

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Play  
**your**  
part

Supporting our  
People to Play their Part  
**Our People Plan  
2021-2024**

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Cheshire West  
and Chester

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## Foreword

**Our workforce is the Council's greatest asset. This has never been more true than during the COVID-19 pandemic, where our exceptional staff rose to the challenge to save lives and livelihoods during the Borough's greatest ever crisis.**

We saw new public services designed and delivered in a matter of days, an acceleration in our digital transformation, the redeployment of many staff and 2,000 colleagues moved to working from home. We demonstrated our enthusiasm and commitment to make a difference and to work together with our communities in the most trying of circumstances.

As we look forward, we must build on this great response. We have an ambitious Council Plan and Recovery and Renewal Plan to deliver. Both plans illustrate a vision of a council that delivers its priorities by working closely with our communities and partners to tackle our shared challenges. We will see significant changes to the way we operate. Many council services will be redesigned, we will have a closer relationship with communities and partners, we will embrace technology, and tackle complex problems with the people we serve. This is an exciting agenda, and we need to work together with all our colleagues to make this happen.

This People Plan has been shaped by listening to our workforce. The days of top down plans, written in closed rooms, are over. This will only work with the full involvement of all our employees, who are our greatest sources of knowledge, innovation and commitment. It sets out how we can deliver our priorities for the Borough by engaging with colleagues to shape our services, providing staff with the right skills, attracting and developing talent, getting our culture right and safeguarding our health and wellbeing through challenging times. Our approach addresses the full lifecycle of an employee, from the recruitment process to the day a colleague leaves us, and every step between. We want to commit to support and value our staff at every stage.

The People Plan itself will be flexible to adapt and change as we move through the next few years, but establishes some core principles, and sets out practical steps along our journey.

Cheshire West and Chester is already a great place to work- but we can never stand still. If we deliver this plan, I have every confidence we will deliver our council priorities, and become amongst the best public sector organisations to work for in the country. By 2024, and hopefully sooner, we will be recognised as an employer of choice, an organisation that excels in developing and supporting its workforce and a place where all staff can play their part to make positive change happen. I look forward to working with you to make this vision a reality.



**Andrew Lewis**  
Chief Executive  
Cheshire West and Chester Council

# Our Council Vision and Priorities

## Introduction

We have developed a Council Plan for 2021-2024 and a Recovery Plan to set out the future beyond COVID-19. These plans set out the vision and key priorities that will guide our actions over the next four years. At the heart of the vision is a recognition that the council can only achieve its goals by working alongside communities, partners, and staff.

### Key priorities are:

- Tackling the Climate Emergency
- Fairer Futures – tackling the Poverty Emergency
- Supporting our local economy to grow and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents
- Supporting children and young people to get the best start in life and achieve their full potential
- Enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives
- Making all our neighbourhoods even better places to call home
- Delivering an efficient and empowering Council

### Play your Part – a culture for delivery

To achieve our priorities, we have defined a culture and way of working which will be the platform for our success.

Traditionally local government is seen to work in professional and departmental “silos”. This approach fails to deliver a joined-up service for our residents, and also reduces opportunities for our staff to fully represent and become familiar with the full range of services we offer. It limits career development and reduces the opportunities to be part of each other’s success.

We will see silos challenged and all services of the council and external partners working in a joined-up way alongside communities, unlocking ideas and understanding aspirations, making valued change happen. When we engage with our residents, we do so as representatives of the whole council, not just our own part of it.

Great customer service must be at the heart of everything we do, within and outside the council. We will become a digitally enabled and confident organisation, with employees using technology to best advantage to deliver better services for customers and communities. We will use data and insight to inform our decisions and the services we deliver.

We will see a different kind of workforce, modern and agile, making the best use of our workplaces to build collaborative working, empowering our staff to make decisions and motivating them to be innovative. We will recognise great contributions by individuals and teams and celebrate and share our successes. Although staff may work differently, we will continue to have their mental and physical wellbeing at heart and wherever they work they will be clear on the need to Play their Part, how they can do that, and how they will be supported and acknowledged for great performance. Playing their Part, not only in what they do day to day, but by a whole range of opportunities to volunteer and deliver great social value in our Borough.

All the specific commitments in this People Plan are included to ensure we have a happy, engaged, motivated, healthy, well informed and confident workforce, trusted to play their part and deliver our priorities through innovative services they help to shape.

We want each employee to be proud of the part they play.

