



## **Workforce Strategy 2022-2028**

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## Foreword

We recognise that the greatest asset we have, to deliver services to the communities of West Suffolk, is our workforce. It is important that, as we continue to deliver those services in a changing and challenging environment, our workforce strategy continues to focus on how we attract, retain, reward, nurture and develop our staff, through our five key workstreams.

There will be a continuum of change in public services over the coming years, not only in the services the public sector provides and the demands placed upon them, but in how services are delivered as demographics shift, new technologies emerge and our citizens' expectations change.



Our vision is: supporting and investing in our West Suffolk communities and businesses to encourage and manage ambitious growth in prosperity and quality of life for all. This Workforce Strategy, in line with our values, outlines our commitment to work together to deliver this vision and to develop future focused workforce plans to help us to deliver against our Strategic Framework, while building a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects and understands the communities we serve.

This strategy captures the learning from our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recognises the opportunities that 2020 has provided to move towards an agile organisation, valuing new ways of working and enabling our staff to deliver their best work in different ways, with a strong focus on supporting health and wellbeing.

The workforce strategy makes a commitment to take positive action to attract and develop an inclusive workforce that understands and reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We need to consider new ways of influencing culture change across the organisation, cultivating diversity and inclusion and creating a workforce where difference is respected and valued. We recognise that a diverse workforce, with a diverse set of experience, perspectives, understanding and background will support the development of new ideas.

We are focused on how we will continue to reform the way we work to enhance the capabilities of our staff, develop an inclusive culture where leaders, at all levels, promote a culture of personal responsibility and accountability and empower an engaged workforce, where our staff can be creative, flexible and have the right skills to respond positively to any challenges ahead. In so doing, we will build on the resilience of the workforce, increase productivity and effectiveness to enable us to respond to community demands together, providing the best outcomes for our residents.

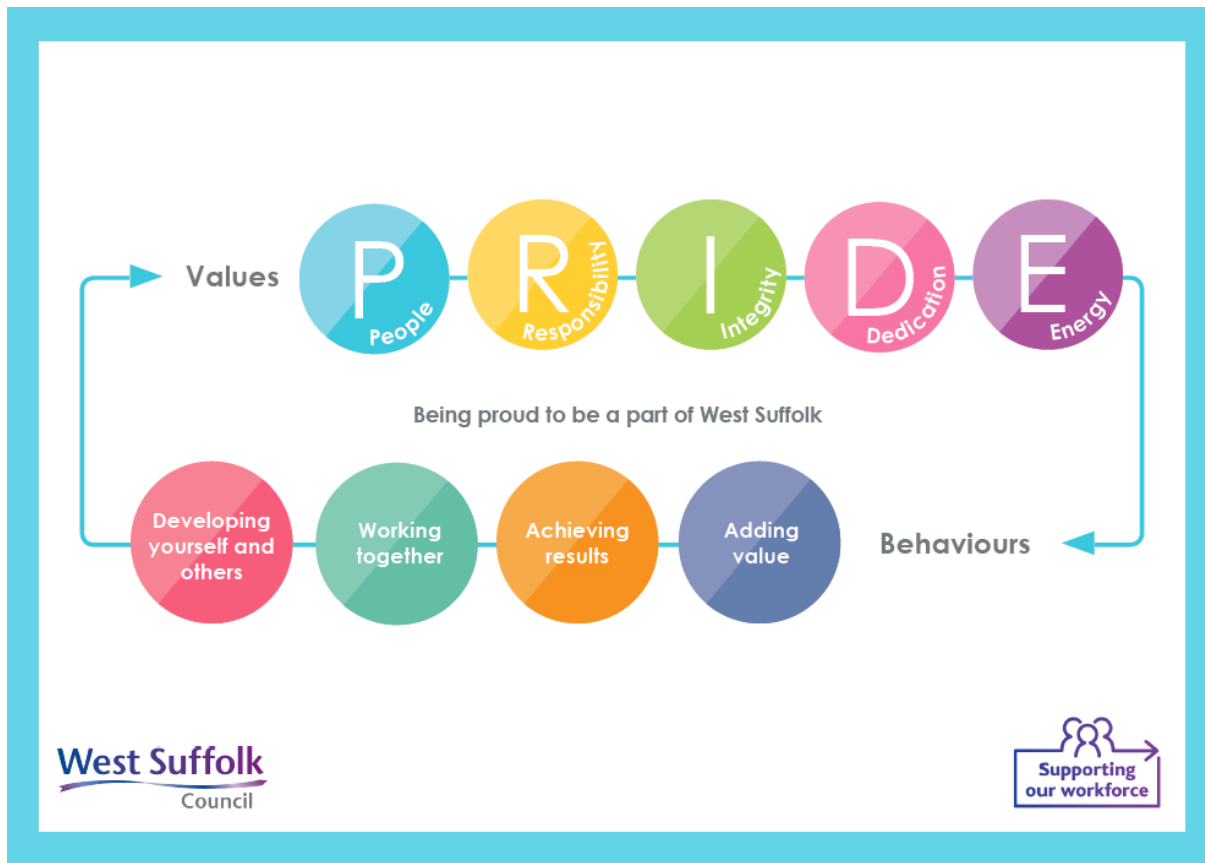
This strategy recognises that career trajectories and structures are changing and the traditional boundaries of jobs are starting to break down as people seek portfolio careers and organisations seek individuals who can move from project to project rather than fit a defined role, requiring us to challenge traditional specialised and linear public sector careers. These changes will therefore require us to respond and think differently if we are to recruit and retain a truly diverse and inclusive workforce, a workforce which is able to bring insight, encourage change and the ability to innovate, enabling us to transform, grow and deliver people focused services and initiatives.

