Cheshire West & Chester Council

People & Culture Strategy **2025-2028**

Stranger together: Our workforce of the future

Play your part towards a Stronger Future

Cheshire West and Chester

Foreword

Creating and maintaining a strong and positive culture is incredibly important, in any organisation. I believe that's particularly the case for us as a Council.
Whether we're working together to solve challenges, empowering our residents and businesses to thrive, or thinking about how we might improve services for local people, culture is the force that shapes how - and how effectively - we do it.

At our heart, we're an organisation built on relationships. We exist to support our communities; and none of us can possibly do that on our own. Our work is therefore defined by our culture - because a strong culture supports collaboration, helps to drive innovation, and builds the trust we need; both with our residents, and with each other.

For that reason, I really welcome our new People and Culture Strategy. Building on the foundations of our Code of Conduct, and our owned THRIVE values it will help to guide us in a direction where every member of our workforce genuinely feels they can be themselves and make a positive difference to our communities every single day. I look forward to seeing the progress it helps us all to make as a Council over the coming months and years.

Councillor Louise Gittins
Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Since I joined Cheshire West and Chester Council - and more recently as Chief Executive - I've seen first-hand what a talented and passionate workforce we have here. The difference our teams make to people's lives and livelihoods can't be under-estimated, and it's important we have the confidence to promote it as far as wide as we can. We need to continue to build on our strengths adopting a 'One Council' approach with us all contributing to our vision where everyone plays their part in building a stronger future

My ambition is for us as we continue to look ahead is to be seen as a genuine employer of choice. I know this will be an aspiration shared by every one of our colleagues - to be truly proud to work here, to love working here, and to be as attractive as possible to potential employees so that we can continue to learn and grow.

We've already made some great progress on our path to achieving this - including the launch of a new recruitment website, and an established network of Ambassadors, who regularly visit schools, colleges, universities and career fairs to share the work we do and promote working for the Council as one of the most meaningful and rewarding career choices you can make.

Our new People and Culture Strategy is another exciting stage on that journey. It gives us a great framework to recruit, develop and retain high quality staff as we continue to move forward together, and we will share its impact with you on at least an annual basis.

Del Curtis
Chief Executive, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester Council's 'People Plan' concluded in 2025. It focused on the four key themes of recruit, retain, develop and embed to enable Council colleagues to 'play their part' in delivering Council priorities. Since the implementation of the plan, a number of key workforce changes and developments have been achieved. The most notable include:

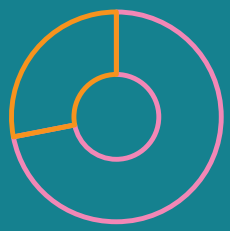
- the launch of a bespoke recruitment website
- implementation of an Inclusive Employment Strategy
- implementation of a Modern Workforce approach to flexible working
- the introduction of Play your Part Charters and Conversations model
- a refreshed approach to Talent and Development through tailored pathways
- commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through the 'Be You' campaign
- investment in a reward and recognition scheme
- retention of 'Investors in People' accreditation.

These interventions have helped form foundations upon which to build and to ensure that this strategy takes them forward in terms of tangible outcomes, continuing to have measurable impact on our future workforce and direction of the Council. The Council has a passionate, proud and genuine commitment across the workforce to work collectively for the good of the borough. We will build on our success so far, strengthening our culture, behaviours and approach. This strategy will enable our colleagues to 'do things differently, to make a difference', putting our communities, residents and customers at the heart of everything we do.

Our workforce

There are nearly **3500** colleagues working across the Council

3% of colleagues are from diverse racial groups



72% of our workforce is female and **28%** is male

55% of the workforce are aged 40 to 59 with those aged 16-29 making up **14.5%**

2% of our workforce have declared they have a disability or long-term health condition

Women earn **£1.07** for every **£1** earned by men

There have been **5054** colleague recognition 'Shout outs'

50 entry level apprentice starters over the last 3 years

Please note that these statistics relate to 2021-2024 or latest position 2024.