Our Thrive Values of Teamwork, Honesty, Respect, Innovation, Value for Money and Empowerment will continue to be the foundation for how we work - this plan sets how we will support our employees to really embody and display those values every day in their roles

Value	What this means	Key behaviours
<b>T</b> eamwork	We always achieve more by working as a team rather than as separate services. The council will not allow its services to work in silos and will always look for opportunities to work closely with other organisations that have shared objectives. Teamwork is also about having good relationships with our communities and service users, where we all achieve more by working together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work alongside others both inside and outside the council</li> <li>• Recognise each others strengths and expertise</li> <li>• Hold each other to account</li> <li>• Think about the needs of customers not just your individual service</li> <li>• Think about the big picture</li> </ul>
<b>H</b> onesty	This involves acting with integrity and being honest about what works well, what is possible, and what needs to change. It is important internally but absolutely essential in regard to our relationships with residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the right thing not just the easiest thing</li> <li>• Explain the reasons for our decisions and actions</li> <li>• Be receptive to challenge</li> <li>• Speak up about concerns and areas for improvement</li> <li>• Be realistic about what is achievable</li> </ul>
<b>R</b> espect	Respect is a value that is vital in public services. The council will always act to respect residents, partners and staff. It will respect the views and opinions of all, even where there are differences of opinion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the perspectives and capabilities of individuals</li> <li>• Respect difference</li> <li>• Be polite and courteous</li> <li>• Respond in a timely manner</li> <li>• Challenge unacceptable behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>I</b> nnovation	This requires the organisation to think creatively about delivering better results for residents with scarce resources. Often this is about tackling the root causes of problems rather than treating the symptoms, embracing digital technology, working in partnership, and designing services around needs of our residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be enthusiastic and positive</li> <li>• Challenge when things aren't working</li> <li>• Seek out best practice</li> <li>• Be open to new ideas</li> <li>• Embrace technology</li> <li>• Reflect and learn from our actions and experiences</li> </ul>
<b>V</b> alue for money	This is more than just about saving money. It is about focusing on the priorities of our communities and making a difference for every pound the Council spends or influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how much things cost and what difference you are making</li> <li>• Put yourself in the shoes of your customer</li> <li>• Compare what you do to other organisations and learn from the best</li> <li>• Think about resources beyond the Council, within communities, businesses and partners.</li> <li>• Call out waste and suggest ideas to be more efficient</li> </ul>
<b>E</b> mpowerment	Internally we want to empower our staff to find new solutions to our challenges. Looking outwards, empowerment is about working differently so that citizens and communities can play their part in tackling local challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise people's capabilities and strengths rather than their challenges</li> <li>• Trust your team, partners and communities to do the right thing</li> <li>• Make it easier for people to share their ideas</li> <li>• Seek out opportunities for growth and personal development</li> </ul>

## How this plan was developed

The plan has been developed to reflect the needs of the Borough and organisation, and also the views of our workforce, councillors, senior leaders and trade unions. The following steps have been taken in this regard:

### Key priorities are:

1. Understanding our latest priorities
2. Surveying staff to gain feedback on our modern workforce change project
3. Focus groups with staff to understand priorities from their perspective and where, as an employer, we can improve
4. Discussing our ideas with our Trade Union colleagues
5. Talking to other councils about how they do things and learning from them
6. Holding a workshop with our Senior Leadership Team
7. Looking at our latest Investors in People feedback
8. Surveying all Members on what they think is important as an employer to recruit, retain and develop our staff effectively
9. Holding a workshop with our Staffing Committee Members

From that feedback we identified some key priorities in each stage of the employee lifecycle and how this will contribute to our desired culture.

We have thought about how we prioritise each part of the plan, how we will measure success and outcomes, and how the action plan will be delivered in line with available resources over the next three years.

We have also ensured that our People Plan aligns with other plans that have been or are being developed – Inclusive Employment, Workplace Wellbeing and Social Value.

The Plan sets out our ambitions, but it will be flexible, with arrangements for regularly checking we are on track. This is a living and breathing plan which can change in line with new thinking, and what's working well and what isn't. Our employee feedback will be key to our evaluation of success. If there's any aspect of this Plan which you see isn't sufficient, or isn't being delivered, please say so, and influence its further improvement.

## How will we evaluate the progress and success of this plan?

- We will measure our progress through clear targets, external assessments such as Investors in People, performance and workforce data and through feedback from our stakeholders and our employees themselves.
- We will actively seek employee feedback through frequent temperature checks and through genuinely two-way communication channels
- We will be open to employee feedback and use it to improve both as an employer and as a council



## Council Companies and Commissioned Services

The Council works particularly closely with a number of Council-owned or part-owned companies, who form part of a family of organisations helping to deliver the priorities of the Council and our residents. As separate employers, they are all responsible for their own dedicated policies and workforce plans. Although this People Plan is focused on our responsibilities for the directly-employed council workforce, the values and ambitions it embodies are shared by our council companies. Indeed, we have learned from their best practice. And we share the same principles and commitments to our workforce, and to delivering social value for workforce and

residents. Specifically, we are supporting our Council companies to embody cooperative principles, through which their services are increasingly shaped by their service-users and staff.

We also commission a wide range of services from the private and voluntary sector, and work closely with other public sector partners. We cannot dictate their employment practices, but we can lead by example, and be clear about the key principles we want to see embodied in the delivery of public services across our Borough and beyond.