**Ian Gallin, Chief Executive**

## Our Vision, values and behaviours

West Suffolk Council's vision is to be ambitious in supporting and investing in our communities, businesses and the environment and to encourage and manage growth, prosperity and quality of life for all.

Our values and behaviours are measured through our staff performance development review and underpin our workforce strategy, our roadmap to ensuring we have a motivated, committed and well-equipped workforce.



## Our workforce journey – where are we now?

West Suffolk Council is committed to being an employer of choice, offering an excellent working and development environment, with a commitment to learning and improving.

We recognise that the key quality and financial objectives can only be achieved through the contribution of a well-led, engaged and efficient workforce, a workforce proud to work for the people of West Suffolk.

The previous strategy 2018-2020 and the Interim People Plan 2020-2021 focused on the development of our workforce post-shared services and during the response to COVID-19, as well as the changing landscape of working in a much more collaborative way with partners.

A summary of some key achievements includes:

Workforce Strategy 2022-2028

- **Skills and behaviours**

We continue to provide opportunities for staff to engage and learn new skills. We invest in continuous professional and personal development for all staff by offering in-house and externally commissioned development programmes.

- **Recruitment and retention**

We have focused on flexible and timely approaches to recruitment, embedding career pathways for succession planning, and we have continued to seek flexible opportunities in the way people want to work with a focus on service delivery.

- **Health and wellbeing**

We have continued to offer a range of health and wellbeing initiatives that are made available to staff and online health and wellbeing resources that can be accessed at any time. Wellbeing levels across the organisation continue to be positive and the results from the wellbeing pulse surveys have consistently shown that there is great team support and positive working relationships across the organisation and high confidence that people can get help when they need it, as well as high levels of interest in work.

The warning signs we need to continue to consider are personal resilience, workloads, stress management, opening communication or connectivity with others to support these risk areas and physical health while working at home.

- **Reward and recognition**

We have continued to find creative ways to support our employer offer, with the introduction of additional non-financial rewards such as staff recognition awards.

- **Future planning**

With the continued commitment to apprenticeships, career pathways and promotion opportunities, we now need to move forward into an exciting new phase of our journey, capturing learning from our previous achievements, the pandemic and post COVID-19, to transform the way we deliver our services in a new agile way.

## **Contextual factors affecting our future workforce**

We continue to have a strong reputation and proven track record of transforming local government to meet the challenges faced by our council and communities, demonstrated by the creation of one West Suffolk Council. We need to build on this as we prepare the workforce for a range of external and internal challenges ahead. Table 1 outlines the ongoing internal workforce challenges.