Next steps

The Council's commitment to its workforce remains strong, with further aspirations to enhance our colleague experience offer to ensure we are a top employer of choice. Our People and Culture Strategy has been developed alongside the Council's Borough Plan and in consultation and partnership with Council and Trade Union colleagues. It will develop and sustain the Council's workforce of the future, based on being 'Stronger Together', realising 'Our Vision' – "*A stronger future where we all play our part in thriving, caring and sustainable communities*".

Our colleagues are essential to our delivery model; it is through them that our ambitious plan will be achieved. This will be facilitated through a 'Stronger Together' workforce which thrives on collaboration, inclusivity and mutual support. We will embody the notion that colleagues achieve more when they work together, utilising and enhancing their knowledge, skills and capability. This will be driven by insight-led decisions, innovative practice and empowered colleagues who 'play their part' to make a real difference to our residents and communities.

Our Strong Missions

Starting well:

The best possible start for our children and young people, with improved opportunity, a healthier start, greater resilience in families and the best possible support and care when it is needed.

Tackling hardship and poverty:

More people feel more financially secure as the causes and impact of hardship and poverty are addressed by working alongside residents.

Resilient people living their best lives:

Local people are enabled to flourish, be healthy, happy and independent for longer in supportive communities.

Opportunity in a fair local economy:

Local people and businesses contribute to and benefit from a strong and fair local economy.

Neighbourhood pride:

Residents live in well maintained, connected and safe places with good and affordable homes.

Greener communities:

Individuals, public services and businesses take action to move to tackle the climate emergency, achieve net zero, protect the natural environment and adapt to the impact of climate change.

Play your part
towards a Stronger Future

Context

Cheshire West and Chester Council finds itself against a backdrop of significant challenges for local government, in meeting people's needs. Significant numbers of homeless families and children are in temporary accommodation and housing waiting lists continue to grow. Adult social care is under continued pressure as need rises. There are spiralling costs and pressures for children's social care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including home-school transport. Alongside this are the fundamental long-term challenges facing communities, including trends in ageing, demographic shifts, social and health inequality and climate change. Plus, the need to safeguard against rising cyber security attacks, whilst balancing the digital transformation and inclusion of services.

The Council recognises that it is facing a period of significant change, particularly in relation to increasing need for services, alongside balancing budgets. However, following the launch of the Borough Plan there are significant opportunities for transformation, coproduction and service excellence. In addition, the Local Government review and devolution deal for Cheshire and Warrington will require new approaches to partnership and collaborative working plus opportunities to have ownership over the way in which funding is applied and services delivered. This strategy harnesses the exciting possibilities and opportunities presented by the future world of work. It sets out the Council's aspiration to maintain high levels of performance and engagement by aligning our colleague experience offer with the delivery of excellent customer service.

The Council aspires to ensure that every colleague has an exceptional experience during their time at Cheshire West and Chester. Pre-hire to leave or retire and everything in between, will form our 'colleague experience' offer. This offer has been developed with our colleague's aspirations at its heart, creating a 'One Council' culture of belonging, led by compassionate leaders and managers who nurture colleague wellbeing, resilience and development.

The Council is also going through a significant period of change, in terms of digitalisation and service redesign. The focus is influenced by the Council's commitment to increasing efficiencies and productivity, continually diversifying, as well as attracting and retaining the best people. The strategy will enable the Council's people to continue to grow and mature this approach, by improving internally delivered services and establishing new delivery models to support the organisational structure for the future. The approach to workforce planning will support not only talent and succession, but also the growth and diversification aspirations (such as contract bids, TUPE transfers and service redesigns). This strategy will support this aim through further embedding and strengthening the Council's approach to people management, wellbeing and workforce development

It is also important to acknowledge that the implementation of this strategy will be supported by 'cutting edge' employment practices. This means that our policies, initiatives and approaches will be forward-thinking, designed to improve our colleague experience,

enhance productivity and align with modern work practices. The Council will ensure that its people practices enable secure and flexible work, payment of the local living wage, engagement and colleague voice, diverse recruitment, values-driven performance management and development and a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. This will enable us to be a proactive competitor in attracting and retaining top talent, whilst fostering a more engaged and outcome-driven workforce. The Council will also continue to benchmark its approaches via external accreditations including Investors in People (IIP) and Inclusive Employers plus external networking and good practice benchmarking groups such as Northwest Employers organisation, to ensure we remain at the top of our 'people' game.

