Workforce Strategy 2025-2030

Introduction

The future of work is predicted to see an increase in the use of automation, changes to models for work and structures, and changes to the way and places that we all work. We will need to ensure that the Council is able to respond to these changes and the demands and needs of our communities. Alongside this are changes needed to make sure that our workforce is involved and engaged in order to deliver the very best for our residents.

This Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce over the next few years which will enable us to get to where we want to be as a council. This includes embedding our organisational values into our work and culture.

The Strategy and action plan will ensure we proactively meet the future challenges and requirements of the organisation ensuring we have a joined up approach to resource, attract, deploy, develop and retain our workforce to deliver our current and future priorities whilst remaining flexible enough to deal with the levels of change which have become a norm within local government.

We have identified four key themes for the Workforce Strategy:

Theme 1 Talent and Development

Theme 2 Our Brand and Recruitment
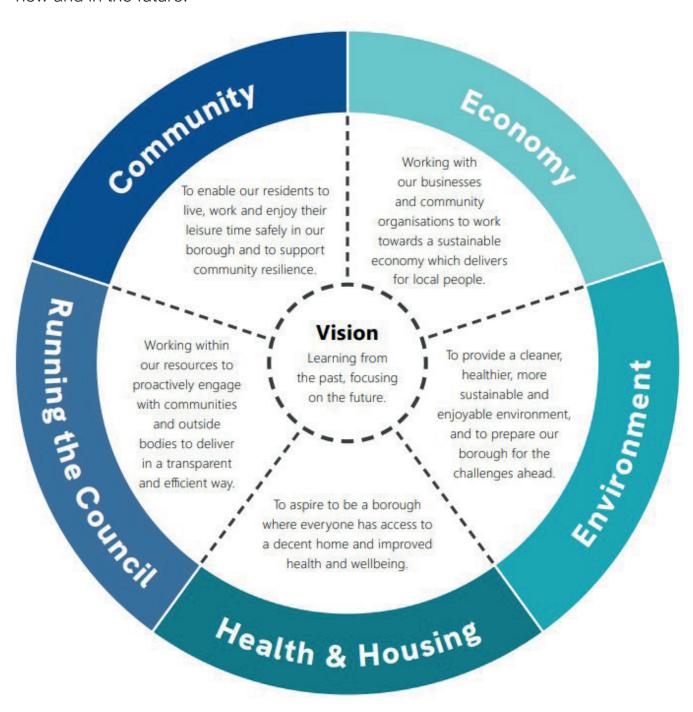
Theme 3 Wellbeing and Reward

Theme 4 Organisational Change and Design

Our Corporate Plan

Our Corporate Plan sets the overarching goals for the future of the borough of Swale.

The ambitious priorities set out in the plan recognise the Borough's potential whilst setting long-term aspirations that will benefit our residents, businesses and partners now and in the future.

Community
To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.

Economy
Working with our businesses and community organisations to work towards a sustainable economy which delivers for local people.

Running the Council
Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way.

Vision
Learning from the past, focusing on the future.

Environment
To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.

Health & Housing
To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.

Our Workforce Themes

Theme 1
Talent and Development

We will support our staff by designing and implementing effective people, performance and talent management systems. We will develop our teams, so they have the skills to provide responsive services, using innovation, flexibility and transparent and informed decision making. Our staff will be clear on the direction of the organisation and resilient to meet the challenges that lie ahead. This will ensure the Council anticipates, plans for and tackles current and future challenges, by establishing a workforce that is listened to, collaborates, is high performing and delivers value for money.

We will create a learning culture that is understood with meaningful learning opportunities linked to supporting the strategic vision and priorities of the organisation. Our staff will have a growth mindset and take responsibility for their own learning journey.

Our Outcomes by 2030

- An inclusive talent management framework that will identify, select and deploy outstanding talent allowing employees to grow and develop in the organisation.

- Clear talent and succession pipelines to grow our own talent through graduate schemes, apprenticeship schemes and developing our staff.

- We know where we have areas of expertise and where we do not and we work together internally to share and develop skills and knowledge of our workforce.

- Employees are digitally competent, and confident in using technology to promote and enhance agile and flexible working.

- Our leaders and managers are 'confident' in both their technical and softer skills adept at listening, applying emotional and personal responses to allow an adaptive style of management.