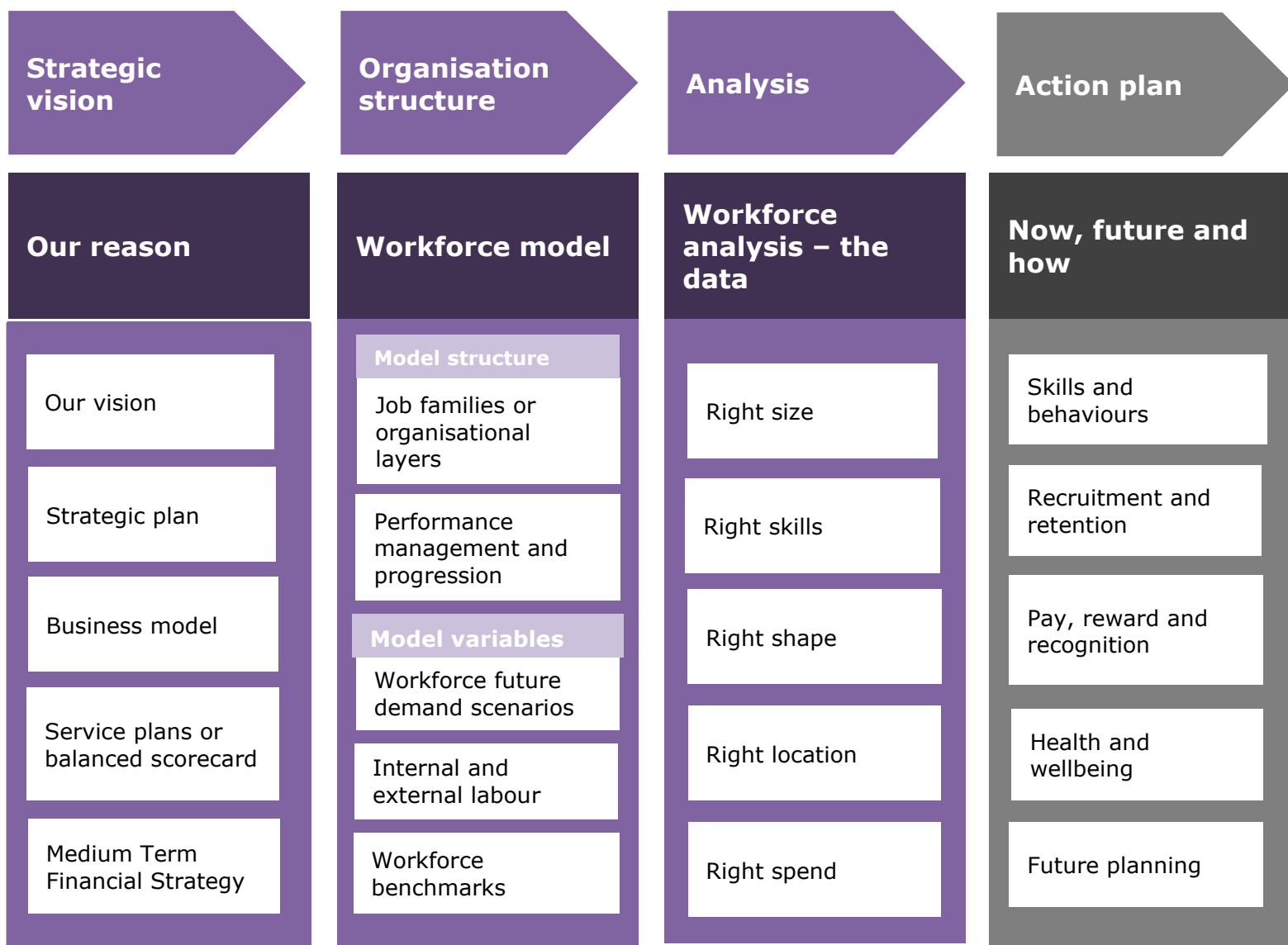
**Table 1 – Ongoing internal workforce challenges**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Recruiting and retaining a wide range of talent	Future profiling and succession planning that continues to grow and develop our own staff alongside the new to attract fresh external insights
New ways of working	Career pathways and progression
Leadership development and peer networks	Maximising the skills of current staff
Agile working	Financial sustainable solutions
Equality, diversity and inclusion covering recruitment, networks, training and coaching and mentoring	Health and wellbeing, with a focus on physical health and mental health
New learning management system	New approaches to corporate inductions
Leading Together development programme	Range of coaching and mentoring options
Staff survey and wellbeing pulse surveys	Ensuring employees are able to fully utilise the opportunities that emerge from new technologies that will transform how we deliver

## **Workforce strategy model**

Our strategy is underpinned by our overarching commitment: to enable West Suffolk Council to be a great place to work by attracting and growing a competent workforce with the right skills and behaviours to deliver the best services for our communities.