The strategic commitments within this strategy have been linked to the Council's THRIVE values to ensure that the outcomes have a direct impact on the organisation's aspirations and success. This strategy puts our people at the heart of what we do and will enable the Council to have 'the right people', 'in the right place', undertaking 'the right actions'. Inclusion, connectivity, accountability and development are common themes throughout this strategy, and it is hoped the themes set out will support all colleagues to 'belong', bringing their best selves to work and therefore deliver the best possible outcomes for the Borough and its citizens, rewarding those who go above and beyond and actively challenging those who don't live our values.

‘One Council’ Culture

Our vision will only be achieved if we have a clear set of values that drive our culture, behaviours, and activities. The People and Culture Strategy themes are linked to the Council’s established THRIVE values to ensure they are meaningful and impactful for colleagues. In turn, this strategy will facilitate better decisions, support delivery of better services and help connect the Council more closely to our communities, residents and customers. Our THRIVE values help remind us of our public service ethos and guide everything we do.

Teamwork

We achieve so much more together and there is more that unites us than divides us. Our relationships with communities and taking a collaborative approach across services and organisations will be vital to make a difference.

Honesty

We will always act with openness and candour, being clear about what works well, what is possible and what needs to change. It’s also about being accountable for our responsibilities.

Respect

Respect is integral to good public services and good relationships. We will build on the strengths of our communities. We will always listen to and respect our communities, our partners and our colleagues even when we have different opinions and views.

Innovation

We will work together to think creatively focusing on solutions and possibilities rather than problems. Often this is about tackling the root causes of any challenge, embracing technology, and seeing things from a different perspective.

Value for money

This is more than just saving money. It’s about being passionate about making a difference through every pound we spend or influence.

Empowerment

We want to help our residents, communities and colleagues to be genuinely empowered to achieve their ambitions. We will act to foster this empowerment, providing people with the opportunity and resources to make a difference.

Consultation

Colleague 'voice' is important to us and essential in the shaping of this strategy alongside working towards our Borough Plan. Colleagues were asked 'what does employer of choice' mean to you to support our approach. Their feedback has been utilised to shape the commitments, actions and expected outcomes of the strategy.

- Feeling trusted, respected and valued
- Collaboration across the organisation
- Having a culture of openness and honesty
- Values that are visible and demonstrable
- Recognition and appreciation for making a difference
- Having a 'voice' and being 'heard'
- Inclusive and authentic leadership and management
- Being proud of where you work
- Flexibility and work life balance
- Working smarter with the right technology
- Development opportunities and career progression
- Having a strong reputation which is recognised by Members and Residents

High Performance Outcomes

To enable us to drive successful outcomes through the achievement of our Borough Plan and Missions, the Council will continue to develop and invest in high performing teams. High performing individuals will ensure we enhance organisational outcomes, strengthen our sustainability and empower us as a regional leader. This will be achieved through the implementation of our strategy commitments and actions. As a consequence, Cheshire West and Chester colleagues will stand out from the crowd by being collaborative in their approach, results driven, operating in a culture of trust and openness, with high resilience and adaptable to change, whilst being valued and motivated through a strong sense of purpose. We will foster a community-led approach to service engagement and delivery, ensuring our colleagues are curious, listen, connect, enable and empowered so the decisions and interventions we put into place truly reflect the needs of our residents, businesses and communities.

By the year 2028, Cheshire West and Chester will have achieved the following high-performance people outcomes, linked to our THRIVE values. We truly will be 'Stronger Together' and an employer of choice, through our world class colleague experience approach to people and culture. In turn residents, businesses and communities within Cheshire West and Chester will have a strong future.

