

**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Resources and Transformation  
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## WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2024-2027

### NON KEY DECISION

Author – Kirsten Frew Ext.No. 2321  
Clare Davies Ext.No. 2164

Lead Officer – Clare Fletcher Ext.No. 2933  
Contact Officer – Kirsten Frew Ext.No. 2321

## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet and seek approval of the new Workforce Strategy, *People, Even Better*, for 2024-2027.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the attached Workforce Strategy for 2024-2027.

- 2.2 That Cabinet notes that the implementation plan may be revised due to changing circumstances and workforce requirements and that approval for changes is delegated to the Heads of HR&OD, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation which reflect this dynamic environment.
- 2.3 That Cabinet notes that the Heads of HR&OD following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources will have delegated authority for the production and implementation of an annual action plan for each of the key themes within the strategy.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Workforce Strategy 2024-2027 is pivotal in addressing the multifaceted challenges presented by today's evolving work environment. It aligns with the Council's new corporate plan, "Making Stevenage Even Better," which prioritises strategic investment in the workforce amidst a challenging financial climate, new regulatory frameworks, and a competitive recruitment landscape.
- 3.2 This strategy is driven by the Council's core values; caring, straightforwardness, responsiveness, excellence, innovation, and teamwork, which are integral to all Council operations. It is designed to foster a culture of engagement and collaboration, ensuring that employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to the Council's success.
- 3.3 Informed by feedback from quarterly staff pulse surveys, the strategy focuses on strengthening areas of success and addressing areas for improvement. The strategy emphasises five key priorities: Ways of Working, Attracting and Retaining the Best People, Engagement and Communication, Inclusion and Wellbeing, and Organisational Development.
- 3.4 The strategy is not just a blueprint for the future but also a response to the current and anticipated challenges facing the Council. It builds on the achievements of the previous Workforce Strategy (2020-2023) and incorporates lessons learned to better equip the workforce to meet the evolving needs of the Stevenage community.

### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

#### **4.1 Reason for change**

The necessity for a new Workforce Strategy arises from several critical factors:

The Council must ensure that its workforce is adequately equipped to deliver on its strategic ambitions in an increasingly complex and competitive environment.

The global pandemic has fundamentally altered the world of work, necessitating a strategic response that addresses both immediate and long-term service delivery needs.

The Council must proactively adapt to emerging work practices, including the transition to a new public sector hub, while supporting key initiatives such as the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management, the Commercial and Insourcing Strategy, the Climate Change Agenda, and Digital Transformation.

The strategy is essential to cultivate a workforce capable of delivering the high standards of service expected by Stevenage residents, in line with the Council's strategic priorities.

#### 4.2 Key Element of the Strategy and Outcomes

The Workforce Strategy 2024-2027 is centred around five strategic priorities, each designed to ensure the Council's workforce is equipped to meet the challenges of the future. These priorities include the continuous evolution of The Council's ways of working, attracting and retaining the best talent, fostering engagement and communication, promoting inclusion and wellbeing, and driving organisational development. Each priority is aligned with the Council's broader organisational goals, including addressing climate change, harnessing technology, and maintaining financial stability.

Theme	Theme Definition
<b>Ways of Working</b>	The Council aims to evolve its working practices by fostering a hybrid work environment, reducing physical office space, and achieving "hub ready" status. This involves leveraging technology to boost productivity, upskilling managers to lead effectively in this new environment, and aligning operations with climate change goals, ultimately enhancing staff work-life balance and proficiency with digital tools.
<b>Attracting and Retaining the Best People</b>	The Council's focus is on building a diverse and skilled workforce that embodies the Council's values. The Council will streamline recruitment processes, enhance its employer brand, and support apprenticeships to increase workforce stability. By improving the Council's onboarding experience and maintaining high satisfaction among new

	hires, the Council aims to become an employer of choice, known for commitment to diversity and excellence
<b>Engagement and Communication</b>	The Council are committed to creating a culture where employees feel valued, heard, and engaged. Through regular feedback loops, staff recognition initiatives, and enhanced communication, the Council aims to empower its workforce to contribute positively to its success. This approach ensures that staff remain motivated and connected, driving organisational resilience and innovation.
<b>Inclusion and Wellbeing</b>	The Council's goal is to nurture an inclusive and diverse workplace that prioritizes employee wellbeing. The Council will implement comprehensive health and wellbeing programs, support mental health in the workplace, and work to reduce the Gender Pay Gap. By fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity, the Council aims to create a positive work environment where every employee can thrive.
<b>Organisational Development</b>	The Council will focus on developing a forward-thinking, collaborative workforce by investing in leadership development, maximizing the use of its Apprenticeship Levy and promoting continuous learning. The Council's strategy includes effective workforce planning and equipping its leaders to support staff through change, ensuring that its workforce remains agile, skilled, and prepared for future challenges

**4.3 Consultation on the Strategy**

4.3.1 As part of the development of the Strategy consultation has taken place with the Resources and Transformation portfolio holder and the Leader of the Council, SLT, and Trade Unions. Additionally, feedback has been received from staff via pulse surveys. A summary of the feedback is presented below:

<b>Table one Summary of Consultation Feedback</b>	
Stakeholder Group	Feedback
SLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important that the strategy is the Strategic Leadership Team as a whole and not just the HR service.</li> <li>• The IT strategy will be a key enabling piece of work and it is important that these strategies work together.</li> <li>• Key enable strategy for Transformation programme</li> </ul>
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy is well time to aid our transition to the public sector hub.</li> </ul>
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of survey feedback included in strategy under Workforce Insights</li> </ul>

4.3.2. All of the groups consulted recognised the need for an emerging Workforce strategy, to support the achievement of the Council’s strategic ambitions and ensure that the Council develop an appropriately skilled workforce to continue to deliver services to Stevenage residents now and in the future.

4.3.3 The key elements of the feedback are that generally there was a positive response to the strategy. It is recognised that as an emerging strategy not all potential costs and benefits are known at this stage. However, this will be kept under regular review to ensure there are benefits for employees and residents, and costs are kept under control. It is also recognised that technology is a key interdependency for this success of this strategy for both employees and residents, this feedback was consistent from all stakeholders.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 The Workforce Strategy entails a strategic investment in our workforce, focusing on upskilling, digital transformation, and improved recruitment and retention, all within a constrained budget. The strategy also seeks cost efficiencies, such as reducing physical office space through hybrid working to control operational expenses.

## **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 Implementation must comply with employment laws, including fair recruitment, equal pay, and health and safety standards. The transition to hybrid working will be managed to ensure legal compliance and protect employee rights.

## **5.3 Climate Change Implications**

5.3.1 The strategy supports our Climate Change Agenda by reducing our carbon footprint through hybrid working, minimizing office space, and encouraging sustainable practices, aligning workforce activities with environmental goals.

## **5.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.4.1 We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. The strategy addresses the Gender Pay Gap, introduces Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting, and ensures equal access to career growth and development, promoting equity across the organisation

## **5.5 Information Technology Implications**

5.5.1 The strategy emphasises using technology to boost productivity and collaboration. Implementing tools like Microsoft 365 and digital onboarding will require ongoing IT support, training, and enhanced cybersecurity measures. Adapting to hybrid working models will also demand continuous updates to our IT infrastructure to support a more agile workforce.

## **Background documents**

4.2 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

## **APPENDICES**

- A Workforce Strategy 2024-27
- B Workforce Strategy plan on a page