Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council Workforce Strategy 2013-15

Background

It is good practice to refresh our organisation's Workforce Strategy to ensure it remains aligned to achieving the goals of the organisation. At the end of November 2012 Council agreed our refreshed Corporate Plan; the key strategic policy framework document for the council.

There are already a number of workforce 'initiatives' being progressed in the council; we have not however pulled these together into a coherent package that underpins delivery of our Corporate Plan. The aim of this Workforce Strategy is therefore to set out a comprehensive and progressive approach to workforce challenges to support our journey of transformation.

The changes to the Corporate Plan were informed by a situational analysis including policy direction, current performance, financial context and a latest summary of our evidence base. The Corporate Plan outlines what outcomes we're looking to achieve; further to this we need to consider 'how' we want to go about delivering this and what organisation we continue to aspire to be? We have refreshed our guiding principles below given the changed context within which we now work; in particular the change to the council's partnership with the NHS, localism and our increasingly important community leadership and partner role.

The information we use in formulating our Workforce Strategy is derived from many sources. In addition to consideration of the organisation's priorities articulated within the Corporate Plan we use feedback that we receive throughout the year. There are a variety of ways that this is achieved, for example through the Directorate Improving Working Lives groups, Change Champion network, Equality and Diversity Employee Groups, Trade Union representatives and the Employee Opinion Survey. The Our People Group is a formal group which provide a corporate place to share information and best practice in relation to the things that are important to people. Public Health, Health & Safety, HR, Sports & Development and others are also represented at this group. This engagement informed the following SWOT analysis;

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Some leaders with great people management skills • Many committed people striving to do a great job • Good acceptance of Better Ways of Working where piloted • Workforce fundamentals in place e.g. appraisal, performance management and absence policies • Suite of skills development opportunities in place offering development to all staff • Many employees with high levels of skill, experience and qualification • Leadership development pathway offers opportunities at all levels • Organisational level sickness levels on target • Experienced in the Management of Change including rationalisation/TUPE transfers etc. • Evidence that we can deliver significant change	• Working in a complex organisation staff are asking for more clarity about their role and what is expected of them • Declining staff morale • Inadequate focus on delivery of difficult service changes or savings against target • History of overreliance on interim managers • Inadequate appraisal coverage and quality • Pockets of high sickness levels • Underperformance has gone unchallenged in some areas over time • Increase in staff with stress-related issues • People management skills variable across the organisation • Pockets of bullying and harassment issues that need to be addressed • Existing workforce policies and processes not fit to current context • Development opportunities provision not tailored to changing role and shape of organisation or targeted to areas of most need

	• A lack of workforce planning linked to achievement of strategic objectives and the financial plan. • The "pressure" that staff are currently feeling.
OPPORTUNITIES • Demonstrated ability to lead on cutting edge approaches • Good working in partnership with Trade Unions • Limited competition from other local employers • Liberalisation of employment legislation • Attractive locality with low cost of living • Available technology to enable employees to be more efficient and effective at work • Network of partner organisations to collaborate and share people resources	**THREATS** • Increasingly complex and fast-changing environment • Intense funding pressures • Limited local availability of professional skills in some key workforce areas • Ability to retain of key staff • Scale of change exceeds available resources • Destabilising effect when senior managers leave, especially in sensitive areas.

The organisation we need to be

Our Corporate Plan lays out our vision for what we intend to achieve along with our strategic objectives which describe our priority areas. In addition to these statements the following principles aim to describe what type of organisation we need to be to achieve our overall aims;

Local Leadership

We undertake a strategic role, utilising the democratic process and working in partnership to ensure that the services communities most need are in place and offer greatest value.

Self Reliance

Working with residents, community groups and our partners we help people to be more self reliant, devolve services and build stronger communities

Highly Regarded

We always aspire to be held in high regard, nationally, regionally and locally for what we do and how we do it.

Customer Focus

Our decisions are based on listening to and working with our customers, using robust evidence so that our services meet residents' greatest needs.

Value for Money

A streamlined and efficient organisation, driving value for money. Networked and agile we empower employees and continue to reduce waste. We make the best use of all our available resources.

High Performance

Recognising that we can no longer fund services at previous levels we still aspire to do what we do well; managing risk, maximising opportunities and delivering continuous improvement.

Our organisation's Values describe the way we want to go about our business on a day to day basis;

People:	Treating **people** fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity
Excellence:	Striving for **excellence**, and the appropriate quality of service, 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

Herefordshire Council

Workforce Outcomes

In order to achieve our organisational objectives and our aspirations for the organisation we have identified the following ten critical workforce outcomes;

1. Our leadership enables staff and the organisation to succeed through clarity of role, contribution and accountability.