1. Attract, recruit and resource (Teamwork)

Cheshire West and Chester create appealing and fulfilling roles attracting and retaining high talent colleagues, right first time through values-based recruitment and selection. Based on an insight-led workforce planning approach ensuring the Council is fit for the future.

2. Equitable, diverse and inclusive (Respect)

Cheshire West and Chester has a culture of belonging, where everyone's difference is celebrated and valued. Our colleagues will bring their whole selves to work, to be the best they can be and in turn are empowered to deliver excellent services.

3. Well led and inspiring (Honesty)

Cheshire West and Chester have skilled, compassionate, inclusive and authentic leaders and managers. They nurture and develop high performing teams and drive outcomes through a 'One Council' approach. Taking accountability for underperformance, ensuring continuous improvement.

4. Engage, reward and recognise (Empowerment)

Cheshire West and Chester colleagues understand how they contribute to our vision; they have a strong colleague voice and go the extra mile. Their commitment and achievements are rewarded and recognised enabling a sustainable workforce, by retaining the right people.

5. Enable productivity and performance (Value for Money)

Cheshire West and Chester has motivated and productive team members who are ready to face future challenges acting in the best interests of our customers and communities; through maximising their potential to deliver with impact, exceptional services for customers.

6. Deliver future focused, enabling services (Innovation)

Cheshire West and Chester colleagues embrace change; by being insight led, adopting digital technologies and innovative redesign approaches, they actively contribute to our transformation journey.

Strategy commitments, actions and measures:

This strategy focuses on six strategic commitments which will rationalise its vision and support the outcomes to enable Cheshire West and Chester to bring to life its People and Culture Strategy "Stronger Together – Our Workforce of the Future":

1. Attract, recruit and resource

The Council is committed to reviewing its overarching target operating model incorporating workforce planning, skills development, and cultural alignment to ensure the organisation has the right talent to achieve its goals.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Continuing to develop our recruitment website, linking to national campaigns and use of social media/networks to promote the Council as an 'employer of choice' to support attraction of high calibre candidates.
- Further embedded job role profile approach and commitment to redesign roles that become vacant or created to ensure we structure roles that are attractive and help us fulfil our priorities.
- Review our recruitment processes, so they are streamlined, accessible and create the best possible candidate experience.
- Develop agreed recruitment and selection principles to ensure we recruit the best people based on our values and without bias. Including inviting our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network colleagues to be part of our recruitment panels.
- Commit to all prospective candidates that we will share interview questions or selection activities in advance so they can be the best they can be.
- Continue to invest in our 'Ambassadors', who commit to sharing their professional and work experiences for the benefit of prospective candidates and support existing colleagues to appreciate wider career opportunities within the Council.
- Adopt the Migrant Workers Charter, to provide career opportunities and further resilience to our workforce.
- Proactively engage with our care experienced to promote development, work experience and career opportunities as part of our commitment as Corporate Parents.
- Continue to work with the Armed Forces Covenant, to build equality of opportunity for ex-armed forces personnel including guaranteed interview scheme.
- Commit to ringfencing vacant roles to support apprentice and graduate recruitment, with the expectation that we will grow our graduate talent, one per service by the conclusion of the strategy.
- Regularly review applicant, candidate and appointment data to ensure we have an inclusive approach free from bias, supporting a diverse workforce.

- Review our onboarding approach so newly appointed colleagues are supported and ready for day one, including actioning any required reasonable adjustments and essential development activity.
- All services will have a robust workforce plan, owned by the relevant manager, linked to the achievement of their priorities, outlining key people interventions to support a sustainable workforce.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester create appealing and fulfilling roles attracting and retaining high talent colleagues, right first time through values-based recruitment and selection. Based on an insight led workforce planning approach ensuring the Council is fit for the future.

Success will be measured by.