The model below outlines how this strategy sits across the wider organisational context.



## Valuing difference

The council recognises that a diverse set of experiences, perspectives and backgrounds is crucial to innovation and the development of new ideas. Valuing differences plays a key role in attracting and retaining talent and is an important component of a successful organisation.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity, creating a culture where diversity is valued and encouraged, using the principles of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

As part of this strategy, we set out how we will work towards a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local community, so that our services are provided appropriately and the council benefits from a wealth of experiences.

Throughout our workstreams, we encompass our approach to taking positive action to support our commitment to being an inclusive employer who values diversity and promote and support Disability Confident through both recruitment and retention.

## Leading together

To support managers at all levels to assist in coaching and supporting their staff and help deliver this strategy, Leading Together is our overall leadership commitment to 'building an engaged and energised workforce where different ideas are valued, ensuring that we know, support, empower and trust staff to effectively deliver, while being inclusive in all we do'.

This will be achieved through our five leadership behaviours:



- be authentic
- be visible
- engage with others to understand
- lead with integrity
- be enquiring and challenging.

## Our workstreams and priorities

We continue to focus and build on our five key workstreams as they underpin the ambitions of our organisation in becoming an agile employer, as we look to further transform the way we work in the coming period together with our commitment to attract, train and retain a workforce which embraces equality, diversity and inclusion.

### Skills and behaviours

#### Why is this a priority?



We strive to be an organisation where we support the right people, with the right skills to deliver and where people can give their best at work. Our people must be supported by strong leadership, leaders who create an environment of involvement and respect and where different ideas, backgrounds and perspectives are valued and used to create innovative and sustainable ways to work with our elected members and our communities. Equally we encourage and support all staff to demonstrate leadership, both personally and organisationally. We must focus on connective skills, those which enable collaborative working and shared delivery, translating our vision into successful completion of projects, to continue to drive public services.



## **What do we want to achieve?**

- Continue to train, develop and grow our workforce in multi-disciplinary settings to ensure our staff have the skills for their role, but to also focus on transferable skills as well as professional and technical skills.
- Continue to develop our teams to have the skills and behaviours to deliver services innovatively, creatively and flexibly, ensuring our staff are fully engaged at all levels.
- Support a flexible workforce through redeployment, secondment and job swaps, opening opportunities for our staff to work across the organisation, creating inhouse capacity to meet organisational demand.
- Support inclusive leaders, those who model the right values and behaviours and who welcome individual contributions, encourage and support engagement in decision making, challenge the norm and demonstrate effective coaching and mentoring.
- Develop leaders who have a people centred approach and promote a culture of personal responsibility and accountability, using emotional intelligence and actively promoting and supporting health and wellbeing.
- Encourage all staff to show personal and organisational leadership, taking responsibility and accountability in their work and their learning and development with a strong commitment to continuous personal development, investing in themselves as well as others.
- Foster a cultural mindset to learning and development and encourage a sharing of knowledge and interesting information across the workforce.

## **What actions will help us deliver the needs identified?**

- Continue to develop career pathways, mapping skills, future knowledge and behaviours to support succession planning, building in flexibility where necessary to develop skills across multiple areas of the organisation, a zig zag approach to career progression.
- Identify career pathway plans which can overlap into different areas to bring together core skills and abilities over a range of work areas and continue to develop skills mapping to match job roles to new and appropriate apprenticeship standards.
- Continue to maximise the opportunities of the apprenticeship levy either through apprenticeship contracts or upskilling the workforce, finding innovative and new subject standards.
- Deliver a suite of compulsory training for managers, supervisors and team leaders through providing leadership training and exploring opportunities around master classes.

