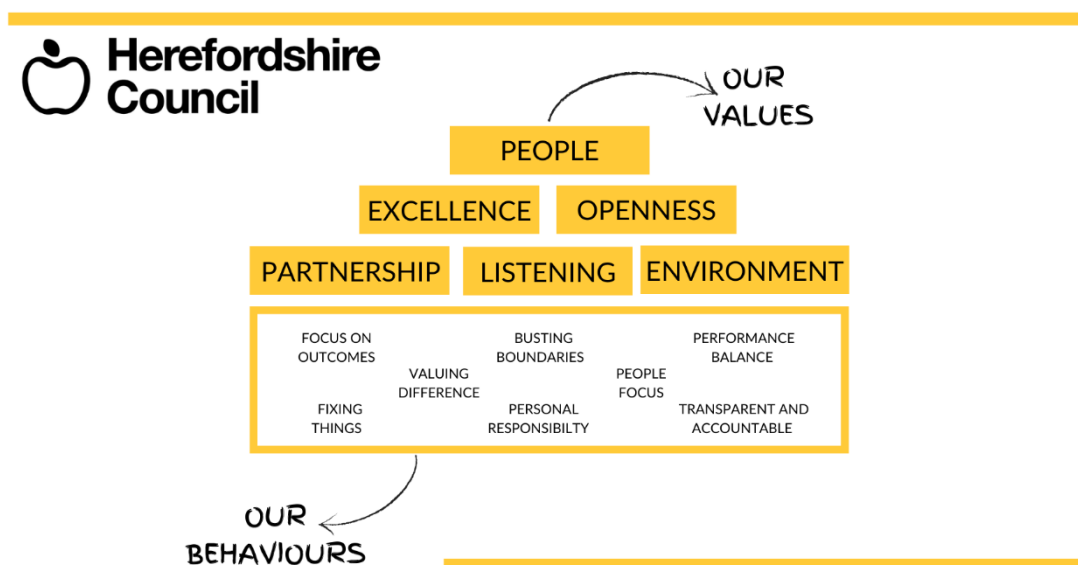
These six areas of our agenda are supplemented by additional 'strategies on a page' that set out our approaches to employee engagement and supporting staff wellbeing – two important themes which underpin our organisation development activity.

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While our general approach has until now been one of continuous improvement rather than overt transformation, the transformative impact of factors such as the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic must be acknowledged. As an organisation we will always adapt to the influences on our work, people and communities.

How we do things around here



The changes we wish to make are to a large degree cultural. Whether it is increasing levels of engagement, developing an identifiable employer 'brand', creating greater agility, enabling and supporting a partly home-based workforce or building resilience – all require different ways of thinking and acting.

The eight statements below capture our culture ambition – what we will be consistently doing when we have made it 'the way we do things around here'. These statements have been developed using information from a range of initiatives, conversations and by testing their relevance with senior leaders in the organisation. These are our **8 behaviours**.

Focus on outcomes

Focusing on what we are achieving, not where and when we are working

People focus

Developing and implementing processes that work for our businesses and residents, improve wellbeing and reduce inequalities

Fixing things

Looking to continuously improve and making changes as a result

Busting boundaries

Working together across the organisation to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents

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Valuing difference	Treating one another with respect – recognising and valuing differences
Personal responsibility	Taking personal responsibility for our own development and for our personal performance
Performance balance	Holding one another to account for what we do and how we do it, balancing support and challenge
Transparent & accountable	Our decision making is seen as transparent and shows clear accountability

All of this underpins our **PEOPLE values**. Designed as a set of principles, they will increasingly guide the way we act, what we say and how we think and aid us in making decisions:

People	Treating people fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity
Excellence	Striving for excellence, and the appropriate quality of services, care and life in Herefordshire
Openness	Being open, transparent and accountable
Partnership	Working in partnership and with all our diverse communities
Listening	Actively listening to, understanding and taking into account people's views and needs
Environment	Protecting and promoting our outstanding natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all

We will only achieve our potential by every individual being involved in making improvements in how they work and how they work together.