- Time and cost to recruit.
- Turnover (those people who leave the organisation annually) and reason for leaving.
- Attrition (reduction of workforce due to; sickness, ill health, retirement, resignation/dismissal).
- Number of people who successfully pass their probation (right first time).
- Tracking applicant, candidate and appointment conversion linked to diversity monitoring and 'Ambassador' activity (including guaranteed interview scheme linked to care experienced and ex-armed forces).
- Workforce profile as part of the annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring report.
- Essential development activity completion linked to key performance measures to establish impact.

2. Equitable, diverse and inclusive

The Council is committed to creating an environment where every individual can feel safe, experience a sense of belonging, and is empowered to achieve their full potential. We will prioritise developing and progressing a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation and a culture of belonging by going beyond our legal duties, taking an intersectionality approach and zero tolerance to harassment and discrimination.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Continue to develop our 'Be You' campaign sharing lived and ally experiences to enhance our culture of belonging, through our engagement and communications activity.
- Adopt trauma informed organisational practices by integrating an understanding of trauma into decision-making, communication, and team management. Creating an environment where employees feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive - even if they are managing past or present trauma.
- Focus on developing managers to ensure psychological safety is paramount, so they create working environments where people feel safe to speak up, admit mistakes, and seek help without fear of retribution.
- Leadership and management commitment that no colleague will be disadvantaged due to their difference, including a proactive and collaborative approach to reasonable adjustments.
- Build upon our Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard programme, expanding the approach across the organisation to identify issues and measure improvements in the workforce with respect to the experiences of colleagues from different racial backgrounds.
- Co-create, implement and act upon a charter which commits to upholding colleagues' right to work in an environment that is free from discrimination, abuse, and harassment.
- Review the Council's approach to Equality Analysis, redesigning the process and creating compliance to ensure that any policy, project or scheme does not unlawfully discriminate against any individual.
- All colleagues from under-represented groups/backgrounds in the workplace will be given the opportunity to undertake a programme of activity to nurture and empower them to progress into leadership and management roles.
- Implement a 'co-mentoring' pathway where colleagues from under-represented groups/backgrounds in the workplace mentor our leaders/managers to educate and remove workplace barriers and in turn our leaders/managers mentor colleagues to open up development and progression opportunities.
- Recognise and value the importance of our multi-generational workforce by seeking to become an age friendly organisation.

- Strong colleague ‘voice’ enabled through our People and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Network groups. Each network group having a set of priorities and deliverables that link to the People and Culture Strategy themes.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester has a culture of belonging, where everyone’s difference is celebrated and valued. Our colleagues bring their whole selves to work, to be the best they can be and in turn are empowered to deliver excellent services.

Success will be measured by.

- Inclusive Employers Standard benchmarking
- Disability Confident Leaders Re-accreditation
- Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA+ Charter Mark
- Gender, Ethnicity and Disability pay gap monitoring
- Percentage increase of colleagues who feel comfortable to disclose information in relation to protected characteristics
- Improved diversity of our workforce reflecting the communities we serve
- Progression of underrepresented groups/background into management/leadership roles
- EDI development activity completion linked to key performance measures to establish impact
- Proactively monitoring harassment and discrimination cases
- Monitoring our age demographic
- Leadership demographics based on under-represented groups