2. Our people managers enable our workforce to be engaged, motivated and committed to the organisation working in an environment where communication is effective, empowerment and trust is high. Everyone is expected to engage with the organisation's aims and seek out the information they need to perform well.

3. We have skilled people managers who ensure that the right people are in the right roles with the right skills to deliver our objectives. Everyone is expected to take personal responsibility for their performance and personal development.

4. As our challenge increases it becomes even more important that we attract, retain and develop the best possible staff.

5. We have a flexible and responsive workforce capable of working effectively across team and organisational boundaries with a 'can do attitude' that is customer and outcome focussed.

6. Our managers are great at supporting their team members to lead healthy lives and to have a good work/life balance.

7. Our staff experience and take personal responsibility for an effective performance culture where we are open about our performance in order that we can build on successes and learn from things that don't go so well.

8. Our policies and processes support achievement of performance improvement.

9. The way we pay and reward our people attracts, retains and engages in a way that positively impacts engagement and performance improvement.

10. Equality and diversity is embedded at the heart of our organisation.

The following provides the key principles and priorities underpinning achievement of the above outcomes; these form the basis for the refresh of our 2013/14 delivery plan;

Leadership

Leadership at all levels of the organisation has a crucial role to play in setting the culture and context for continuous improvement and in motivating and supporting staff to deliver our strategic objectives. A major report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) warns that the public sector needs to build its management capability in order to address the challenge of the future. The report highlights that line managers and supervisors in particular lack the people management skills that will be necessary to get more out of employees and build the kind of organisational behaviour needed to see organisations through the challenging spending squeeze.

This is an area where we have previously and continue to focus our investment in leadership development on a structured leadership development pathway, tailored to the needs of the organisation with appropriate development opportunities for leaders at different levels. Our leadership pathway has four simple levels, from aspiring managers to senior leaders. Principal

elements of the pathway are: leadership competency framework; 360-degree feedback; leadership development opportunities at all levels including coaching, formal and informal programmes; performance appraisal and personal development planning.

The purpose of our leadership pathway is to achieve a cultural shift from command, control and top-down management to a collaborative and engaging model in which teams and individuals feel inspired, motivated and empowered to deliver; and leadership skills are strengthened to ensure that employees are effectively supported and managed through changing times. We will do this by developing leaders who involve others to gain commitment and accountability.

Engaging our workforce

Employee engagement can be defined as 'a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help our colleagues (organisational citizenship). It goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation. Engagement is something the employee has to offer: it cannot be 'required' as part of the employment contract.' [CIPD] It is understood that employee engagement is critical to meeting the unprecedented challenges of the current time: There is a significant body of evidence that links engaged staff in the workforce with increased performance and customer satisfaction; reduced levels of sickness absence; improved customer focus; increased advocacy of the organisation in the community by employees and increased innovation. Good people managers are critical to enabling us to be successful at achieving this.

This outcome is clearly linked to a number of other elements in this strategy and in particular our leadership approach; in addition to work in other areas we also have a number of corporate initiatives aiming to improve staff engagement; these include the role of Change Champions, senior staff road shows, corporate communications to mention a few. It is our aim going forward to better enable staff engagement through a more philosophical approach given our commitment to be a Lean and Systems thinking organisation and where ideas for change are embraced and put into action. This is a critical corner stone of this Workforce Strategy requiring a significant change in behaviours from leaders, staff and members across the organisation.

The way that we communicate with each other is a critical factor in all that we do. We are committed to a culture where communication spans many relationships and therefore staff take personal responsibility, be responsive and always be informed.

As the demands on us continue to increase it is vital that we attract and retain the best possible staff. We will do this by being explicit about our employee proposition; how staff will experience working for the organisation and what is expected of them. This helps staff to recognise some of the really good things that currently exist and to challenge if we do not deliver on our Workforce Strategy. Underpinning this is the need for a climate where feedback is encouraged enabling us to discuss where we're not delivering what we've promised in order to address this. We will know we have been successful when we have a highly engaged workforce measured through the Employee Opinion Survey, reduced absence rates and fewer resignations.

Capacity and capability

Significant improvements have been made recently to establish robust processes and support for the workforce to enable the development of skills and abilities and progress careers. New guidance on personal development planning has been introduced, e-learning capability established, and disparate training functions have been brought together in Hoople. We have been active in facilitating some cross sector workforce planning and development across partner organisations, for example in adult social care and children's services although there is much more that we need to do in this area. These changes reflect the high priority we place on the training and development of staff and these improvements must result in our having the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. We will build on successes through 'growing our own' with focussed

development aligned to our competency framework, continuing professional development (CPD) interventions and more focus on succession planning for critical roles.

