
Report to Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

November 2021

West Sussex County Council People Framework

Report by Interim Director of HR and Organisational Development

Summary

This People Framework identifies the interventions needed to develop staff, managers and leaders to enable achievement of the Council Plan and the delivery of improvements and priorities in the future. This includes the changes to working practices resulting from the experience of the Covid 19 pandemic as the Council implements Smarter Working

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 We are committed to building on the significant strengths of the County Council's COVID-19 response, to address the governance and service challenges facing the County Council in 2020/21 and beyond. The new leadership of the Council has created a strong sense of hope and possibilities and establishing a more supportive and inclusive culture.
- 1.2 Although we are well on the road to making change and progress, we recognise that continuing change and improvements are required. The development of the People Framework is key to realising the ambitions of the council through its people and it is essential that services and staff are involved and engaged in its development.
- 1.3 There are key areas for us to focus on, including a commitment to put residents at the heart of everything we do; to create strong and visible leadership; to work closely with partners; to invest in and value our staff; and to make the way we work as straightforward as possible.
- 1.4 The Council Plan defines the outcomes we will deliver during the next 12 months. Service improvements in Children's, the Fire Service and Adults' are ongoing as well as a development plan for Adults' Services. Given the pressure on the West Sussex economy following Covid-19, rebuilding in this area will also feature. Key to the business plan will be ensuring work is costed and managed through robust planning and performance routines.

2 The People Framework

- 2.1 The People Framework sets out the interventions and actions required to support an improved focus on how we achieve our Council Plan. At the core of this will be a focus on the communities we serve, effective leadership, strong

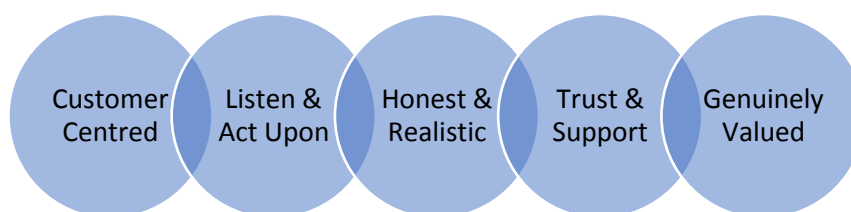
officer/member relationships, a commitment to partnership working and a valued and high-performing workforce. The framework identifies the interventions that are required to achieve the priority actions set out in the West Sussex County Council Plan.

- 2.2 The People Framework will evolve and develop as outcomes are delivered and milestones reached. We will use the learning gained at each stage to refine and develop the framework. The People Framework therefore identifies four key themes that will help shape our organisation, our leadership, and our workforce in the future in support of West Sussex County Council's priority action areas. Equality, diversity and inclusion underpin each theme and the Framework as a whole. This inclusive culture to which we aspire, where all of our people are treated with dignity and respect and are able to work in an empowered, collaborative and innovative way, will be achieved through the work we undertake in each of the four themes.

Theme 1 Leadership and Management	Theme 2 Wellbeing, Values and Ways of Working	Theme 3 Performance and Development	Theme 4 Resourcing and Talent
Culture, Diversity and Inclusion underpin each theme			

3 West Sussex County Council Values

- 3.1 Our workforce is the key to our ambitions. We will work collaboratively with staff to understand the challenges they face and provide them with the opportunity to shape and develop the support we provide. How we do things is just as important as what we do. The West Sussex County Council values are the five key areas guiding behaviour that were developed with staff and will frame our culture in the future.



- **Customer-centred** - we put the customer central to everything we do
- **Listen and act upon** - we listen to each other and act on what we say
- **Honest and realistic** - we are honest and realistic about what we can achieve
- **Trust and support** - we trust and support each other to achieve our goals
- **Genuinely valued** - we feel our contribution is valued and our achievements are recognised

4 How will we measure progress?

- 4.1 This strategy will be successful when we have delivered against the four key themes. For each theme we have identified the set of deliverables which will be measured to determine our progress. The deliverables outlined for the next twelve months are particularly focussed on addressing the 5 action areas that

will deliver the Reset and Reboot. The measures will vary from theme to theme and may change as elements of the work are delivered.