3. Well led and inspiring

The Council recognises that leadership and management roles are positions of privilege, therefore we have high expectations for these individuals. We will hold them to account in how they set exemplar workplace behaviours, invest in their development and empower them to live our values to support their teams to achieve our STRONG Priorities.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Transparent expectations of leaders, managers and colleagues articulated and facilitated through the Council's Play Your Part Charter approach. To be utilised for attracting the best team members, development, performance and progression.
- Development and implementation of 'People Manager' goals, focusing on accountability for colleague engagement, development, wellbeing, performance and employee relations.
- Focus on 'compassionate and authentic' leadership development to ensure all leaders and managers prioritise inclusion, resilience, wellbeing, health and safety and recognition across their teams.
- All leaders and managers to adopt a 'coaching' style to facilitate an empowering people management and development approach.
- Further embed our Leadership Pathways to ensuring we provide development, succession and progression opportunities giving managers ownership of their career trajectory.
- Commit to knowledge sharing/mentoring of aspiring and developing managers, facilitated by those who are producing high performing people outcomes within the Council.
- Dedicated 'talk to me time', facilitated by our senior leaders, to enable colleague to seek clarity of direction, flag areas of concern and share innovative ideas to support and improve their colleague experience.
- Promote, analyse and act upon our colleague engagement survey, developing tangible actions (linked to workforce plans) to support continuous improvement.
- Leaders and managers for each service have an up to date, fit for purpose business continuity plan and risk register to support organisational resilience and ensuring all colleagues have an understanding of this.
- Embed our Play Your Part Conversation approach so all colleagues understand our shared vision and their role in making our priorities a reality through clear and agreed goals.
- Utilisation of the 'learning' element of Play Your Part Conversations to ensure every colleague has access to relevant development activities, whether formal or informal.
- All leaders and managers to ensure that all colleagues have an understanding and appreciation of working within a political environment.
- All leaders and managers to tackle team challenges and underperformance in real time (no matter what level) through open and honest conversations, resolving issues informally as the first and preferred approach.

- Proactively utilising our workforce data to improve our colleague experience offer, being accountable for areas of improvement.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester have skilled, compassionate, inclusive and authentic leaders and managers. They nurture and develop high performing teams and drive outcomes through a 'One Council' approach, taking accountability for underperformance ensuring continuous improvement.

Success will be measured by.

- Percentage of colleagues who trust the leaders/managers in the organisation (engagement survey).
- Completion and quality of Play your Part Conversations.
- Workforce data trend improvements.
- Emerging Leader pathway completion linked to internal/external progression.
- Positive reduction in employee relations cases.
- Frequency of leadership communication.

4. Engage, reward and recognise

The Council aspires to enable its workforce to be 'Stronger Together'. We are committed to promoting activities and interventions which facilitate communication, consultation and collaboration across the organisation which in turn support colleagues to undertake their roles successfully.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Implement an exciting and informative forward plan of engagement and communication activities to support colleague understanding, development and stretch.
- Continue to embed an integrated and high-quality operating model which supports the psychological and physical wellbeing of all colleagues, including our Wellbeing Champions, Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and bespoke workshops.
- Implement a targeted and progressive 'Health Strategy', promoting women's health, including our commitment to period dignity, pregnancy and maternity care, breast feeding and menopause support.
- Implement a targeted and progressive 'Health Strategy', promoting men's health, including our commitment to mental and physical health awareness, the importance of regular cancer screenings and check-ups for chronic diseases such as blood pressure, hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol.
- All managers to utilise the 'strengths' element of Play your Part Conversations to celebrate individual successes and provide recognition.
- Refresh our reward and recognition scheme, ensuring it is promoted and utilised, so colleagues understand how they are valued and appreciated.
- Continue to promote our colleague benefits, including salary sacrifice annual leave purchase, Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), home and electronics, cycle to work and car lease schemes, as well as retail discounts.
- Promote our Volunteering Pathway to utilise colleagues/teams' skills enabling them to 'give something back', supporting team wellbeing and connectivity.
- Continued commitment to pay all roles the 'Local Living Wage' and encouraging our partners and contractors to do the same.
- Refreshing our Retirement Pathway so all colleagues are supported and prepared for their transition to leaving the organisation.
- Continue to embed our 'farewell' conversations, understanding the reasons colleagues leave the Council and using this information to further develop our colleague experience.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester colleagues understand how they contribute to our Vision, they have a strong colleague voice and go the extra mile. Their commitment and achievements are rewarded and recognised enabling a sustainable workforce, by retaining the right people.

Success will be measured by.

- Retention (those people who stay with the organisation).
- Engagement levels by team, service and Directorate.
- Reduction in sickness absence.
- Number of colleagues accessing wellbeing activities.
- Tracking 'reasons for absence' linked to wellbeing interventions (with a view to reducing days lost).
- Number of (recognition) 'Shout outs'.
- Number of colleagues actively accessing and utilising the Council benefits platform.
- Number of team members who increase their pension contributions.
- Reasons for leaving the organisation.

