

Workforce Strategy

Summer 2024



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I am pleased to introduce our Workforce Strategy for Huntingdonshire District Council.

A workforce strategy is about collaboratively working together to define the organisation we want and need to be - not only now but for our future.

With that said, this strategy has been developed with you, our staff. Developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our residents is vital if we are to achieve the ambitious outcomes set out in our Corporate Plan.



Our iCare values provide an excellent foundation for us to build upon but this strategy goes a step further. It sets out how we will address the workforce challenges we face.

People's needs and expectations of work are changing. Our aim is to build a workforce where there are opportunities for development and growth, and where every staff member feels valued, included, and appropriately rewarded.

As the world evolves, so do the needs and expectations of our workforce. The recent pandemic has accelerated this transformation, opening up new possibilities and ways of working. Looking to the future, we must ensure we have the right resources and skills to equip us for the challenges it may bring.

We are committed to supporting the well-being of staff as well as attracting, retaining, and growing our workforce, particularly in hard-to-recruit areas. Our focus is on creating compelling career pathways that benefit not only our staff but also contribute to the broader well-being of our community.

It is a privilege to lead a workforce with such a diverse range of skills and experience who provide such important services to Huntingdonshire residents every day. Whether you are an existing member of staff or thinking of joining us, thank you for taking the time to consider our Workforce Strategy.

Michelle Sacks, Chief Executive Huntingdonshire District Council

What is the Workforce Strategy?

At the heart of our council's success is our ability to attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce who truly connect with, and deliver, our priorities and values. This is what a Workforce Strategy delivers.

The Workforce Strategy provides a framework for how we are going to achieve the vision set out in the Corporate Plan. It sets the roadmap we will follow and the broad areas that are our priorities for delivery. Like all good strategies, it does not prescribe the detailed actions we will take. It will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose and will change if the evidence supports new approaches being introduced.

We are renewing our Workforce Strategy to prepare the council for the changing skills needed in its future workforce and to ensure that we can continue to attract, retain, and nurture talent. This strategy will encompass the well-being, happiness, and inclusion of our staff. Whilst looking to offer varied and fulfilling careers that are adaptable in an ever-evolving work environment. We know that to have the best talent we need to invest in our employees; so we will look to develop and grow our talent where possible



Why do we need one?

A talented and aligned workforce is crucial for bringing our priorities to life and ensuring the organisation delivers on its outcomes.

Getting it right delivers significant benefits:

- ✓ **Higher quality services for our customers, greater staff engagement and retention, and lower levels of stress.**
- ✓ **Value for money services with our workforce made up of the right people in the right places, as direct people costs make up circa 40% of the council's expenditure, the cost of getting it wrong can be significant.**
- ✓ **To ensure that we can deliver our organisational priorities with our workforce.**
- ✓ **Become an employer of choice by providing training and empowering an innovative workforce.**

Developing the strategy

At the heart of the Workforce Strategy are our staff which is why we have involved them at every step of the way. So far this has involved:

- Regularly engaging with Employee Representative groups and a number of staff who are acting as our Workforce Strategy Champions.
- Testing our initial thoughts on the content of the Workforce Strategy and running interactive workshops with a combined attendance of over 300 staff from across the council, spread across the 3 pillars who have helped to shape the recommendations in this strategy. Senior Leaders and Elected Members have also been engaged with with.
- Undertaking external research to understand industry best practice and take learnings that we can bring to the Council.



Attraction and Retention

The Workforce Strategy has been broken down into three key areas or “Pillars” that cover the core areas that need to be focused on to be an employer of choice. This part of the strategy explains the key priorities under **Attraction and Retention**.

Recruitment

- A large focus on the work we do will be on recruitment as we move to attract top talent into the Council. To do this we need to develop a strong Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which will help us to sell the organisation. An EVP simply put is the value, through benefits, rewards and culture, that we can offer to potential new employees in return for their talent, skills and experience.
- To help build a workforce for the future and to fill any potential skills gaps there should be a plan to grow our own talent through apprenticeships and training posts.
- Once the right people have been sourced there needs to be an effective onboarding and induction programme which will help to retain the talent that has been found.

Learning and Development

A key part of retaining our staff will be:

- Ensuring that they are trained to effectively undertake their roles with key competencies being covered. This will be through formal courses and informal on the job training.
- Creating career pathways will also help to develop our staff and give a route to progression opportunities within the Council.
- Focussing on diversity and inclusion across the Council will ensure that we embrace all employees and their differences.

Reward

This is ensuring that the Council has:

- A competitive rewards package for our employees, including pay, benefits such as pension, high street discounts and by providing financial guidance and support to those who want it.
- Support to our employees and ensuring that we have flexible ways of working in a hybrid world.
- A focus on performance output rather than attendance.

Engagement

This part of the strategy explains the key priorities under **Engagement**.