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What we will do and how we will do it

Our strategy focuses on building on the organisation's and individuals' strengths. We recognise we do not start with a 'blank slate' and much of our workforce and organisation development work will continue. Alongside that we recognise the challenges the organisation faces and the need to actively address issues such as recruiting to 'hard to fill' roles. The primary focus is on work that is designed to change attitudes and behaviours.

The following sections set out the six areas that will help us achieve our strategic aims, along with the key activities which will deliver them. We recognise that each of these six areas does not sit in isolation – aspects of one will enhance and enable others. For example, what we do as part of our reward and recognition approach will influence the outcome of recruitment and retention. Similarly, embedding a learning culture will support the successful delivery of our leadership development activities, while managers and leaders with the right skills and attitudes will embrace, and deliver through, performance management.

In a similar way, the activities which explain 'how we will do it' do not necessarily directly 'read across' from those which list 'what we will do'. They are not always mutually exclusive and some may help deliver more than one aim. Rather, they demonstrate how we plan to achieve our desired outcomes.

At the centre of our model is culture. Each of the other areas contributes to our culture – 'what it's like around here' – whether that be in the behaviours our employees display or through the experience they have as part of our organisation. At the same time, our culture reciprocally influences the other five areas and impacts the outcomes that each of them achieve.

Recruitment and retention



Attracting people to come and work here, making sure we manage, develop and reward them for working to achieve the outcomes we are looking for

Herefordshire has traditionally had number of challenges from a workforce perspective that need to be recognised. The geographical location and local pay rates have made recruitment more difficult than for other authorities, while there has also for many years been movement out of the county of younger people which has impacted on our future supply of employees. The perceived shift in national attitude in 2020 towards homeworking – along with changes in our own organisational culture and working practices which mean that many more roles may be delivered primarily from home – presents both new opportunity and additional challenge for us.

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The opportunity is that we are able to widen our potential recruitment pool, and strengthen the diversity of our workforce, in two ways:

1. By attracting candidates for whom working purely at an office location is not desirable or suitable
2. By attracting talent who wish to remain based in geographical locations that would previously have been prohibitive to working for us.

The challenge is that other organisations are also adapting to increased agile and virtual working, meaning that a portion of our traditional talent base who wish to remain located in Herefordshire may now be attracted to higher salaries or different job opportunities offered remotely by employers based elsewhere.

<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
<p>We will help Herefordshire Council to be a great place to work and a thriving and learning organisation, with employees who are healthy – physically and mentally</p> <p>We will promote Herefordshire as a great place to work – whether you live in the county or not – and convey our increasingly flexible approach to working arrangements</p> <p>We will adapt our recruitment to ensure we attract the best candidates, wherever they are located</p> <p>We will develop and implement activity to improve recruitment and retention for roles identified as hard to recruit and retain to</p> <p>We will implement changes that build resilience, personal wellbeing and when needed provide some extra support</p> <p>We will implement activity to ensure we recognise individual differences, acknowledge individuals' personal needs and ensure that everyone can achieve their potential</p> <p>We will work to attract and retain a diverse workforce and remove any barriers that limit potential employees from being successful in their applications</p>	<p>We will provide a range of benefits – not only those that provide financial incentives, but also ones that include ways for our employees to support and enhance their physical and mental wellbeing</p> <p>We will offer learning and development opportunities which go beyond functional requirements and will help enable our employees to become more resilient and thrive in all aspects of life, not just at work</p> <p>We will build on the beginnings of our employer 'brand' activity that both delivers and makes real our employee value proposition, and promotes it to prospective recruits</p> <p>We will ensure we are using the right channels and branding to attract quality candidates</p> <p>We will develop bespoke offerings for hard-to-fill roles, benchmarking against comparable authorities, and collaborate with regional and national schemes and networks to increase our profile in the recruitment marketplace</p> <p>We will build on our existing flexible working opportunities and promote those in our recruitment</p> <p>We will continue to seek additional ways to attract applications and routes to employment from under-represented groups, such as guaranteed interviews for disabled applicants, care experienced young people or military veterans, and by encouraging work experience and apprenticeships as alternative routes to employment</p>