5. Enable productivity and performance

The Council understands the increasing pressures, demands and challenges of the changing world of work within Local Government and that its success is only sustainable through its people. We are committed to developing progressive employment and development practices which maximise a flexible and responsive workforce, whilst ensuring customer excellence is at the heart of everything we do.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Support our managers to manage by outcomes, avoiding presenteeism and working from a position of trust first and foremost.
- Review our flexible working, leave, carers and family friendly policies to ensure they are fit for purpose and support a healthy flexible and sustainable workforce. Including going above and beyond statutory regulations to introduce paid carer's leave.
- Review our Sickness Absence policy to ensure it proactively supports colleague wellbeing and continuity of service delivery.
- All managers to exercise discretion within their approach to people management, doing the right thing and not taking a 'one size fits all' approach.
- All managers to proactively coordinate and facilitate regular activities to bring teams together, in person, to support effective communications, engagement and wellbeing.
- Strengthening our personal growth opportunities utilising colleague skills to enhance value for money and social impact focusing on our facilitator pathways (upskilling colleagues to upskill colleagues).
- Continue to maximise our Apprenticeship Levy by promoting professional development qualifications to promote service resilience particularly in the data and change space (so colleagues become self-sufficient within their own area).
- Support our aspiring colleagues to develop leadership and management skills through our pathway to ensure they are 'job ready' should opportunities arise and to retain high talent.
- Utilise our 'Progression' pathway alongside our workforce planning approach to succession plan our workforce of the future, particularly within 'hard to recruit' and 'leadership' roles across the organisation.
- Work in partnership with our partner authorities to shape and embed coaching and mentoring pathways, broadening exposure to the wealth of knowledge and skills across our boarders.
- Continue to promote THRIVE ('Stay') conversations to enable colleagues to explore career and development opportunities with a view to retaining talent.
- Enhance our development offer, including content, footfall, monitoring and impact through the redesign of our Learning Management System.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester has motivated and productive team members who are ready to face future challenges acting in the best interests of our customers and communities; through maximising their potential to deliver with impact, exceptional services for customers.

Success will be measured by.

- Employee Assistance Programme access levels.
- Occupational Health Referrals.
- Flexible Working Requests.
- Workforce's ability to deliver against the organisation's missions.
- Percentage of vertical and lateral moves across the organisation, in total and from specific groups e.g. apprentices.
- Proportion of qualification levels across the organisation.
- Proportion of internally delivered workshops and development opportunities (and corresponding budget efficiency).
- Proportion of 'pathway' participants achieving promotion / sideways moves to facilitate later promotion.

6. Deliver future focused, enabling services

The Council is aware that it needs to continuously improve to ensure it remains financially resilient and sustainable, whilst continuing to meet the needs and improve the outcomes of its residents, customers and communities. We will enable this through our people; further developing change-management capabilities, tapping into their transferable skills, utilising insights and new technology and not taking a 'like for like' approach. This will mean processes and services are redesigned so work is achievable, insight-led, impactful and rewarding.

This will be achieved through the following actions.

- Review the Council's OD and HR service structure, processes, technology and governance developing a 'Target Operating Model' which enables the delivery of the Borough Plan priorities and successful implementation of the People and Culture Strategy.
- Keep under review the Council's overarching operating model and structure, to ensure it is robust and has the flexibility and agility to adapt to the rapid pace of change and meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- Undertake a thorough analysis of the present and future workforce across the Council, establishing need and addressing future skills shortages or hard to recruit roles.
- Develop our approach to organisational change to ensure any reduction in people or service does not overburden colleagues and that we support resilience and sustainable delivery of our intended outcomes.
- Adopt the 'Decision Making Accountability' approach ensuring that Council structures are effective, efficient and empowering.
- Transform the way we operate through technology and artificial intelligence, underpinned by a relentless focus on data and insight to drive decisions and improvements.
- Continue to evolve the Council's digital skills offer as part of our Talent and Development forward plan, to ensure colleagues' capabilities are fit for the future.
- Further utilise our Customer Experience Ambassadors to listen, advocate and champion our customers and community needs to ensure the Council delivers excellent customer experience.
- Explore opportunities to widen partnership working and collaboration with our Council companies, health and place colleagues and the voluntary, community and faith sector to support continuous improvement, development and wellbeing.
- Trailblazing Devolution for the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region, positioning the Council as a lead collaborator and partner to ensure the transfer of decision making and resources to a local level is tailored to the needs of residents, communities and businesses making a tangible difference to lives.