## Recruit

We have a clear employer brand, embrace modern and agile working practices, are transparent about what the organisation is about and its ambitions and attract from a wide and diverse pool of candidates with best practice recruitment techniques and onboarding practices

## Retain

Employees understand the vision, understand how they play their part, are supported in their role and recognised and rewarded for their contribution. There are defined career paths and development for each role. Staff wellbeing is seen as a priority.



## Develop

We equip our employees with the right skills and knowledge to do their job effectively and play their part - skills that equip them not only for today but for tomorrow, embracing digital opportunities.

## Embed

Builds a supportive culture that is customer centric, outward facing, develops its social value ethos, responds to the climate emergency and focuses on delivery of the council's key priorities. THRIVE values are lived everyday and innovation and empowerment are valued and supported.





## Recruit

### The challenge and the opportunity

We face many challenges and opportunities over the next few years - economic recovery, tackling the climate emergency, supporting an increasingly older population and addressing further pressures on housing, inequalities, and social care - to name just a few. We also face increasing expectations from the public about the quality of services they rightly expect. And we're having to respond within continued financial constraints that aren't easing anytime soon and require us every year to seek further savings and efficiencies from our services.

This means we need a workforce capable of performing their core roles well but also contributing to the wider objectives of our council plan. Specialist skills are important, and will continue to be nurtured and developed. But so too are attitude and cultural fit with the organisation, and strong ethos of adaptability and responsiveness to our residents. It is vital we recruit from within and outside the council with this in mind.

Over the last 2 years there have been 857 council vacancies. This shows that, even within our tough financial limits, we can still provide opportunities for existing staff to develop their careers, and for securing the talented and diverse individuals we need for the future.

There are specific challenges to recruit staff to certain discrete areas, most notably in adults' and children's social care, in a very competitive market. In children's social care alone, during 2020 there were an average of 10 vacancies each month.

As a large employer with social goals, and to improve our own diversity, the council can use recruitment to give opportunities to young people, under-represented groups and those who may have been unemployed for a significant time through work experience, traineeships, work placements and internships, and apprenticeships.

The Council's workforce still doesn't adequately reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We need to ensure that our employment opportunities

are seen by as diverse an audience as possible, and that the image we have as an employer appeals to potential candidates irrespective of their background. We already incorporate equality into our core objectives, making every effort to eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunities and foster good working relationships between different people in the workplace.

Through our Everybody In Action Group we give staff the opportunity to influence employment related staff issues, especially for staff from groups who are a minority in the workplace based on factors such as race and religion, sexual orientation or disability. We will continue to support staff who consider themselves to be part of minority groups that come together around shared identities and their allies, to promote diversity in the workplace, and to seek out and address any aspect of our culture which may be holding us back from being a true equal opportunities employer. We must ensure that as many people as possible, whatever their background, feel confident in applying for opportunities with us, and see the council as an employer of choice for them.

### Consultation Feedback

Our last employee survey indicated that 59% of our employees feel that the right people, with the right capabilities, are selected for roles - with 19% neither agreeing or disagreeing. 76% of employees agreed that the organisation is truly an equal opportunities employer. Manager feedback showed that our recruitment processes need to be leaner and our timescales shorter. For example, in Adult Social Care, even when recruitment is addressed promptly, open vacancies typically leave a gap in staffing for 3 months or more, which has an impact on the service we can deliver.

We need to work on a clearer and more compelling 'employer image' which embodies the Cheshire West and Cheshire brand and all the great things about working here. We have a great story to tell – we don't always tell it.

Our consultation confirmed that people look for job vacancies in a whole range of different ways these days, not all through digital platforms. It's important that we use our staff as advocates for the council as an employer and that opportunities are marketed through the best and most inclusive recruitment platforms, through social media, and through our Skills & Employment and Childrens' Early Help and Intervention services, so that we reach the widest most diverse range of candidates we can. We received feedback that the language we use in our recruitment is important, and we should always use language which is clear and welcoming to make sure we receive applications from as diverse groups of candidates as possible.

The council is a great place to work but it also a great place to develop specialist careers, whether in law, planning, social care, procurement, finance, HR, civil engineering, or a whole host of other professions. We can do more with our partners, our schools and colleges through career fairs and other activities to promote these specialist opportunities which young people may not realise are available. We can build on our already strong relationships with Chester University and Cheshire's Further Education colleges and schools, to support their students to consider careers in the local public services.

**Recruitment – what good looks like?**

- Using best practice recruitment platforms and techniques, the organisation is honest and transparent about what this council is about, what is important to it, what its values and ambitions are and have a clear 'employer offer'
- The council attracts and recruits the right people who identify with our employer offer and values and are passionate about playing their part in helping the Borough to Thrive while recognising that diversity and equality are the cornerstones of our values.
- The organisation works with key stakeholders to maximise employment opportunities for school leavers and young people whatever their educational attainment or particular needs, our care leavers and longer term unemployed and under-represented groups through apprenticeships, work placements and internships and supporting inclusive employment initiatives.