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Recognition and reward



Recognising the contribution our employees make to achieve the outcomes we are looking for, rewarding excellence

Recognition and reward are arguably a sub-stream of the work we do to enhance our recruitment and retention. However, we feel they merit focus in their own right as we do not simply want to 'retain' staff – we want them to be engaged, motivated and our greatest ambassadors. Our early work on employer 'brand' has demonstrated that we can create a compelling value proposition that goes beyond basic salary.

Furthermore, our experiences in 2020 of the drastic shift in the way many of us work have highlighted the increasing value of appreciation and recognition – as we become a more agile and flexible organisation we need to ensure that all staff feel valued for the outcomes they deliver, especially if they work largely remotely.

The activities listed below supplement those which will develop our recruitment and retention agenda.

<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
<p>We will foster a culture of recognition and celebrate success</p> <p>We will take a holistic approach to reward that encompasses not only financial benefits but less tangible aspects such as purpose – what we do here matters – to achieve an overall employee value proposition</p>	<p>We will develop and implement frameworks to formalise employee recognition and to celebrate success</p> <p>We will continue to identify additional ways to recognise and reward the contribution and commitment of our employees</p> <p>We will build on the beginnings of our employer 'brand' activity that both delivers and makes real our employee value proposition</p> <p>We will continue to identify and implement opportunities to enhance our benefits to employees</p>

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Learning and development



Developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours across the whole of our workforce

We want to ensure our workforce has the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to be successful both now and in the future. The right learning and development interventions will engage our workforce through a sense of empowerment and achievement and provide the tools to respond to challenges and changes in demands with agility and resilience.

<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
We will provide learning and development in job specific and professional skills that people need to undertake their role, from pre-employment to exit	We will support services and subject matter experts in the development of training, and promote and track completion of annual mandatory training
We will increase the capability of our managers to deliver the objectives of the organisation	We will continue to leverage apprenticeships as a way of 'growing our own' and to enable staff to gain professional qualifications
We will equip our managers to manage by outcomes, not activities	We will continue to identify and provide tailored learning offerings in our key areas of focus such as mental health awareness, resilience and managing by outcomes
We will ensure people have appropriate continuous professional development in their area of expertise	We will review and enhance our online learning and self-study resources
We will give staff the chance to develop not only in functional or professional areas, but also fundamental aspects such as a resilience and wellbeing	We will review and continuously improve the induction programme from confirmation of appointment to 3 months in role, paying particular focus to achieving the right outcomes for those who work remotely
We will ensure people joining the organisation receive a robust induction and have completed appropriate mandatory training	

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Leadership development



Inspiring people to deliver through what we say and do as leaders

We understand that leadership is not about a 'role' or about a job title – it is, at its heart, a collective responsibility and can emerge from the activity of any individual in the organisation.

Our approach has at its core this collective approach and recognises the different role and the expectations on some individuals to be leaders as a significant element of their job.

While any change needs the collective understanding and 'buy-in' of the workforce, to truly succeed it requires leaders to demonstrate and champion the values and behaviours we wish to embed; leaders who inspire their teams through displaying trust and demonstrating the value of what we do as an organisation.