- Introduce a comprehensive equalities and diversities training offer, including recruitment and interviewer training, unconscious bias and anti-racism and manager training.
- Embed a culture where staff invest in their own learning through the 'Take Time To Learn', a commitment of dedicating at least one hour a month to developing themselves through a range of ways – for example, reading interesting articles, completing e-learning modules, watching videos, listening to podcasts, talking to colleagues or discovering and sharing new ways of working.
- Encourage staff sharing of relevant learning with colleagues, either formally in team meetings or in discussions, or sharing learning with other colleagues across the organisation to benefit their development.
- Capture the learning and development activities in performance development reviews, which feed into individual and service training plans.
- Provide different ways of learning for our staff to self-develop in bite-size sessions, as and when they need support and guidance, through platforms such as Watch and Go, where staff can log in to watch single videos or a series of videos created as learning pathways.
- Continue to source new learning topics and providers to build on the current corporate training offer and professional training offers, and monitor and report on compulsory training module engagement to ensure we reach all corners of the workforce, which delivers the needs for the directorate training plans.
- Support our staff and peer networks to create a culture of engagement by encouraging employees to have a voice that is listened to and explore how we can extend these to support underrepresented groups.
- Embed coaching and mentoring as core management skills.
- Ensure all new managers, team leaders and supervisors are supported in their roles, through induction and training, to provide a base line of West Suffolk Council policies and procedures information, and continue to train to support development.

## **Recruitment and retention**

### **Why is this a priority?**



We need to continue to source, recruit and retain the best people with the right skills at the right time to deliver our vision. Good recruitment leads to good retention and both are equally important to the growth and success of any organisation. We need to build a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of and understands our communities, through all levels of the council. We need to ensure we support our staff at the start of their employment, from appointment to retirement, ensuring we focus on their work life balance and enabling them to reach their full potential and aspirations.

## **What do we want to achieve?**

- Retain as many as possible of our high performing employees who show commitment, dedication and loyalty to ensure we maintain a stable workforce, especially in terms of skills and knowledge.
- Monitor and retain healthy turnover rates, because we are an employer of choice – a place where people want to work, and want to recommend others to work with us, bringing new skills and ideas to continue to build a strong workforce.
- Be able to attract and retain specialist and hard to fill roles through creative approaches to recruitment and different models of recruitment and employment engagement.
- Find creative ways to recruit to hard to fill roles, within the ethos of the council's employment principles, finding solutions which are sustainable, fair and equitable.
- Ensure that new entrants to the council are fully embedded in the organisation from the outset and are welcomed by an induction programme that supports that process and their needs.
- Support our employees in their work and their personal lives by advocating work life balance, supporting agile working, caring responsibilities and volunteering opportunities.
- Ensure we support new ways of working through our new recruits, complementing the current agile working, and through the working lives of our employees, responding to different needs while ensuring the services deliver.

## **What actions will help us deliver the needs identified?**

- Develop and deliver an onboarding process for new starters, which enables processes to be completed online from application to offer, enabling induction to focus on the employee manager and the employee employer relationship and introduction to the council, together with the personal needs of each employee.
- Develop and deliver a new manager induction process which signposts managers to the toolkits and guidance in managing people and managing processes.
- Deliver a corporate induction event which enables all staff to meet members of Leadership Team together with colleagues across other service areas.
- Attract a wider pool of talent by re-evaluating the skill set needed when replacing staff, considering the needs of the role, not straightforward replacement.

- Ensure that all recruitment requests consider the widest options available for agile working, to ensure we attract a wider and diverse audience, testing and questioning traditional thinking and potential barriers.
- Promote agile working through our recruitment processes, by clarity and storytelling, with our staff sharing experiences and practices, and widening this through our recruitment website pages.
- Focus on local jobs for local people, within a local government setting, while considering suitable roles where wider ways of agile working may be available and enabling us to attract a wider and diverse workforce, particularly for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- Review our recruitment processes to identify and address any disparity in equality of opportunity.
- Continue to support career pathways, through apprenticeships, secondments, redeployment and job swapping, supporting job enrichment and satisfaction and enabling a flexible workforce to work across the council, having an insight into what all corners of the organisation do, not just those areas where they are deployed to work.
- Consider other flexible offers such as sabbaticals and career breaks, to enable our workforce to fulfil other opportunities, whether that be personal or work related, with the opportunity to return to the council, bringing back enriched skills and abilities achieved through different experiences.
- Focus on developing further employee engagement initiatives, such as staff focus groups, capturing the energy of staff who want to look at the possible in everything we do.
- Capture exit interview data to enable a clear understanding of the reason for staff movement, highlight any trends which can inform changes and expectations of staff.