- 4.2 Key measures of organisational health in relation to leadership and the workforce have been identified where these provide insight as to progress against each of the four themes. These will be monitored and reported through the West Sussex County Council Performance Monitoring Process.

5 Monitoring and Progress Reporting

- 5.1 We will review this Framework in light of the vision and direction set out in the Council Plan. The Framework will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with corporate priorities.
- 5.2 As part of this review we will look at the four key themes and assess the impact of what has been delivered and the overall progress of the culture of the County Council.

6 Supportive and Diverse Culture

- 6.1 The key to a successful organisation is to have a culture based on a strongly held set of values that are supported by actions and interventions. The culture that we aim to develop is one that will reflect our commitment to putting residents at the heart of everything we do. It will be based on strong and visible leadership, closely working with partners, valuing and investing in our staff; and working in as straightforward way as possible.
- 6.2 The development of our culture will result from our actions and interventions in relation to the four themes of the people strategy with a particular focus on:
- Recruiting and retaining staff and leaders who will share our beliefs and values;
 - Ensuring line management practices in relation to development, performance management, reward and recognition reinforces our core values;
 - Leadership that role models our values and behaviours;
 - Treatment of staff reflects a commitment to dignity and respect and staff feel listened to; and
 - Engagement with and between staff, leaders, and managers, creating simple and effective ways of working, and enabling staff to protect and manage their wellbeing.
- 6.3 External inspections have identified concerns that feedback is not always acted on. It is therefore important for us to be aware of the extent to which such experiences could particularly affect, or impact upon, individuals from underrepresented groups or with protected characteristics. Our culture must promote dignity and respect in the workplace, diversity and inclusion, and promotion of employee voice.
- 6.4 Each of the four themes of the people strategy make an important contribution to enabling the culture we aspire to have, and to promoting dignity, diversity, inclusion and engagement.

7 Theme One: Leadership and Management

- 7.1 Too many fearful or disempowered managers and leaders have been unable to lead or maintain excellent practice in their own areas. There is a legacy of a lack of confidence and self-belief and fear of challenging or taking responsibility.
- 7.2 In future our leaders will need to lead, manage, communicate and work differently and take pride in maintaining excellent practice.
- 7.3 Our ambition is that *"We have Competent and Confident Leaders and Managers who live and behave in line with our Values"*

8 Next Steps: Leadership and Management

- 8.1 Key to achieving our Reboot is the need for leadership stability. Our aim will be to ensure that the majority of senior leadership roles are filled on a permanent basis. This recruitment and subsequent development of our leaders must promote longevity and focus on the development of leaders who are aligned to, and lead in accordance with, our values and the culture we aspire to.
- 8.2 Our leaders will lead with integrity, demonstrate our values and meet high standards of behaviour and accountability. Leaders will also play a role in strategy, planning and performance and establish a clear purpose. We will therefore review our "Being a Manager and Leader" framework so that we have a clear articulation of our expectations of managers and leaders in the County Council and what they need to know, what we expect them to do and how we expect them to behave, when they are leading their teams and services and the organisation in a values centred way. The framework will be embedded into recruitment and promotion, performance management, and development processes.
- 8.3 Leaders will create a culture that values staff and will have the skills and knowledge required to lead and support teams and individuals through a coaching style of leadership to encourage accountability, innovation and creativity. We will therefore develop leadership capability through development programmes targeted at 3 levels:
 - Leading my team
 - Leading my service
 - Leading the organisation
- 8.4 Leaders will engage in the direction and organisational health of the whole council and work collaboratively to solve problems and break down siloes. We will therefore establish and develop a Leadership Forum for shared working, learning, partnership and collaboration. We will support collective leadership through the delivery of a number of "demonstrator" projects that will test and develop new ways of working.