As we transform, the skills we need within our organisation are changing, as are our relationships with partner organisations. For example, we have an increasing need for commercial and commissioning skills in our own employees and also have a continued interest in securing the right skills mix across our provider partners to ensure high quality service delivery including a change in social work core professional competencies that reflect the changing nature of the role.

Our managers need to embrace the transformation and the changing environment that challenges nationally, locally and within our organisation present; demonstrating good leadership and management of change, taking their teams with them on our journey. We accept that there are varying degrees of people management skills and expectations within the organisation and we have a commitment through our learning and development, and HR programmes of work, to equip our managers with the tools, skills and support they need to lead their teams successfully in these times of rapid pace, uncertainty and change. Our managers are expected to role model great behaviours and embed our Values in all that they do and are explicitly accountable for the health, safety and wellbeing of their teams; setting clear objectives, accountabilities, and managing performance outcomes aligned to our corporate priorities; keeping communication flowing in all directions; coaching and developing their teams; as a core part of their line/people manager role.

As budgets reduce we also require our managers to become more self-sufficient; this of course requires HR and wider systems to support managers with access to the information and systems they need to lead and manage effectively.

Attraction, Recruitment and Retention

The attraction and recruitment of key staff, skills and experience and is shaped by all the elements of the strategy. 'We always aspire to be held in high regard and trusted by residents, employees and partners for what we do and how we do it'… It is key to our success to be able to attract great people to work in Herefordshire, and for us, as an employer of choice. Expressing our employee proposition, culture, values, benefits of living in Herefordshire and valuing diversity will be pivotal to increase the resource pool for Herefordshire, especially for key roles, skills and experience as well as retaining and investing in the best people.

Flexible and Responsive workforce

This is another critical strand to our Workforce Strategy given that some areas of our public sector workforce still experience quite traditional hierarchical employment models. Our workforce model will continue to transform and shift the balance between our core and flexible/commissioned workforce as we continually consider the best solutions to our service provision that achieves the right outcomes for residents whilst also saving money. In order for us to be flexible and responsive we need to be clear about the role requirements, accountabilities and breadth to develop a resourcing plan comprising a flexible mix of substantive and temporary staff. We should always consider creative ways of resourcing our requirements, moving away from replacing 'like for like' as the default option. We have an opportunity to strengthen workforce planning as an integral part of our Medium Term Financial Plan, delivery plans and existing Root and Branch Reviews whilst also continually reviewing our arrangements for employing temporary and permanent staff ensuring we achieve high quality and best value for longer term sustainability

Our staff are healthy and well and have a good work/life balance

The health, well being and satisfaction of staff has a direct correlation with levels of performance and absence and the fitter and healthier our staff are, the better role models they make for the community and is in line with the Health & Wellbeing motion that was passed by Council in July 2012.

Physical activity provides an opportunity for staff to improve their health and well-being, work-life balance, socialise, enjoy themselves and get that 'feel good factor' - participation and involvement in physical activities will enhance energy levels, enthusiasm, team working and motivation to make a real difference at work.

Equally important is that we address the issues that may cause employees to feel stress in the workplace such as productive working relationships with elected members and between staff and managers, particularly during times of significant change and national economic decline. Our leadership model and the skills and capabilities of managers will seek to address these issues.

Key health and well-being messages such as healthy eating, stop smoking campaigns, staff support mechanisms and screening programmes will be delivered in tandem with physical activity opportunities. The increasing demands that we all face in our lives are challenging so we will enable our people to be fit and healthy both physically and mentally to enable our people to be fit for work for longer into their lives.

Performance Culture

This outcome is very much dependent on other elements of this strategy and is highlighted separately given the significant opportunities for performance improvement in this area.

