



Hertsmere
Borough Council

Draft Workforce Strategy 2019-2021

September 2018



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CONTENTS

1.	Executive Summary.....	4
2.	Introduction.....	4
3.	Statement of Policy.....	6
4.	Legislative Framework.....	8
5.	The Principles and Priorities of Workforce Strategy	9
6.	Data Quality	13
7.	Partnership Working	13
8.	Responsibilities.....	13
9.	Equalities and Diversity	14
10.	Risk Management.....	16
11.	Implementation	16
12.	Evaluation.....	175
13.	Contact Details	18

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Council recognises that the workforce plays a critical role in enabling its strategic 2020 Vision to be achieved and this is the context for the Workforce Strategy 2019-2021. The draft Workforce Strategy 2019-2021 seeks to support the values and address the challenges set out in Hertsmere's 2020 Vision.

The values are as follows:

- Being of service
- Investing in employees
- Integrity and openness
- Ensuring equality in all we do

The challenges identified are as follows:

- Increasing financial pressures
 - Changing population
 - Changing legislation

1.2 The draft Workforce Strategy 2019-2021 has a particular role to play in assisting the council to achieve the strategic objective of being an enterprising council in that it seeks to optimise use of our staff resources, and to enable innovative ways of working that increase the council's resilience and self sufficiency.

1.3 The Workforce Strategy provides the strategic framework for planning, organising and developing the workforce and workplace culture in line with these core values. It sets out the approach to resourcing issues, capacity building, organisational change management and the integration of equality and diversity issues into good people management practices. It also describes the organisational culture needed for Hertsmere to become an 'enterprising council', using the best of all the talent in the workforce and engaging employees in innovation and service development.

1.4 The Workforce Strategy is supported by the annual Workforce Plan which focuses on the priorities for action in the year ahead.

2. Introduction

2.1 The purpose of the Workforce Strategy 2019-2021 is to;

- Set out the vision for people management in Hertsmere and the Council's aspirations on each of the five national pay and workforce strategy areas. (Organisational Development; Skills Development; Leadership; Recruitment and Retention; Pay and Rewards)
- Identify areas of special focus to meet the local needs of Hertsmere's workforce. (Areas of special focus include: health and well-being initiatives; HR systems and information management; modernising recruitment and expanding apprenticeship opportunities)
- Identify employment legislation governing the strategy and the principles that underpin the strategy.
- Clarify the responsibilities of the Council; members; management and staff for implementation of the strategy.
- Define ways in which the workforce is to be developed to be fit for purpose now and over the next three years.

2.2 The Local Government Workforce Strategy 2018 provides a reference point for the Council's Workforce Strategy. A copy of the Local Government Workforce Strategy 2018 can be accessed at the [LGA](https://www.local.gov.uk/great-people-growing-places-consultation-strategy-local-gov.March.2018) website:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/great-people-growing-places-consultation-strategy-local-gov.March.2018>

2.3 A number of factors are driving change and bringing the need for organisational development. Some issues arise from legislative change or emerging best practice, others result from a need to respond to the local issues facing Hertsmere's communities. Key drivers include:

- The current economic situation i.e. the continued pressure on local authority budgets and the drive for efficiency
- The need to deliver services in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors and the exploration of shared services as a model for the delivery of services
- The growth of client choice and the development of commercial contractual arrangements
- The aspiration to become an 'enterprising council' and the need to develop the organisational culture that fully engages employees in innovation and service development
- New legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- The emergence of new technologies which are changing the way we work with each other and with our partners and clients

- Planned and actual growth in housing in and around Hertsmere bringing significant environmental impact and increasing demand for services
- The implications of an ageing workforce and an ageing population alongside age discrimination legislation and changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme
- The potential implications of Brexit

2.4 It is crucial that the council's people management strategy, policy and practice has a clear link to these strategic challenges and that the HR service adds demonstrable value to the council's success in becoming an enterprising council.

3. Statement of Policy

3.1 The Workforce Strategy aims to support the delivery of the Council's 2020 Vision by ensuring we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time, and by securing the full contribution of employees. It aims to support the workforce by ensuring our employees have the necessary skills, competencies, opportunities and the optimal work environment to give of their best.