9 Key Outcomes: Leadership and Management

- Leaders role model the behaviours that are expected across WSCC and create a more positive, supportive and empowering work environment for staff;
- There is stability in senior leadership; and
- Our leaders and staff have the confidence and support to deliver change and continuous improvement.

10 Key Measures: Leadership and Management

- Staff survey data indicates that staff feel supported by their manager and leaders;
- There is a low vacancy rate and low turnover in leadership roles;
- Benefits to staff: There is a clear sense of purpose, and staff feel valued and treated with integrity; and
- Benefits to residents: Those closest to the point of service delivery inform leadership thinking and decision making.

11 Theme two: Wellbeing, values and ways of working

- 11.1 We recognise the importance of having a healthy and diverse workforce, in enabling staff, managers and leaders, to provide the best service that they can. In the challenging context that we are operating within, which is further emphasised by the current Covid19 pandemic, there is a risk that the health and wellbeing of our employees will suffer. Furthermore, there is a prevailing narrative of concern around bullying. We recognise also that over recent months, society has changed. As well as the pandemic, campaigns, social movements, and world events such as Black Lives Matter, environmental concerns, economic challenges, and Brexit are causes for refocussing efforts aimed at improving inclusion and promoting wellbeing. In this context, a key priority is to support people's wellbeing and resilience as well promoting dignity and respect in the workplace.

12 Next Steps – Wellbeing, values and ways of working

- 12.1 In the context of the Covid19 pandemic we have experienced a significant period of change. Many individuals have continued to operate on the frontline while for others, remote working will continue for the long term. Individuals' need for support will vary greatly, flexible ways of working will continue to be needed, and new ways of engaging with individuals and teams will be required. Our New Ways of Working Cell will continue to be vital for ensuring the organisation continues to operate efficiently and effectively over the long term. Alongside this we will promote smarter working using technology to support efficient decision making and enabling staff to work flexibly.
- 12.2 Actions will ensure that the employee voice is developed with the aim of understanding and addressing problems and issues that individuals and groups of staff face, ensuring that individuals can be themselves at work and are valued for their contribution. In particular, this will focus on establishing new and effective methods for raising concerns and giving feedback. Refreshed

Equality and Diversity frameworks and Dignity and Respect at Work policies will be developed and implemented. We will also work collaboratively with our staff groups to enhance their influence and involvement in our people policies and practices and the support they can provide to their members. We will also continue to build on and develop positive relationships with trade unions.

12.3 We will ensure that staff health, safety and wellbeing are prioritised and establish proactive and preventative approaches to the management of mental health.

12.4 Alongside this, we will develop and implement a whole council approach to mental health and wellbeing, jointly with Public Health, to enable proactive and preventative support to maintaining mental health of our staff, managers and leaders.

13 Key Outcomes – Wellbeing, Values and Ways of Working

- We have an inclusive and supportive culture, we work in partnership and we reward individual and team contribution;
- Staff, managers and leaders are supported to maintain their mental health and wellbeing;
- The views and concerns of staff, including those from underrepresented groups inform organisational learning and improved employment experience; and
- All staff are treated with dignity and respect.

14 Key Measures - – Wellbeing, Values and Ways of Working

- Staff survey data evidences that all staff feel trusted, valued and recognised for the work they do;
- There are manageable levels of sickness absence; and
- Health and wellbeing survey evidences that staff feel supported to maintain their mental health and wellbeing.
- Benefits to staff: Staff feel listened to and are supported to manage their health and wellbeing
- Benefits to residents: Services are more diverse and representative of the residents they support, staff are supported to work efficiently and effectively in support of residents

15 Theme Three: Performance and Development

15.1 Our review and engagements illustrate that some basic corporate disciplines are in disrepair; corporate planning and performance management must improve and too many elements of people management and professional practice are inconsistent. Performance conversations vary enormously, people are fearful of having difficult conversations and a lack of support in handling this, and bullying has become a consistent part of the narrative.

15.2 The ambition is that a clear vision and corporate plan will be supported with clear measures and reporting that provide transparency of, and assurance on, core service performance, organisational health and major projects.