Achieving better outcomes – especially when spending is reducing and demands for services are increasing – we will require improved, more efficient and more effective performance from our organisation that is focussed on the right priorities. This in turn requires fundamental changes in organisational systems and culture to deliver:

An organisation that:

- Focuses resources and efforts on the critical priorities
- Delivers what we say we will
- Has the right capacity and capabilities to deliver corporate aims
- Provides the right tools and working environment for success
- Deals swiftly and effectively with under performance
- Is networked and focused on delivering shared outcomes
- Works quickly to resolve performance and/or cultural concerns that adversely impact on effective team working and our people's ability to challenge.
- Enables all staff to fulfil their full potential
- Celebrates achievements and success

People that:

- Have a 'can do' approach to meeting customer/community needs
- Have the business, people and delivery skill levels required
- Are engaged, empowered and proud to work for the Council
- Know the purpose of the organisation and their role within it
- Are developed to fulfil their potential
- Are responsive, flexible and take personal responsibility

Managers that:

- Clearly describe the performance outcome and standards expected from each member of their team using the performance appraisal framework
- Have regular, quality performance discussions with their team members at least monthly
- Regularly coach, develop and give constructive feedback to their teams to enable growth and learning from doing things differently for continued sustainable success
- Inspire and motivate their teams to be the best that they can be
- Regularly recognise great contribution and celebrate success

- Support performance improvement rigorously to address under performance swiftly

The challenges of the future place new demands on the organisation in the way that we manage performance. We can now capitalise on the work of the refreshed Corporate Plan which makes clear what our priorities are enabling us to better link this to individual targets so people can see where their individual performance fits in. We will strengthen our performance culture where we celebrate good performance, we challenge each other to further improve, we learn from our mistakes and deal with under performance.

Workforce policies and processes

Experience of using our existing policies and procedures has highlighted a significant performance improvement opportunity, as our current policies no longer support the changed environment within which we work; for example the need to deal with under-performance swiftly and to manage performance, based upon outcomes rather than presenteeism. A fundamental change to our policy structure and content is planned in order to leverage performance improvement and better partnership working between our line managers and the HR service.

Pay and Reward

Our current reward approach is guided primarily by a policy of not moving away significantly from national terms and conditions without due consideration. This is currently still the case however we propose that further guiding principles need to inform our strategy going forward:

- We will consider total reward; this links to other challenges already raised in this strategy including employee experience
- Will support delivery of corporate objectives and our Workforce Strategy whilst also considering affordability
- We're well positioned in the labour market ensuring that whilst we achieve our targets for wage and job growth in the county that we continue to compete for the best people; this should not be a race to the bottom
- We pay fairly for the jobs people do; the skills knowledge and experience required
- We have excellent employee relations
- We have equal opportunity in employment
- We don't pay for under performance
- We will consider implementing a reward element to staff suggestions that are implemented and successfully deliver savings.
- We will consider a move from minimum to living wage
- The issue of directly linking pay to achievement is well documented in academic journals and tends to conclude that the benefits from this are varied depending upon the organisation. It is proposed that once key underpinning practices are in place that we would need to consider better linking reward to performance.

These principles need testing as currently data is lacking about what motivates staff in Herefordshire Council and what aspects of the total reward package are most important. A staff engagement process commenced in February 2013 and is designed to test these principles as well as informing improvement proposals and the accompanying delivery plan.

This objective also links to our duty to publish our annual Pay Policy Statement in which many of these principles will also be captured.

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Equality and Diversity

In 2010, Herefordshire Council, signed up to the Equality and Human Rights Charter for Herefordshire, demonstrating our shared commitment to dignity and respect and human rights in everything that we do. The charter sets out how public service providers will work in partnership to embed equality and human rights within all that we do. It also sets out an agreed vision around equalities for the communities of Herefordshire. It provides a focus to ensure that we meet our obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the detailed requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and the Equality Framework for local government.

Promoting human rights within an organisation allows individuals to flourish, reach their potential, and participate fully in society. Promoting equality is a core part of the human rights agenda and is essential for the creation of a cohesive society and for a strong economy. Recognising and respecting individuals' rights within our community helps us to uphold our sense of responsibility to each other.

We will continue to work to the principles and values as set out in the charter and work in partnership, making Herefordshire a place where people, organisations and businesses work together towards long term, sustainable success for all. We will role model equality and diversity in our workplace and know that we have been successful when we enable and facilitate opportunities and therefore enjoy the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Key contributors to this Workforce Strategy

The development of this Workforce Strategy has been in collaboration with various colleagues and teams of people across the organisation, namely: Leadership Team, Senior Management Team, Members, Change Champion network, Our People Group members, Head of Workforce and OD, Organisation Development Lead, Trade Union representatives, Legal, HR, Equality & Diversity team members, Communication and Engagement team.

Next steps

Following a period of consultation and agreement from Cabinet to this strategy these outcomes and underlying principles will be used to inform a refresh of our delivery plan in order that tangible actions can be taken to achieve this strategy and measures identified to establish when these outcomes have been achieved.

Author; Jenny Lewis

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