3.2 Workforce Strategy objectives cover the five national pay and workforce strategy areas:

- **organisational change and development** that is focused on people, their wellbeing and resilience
- **great leadership** that is visionary, ambitious and effective and the development of leadership skills at all levels
- **skills development** that is truly innovative and focused on combining organisational and individual needs
- **improved recruitment and retention** outcomes based on proper planning and use of best practice techniques
- **pay and reward** systems that attract and retain talent, motivating and helping people throughout their careers

3.3 In developing this strategy, consideration has been given to feedback from local workforce surveys, as well as research and current management information on key workforce issues in Hertsmere. This tells us that our Workforce Strategy needs to help us respond to the following people management challenges:

- We need to address on-going recruitment and retention difficulties and national skill shortages e.g. for Planners, using modern recruitment methods and re-branding the Council as an employer of choice
- We need to maximize efficiency and drive down costs wherever possible, making technology work for us
- We need to build capacity by developing and making the best use of people's talents and potential, lifting motivation and increasing staff retention.
- We need to invest in the health and well-being of our employees both to help reduce sickness absence levels and to enable people to achieve a good work-life balance and remain fit to give of their best, including in challenging circumstances
- We need to develop a strong leadership culture in which our managers develop and model excellent behaviours that support the 'enterprising council' agenda
- We need to do more to diversify our workforce and in particular to recruit, retain and develop younger people
- We need to mobilize the workforce to respond quickly to new challenges, in particular the digital transformation agenda
- We need to further develop our managers as effective people managers and deliver consistent people management practices within a framework of modern employment policies
- We need to develop our organisational culture to support excellence in both public service and enterprise
- We need to maximise the value that the HR function adds to the business

3.4 In light of these local needs, the following areas of special focus have been identified:

- health and well-being initiatives
- HR systems and information management
- modernising recruitment
- supporting new apprenticeship opportunities

Further information about initiatives in each of these areas is provided in the Appendices.

3.5 Other corporate initiatives that are likely to have ramifications for the workforce strategy include the review of the Customer Service Strategy and the intended procurement of a new CRM system in 2019; the review of the GIS

Strategy and procurement of a new GIS system, also in 2019; and the upgrading of the council's website and improved capability for digital transformation over the next 12 to 18 months. It is likely therefore that one or more additional areas of special focus will be identified and included in the Workforce Plan for 2019/20.

4. Legislative Framework

Employment legislation governing the strategy and the legal principles that underpin the Workforce Strategy:

Principles.

4.1 It is essential to meet the requirements of employment law and at the same time enable the transformation agenda and support managers to build efficient and high performing teams.

4.2 Within the spirit of the equality legislation and to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty it is the Council's objective to attract, develop and retain the most talented people.

Changes in Legislation

4.3 There have been some changes that impact on the workforce strategy. In particular, the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in May 2018 has a significant impact on the management of employees' data as well as the data of job applicants.

4.4 Creating a workforce that is flexible and meets the needs of the Council occasionally requires the ending of some employment relationships. This always carries a risk of a claim against the Council that could be costly. The Employment Tribunal fees that were introduced in 2013 have now been repealed and this has led to an increase in cases going to the tribunal. The workforce strategy seeks to prevent cases going to litigation by resolving matters internally where possible. However, cases that do progress to litigation will be defended robustly on the basis of clear compliance with employment law and adherence to agreed policies and procedures.

4.5 From April 2018, there were changes to the law making all payments in lieu of notice subject to taxation and from April 2019 all termination payments in excess of £30,000 will be subject to employers' National Insurance contributions as well. These changes will need to be reflected in the business cases for any settlement agreements proposed in future.

4.6 The right to request flexible working was extended to all employees in June 2014. It previously only applied to parents and carers. While we have always tried to accommodate requests for all staff, this has put a greater onus on us as the employer to consider fully any requests that we receive. It can be a real challenge to provide employees with the work-life balance they seek and to continue to provide the highest quality services. Given that work-life balance

has been revealed to be the second strongest motivation for people to work in local government, this is a key area to be addressed.

4.7 Sickness absence management is an on-going priority. The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 in respect of disability discrimination place an obligation on us as an employer to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities and recent case law demonstrates how failure to comply with this in disciplinary and formal sickness absence hearings can render dismissals unfair. In such cases, the compensation for disability discrimination is uncapped and this raises both the financial and reputational risks considerably.

4.8 The changes to the local government pension scheme in April 2014 aligned the Normal Pension Age with the state pension age. The possibility of further legislative change to state pension age will therefore impact directly on local government employees. This may lead to challenges in the future as an ageing workforce faces the requirement to work longer to retirement and may further worsen the existing demographic imbalance in the workforce by retaining older workers longer.