**Recruitment Plan**

**Design and roll out a refreshed employer image and website**

The image will give a major focus on the values of the organisation, the opportunities for development, the competitive employment package, agile working, and the council's vision.

Alongside this we will review our non-digital recruitment methods and ensure that opportunities are seen by as diverse a group of candidates as possible.

**Timescale: By mid-2022**

**Ensure we promote our employer offer to key groups**

We will work closely with schools, colleges, universities and other partner organisations and further participate in activities such as jobs and career fairs

**Timescale: by mid-2022 and through to 2024**

### **Streamline recruitment processes**

The council will review all its processes to ensure recruitment processes are timely, efficient and intuitive both for hiring staff and applicants and will actively seek feedback from all new starters within a six-month period to allow us to continuously improve.

**Timescale:** by mid-2022

### **Develop a range of fit for purpose and selection methods for managers**

Rather than relying on entirely traditional interviews, managers will have access to a range of assessment tools including psychometric testing, presentation tasks, scenario tasks, group work, and technical tests. Our recruitment process will assess not only technical ability but also personal qualities, management styles and levels of emotional intelligence. We will aim to make our recruitment processes appropriate to the level and type of role so that all candidates have a chance to shine.

**Timescale:** by mid-2023

### **Widen our apprentice strategy to become an Inclusive Employment Plan**

We will maximise opportunities through a variety of gateway to employment initiatives and apprenticeship opportunities. These will include supported internships and supported apprenticeships to ensure that opportunities are there for as diverse a group of people as possible.

**Timescale:** To be fully achieved by 2023

### **Offer a work placement programme for care leavers In line with corporate parenting responsibilities**

The council will work closely with its services, council owned companies and commissioned services to guarantee a work experience placement opportunity for every care leaver.

**Timescale:** To be fully achieved by 2023

### **Deliver targeted recruitment programmes in adult social care and children's social care**

By improving our recruitment platform and information to candidates and by using the apprentice strategy to 'grow our own' so that internal staff can train as qualified social workers. We will also continue to support the Step Up to Social Work and Think Ahead Programme as a route into social work.

**Timescale:** by Q3 2022

### **Refresh our induction and on-boarding processes**

In line with an 'employer of choice' approach, we will develop pre-employment induction and orientation activities utilising our e-learning platform, ensuring all new starters have access to learning as defined in their learning path, and ensuring all new starters attend a corporate induction event within three months of starting as part of their orientation. All staff will have the access to equipment and systems they need from day 1.

**Timescale:** by Q3 2022

## Measures of Success

Measure	Target
Incremental increase in website hits and application numbers for vacancies. Positive feedback received on website.  Targets for both these measures will be defined after setting a baseline in year 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target to be developed</li> </ul>
Reduce the length of time between vacancy approval appointment start date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average recruitment period from advert to start date is 3 months or less</li> </ul>
New starters (within 6 months) survey / probationary feedback responses indicate a high level of satisfaction with the recruitment and onboarding process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of new starters indicate satisfaction with recruitment and onboarding by end of 2022</li> </ul>
Increase in the number of entry level apprentices including school leavers, those requiring additional support, NEETs and unemployed adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, 25 Entry level apprentices per year</li> <li>10 Supported internships per year</li> <li>4 Supported Apprenticeships per year</li> <li>10 Entry level apprenticeships filled by those from under-represented groups per year</li> <li>20 work experience placement opportunities per year for care leavers, children in care and young people with Education Healthcare Plans</li> </ul>
All new starters receive a formal corporate induction within the first 3 months of starting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% new starters have induction within first 3 months</li> <li>90% or more of new starters rate their induction and onboarding experience as good</li> </ul>
Improvement in attracting and recruiting candidates quickly to social care and children's social care vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of vacancies filled within 3 months of advertising</li> </ul>



## Retain

### The challenge and the opportunity

Alongside attracting diverse candidates for council vacancies, it is also important to retain high performing employees, particularly in pivotal or hard to fill roles, and to provide opportunities for employees to have fulfilling and long-term careers with the council.

Delivering our Council Plan needs a blend of employees with new skills and insights, and those with knowledge and experience gained over years of employment. It also requires us to have a visible and understood vision and ambition and values that employees identify with.

Some staff turnover is healthy, but it is essential that we retain staff in key areas and address areas of high turnover, particularly in those areas where the market for candidates is challenging. In 2020, 248 colleagues left the council, equating to a labour turnover figure of 8.11% against a UK average for all sectors of around 15%. The most recent Local Government Workforce Survey from the LGA shows a median average labour turnover rate of 13.4%. This suggests we are in a relatively strong position to retain staff and avoid the disruption that can be caused by excessive turnover.

In 2016 the council committed to paying employees the local living wage and has implemented pay increases each year to ensure that pay rates fully consider the Living Wage Foundation pay rate – currently £9.50 per hour. This reflects the cost of living and is part of our wider commitment to social value. The council also encourages other employers across the borough to do the same where possible.