Outcome:
Cheshire West and Chester colleagues embrace change; by being insight led, adopting digital technologies and innovative redesign approaches, they actively contribute to our transformation journey.

Success will be measured by.

- Efficiencies generated through digital automation.
- Impact on service delivery/performance indicators as a result of service redesign.
- Change programmes are delivered to budget and achieve their purpose.
- Achievement against financial targets – balanced budget year on year
- Improvements against sector benchmarks.
- Customer satisfaction and feedback.
- Increase to employee's satisfaction as a result of service redesign.
- Social value and community impact.

Supporting Strategies

The People and Culture Strategy 2025-2028 supports and is supported by the following Council Strategies and approaches.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Inclusive Employment Strategy
- Women's Health Strategy
- Modern Workforce Approach
- Play Your Part Charters and Conversations Approach
- Customer Strategy
- Enabling Great Lives: Our Adult Social Care Strategy
- Children's Workforce Development Strategy

Equality Analysis

The Equality Analysis undertaken ensured there is an EDI theme within this Strategy from which actions provide a focus on people activity. This will ensure there is a culture of belonging and inclusion within the Council through; EDI specific Play Your Part Charter/Conversations goals across all levels of the organisation, ensuring progression pathways are open to all, colleague network groups which provide practical support and influence and that satisfaction of all groups of colleagues are equitable.

Ownership, Monitoring and Review

High quality and meaningful data and evidence is key to understanding the progress, potential barriers and impact of this strategy. Therefore, each theme has associated actions, outcomes and measures of success. This will be monitored through a detailed action plan and linked to the Council's Workforce Dashboard and Corporate Scorecard. Impact and outcomes will be discussed and acted upon on a regular basis and linked to the Council's Annual Delivery Plan reporting cycle. This will enable the strategy to be more than words on a page, by collectively holding each other to account in order to deliver our colleague experience offer and commitments.

The Council has made a commitment to external good practice frameworks to ensure our offer is robust, dynamic and continually improves in line with organisational aspirations. These include.

- **Investors in People** which focuses on people management and development, of which the Council is currently a 'Gold' accredited organisation, with aspirations for 'Platinum'.

- **Disability Confident Leader** which illustrates the Council's proud commitment to recruiting, retaining and developing disabled people.
- **Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA+ Charter Mark** a signifier of the Council's good practice, commitment and knowledge of the specific needs, issues and barriers facing LGBTIQA+ people.
- **Care Leaver Covenant**, as signatories of the charter, the Council commits to supporting care leavers to thrive within the workplace and beyond as Corporate Parents.
- **Armed Forces Covenant** employer recognition scheme, gold accreditation. Building our reputation as a forces-friendly employer through a commitment to ensuring that members of the Armed Forces community do not face discrimination during recruitment or in employment and are treated with fairness and respect in all aspects of their life.
- **Inclusive Employer Member Accreditation**, which shows that the Council truly cares about making every colleague feel valued, whilst acknowledging differences and how these differences contribute to the Council's culture and outcomes.

The above list is not exhaustive, and additional accreditations may be considered as we implement and progress the Strategy.

Success is a journey not a destination

The Council's People and Culture Strategy will be reviewed every four years, or sooner should organisational direction and priorities significantly change, and it is deemed no longer fit for purpose.