## **Pay, reward and recognition**

### **Why is this a priority?**



We need to continue to be able to recruit and retain a diverse range of people and pay, reward and recognition is a fundamental part of our offer to our staff at a time when resources are even more stretched, post-COVID-19 recovery. In order to attract the best staff, we need to be able to ensure that we not only offer the employer of choice reputation but the widest available benefits that are available to us, in the most cost effective way, recognising that benefits are not always about pay. We need our staff to realise they are valued and recognised for their efforts through initiatives and events.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

- Continue to bring in new benefits, which meet our workforce needs, in terms of financial support and management, and enhance our offer through our West Suffolk We Save platform.
- Be competitive in terms of our pay, reward and recognition offer to our workforce and to future recruits.
- We are proud of our gender pay position – endeavour to ensure that any future pay initiatives do not compromise this position.
- Promote that reward is not all about pay and the employer offer focuses on the widest possibilities.
- Demonstrate to our staff, through staff recognition schemes such as the yearly recognition rewards, that we value them.

### **What actions will help us deliver the needs identified?**

- In July 2021, we launched Cushon, a financial benefit which offers savings schemes for staff and is based on the West Suffolk We Save platform. Continue to promote this, along with financial initiatives, webinars and talks.
- Launch Salary Finance, a financial benefit based on the West Suffolk We Save site, which offers the widest financial help to our staff, including short term and long term loans, draw down arrangements during the pay month and other opportunities to support short term financial pressures.
- Continue to ensure our pay line is fit for purpose.
- Undertake both gender and ethnicity pay gap recording.
- Continue to utilise the full range of benefits available on the Reward Gateway platform, such as SmartTech purchase scheme, SmartAwards e-cards and e-communication and a car benefits scheme.
- Continue to work with Reward Gateway to promote the West Suffolk We Save benefits and actively communicate, through the site, with staff who are signed up as members and continue to promote 'good news savings' with updates from Human Resources and Learning and Development.
- Promote our range of non-financial benefits, such as agile working, flexible working and work life balance, and ensure those policies continue to add to the overall offer.
- Continue to deliver yearly staff award recognition which reflects the priorities of West Suffolk Council.

## Health and wellbeing

### Why is this a priority?

A healthy and motivated workforce, which demonstrates resilience and is responsive to change, will reflect in the quality of services we provide for our communities.



A proactive approach towards workplace health and wellbeing will support our staff to be happy, healthy and motivated. Failure to recognise that a culture of a strong commitment to health and wellbeing is one of the most important offers an employer can make will result in an increase on spend in this area, together with low morale, poor productivity and high turnover. Good health and wellbeing is a core enabler of employee engagement and organisational performance.

### What do we want to achieve?

- Support our staff to ensure they maintain a work life balance, which provides a sense of value and responsibility with employees being in control of their lives. In return, our staff will have increased loyalty and a stronger commitment to the organisation.
- Ensure levels of absence are at a manageable level across the council, but also be mindful of how agile working can mask absence through a commitment of always being accessible.
- Aspire to be a good employer who recognises the importance of work life balance, but also the pitfalls where home and work lines can potentially blur in order that we can reduce workplace stress and absence.
- Support employees to have a choice over how and when they work, giving them greater autonomy and job satisfaction.

### What actions will help us deliver the needs identified?

- Through strong people policies, such as agile working and health and wellbeing, continue to support an environment where our employees matter to us and our managers take responsibility for supporting and signposting their staff in terms of wellbeing interventions.
- Encourage and support our employees to maintain good physical and mental health, actively monitoring health data, and develop a positive work and home life balance to avoid home life conflict and positively discourage a working long hours culture and an expectation to always be accessible.
- Work with managers to ensure that health and wellbeing is a priority and ensure that they uphold those values in the ways in which they will support their staff and themselves.
- Provide a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives, which support not only the national events and topics but also reflect and respond to the needs

of our workforce, and ensure that initiatives are monitored and evaluated to ensure they are current and relevant.

- Ensure we recognise health issues, especially in an agile world, and can address them and support staff and managers to resolve matters, ensuring our managers lead by example through emotional intelligence, role modelling and self-awareness.
- Communicate and evaluate our health and wellbeing offer, through the intranet and use of regular pulse surveys, to support health and wellbeing.
- Support agile ways of working to enable our staff to maintain a work life balance and empower them to have more autonomy over their work, where it is done and how it is done.
- Work closely with our external counselling provider to offer timely and topical support networks such as the parent and carer group and the new normal life group.
- Support our staff to engage with staff networks which provide a culture of engagement, encouraging employees to have a voice and a safe space to share issues, concerns and ideas, to ensure a range of views are considered for the best outcomes.
- Engage and work with our mental health first aiders and wellbeing champions, to continue to offer a range of support for our workforce, through our internal network of staff based in our services.