We recognise that our staff often work through some very difficult challenges such as in the recent pandemic which require a level of personal resilience and employer support. As a council we are committed to our employees' wellbeing at work and we believe this is also a key component in being a good employer and retaining great staff. In the Embed section of this document there are more details of how we plan to further develop a supportive culture.

### Consultation Feedback

From the council's Investor in People survey, it is clear that staff really value personal development, clear career pathways and opportunities, fair recognition and reward, being empowered to make decisions and to have their voice heard while also receiving consistent and honest communications. It is also important they feel proud to work for the council and identify with its core values.

In our most recent staff survey 79% of staff agreed that the council's values guided the way they worked with 86% of staff agreeing they shared those values. 71% of staff agreed that the council had adopted a culture of recognition and 62% agreed people were recognised and rewarded although IIP interview evidence suggested that although improving, recognition of team performance was inconsistent.

Overall, 71% of staff agreed that Cheshire West and Chester was a great place to work.

Consultation feedback showed us that we could do more to raise awareness of the council's vision and 'the big picture' so that staff are clear on how to play their part. Staff feeling proud of the contribution they make is really important.

Our consultees told us that to create good retention employees need to have fair pay/benefits for the job, be able to manage their workloads and have a healthy work-life balance. We need to support career progression, have succession plans in place and manage our talent effectively. In addition, there needs to be a flexible approach to recognition and this doesn't always need to be part of a formal process. Informal and personal one to one recognition is immensely important and should be part of our culture.

Agile working is a positive but we must ensure that everyone has access to collaborative spaces, feels empowered to manage their time effectively and consistently have opportunities for interaction with colleagues, both face to face and virtually, and that communication methods need to be appropriate for both virtual and face to face settings.



### **Retain – what good looks like?**

- A clear vision and ambition that employees can identify with and understand their role in achieving the council plan priorities.
- Retention of high performing employees and build on our talent, supporting employee's career aspirations and ensuring we have succession plans in place
- Continued development as an employer, building a modern workforce and maximising opportunities for agile working and ensuring a healthy work life balance.
- At every stage of our employees' life cycle, the organisation looks after their wellbeing, enabling them to feel fulfilled, safe and valued in the workplace and recognised and appropriately rewarded for the contribution that they make
- We have a strong support network for those employees who consider themselves to be in a minority through our Everybody In framework.
- Every employee has access to the development they need to do their job well and to support their progression
- There are effective and consistent two-way communications with the workforce
- The council has a culture of social responsibility and staff are provided with the opportunity to play their part in a variety of ways
- Staff understand the full value of their benefits package and this is clearly communicated.
- Staff feel able to influence the benefits and rewards package and we build in flexibility to our reward packages.





## Retain Plan

### Ensure clarity of individual roles in achieving the council priorities through service plans

Service plans will be developed through team meetings and workshops with staff and will help set out how key priorities and how they fit into the wider agenda of the council. Staff should be able to see 'the big picture'

Timescale: By 2022

### Continue to develop a modern well- equipped workforce with agile and flexible working practices

Over 65% of staff now work predominantly from home and other locations rather than an office or fixed council locations. This presents major opportunities for productivity, work-life balance and efficiencies. Technology such as MS Teams have proved invaluable. We have worked with staff and managers across the council to embed this approach and determined how it could be embedded. Worker styles and office layouts have been identified as well as future technology requirements. These will include front line staff and the requirement for them to have improved access to digital solutions. Policies and procedures will be changed and solutions identified to maintain a sense of team.

Timescale: By end of 2023

### Increasing internal promotions

Succession plans will be in place for all services. They will set out the skills and roles for the future and ensure they are reflected in the development of staff so they have the best opportunity to be promoted when vacancies arise.

Timescale: By end 2022

### Rewarding good performance

We will use an internal digital platform that allows feedback across the organisation (and potentially beyond)

- Peer to peer
- Top down
- Bottom up
- Including Councillors

We will have a blended approach to recognition and reward, some formal and some informal using a variety of rewards at both individual and team level.

Timescale: by end 2022

### Continue to pay the local living wage rates

This will continue to be a commitment to our employees and to employees in our family of council companies. The council as a shareholder will continue to monitor levels of pay in council companies.

Timescale: 2021



## Retain Plan

### Define our complete employment package

As part of recruitment offer we will highlight pay and non-pay elements in our overall package. Our total benefits package will also be communicated to the existing workforce.

Timescale: by mid-2022

### Develop schemes which capture employees’ innovative ideas and empower employees

We will use a variety of approaches to gather feedback and use the insight of our colleagues to drive improvement. These may include:

- Individual suggestions
- Group work on emerging challenges
- Action based learning
- Providing toolkits for team away days to support creativity and challenge
- Look at conduits through online platforms
- Providing continuous improvement facilitators

Timescale: By end 2022

### Define our complete employment package

As part of recruitment offer we will highlight pay and non-pay elements in our overall package. Our total benefits package will also be communicated to the existing workforce.