<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
<p>We will focus on first-line and middle managers, equipping them to meet the immediate and medium term challenges they face</p> <p>We will identify our future requirements and work to ensure we have people ready to take on leadership roles</p> <p>We will develop our leadership in partnership with other organisations that serve the residents of Herefordshire</p> <p>We will ensure all those new to leadership roles are equipped to perform them</p>	<p>We will continue and build on the work of both our Personal Leadership/Leading People manager programme and also our Future Leaders programme</p> <p>We will seek opportunities to collaborate with partner organisations such as the STP and for our managers to participate in external initiatives like West Midlands Employers Local Authority Challenge</p> <p>We will implement a programme of 'coaching for managers' and will develop our own internal coaching pool</p> <p>We will encourage and facilitate mentoring</p> <p>We will develop new manager inductions</p>

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Performance management



Delivering outcomes by effectively and efficiently engaging people in what needs to be done, by who, by when and how we are progressing in achieving it

As our organisation shifts to a more agile, flexible and virtual working model, performance management not only becomes ever more important in ensuring we achieve what we set out to do, but must itself change to reflect the different approach needed when managing a dispersed workforce. This is to a large degree a cultural change – fostering mutual trust between staff and their teams and placing emphasis on outcomes delivered rather than when, where, or even how, specific tasks are completed.

Key to this is having a clear line of sight from every employee's day-to-day activities to the outcomes for our organisation as a whole – and ultimately those of the residents of Herefordshire. Our **Performance Management Framework** sets out how this is achieved structurally, while the work we are doing in leadership development and culture will help embed this at a cultural level.

<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
<p>We will use the Performance and Development Process (PDP) to support and challenge our employees to deliver the objectives laid out in the County Plan and delivery plan</p> <p>We will encourage people to have effective conversations reflecting on what has been achieved, what has been learnt and how we can adjust our approach for the future</p> <p>We will embed the Performance Management Framework (PMF) as the way we get things delivered</p> <p>We will monitor progress against the achievement of plans and adjust our activity when needed</p> <p>We will manage people on the basis of the achievement of outcomes rather than traditional attendance and working hours</p> <p>We will recognise and reward people for delivering against their objectives and we will take action to improve individual performance when necessary</p>	<p>We will continue development of the PDP to demonstrate the value it brings to individuals and the organisation</p> <p>We will promote and encourage the concept of the 'Golden Thread' – how each individual's activities and performance is aligned and contributes to the overall outcomes for Herefordshire Council and its residents</p> <p>We will develop and implement interventions that develop managers' ability to use data to improve performance</p> <p>We will deliver learning and development interventions in areas such as managing by outcomes and managing in a virtual workplace to equip our managers with the skills to successfully lead people and achieve their objectives regardless of where they are physically based</p>

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Culture



Achieving our potential by every individual being involved in making improvements in how they work and how they work together

We have already set out how the changes we wish to make are to a large degree cultural. Whether it is increasing levels of engagement, creating greater agility, developing and supporting a partly home-based workforce or building resilience – all require different ways of thinking and acting. Each of the five areas above will influence our culture and successfully delivering them will largely result in the culture we wish to achieve.

There are aspects of our culture – how collectively we think, feel and act – which will in turn support the development of the other five areas. These are embodied in the **PEOPLE values** and **8 behaviours** that were presented earlier in this strategy. These values and behaviours will increasingly become ‘what it is like’ to work at Herefordshire Council.