Communication

- Have a clear sense of purpose and buy in with managers and leaders leading and facilitating this.
- Having open, accessible two-way communication paths which are clear and transparent and available to all.
- When communicating across the workforce we should approach this in a tailored manner so that we get the widest reach possible, using the resources available to us. One size does not fit all and not all staff have the same level of understanding. Communication does not have to be big; team meetings, open doors, and posters all help to engage people in different ways.
- Actively seeking feedback from employees both formally and informally so that we can ensure that messages are being heard and that feedback is acted on.

Recognition

- Being given informal recognition when its due. A simple and genuine 'thank you' goes a long way.
- Provide opportunities for formal recognition to take place, either through a formal process or an awards event.
- Make celebrating our successes part of our every day. Proudly sharing both internally and externally our achievements.

Positive Working Environment

- Create a positive working environment for all staff with managers who are trained and skilled in supporting this environment.
- Hybrid working has changed the work environment for many and it is important that those who work like this and manage hybrid workers have the support, skills, and guidance to do this effectively.
- Collaboration is a regular activity, not only within teams but across services, to help bring the most rounded ideas and outcomes for our residents.
- Facilitating a network of inclusivity groups across the Council.
- Further embedding the iCare values so they are a core part of the Council and all we do.

Well-being

The key priority under **Well-being** is to create an effective framework. This encompasses:

Physical, Mental & Emotional well-being

- The first, and biggest, part of the framework will cover an individual's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, with employees needing different things at different stages of their life & career.
- A number of the activities under this part of the framework are self-directed and driven and are founded on the key principle of knowing your own self and body.
- Support can then be offered by HDC to enhance good physical, mental and emotional health through our support services and good working practices.

Workplace Social well-being

- Workplace social well-being meets the need for employees to interact in a positive and supportive manner.
- Teams should be given space to be able to connect, building and forming relationships outside of purely work-related activities.
- By encouraging role modelling wellbeing behaviours and creating space for open conversations, whether they are with colleagues, managers, employee reps, mental health first aiders or through the employee assistance programme.

Financial well-being

- The final part of the framework to ensure all-round well-being is to support financial well-being of employees.
- This can be through offering guidance and support through the Employee Assistance programme and other financial guidance tools.
- Providing discounts via our online lifestyle platform and seeking further opportunities to offer discounts on HDC products.

Future ways of working

With a decreasing pot of government funding, rising costs and inflation and greater pressure on our services we will need to find ways to save money or generate income in order to continue providing high-quality services. As a result of this, the council will not be able to continue to work in the same way and we will have to work out how to do more with less.

A key element of our Corporate Plan sets out that Do, Enable, Influence is a key strategic response to these challenges for the Council. We will play more of an enabling role and will make more use of partnership working and empower people to reduce demand for traditional public services.

DO. Using all our services and ways of working to best serve Huntingdonshire.

ENABLE. Huntingdonshire residents and businesses to thrive by listening and working with them.

INFLUENCE. Partner organisations and stakeholders by creating a shared vision that benefits Huntingdonshire.

The results of feedback, ideas and input from across the workforce has told us that we need to be:

Customer Focused – ensuring residents, contractors, members, and colleagues receive the best customer service at all times and are treated with respect.

Understanding of Council values and priorities – we all need to be very clear about the direction of the organisation and understand how they contribute to achieving our priorities.

Flexible, adaptable, and innovative – to deal with a changing environment as well as finding innovative ways to deliver services considering the need to drive down demand and make the best use of technology.

Able to deliver effective hybrid working – supporting managers and employees working in a hybrid world.

Outcome focused and high performing – whatever we do will need to have identifiable outcomes and meet the needs of our residents. We will need to work to the best of their ability and give 100%.

Well led and managed – with managers who demonstrate visible, fair, and pro-active leadership ensuring that our staff are supported, and where poor performance is identified it is managed effectively.

Working in a safe, healthy, and supportive environment – ensuring that we are safe at all times and work in a healthy and supportive environment enabling them to be at their best.

Engaged, motivated and resilient – we all need to feel well informed, clear on the direction of the organisation and resilient to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

Next steps

1

We will provide continuous communication back to the organisation, including a 'what are we going to do' page and appropriate comms to all staff.

2

We will invest in the action plan, through funding and resource to ensure we can deliver the agreed actions and will continue to work with employees across the council and the employee representative groups to deliver the work.

3

Follow the relevant governance procedures to ensure that the strategy and subsequent action plan are delivered. This will include reporting progress on the action plan to Elected Members via the Employment Committee.

4

Ensure we monitor impact, with the following as initial metrics:

- Feedback: from managers and staff via briefings
- Staff survey(s)
- Employment Committee Data reporting:
 - Staff turnover
 - Staff sickness
 - Success of Recruitment campaigns
- Satisfaction rates from Engagement Surveys.