4.9 Attracting, developing and retaining the most talented people requires a reward strategy that is fit for purpose. We will continue to ensure that our pay systems are reviewed regularly and monitored for equal pay compliance and that annual gender pay gap reports are published, as required since March 2018 under the Gender Pay Gap Regulations. We will also seek to offer a range of benefits comparable with our competitors in the labour market. Achieving this in the context of shrinking resources and budget reductions will be extremely challenging and innovative approaches will be needed. Salary sacrifice schemes will continue to be offered and consideration will be given to other ways of assisting employees with effective management of their finances, whether this is part of pre-retirement planning or help for younger employees with childcare and other short to medium term expenses.

4.10 The potential implications of Brexit for UK employment legislation are not yet clear and a watching brief will need to be kept on this. It is likely that Brexit will have some implications on the availability of migrant labour from the EU and that this will impact on recruitment in some professional areas.

5. Priorities and objectives of the Workforce Strategy 2019-21

5.1 Organisational and Leadership Development

Over the next three years, the Workforce Strategy will help the organisation to effectively manage organisational change and development that is focused on people, their wellbeing and resilience. This will involve:

- Creating a positive employee relations environment working in partnership with employees and trade unions

- Developing an effective leadership culture, providing great leadership that is visionary, ambitious and effective. Identifying, developing and making best use of the talents of budding managers to develop leadership capacity at all levels and support future succession plans.
- Engaging employees and encouraging their contribution to organisational change for continuous service improvement
- Equipping staff to respond quickly to changing demands and the transformational agenda and supporting them to make maximum use of new and emerging technologies
- Promoting a culture of innovation and confidence in the workforce to engage with the development of Hertsmere as an 'enterprising council'.
- Developing a more flexible workforce supported by a flexible employment package and enhanced opportunities to achieve a healthy work-life balance
- Making sure people can progress and achieve their full potential
- Ensuring that this is a safe and healthy place to work and that accidents are minimized
- Promoting a range of well-being initiatives to assist staff to maximize and safeguard their physical and mental health
- Maintaining effective management action on sickness absence
- Enhancing partnership working and equipping staff with skills for the new ways of working, including shared services
- Developing the Human Resources function to ensure that it delivers clear added value to the business including maximising the HR systems to improve people management processes and to comply with the requirements of the GDPR.

N.B. The promotion of health and well-being initiatives is an area of special focus and further information is included in Appendix B about the initiatives to be included in the Workforce Plan 2019. The improvement of HR systems is also an area of special focus and further information is included in Appendix C about the initiatives to be included in the Workforce Plan 2019.

5.2 Skills Development

Over the next three years, the Workforce Strategy will enhance the capacity and capability of the organisation by skills development that is truly innovative and focused on combining organisational and individual needs. This will include:

- Expanding apprenticeship opportunities in as many departments as possible to attract and retain younger people in the workforce
- Expanding and improving work experience opportunities to encourage younger people to consider a career in local government
- Promoting a culture of learning and development for all staff.
- Linking personal development to high level performance and to the needs of the business through the on-line appraisal scheme
- Supporting career development to 'grow our own', through career grade schemes, coaching, mentoring, secondment and shadowing schemes
- Providing clear, structured qualification strategies for professional development
- Providing training opportunities through different media, including on-line training, where this is the most appropriate route to secure rapid and documented compliance with mandatory training requirements.
- Ensuring that staff have the skills, equipment and working environment they need to work efficiently and effectively

N.B. The expansion of apprenticeship opportunities is an area of special focus and further information is included in Appendix D about the initiatives to be included in the Workforce Plan 2019.

5.3 Improving Recruitment and Retention

Over the next three years, the Workforce Strategy will help address resourcing issues by ensuring that the council employs the best people with the most relevant skills, knowledge and experience, in the right place, at the right time, whilst ensuring effective cost control. This will mean improving recruitment and retention outcomes based on proper planning and use of best practice techniques.

- The annual Workforce Plan will support this aspect of the workforce strategy by predicting staffing needs and issues and identifying the requirements for recruitment solutions.
- Re-branding the Council as an employer of choice – the place where people want to be and retaining talent in the workforce. Recognition that a strong public service ethos and a good work life balance are currently the strongest motivators for people to work in local government indicates a need to promote these aspects strongly in recruitment campaigns. A number of innovative approaches can be adopted to show potential candidates the 'human face of the council' and dispel unhelpful negative stereotypes about working in local government.

- Improving recruitment processes and maximizing recruitment opportunities, especially through the use of social media and creative microsites for publicizing job opportunities. Reviewing the council's recruitment policy and procedures and revising the recruitment operational handbook and recruitment training to be more user friendly for managers.
- Maintaining effective control of the procurement and deployment of agency temps to ensure that wherever possible roles are covered by directly employed staff.