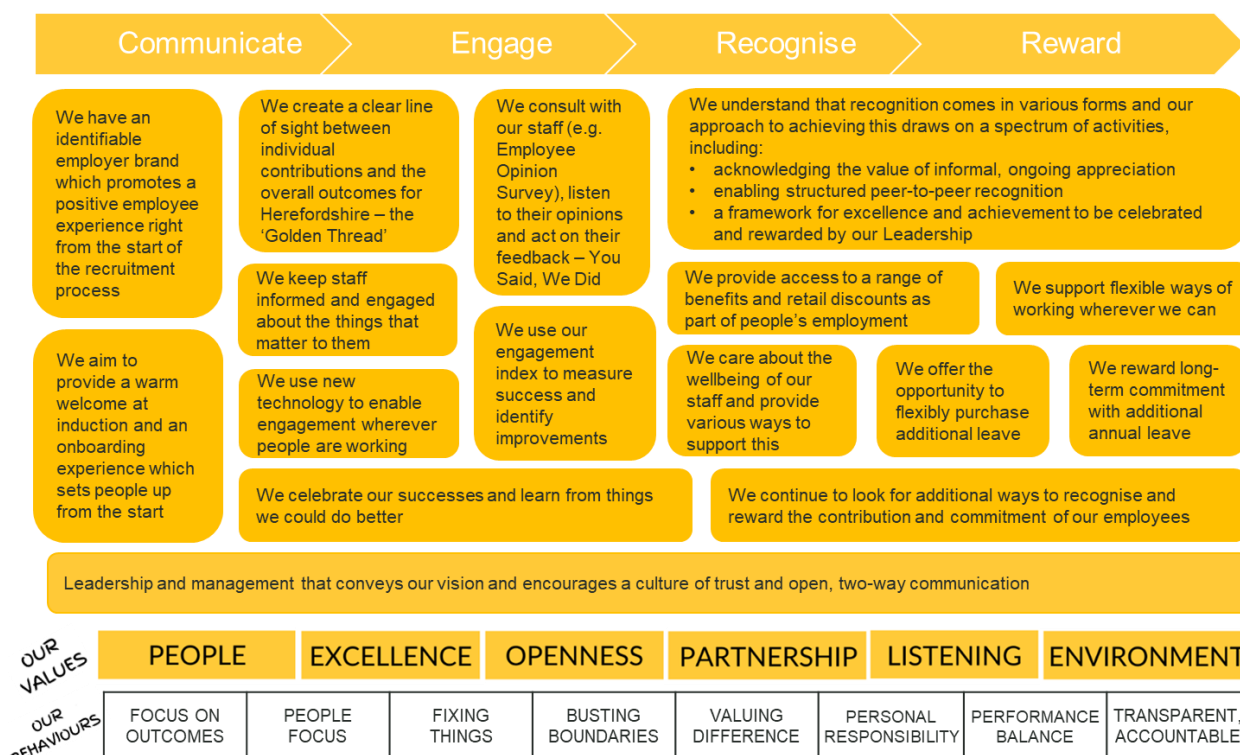
<i>What we will do</i>	<i>How we will do it</i>
<p>We will continue to work to embed the 8 behaviours and PEOPLE values across the organisation</p> <p>We will help the organisation achieve its potential by enabling individuals to be involved in making improvements in how they work and how they work together</p> <p>We will work to ensure the organisation culture and management approach is one that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on outcomes not activities • balances the level of support and challenge • helps people learn and fulfil their potential • enables people to have influence over how, where and when the work is done • provides a safe and healthy working environment – physically and virtually • enables people to build and maintain healthy lifestyles • generates self-worth from the sense of achievement within one’s own role and from being part of what the organisation delivers for the residents, visitors and those who work in Herefordshire 	<p>We will continue our programme that identifies and implements ways to embed our behaviours and value and, more broadly, BWOW across the organisation, for example by developing our PDP form to encourage performance conversations that are structured around the 8 behaviours, or through shaping future recognition initiatives around demonstration of our PEOPLE values</p> <p>We will continue to develop and deliver the employee opinion survey and act on the findings</p> <p>We will identify a range of interventions that will support people to build resilience and increase the speed of recovery</p> <p>We will continue to develop and deliver our programme designed to make us a ‘healthy workplace’, including mental health first aiders/bullying & harassment advisors</p> <p>We will develop and implement ways of conveying the culture of our organisation not only to existing employees but also to potential new recruits and new hires, including within our selection and assessment processes</p>

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Employee engagement

Our overall aim is **to develop an engaged, agile and resilient workforce**. Engagement takes many forms: an individual's understanding of the work they do and how it contributes to our corporate ambition; a feeling of being appreciated, recognised and fairly rewarded for efforts made; and sense of empowerment and permission to identify and implement improvements are but a few examples.

Our Engagement strategy on a page aims to bring together and summarise the aspects of engagement, and underpins and supplements the six areas of activity that have been set out in this strategy.