## **Future planning**



### **Why is this a priority?**

Workforce planning can be the most effective activity an organisation can engage in to provide internal and external intelligence to enabling effective current staff needs and future succession planning. We need to be able to plan for skills shortages, both local and national, monitor turnover and undertake succession planning to be able to respond to service needs and demand and continue to support the transformation of the organisation. Planning enables us to identify gaps between the present and the future, to enable the implementation of solutions so that we can deliver on our priorities.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

We need to stay ahead of the curve to ensure that we have the right number of people, with the right skills, employed in the right place at the right time. We need to think creatively and consider career pathways and career portfolios which enable us to utilise our workforce in the most flexible way that enhances not only their career opportunities but also the opportunities for the council. We need sound workforce planning to enable sustainable organisational performance, through better decision making about the future people needs in the public sector. We need to be able to tell the story through our workforce data.

## **What actions will help us deliver the needs identified?**

- Positively encourage and seek opportunities for our staff to be redeployed or seconded to other parts of the council in order to build new skills and abilities, building portfolio careers which will enable a greater approach to matrix working.
- Use information drawn from the staff surveys to inform workforce planning decisions and actions.
- Encourage a stronger commitment and a fluid movement of staff to enable staff to gain new skills within the organisation, supporting the 21<sup>st</sup> century public servant expectations of the new public sector employee.
- Ensure that workforce planning is not just about numbers, but is about skills potential and how this can be deployed across a multi-disciplinary organisation, with buy-in needed from the whole organisation, linking the strategic need to the workforce planning.
- Produce relevant people data, on a quarterly basis, to enable service managers to interpret the data, input good quality information and analyse performance for their service, but understand where their service fits with the organisation.
- Improve the quality and quantity of data we hold about our workforce to help make more insightful decisions. Use the data to bring together organisational and strategic planning processes, while being clear that the approach must be flexible to deal with constant change.

## **Delivering the strategy**

A key part of any successful strategy is the execution and everyone has a part to play in translating this strategy into reality and, in the process, enhancing our culture.

### **Strategic managers**

- As a leadership team, promote and support the implementation of this strategy.
- Create opportunities to talk to staff and managers about progress made against our people plan aspirations and the ongoing challenges we face and how we can overcome them.
- Create a space to listen to staff and promote an inclusive workforce.
- Encourage and support others to take responsibility for continual learning and development.



## **All people managers**

- Ensure all staff understand and know how their work contributes to our objectives, connected to the performance development review.
- Foster an inclusive team where people are recruited for attitude and trained for skill.
- Create an environment where staff are willing to try new ideas, focus on what does work and what could be even better (growth mindsets).
- Work together to identify and manage shared problems and develop shared solutions – ‘one team culture’.
- Know your people, use emotional intelligence to have difficult conversations, show empathy and compassion, with wellbeing at the forefront of supporting people.
- Share and celebrate successes together; create and support development opportunities.
- Use resources in different ways; continue to embrace flexible deployment and agile working.
- Continually learn and adapt – as leaders and with our teams.
- Focus on engaging and communicating with staff.
- Be a cohort of strong and confident managers, working together internally and across the system.
- Build positive relationships with members to help shape and influence our response to our challenges, opportunities and risks.

## **All staff**

- Keep talking and sharing ideas; be open minded.
- Take the initiative to propose new ways of working which supports collaboration and increases efficiencies for the council.
- Take personal responsibility for how and when you work.
- Utilise training and development opportunities to increase your understanding of inclusivity and proactively address any discrimination in and outside the workplace.
- Take control of your personal learning and career progression.
- Look after yourself and your teams; put wellbeing at the heart of all we do.

## **Human Resources (HR) Team**

- Work closely with senior managers to develop workforce plans in directorates in support of the priorities outlined in this strategy.
- Regularly monitor and give feedback on emerging themes, progress and challenges.
- Review key HR policies, procedures, systems and management support to facilitate organisational change.
- Work closely with trade unions to help improve performance and lead on negotiations.