Performance will be challenged constructively, and we understand and act on key performance issues.

16. Next Steps – Performance and Development

- 16.1 To support this, there must be good consistent people management and development tools and practices in place to ensure that we invest in our people to build the capability we need to succeed. We will ensure modern performance management is embedded so that all staff have good performance conversations and development support.
- 16.2 Actions will be taken to ensure high standards of line management with a consistent focus on performance and development of our people meaning that everyone experiences good quality performance conversations and development support.
- 16.3 Our staff are key to the success of our organisation so we will invest in our people to build the capability we need to succeed. We will undertake a review of the Learning and Development provision, using the learning of Covid19 to ensure the offer is modern, targeted to business need, and relevant. We will optimise our use of the apprenticeship levy to support our staff to develop their skills and careers within West Sussex County Council.

17. Key Outcomes – Performance and Development

- All staff have consistent quality performance and development discussions; and
- Managers feel supported to have difficult conversations when required but performance is respectfully managed and not experienced as bullying.

18. Key Measures - Performance and Development

- Staff have meaningful performance conversations;
- Staff and managers are completing their induction and mandatory training;
- Use of the apprenticeship levy is optimised to support career development;
- Benefits to staff: Staff feel valued in their employment at WSCC and are supported in their continuous development; and
- Benefits to residents: Staff who support residents and communities are supported to provide the best service that they can.

19. Theme Four: Resourcing and Talent

- 19.1 We have experienced significant challenges as a result of a legacy of reliance on agency, interim and consultancy resources. To reduce our dependency on interims we must nurture and develop talent and support more internal staff into leadership positions as well as being able to recruit and retain the skills and capacity needed across the organisation.

20. Next Steps – Resourcing and Talent

- 20.1 In order to enable the development of internal talent and reduce the reliance on external recruitment and interim solutions to fill management and

leadership posts we will develop and implement a succession management tool that will enable the identification of critical management and leadership roles and identify the learning and development interventions required to enhance our ability to fill vacancies internally.

- 20.2 We will introduce efficient exit interview arrangements such that insight is obtained from all leavers to inform organisational learning regarding the employment experience and retention actions. Alongside this, we will develop and launch a clear employee offer reflecting modern approaches to employment and working practices, reward and terms and conditions. This be used as the basis for building our reputation as an employer and therefore enhancing our ability to recruit and retain people with the values, skills and capacities we need.
- 20.3 We will implement workforce planning in each Directorate to ensure proactive action plans are implemented to ensure we able to recruit sufficient staff to meet medium- and long-term needs. This will involve taking actions to invest in the development of our staff, particularly through apprenticeships, to develop the skills needed by services in the future. Alongside this we will introduce an improved redeployment policy and recruitment planning that enhances our ability to retain staff who are impacted by reorganisations and restructuring.

21. Key Outcomes – Resourcing and Talent

- We are able to attract and retain a diverse range of high-quality staff;
- We are better able to recruit and retain permanent leaders and managers; and
- WSCC has a strong reputation as an employer externally

22. Key Measures – Resourcing and Talent

- Low vacancy and turnover rates in critical roles;
- Exit data indicates that staff do not leave because of poor employment experiences;
- Benefits to staff: Staff experiences inform actions to improve retention and staff are supported to develop their skills over the long term; and
- Benefits to residents: Sufficient staff are employed with the values and skills required to deliver the best possible service level to residents and communities.

23. Work in progress

- 23.1 The outputs from the Good Governance Project have already begun to shape our work and so activity is already underway on a number of priority areas. We have launched a series of Kickstart projects which are building on existing work, refreshing and refocusing some areas and beginning work to deliver the outcomes set out in the framework. These are set out in the attached appendices.
- 23.2 Our progress is measured as part of the HR and Organisational Development Business Plan and within the Council Plan under 2 Key Performance Indicators, Appendix A and high level action plan, Appendix B.

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Appendices

Appendix A Council Plan KPIs

Appendix B High Level Action Plan

Background papers

None