Timescale: by 2023

### Ensure every member of staff has a personal development plan

The plan will be linked to the learning path for their role and to their career aspirations

Timescale: By end 2022

## Retain Plan

### Introduce a talent management programme

This will help identify future leaders and managers. Increase the use of assessment centres to identify staff potential with an action learning based development programme to support talent development and engagement at all levels of the organisation.

**Timescale:** by end 2023

### Promote staff volunteering

We will run an ongoing campaign to highlight opportunities supporting key priorities in the council plan and develop our online resources to highlight real time opportunities. We will explore using our HR management system to capture volunteering days and celebrate volunteering as part of our staff awards.

**Timescale:** by end of 2023

### Review of exit management process

We will capture the valuable insight of colleagues leaving the organisation and identify any trends that require action.

**Timescale:** by end of 2022

### Knowledge Management

We will select and implement a new Council intranet system. The system will support and encourage interactions from employees, including the set-up of various communities to support modern ways of working. This will be more interactive, user-friendly and provide a platform for socialisation, use of the intranet will become intrinsic as part of all of our roles.

**Timescale:** by end of 2023

## Measures of Success

Measure	Target
An increase in the number of positive responses in our IIP survey to the question the council is a great place to work– currently 71%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of staff agree the council is a great place to work by end of 2023</li> </ul>
<p>The council's retention rate is in line with local government average rate or better.</p> <p>Retention rate in hard to retain areas – adult social care and children's social care improves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour turnover is the same or better than the benchmark labour turnover for government organisations (currently 13.4%)</li> </ul>
Platform/process for capturing staff suggestions sees increasing numbers participating year on year. Increase in staff reporting ideas are taken seriously through temperature check surveys. Baseline and targets to be set in year 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target to be developed</li> </ul>
All roles have a defined learning path linked to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of roles have a learning path linked to them by the end of 2023</li> </ul>
<p>By 2024 we will see an increase in the percentage of managerial and leadership roles filled internally</p> <p>Increase in the number of internal promotions</p> <p>Baseline and targets to be set in year 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target to be developed</li> </ul>
Number of staff volunteering days increase year on year to 2024. Current average 500 volunteering hours per annum, 70 employees per year.	<p>Increase in volunteering metrics to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By end of 2023</li> <li>750 hours per year</li> <li>100 employees per year</li> </ul>
Our most recent temperature check survey reported 78% of staff who responded see modern workforce and agile ways of working as positive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>85% of staff view modern and agile working as positive by end of 2023</li> </ul>



## Develop

### The challenge and the opportunity

There are other areas of development that will be required to deliver change and to help meet future demands.

While every employee has access to development linked to their role, the council plan will require staff to have some generic skill sets which underpin all areas of the plan. For example, greater use of digital to reflect the changing preferences of our residents and to help manage demand, greater emphasis on customer service, a greater awareness of the climate emergency, and of the impact of poverty on many of our residents. Change management will continue to be a key skill to deliver major transformation programmes. Current and recent examples include our Children's Services review, the review of Learning Disabilities, SEND High Needs Review, Corporate Services Review, Digital Programme, Places Redesign Programme and Modern Workforce.

We continue to need specialist technical skills in many of our services such as planning, regulatory services, highways and social work - to give just a few examples. While we may recruit externally into some roles to fill skills gaps, we will also upskill our existing staff in those areas by using career grades and development to ensure we have the right number of people with the right skills, not only for today but for tomorrow. The Apprentice Levy provides one source of funding for this programme.

The council will be reliant on managers who can take forward the change agenda successfully, who clearly understand their roles and responsibilities both generally and in relation to supporting change. We will continue to invest in the development of our managers and directors, to ensure they have the skills they need to lead the organisation through its future challenges. We will continue to support the personal development of our Councillors, to enable them to better serve their residents, to enhance their understanding of the services we provide and the needs of their communities.

### Consultation Feedback

In our most recent staff survey 70% of staff agreed their learning and development is supported, with 74% saying that the council understands people's potential, and 75% agreeing they have opportunities to learn at work, with 82% making use of the opportunities. Fewer people (65%) said they understood how the council invests in learning and development. In terms of leadership, just over half of employees who responded said they agreed that the organisation developed great leaders.

Several key priorities were identified as part of the People Plan consultation process. There is a need to refresh our management development provision to ensure consistent and high-quality management of both people and processes through enabled management. Once again, talent management was a significant gap with a great emphasis on the value of mentoring and coaching. Development needs to be both role and career centred and there is a definite need for employees to have the skills to manage change effectively.

There was recognition that not every manager is a natural leader and we need to support our managers to develop their leadership skills, enabling them to take staff with them both in terms of motivation but also through periods of change.

When we look to develop our employees' customer service skills we should benchmark ourselves against the levels of customer services delivered by commercial organisations – those should be the levels of service we aspire to.