Theme 2
Our Brand and Recruitment

We will develop a clear employer brand outlining what is unique, exciting and inspiring about Swale Borough Council. We will promote the Council as a great place to work by promoting the range of flexible working opportunities, our values, the opportunities to grow and develop to attract the best talent with the diversity of skills the organisation and our community needs.

Our high performing culture relies on the strength of our people. As a result, attracting, recruiting and retaining the very best talent is central to our success. To do this we will use a variety of recruitment approaches when considering the full range of work engagements such as permanent employment, interims, short term contracts or other alternative work arrangements to ensure we achieve the best value for money and quality of service with the right level of skills.

Our Outcomes by 2030

- Flexible and innovative recruitment practices are in place to ensure we recruit the right people to the right roles.

- Pathways into the organisation are created through apprenticeships, graduate schemes and work experience placements as well as utilising our apprenticeship levy funds to build our talent pipeline for the future.

- Strengthening our relationships with Schools, Colleges and Universities to raise the awareness of the employment opportunities that the Council has.

- Strengthen our relationships with local communities so that we are able to attract more local diverse talent.

- A clear, attractive and inclusive employer brand is created to highlight the value of working for us together with a flexible approach to recruitment, acknowledging the needs of different audiences to encourage applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.

- People are recruited into roles who demonstrate our values through our value based recruitment approach.

Theme 3
Wellbeing and Reward

We will apply a flexible and fair approach to reward and recognition, recognising and rewarding contributions and achievements of our workforce. We want people to feel proud to work at the Council and enjoy their time at work. This will include staff feeling valued, engaged and supported in their roles.

We will have a proactive approach to wellbeing, supporting staff to have a sustainable work life balance. Wellbeing and healthy working practices and initiatives will be central to our culture and actively promoted. Transparent and fair pay and reward frameworks will contribute to staff feelings of wellbeing.

Our Outcomes by 2030

- Benefits and rewards are inclusive and offer flexibility and choice to suit diverse and changing needs to ensure the council is competitive in the external market, these are well promoted and understood by our workforce.

- High performance is recognised and rewarded for both individual and team contributions.

- Wellbeing opportunities are actively promoted and steps are taken to support the physical and mental health of staff in the workplace.

- Agile and flexible working practices create a positive work-life balance.

- Levels of sickness absence for mental health and other long term conditions are reduced.

- Knowledge and skills of managers and staff are increased in order to have better awareness to manage and improve their own and others mental wellbeing.

Theme 4
Organisational Change and Design

We will need to address challenges that will require responding in new ways, particularly in the way we rise to the demands of paying for services and improvements to our borough in the future. It is critical that we deliver high quality and efficient operations in all our core services; by getting the basics right this will give us a strong foundation for innovation and improvement.

We will continually need to be flexible and agile enough to respond to changing demands. It is essential that our organisational structure and design are aligned to our strategic priorities but allow for restructure and reallocation of resources to priority areas of work where this is needed.

Our Outcomes by 2030

- Resources are used effectively and efficiently to achieve our strategic aims and deliver quality outcomes.

- Processes are linked and integrated, with decision making based on high quality data and information.

- Capabilities in data analytics are improved to help inform and enable data driven decision making.

- New ways of working are explored such as alternative service delivery models, development of new commercial enterprises and changes to the way a service is commissioned or delivered.

Our Workforce Expectations

Our workforce expectations are developed to reflect the values of the Council and to ensure we are clear what every employee working at the Council can expect from us as their employer and in return what we can expect from them.

We will

- Provide positive leadership based on integrity and our values.

- Provide a working environment and culture based on trust.

- Respect you, ensuring you are treated fairly in the workplace - including challenging any discrimination or behaviour that is contrary to our values.

- Provide you with working conditions to thrive and succeed.

- Offer opportunities for you to access training and to develop and progress in your careers.

- We take your health, wellbeing and worklife balance seriously, and help you enhance them.

- Listen and support you to make decisions, developing a culture that supports innovation and continuous improvement

You will

- Be committed to achieving the council's priorities, by delivering well and going the extra mile.

- Actively demonstrate positive relationship skills with colleagues, partners, and residents.

- Be accountable for delivering tasks diligently and to a high standard, providing great results for your team and our communities.

- Respect each other and work proactively to create an inclusive environment and culture, based on trust and where differences are celebrated.

- Be proactive in managing your own wellbeing using the resources provided by the Council.