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Employee wellbeing

We recognise that wellbeing – both physical and mental – is more important than ever before. A key element of our work is building the **resilience** of our workforce, but we understand that this alone does not amount to wellbeing. Our ambition is to be a ‘healthy workplace’, whether people are working from a council building or their own homes. We provide support where it is needed and offer ways to enable our workforce to maintain and nurture their own wellbeing in ways that work best for them.

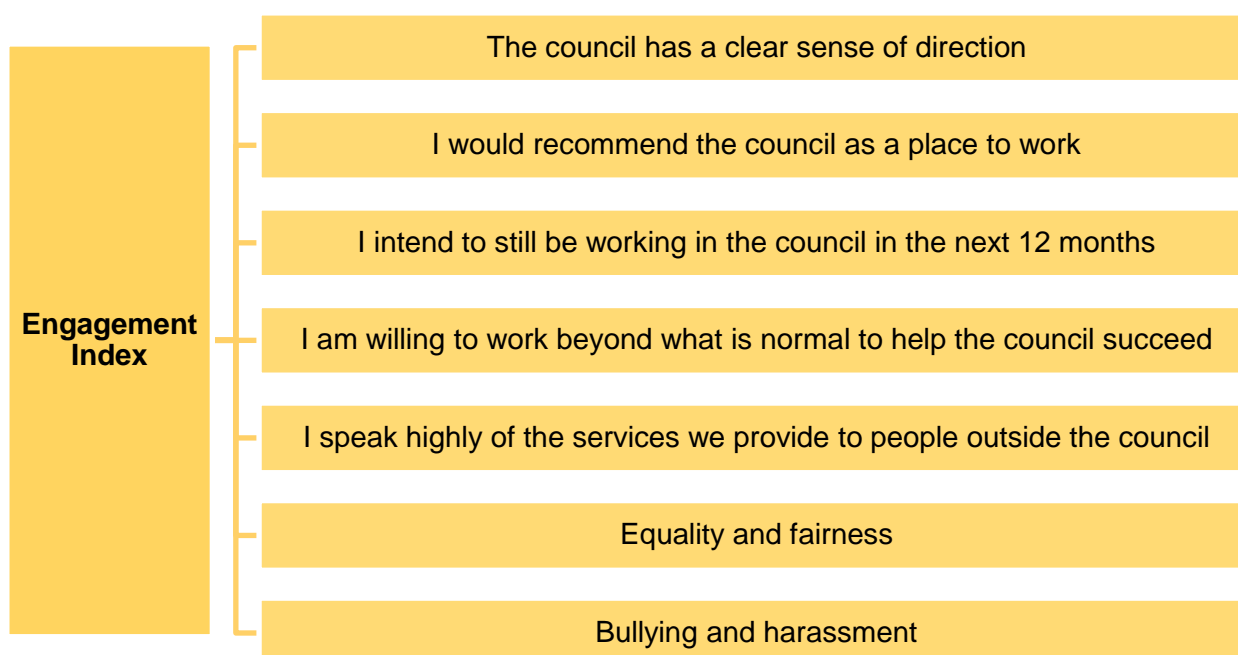
Our Wellbeing strategy on a page provides an overview of our approach.



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How will we know when we have been successful?

We will use a range of measures to track our progress; these include the level of absence, turnover and vacancy levels in key roles. Alongside this we will use our bi-annual employee opinion survey to measure engagement. The survey includes five questions that together make up our **engagement index**. We will use our engagement index plus employees' views on equality and fairness, and bullying and harassment as measures to do this.



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Appendix

As explained in the introduction the details of what we will do, and how and by when we will do it are contained within annual delivery plans. They include:

Corporate delivery plan

Learning and organisation development delivery plan (plan on a page)

Employee relations delivery plan (plan on a page)

Employee survey action plan

Equality policy actions

Gender pay gap action plan

Other elements of our strategy are supported by day-to-day practice and guidance. These include:

Performance development process (PDP)

Performance management framework (PMF) and processes

Better Ways of Working programme (BWOW)

Resourcing, recruitment and general HR processes

Induction

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