**Develop– what good looks like?**

- Our employees have the right skills, knowledge and support to perform to a high standard, not only in their own role, but in supporting transformation and changing ways of delivering services.
- Employees have the appropriate tools, resources, development and support to be empowered to work in a variety of agile ways and to have the knowledge and confidence to make change and decisions happen.
- Leaders and managers understand their responsibilities and are role models who enthuse and support employees to meet and overcome the challenges ahead
- Our learning and development offer is clear and accessible to all employees and is delivered in a variety of ways from formal learning such as apprenticeships and professional qualifications, through e-learning to secondments, shadowing, mentoring and coaching.

**Develop Plan**

**Promoting Learning**

Run an ongoing campaign to raise awareness of learning available using our internal communications channels and training calendars on our intranet. Ensure our change management development opportunities are highlighted.

**Timescale:** by mid- 2022

**Embed our new Customer Experience Strategy**

We will embed our new customer experience standards by including customer service specific appraisal objectives for our whole workforce, recognising and rewarding good customer service through our staff awards and by sharing examples of good customer service through our communications channels

Our learning and development plans will also outline a range of customer experience training opportunities for all levels of managers and staff in key areas of the Council, to universal support for our workforce as a whole.

**Timescale:** Delivered by end of 2022

**Digital Skills programme designed and delivered**

We will ensure we have a digitally skilled workforce to enable increased productivity and innovation. The project will help to develop a culture of digital first thinking through the strengthening of our digital capabilities and behaviours to support our customers. This will be achieved through the implementation of a digital framework, self-assessment tools, a Digital Academy space and resources through e-learning and in person.

**Timescale** Delivered by end of 2022



### **Introduce a new coaching and mentoring programme**

We will put in place a structured approach to internal and external mentors, including with partners. We will also increase the number of volunteer mentors and support the programme with a digital conduit for matching coach/mentor with those requesting coaching/mentoring.

Timescale: Full programme in place by Q1 2023

### **Development of i-Manage.**

This web resource will include more toolkits and resources to enable managers and ensure they understand their workforce responsibilities clearly

Timescale 2021-2022

### **Design & Deliver a bespoke Brilliant Basics Management Development Programme**

This programme will focus on people management, budget management and council wide processes.

Timescale 2022

### **Support the leadership team in the implementation of strength-based practice in social care**

Timescale: From 2021

### **Develop a leadership development programme based on an action learning framework**

We will work with a group of established and emerging leaders to enhance their skills through action-based learning. This involves setting a major challenge which will support the organisation which also develops the participants.

Timescale: Deliver by Q4 2023

## Measures of Success

Measure	Target
Increase in positive response to IIP survey questions relating to support for employees' learning and development (currently 70% positive response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% positive response to IIP survey question on supporting Learning and Development by Q2 2024</li> </ul>
Incremental improvement in numbers of staff with a personal development plan in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of staff have a personal development plan by the end of 2023</li> </ul>
A series of metrics will be established through a new Insight and Improvement Framework to measure our progress against a wide range of indicators, including: Feedback from regular customer satisfaction surveys, feedback from staff focus groups, Council-wide performance against the standards set out in a new Customer Charter, temperature checks conducted by our network of Customer Experience volunteers, who will engage as customers with a range of our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of target staff accessed customer service skills training by end of 2022</li> <li>Achieving our targets for customer satisfaction in line with the council's performance management framework.</li> </ul>
Increase feedback from our previous IT survey where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26% of staff reported being very IT confident</li> <li>Over 50% were fairly confident</li> <li>20% were unsure or not confident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70% of staff report being very IT confident by 2024</li> </ul>
Increased number of staff receiving coaching and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of staff undertaking mentoring /coaching report it has helped to enhance their performance by 2024</li> </ul>
Managers understanding what is expected of them as a CWAC manager through the Brilliant Basics programme to support compliance and help reduce internally generated demand on services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post -programme evaluation indicates 80% of managers report this has improved their knowledge and performance</li> </ul>



## Embed

### The challenge and the opportunity

To sustain great service delivery and deliver our council plan through our staff, we need to continue to build a culture that is responsive to customers, outward facing with a social value ethos and responsive to the climate emergency. We need every member of staff to focus on delivery of the council's key priorities whatever their role.

During the pandemic the council has focussed on providing increased support to its workforce to safeguard both the mental and physical wellbeing of our employees. This will continue to be a critical part of building a positive workplace culture going forward.

Our THRIVE values are well embedded and our Investor in People assessments have shown that employees can identify with these although there will be additional focus over the next four years on building a culture that supports empowerment and innovation.

We know that the council has major transformation projects to deliver in addition to the emphasis on economic and social recovery as we begin to emerge from the covid pandemic. We need to ensure staff have resilience in the face of continued changes both to how services are designed to align with customer needs and to the way they personally work as part of the transition to a modern workforce. We also need to ensure that internal communications are effective and everyone understands progress against our plan and their contribution.

