

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 23 April 2024



Portfolio: Corporate Services (Cllr C Whitbread (Portfolio Holder))

Subject: People Strategy Year 1 Progress

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

Consider and comment on the year 1 actions and progress of the People Strategy.

Report:

1. Context – The People Strategy 2023 - 2027

The People Strategy 2023-2027 sets out how the organisation will support our people to deliver the vision for the district, set out in the new Corporate Plan. It provides a framework for how we plan to implement and deliver our ambitions.

The aim of the Strategy is to support the Council be a more modern, digital, efficient, and inclusive organisation. It is a live and agile document, able to adapt and respond to future challenges.

The People Strategy was updated to reflect the revised Corporate Plan and aligns with the corporate objectives which took effect in April 2023.

Our 2023-27 People Strategy focuses on three main pillars:

- A. Maximising organisational capacity and capability
- B. Effective and inspirational leadership, values, and culture
- C. Enhancing employee experience and engagement.

2. The Report

The report sets out the progress of our Year 1 objectives under each of the three pillars shown above:

A. Maximising organisational capacity and capability

Attracting and retaining talent: Our local authority aims to attract diverse, top-tier talent that shares our passion for revolutionising local government. By leveraging digital recruitment methods and establishing a strong employer brand, we can showcase our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community development.

To retain our exceptional workforce, we will provide competitive employee benefits, flexible and hybrid working arrangements, and clear career progression pathways, ensuring employees feel valued and motivated to stay with us.

What We Said	What We Did
Create a competitive total reward framework that reviews both monetary and non-monetary benefits packages that align with hiring goals and employee retention	Paused due to work on the HR Shared Services project.
To further implement enhancements to the recruitment portal and to review and adjust the job application form to meet current requirements for EFDC.	ITrent has been upgraded to improve the web recruitment portal, it allows applicants a cleaner and more accessible view of the vacancies we have to offer. Alongside this we took the opportunity to refresh and update the job application form, allowing us to embed some additional information requirements as well as reformatting and removing fields that are no longer required or applicable. The changes make applying for a job easier for candidates with less pages and fields to complete and help managers ensure that we obtain the information needed to make good / better shortlisting and hiring decisions.
Deliver Local Pay Award 2023/24 - Completed in line with NJC/JNC requirements in line with annual timetable.	Completed for 2023/24, Local pay implemented for 2024/25. National negotiations are ongoing.
Review of our Terms and Conditions including collective agreement negotiations on: Call out/Stand By payments and implementation of new contracts (Notice period and legislation changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contract Review - Agreement has been reached with the Trade Unions to extend notice periods for employees in Grades A to K, with no management responsibility and appointed or transferred to new positions after 1st April 2025, to eight weeks. The purpose of the extended notice period was to better support the provision of statutory services during the notice period and provide a better onboarding experience for new employees. ▪ Call out and standby agreement has been negotiated

Supporting employees through comprehensive workforce plans:

Supporting employees through our comprehensive workforce plan, we will offer internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs, facilitating ongoing skill development and knowledge sharing. We will foster a culture of continuous learning and development by providing access to training programs, workshops, and online resources that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. Employees will be encouraged to pursue further education, gain new certifications, and participate in professional development events to stay at the forefront of industry trends and best practices.

What We Said	What We Did
To complete a skills and behavioural analysis that further develops the learning and organisational development framework. This work should include a focus on digital skills.	Paused whilst developing our Digital Strategy and work on the HR Shared Services project.
Develop guidance, support services to embed an annual service workforce plan that links to the organisation's structure, goals, objectives, Values and target outcomes.	<p>Phase 1. The Succession Planning tool developed by People Team was completed by majority of service areas. The outcomes of this have been.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversations re impact of potential retirements, career planning and shared services roles are clearly taking place. ▪ Management & Leadership development needs are being balanced with technical development. ▪ Apprenticeship Levy funding is being maximised for leadership development and a number of technical qualifications, thus making the greatest use of corporate training budget. <p>Phase 2. Training to take place in June 2024 delivered by the LGA</p>

In addition, the Council has been running successful apprentice programmes for 10 years; In this time over 50 young local people have successfully achieved nationally recognised qualifications, and career success across the Council. Currently four new Corporate Apprentices have been recruited across the Council - Democratic Services/ Elections, Health & Safety, Internal Communications and a Paralegal role. The Apprenticeship Levy will be used to train the new Apprentices in specific skills for these areas, thus supporting succession planning.

We have continually exceeded our public sector apprentice target every year and utilised our levy money, which would be lost if not invested in these qualifications.