N.B. The improvement of recruitment and retention is an area of special focus and further information is included in Appendix E about the initiatives to be included in the Workforce Plan 2019.

5.4 Pay and Rewards

Over the next three years, the Workforce Strategy will help us to develop pay and reward systems that attract and retain talent, motivating and helping people throughout their careers by:

- Modernising pay and conditions and creating flexible reward packages that are highly valued by staff and reflect changing organisational needs
- Ensuring an innovative range of staff benefits are developed and promoted as part of a total reward approach
- Expanding the range of salary sacrifice benefits to provide staff with a cost effective alternative to more expensive commercial options
- Benchmarking local pay against relevant comparators in the Local Government E-PayCheck system
- Reviewing the pay and grading structure to ensure it remains fit for purpose

5.5 Equality and Diversity

Over the next three years, the Workforce Strategy will help us to value and embrace the diversity in our workforce by:

- Celebrating the diversity and tapping into the talent and potential of all employees to improve service delivery
- Ensuring the fair and consistent treatment of all staff
- Developing the diversity skills and awareness of employees and managers

- Promoting the Dignity at Work Policy across all teams and functions
- Monitoring workforce data and taking action to recruit and retain a balanced workforce
- Publishing the annual Gender Pay Gap reports and taking action to correct any anomalies that emerge from the analysis.

6. **Data Quality – General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

6.1 The council's job application form has been revised to include a privacy notice for job applicants. Data handling processes have been mapped and retention schedules have been produced for both existing and new employees and job applicants. Where third parties handle the data of employees or job applicants, they have provided appropriate assurances of compliance with GDPR requirements.

7. **Partnership Working**

7.1 The implementation of the Workforce Strategy will require effective partnership working between all the stakeholders, in particular the HR function and line managers. The Local Joint Committee is the forum for joint discussions between councillors, officers and staff representatives on workforce issues. Other relevant partnerships, which provide opportunities for networking and joint work include the Herts HR Partnership and the Local Government Employers.

7.2 We will work in partnership with organisations such as Work Solutions (HCC) to support people with disabilities gain and retain employment and with local schools and colleges, and the Herts Apprenticeship Alliance to encourage and support the entry of young people into the workforce through apprenticeships.

8. **Responsibilities**

8.1 The delegation of responsibilities for workforce matters is set out as follows in the Council's Constitution:

- **The Council** - is the employer.
- **The Executive Portfolio Holder for HR** - Has Executive input into human resources policy and is lead member in matters relating to employment.

- **The Personnel Committee** - Within both the organizational framework determined by the Council and approved budgets, to determine arrangements for the appointment and the dismissal of staff and the terms and conditions on which they hold office. Within the remit of the committee to determine matters of mutual interest and concern to the Council and its employees and, through the Local Joint Committee, to provide an interface for consultation with employees. To monitor equal opportunities in employment within the Council. Within the Council's organizational framework, to approve staffing proposals as they relate to individual employees and service group reviews, including early retirements, redundancies and severance arrangements; in relation to the staff establishment and filling of vacancies, this power shall include Directors or employees on comparable grades or conditions of service.
- **The Chief Executive** is Head of the Council's paid service, with authority over all other officers (except where otherwise provided by law) and to give such specific directions to staff as may be necessary to ensure that the objectives of the Council are carried out.
- **The Chief Officers** are responsible to authorise actions as specified in the Council's approved Human Resources Policies and Procedures.
- **The Senior Management Team** – Heads of Service have operational management responsibility for staffing matters within their departments
- **Managers and supervisors** have line management responsibilities for staff
- **Staff** have a responsibility to comply with the employee Code of Conduct
- **The Head of HR and Customer Services** is responsible for the provision of professional advice and support concerning all matters relating to employee relations and staffing issues.

9. Equalities and Diversity

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out on the Workforce Strategy in September 2019. N.B. This is not yet fully complete but has identified the main equality and diversity outcomes wanted from the strategy as follows:

- the implementation of fair and transparent processes and procedures in relation to employment including recruitment and retention;
- compliance with relevant employment laws including all the provisions of the Equality Act 2010;
- equal access to a range of employment benefits ;
- promotion of a culture of learning and development for all staff
- support for career development through coaching, mentoring, secondment, and training schemes

9.2 It was noted that the following factors could contribute or detract from the desired outcomes:

Negative:

- Current economic climate resulting in lack of resources.
- Insufficient opportunities for mentoring, coaching, training and development
- Language or communication needs of particular groups could impact on their access to employment and training opportunities
- Pressure on workforce capacity arising from shrinking resources could impact on the availability of opportunities for job share, part time or other flexible working arrangements that are more frequently sought after by women.