A positive culture underpins the successful delivery of all strands of this plan – having a strong reputation as a good council with a positive culture will help us attract and retain staff and we can build our reputation as a true learning organisation.

### Consultation Feedback

Our THRIVE values are well embedded and understood by our staff with 86% of staff agreeing they have adopted these values and 78% agreeing they operate in line with them. 81% of staff agree the council empowers people to do their job with 80% agreeing autonomy is created in roles, with 91% agreeing they are able to work collaboratively. 79% of staff who responded said that the council embraces change, and 78% agreed they were encouraged to improve the way they do things.

Feedback from managers and staff told us that providing workplace wellbeing support is a must and although THRIVE values are well embedded we should look at them in the context of agile working to ensure people still understand how they can apply and display them in the new world of work.

Staff told us that although they understand how they contribute to their service priorities and clearly see how they 'play their part', that they sometimes do not understand the bigger picture or the council's vision. They felt that staff events were valuable in gaining insight into the wider council activities and ambitions and these would still be valuable to them. Consultees recognised that there is still a lot we can do to break down silos and to have even more collaborative working within the council and with partners.



**Embed – what will good look like?**

- We communicate widely and appropriately to ensure all employees understand and buy into the council’s vision no matter what their role.
- Working collaboratively with Internal Communications and aligning with the Internal Communications Strategy we ensure two-way communications in a world of agile working, using technology for a whole range of staff engagement events that promote understanding and motivate and enthuse the workforce.
- We ensure that we are an outward facing council and that our service delivery models, organisational structures and roles are designed to enhance service delivery
- We engender a sense of shared responsibility for delivering social value and protecting our environment and have an infrastructure that supports and values our employees for their contribution
- We work with employees to build an inclusive, high performing value centric culture, where continuous improvement is inherent in all we do
- We empower our employees to make decisions and nurture innovation in all its forms and we listen to employees about how we can make things better.
- Employees will be able to give feedback on any concerns in the confidence that is safe to do so and that feedback will always be welcome.
- Employees are supported not only to perform well but also to sustain their wellbeing and resilience, workplace wellbeing will be a critical component of our positive culture
- We will have a culture where success is celebrated and employees have a real sense of pride in what we achieve collectively and as individuals.

**Embed Plan**

**Reinvigorate and reinforce our vision**

We will reinforce the council’s vision through a range of internal communications and engagement. Visual cues for our CWAC brand and ethos across a variety of media will be rolled out and discrete culture change programmes will reinforce the vision of the council. The key message will be about staff, residents, partners and businesses all working together to play their part.

Timescale: By end 2022

**Develop a new intranet**

To support internal communication. This will facilitate two-way communication openly inviting comment, feedback and staff suggestions

Timescale: by Q3 2023

### **Introduce frequent temperature check surveys**

These frequent surveys will be in addition to the IIP survey to check wellbeing, to gain views on key initiatives and to shape our approach to agile working. Action plans will be followed up and communicated to address any concerns.

**Timescale:** From Q4 2021

### **Develop a programme of staff engagement events**

A range of virtual and in person events will be re-established to foster two-way communications, feedback and provide staff with answers to their questions. These will be complimented by lunch and learn sessions for staff which will be information sharing sessions to aid staff understanding of important priorities or changes.

**Timescale:** First events by end of 2021

### **Develop a wellbeing action plan**

which is reviewed annually to underpin the Workplace Wellbeing Strategy to include but not limited to:

- Access to resilience training
- Embedding wellbeing champions
- Management wellbeing training
- Mental health first aid training
- EAP provision & advertising
- Time management training
- Access to Brio Leisure offer
- Social activities and book clubs

**Timescale:** By Q3 2022

### **Encourage managers and senior leaders to go ‘back to the floor’**

A programme will be put in place for managers to gain further insight of frontline working in their own and other service areas. This will also support employee engagement, two-way communication and recognition.

**Timescale:** 2022-2024

### **Reinvigorate our Champions Networks**

We will nurture our networks of workplace champions for key initiatives. These include Champion groups on IT and Wellbeing and include Change Champions to ensure wider understanding of major projects and council initiatives.

**Timescale:** 2021-2024

## Measures of Success

Measure	Target
Increase in the number of staff understanding the council vision through temperature checks and IIP Survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>IIP Survey Indicates that 80% of staff understand the council’s vision and purpose by Q2 2023</li></ul>
Increased hits on intranet pages Increased number of staff comments on intranet pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>75% of employees respond they rate our intranet as good or above by 2024</li></ul>
Frequent temperature checks on council initiatives in addition to IIP Survey/assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Action plan in place following each survey to address concerns – to be communicated within 3 months of survey results.</li></ul>
First staff events to take place by end of 2021 with staff feedback sought afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>85% of staff say events are valuable</li></ul>
Wellbeing action plan is well communicated through champions and staff understand the support that is in place and access that support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>85% of staff respond that the council prioritises employee wellbeing by Q4 2023</li></ul>







### Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at:

**[equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)**

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