The People Team have run a series of Skill Pill hours to enable employees to learn more about Microsoft Teams, and how to use Teams more efficiently and particularly how to collaborate more effectively. These sessions were open for members to attend. The sessions will continue with Excel and other relevant digital skills development. All sessions are recorded and hosted on our Litmos Learning Management System, for all employees to view at their leisure.

B. Effective and inspirational leadership, values, and culture

Developing skills, values, and behaviours: Our local authority will prioritise our teams' skill development, values, and behaviours by setting clear expectations and encouraging our managers and leaders to provide consistent feedback. We will nurture a culture of visionary leadership that inspires employees to think creatively, take calculated risks, and embrace change. To achieve this, we will continue to invest in our leadership development program, create opportunities for cross-functional collaboration, and celebrate success stories that exemplify our core values.

What We Said	What We Did
Digital Performance Development Tool to be procured and implemented.	Paused due to development of Digital Strategy

In addition, the Apprenticeship Levy is also being used to fund 15 aspiring Team Managers to start an ILM 3 (Institute of Leadership & Management) programme in early October 2023. The Levy will also fund 8 managers to complete ILM 5 (Solace Emerging Leaders programme).

Creating a sustainable and innovative future: By fostering visionary leadership and culture, we will propel our local authority toward a sustainable future embracing new ideas and innovation. We will actively seek input from employees at all levels and foster open communication channels to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. By empowering employees to contribute their unique perspectives and ideas, we can drive continuous improvement and enhance our ability to address the challenges facing our communities.

What We Said	What We Did
To gain employee insight on a number of focused trending themes i.e. wellbeing, flexible and hybrid working, performance management through different employee engagement methods i.e. insight surveys	Adopting a High-Performance Culture Survey June-July 23 was concluded. An Exec summary has been launched throughout the organisation and insight formed part of the September 2023 Leadership Summit.
Develop a group of Communication Ambassadors aiming to bridge the gaps in our internal communication and engagement content.	Paused due to the HR Shared Services project.
Review and revise the Internal Communication Strategy to realign to the new People Strategy and the new Corporate Plan	Paused due to the HR Shared Services project.

C. Enhancing employee experience and engagement

Building an inclusive environment: We will focus on building an inclusive environment that fosters diversity and embraces the unique strengths and perspectives that each employee brings to the table. Our local authority will establish diversity and inclusion initiatives to promote awareness, understanding, and acceptance of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. We will also provide employees with the resources and support they need to succeed in their roles, regardless of their individual circumstances.

What We Said	What We Did
To achieve Disability Confident status for Epping Forest District Council.	We have been awarded Disability Confident Status Level 2 and being assessed for level 3.
Employment Law Legislation Changes 23-24. Establish people policies, guidance and frameworks that reflect the organisation's objectives including employment law developments expected in 23/24. Specifically focusing on the following: Flexible working, Sexual harassment at work, Carers leave, neonatal leave and pay, Organisational change policy, mental health first aid law	A quarterly update report is now submitted to the ELT/SLT and Wider leadership team outlining updates and changes to wider legislation reviews/changes and internal policy development.

Cultivating a people-centric culture: Our local authority will cultivate a people-centric culture that emphasises well-being and keeps employees healthy, engaged, and motivated to make a difference in our communities. We will implement employee wellness programs, provide access to mental health resources, and encourage a healthy work-life balance. By prioritising well-being, we can boost employee morale, increase productivity, and reduce absenteeism, contributing to our overall success.

What We Said	What We Did
Implementation of Wagestream	Wagestream, our new financial wellbeing app launched to the organisation on the 2nd October. Our current engagement rate is 14% of the workforce, Wagestream report that we have one of the highest engagement rates of all their local government clients.
	Since our initial launch in December 2022, our Wellbeing Hub has had well over 800 unique visits and 2,702 individual page visits. Taking employee feedback and anonymised analytics into account, the People Team developed a new iteration of the hub, which includes a new section for social wellbeing.

Reason for decision:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the progress on Year 1 workstreams under the People Strategy 2023 – 27

Options considered and rejected:

The Cabinet requested an annual update of the People Strategy to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Consultation undertaken:

Consultation with Executive, Senior Leadership and Leadership teams and the Portfolio Holder was completed in March 2023.

Resource implications:

Not applicable

Legal and Governance Implications:

Not applicable

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

Not applicable

Background Papers:

The People Strategy was reported to Stronger Council on 18 April 2023 and Cabinet on 30 May 2023.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Any individual workstream/project risks are identified through the project management processes and subject to the Council's risk methodology.

Equality:

Any equality impacts will be identified at the inception of projects and managed accordingly.