Positive:

- Buy-in from senior management, trade union and partners.
- Supportive and enabling frameworks such as relevant employment laws, the Equality Framework for Local Government, and the council's organisational objectives.
- Shared service arrangements with some partners.
- The council offers translation and interpreter facilities, where appropriate, and is able to produce information in alternative formats including Braille, and make other reasonable adjustments for disabled people.
- Provision of learning and development opportunities including training on equality and diversity

9.3 The potential for adverse impact in relation to negative factors such as language and communication barriers is minimised because the council takes proactive steps to prevent discrimination and ensure no group is disadvantaged. For example, the council offers translation/interpreter facilities where appropriate and makes other reasonable adjustments for disabled people. Training is provided for staff and managers to support the Council's commitment to equal opportunities in employment. The council's recruitment and selection policy and the HR department encourage flexible working arrangements.

9.4 These measures enable the council to deal with gender, race and disability equality issues and other related matters. It was identified that the strategy would positively impact on disabled people as it strengthens the work the council is doing in relation to promoting disability equality, including making reasonable adjustments. The council has adopted the Disability Confident standard, encourages the use of Access to Work Scheme, makes reasonable adjustments, etc.

10. Risk Management

- An ageing workforce and a weakness in succession planning poses the risk of loss of significant skills and experience over the next three years.
- Continuing difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff in areas of skills shortage such as Planning, Finance, Legal, Environmental Health and Asset Management is exacerbated by our proximity to London.
(N.B.this is not an exhaustive list)
- Requirement for budget reductions arising from funding deficits impacting negatively on staffing levels, pay and benefits
- Capacity problems impacting on the health and well-being of the workforce, leading in turn to further capacity problems through increased sickness absence and turn-over rates.
- Loss of morale and motivation in the workforce impacting on service quality and stakeholder perceptions
- Lack of clarity in employment law following Brexit
- There is a risk of potential rises in agency costs arising from the implementation of changes in IR35 regulations and the Apprenticeship Levy on employment agencies
- There is a risk of claims at the employment tribunal for breach of employment rights if policies and procedures are not followed and this is exacerbated by the recent repeal of fees for tribunal applications.
- There are risks of claims for personal injury if health and safety issues are not managed well.

Many of the measures highlighted in the Workforce Strategy 2019-21 will serve to mitigate aspects of these risks and further details of controls and outcomes will be reported in the annual Workforce Plans

11. Social Impact

11.1 The local authority is a significant employer within the Borough and can play a key role within a Local Employment Partnership, as well as modelling best practice in the management and development of its own workforce.

12. Environmental Impact

12.1 The Council supports green travel initiatives to minimise the impact of commuter journeys in and out of Hertsmere. The Council has a Cycle to Work Scheme for employees and also provides interest free season ticket loans to encourage staff who commute into Hertsmere to use alternative transport. The Council supports flexible working, including remote working, which can deliver benefits in terms of reducing the level of commuting to and from work. A

successful Homeworking Pilot offered the scope to reduce levels of commuting in participating teams. A salary sacrifice scheme for cars is offered to encourage staff to utilise energy efficient vehicles for travel to and at work.

13. Implementation

13.1 Implementation of the Workforce Strategy will be supported by the annual Workforce Plans.

14. Evaluation

14.1 The Workforce Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and takes account of changes in legislation and best practice. A revised Workforce Strategy will be published every three years. Progress on the delivery of the annual Workforce Plan will be monitored by report to the Personnel Committee each year, with reports on specific areas of the plan as required within the work programme of the Personnel Committee.

14.2 Evaluation of the Workforce Strategy and the Workforce Plan will include the following:

- The monitoring of performance indicators and trends in workforce statistics such as staff turn-over, recruitment outcomes; sickness absence; and aspects of the workforce profile including the outcomes of Equalities and Diversity monitoring and Gender Pay Gap reporting.
- Stakeholder feedback, including the results of Workforce Surveys; the evaluation of training opportunities, the outcome of consultation with staff representatives via the Local Joint Committee and the outcome of consultation with management via the Senior Management Team and the Middle Managers Group.

14.4 The strategy needs to be kept relevant by continuously assessing it against what is happening in the organisation and in the light of external drivers. We need managers, trade unions and staff to play their full role by commenting on and identifying any gaps that emerge over time. Should you have any questions about the content or implementation of our Workforce Strategy, or wish to contribute any views or suggestions, please contact the Head of HR and Customer Services (see contact details overleaf).

15. Contact Details

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