- Take responsibility for decision making and keeping your knowledge and training up to date, using the opportunities provided by the Council

Monitoring

We will use a range of measures to monitor our progress and success against each of the strategic themes of the workforce strategy, including:

- Feedback from our staff engagement surveys

- Feedback from managers surveys

- Feedback from learning and development activities

- Exit interview feedback

- Key performance indicators

- Quarterly workforce reports

- Workforce Action plan is regularly monitored and updated

- Feedback on our recruitment process and new starter experiences

- Annual report on equality data and gender pay gap reporting

Theme 1 - Talent and Development

Action	Outcome
Conduct a skills audit across the Council to identify talent and where we have skill gaps	Skills audit will inform our learning and development plan in 2025/26 Agree base line digital skills training for staff as well as tailored digital courses to help employees to maximise systems and technology
Review and develop our talent management framework	Individuals will be identified, selected and deployed to work across the organisation as demand and priorities change
Create career pathways and training programmes for staff at different levels of the organisation, so staff can see how they can develop in order to successfully take on leadership roles	New leaders and future leadership development programmes are created and agreed for 2025/26 Career pathways provide transferable skills that bring together common skills and abilities for professional as well as technical roles
Support and develop a flexible workforce to respond to the changing needs of the organisation	Upskill staff to allow movement across the Council's services through the opportunities provided by the apprenticeship levy
Support the development of our leaders to increase knowledge and expertise	Increase learning and skills through secondments and work shadowing opportunities both internally and externally
Deliver a suite of training for all managers, supervisors and team leaders to meet the requirements set by the Council	Managers are confident and take responsibility on dealing with people related matters and have an improved level of 'softer' skills to manage various situations
Develop and deliver a HR dashboard on workforce data to support strategic decisions.	Managers take responsibility to access people management data through iTrent and HR dashboard to effectively address performance issues and support staff to improve performance

Theme 2 - Our Brand and Recruitment

Action	Outcome
Develop our media brand and social media presence to attract a wider and more diverse audience for job opportunities	Better use of social media for advertising Council is attractive place to work through the Council brand Increase in number of applicants for hard to recruit positions by using flexible and innovative recruitment practices
Develop and implement a behavioural framework to support our values	Candidates are recruited with the right skillset and mindset
Establish a values-based recruitment approach	People recruited into roles that demonstrate our shared values Job description templates are value-based to aid the recruitment process
Review and streamline the recruitment process Develop the web recruitment module in iTrent Provide training to managers on the updated recruitment process	Candidate and manager experience is improved and applicants are appointed to roles more quickly Recruitment page is refreshed with focus on personal experience on 'why I work here' and agile working is promoted to attract a wider and diverse pool of talent
Work with partners to promote working at the Council at local schools, colleges and universities Increase our presence at job fairs to attract new talent	A new work experience offer is in place. We have excellent links with schools, colleges and universities as well as utilising our apprenticeship levy funds to builds our talent pipeline for the future
Create 'apprentice first approach' framework so that apprenticeships are routinely considered for entry level roles	Increase in the number of apprentices to support the growth of our talent
Review the exit interview process and monitor reasons for leaving	Increase in the number of staff completing exit interviews Employee experience is improved through our learning on the reasons for leaving
Monitor and continually review the induction process	New starters are fully supported through induction and feedback is provided on their experience New managers including senior managers are provided with knowledge on the Council and supported through the induction process by their managers

Theme 3 - Wellbeing and Reward

Action	Outcome
Continue to promote the benefits package to all staff	Employees have an understanding of rewards and benefits available through the Council
Review our rewards and employee benefits offer to ensure its competitive with other public sector employers	Employees feel valued for their contribution
Develop ways to increase staff recognition to ensure individual and team performance are celebrated and publicised	Employee contribution and achievement is recognised
Support services to develop appropriate career grade structures for succession planning	Employees are provided with opportunities to progress within their current professions Improved retention of talented employees through enhanced development opportunities
Promote and celebrate our non-financial benefits	Staff awareness is increased on the total employee benefits offer that includes hybrid/ flexible working, learning and development and apprentice opportunities to upskill and retain staff, commitment to health and wellbeing of our staff and the importance of staff recognition through Staff Awards
Develop initiatives to increase awareness of resilience and wellbeing Continue promoting national health and wellbeing initiatives	Employees take responsibility for their wellbeing through events and communication on ways to look after your health
Continue roll out of Resilience Training to managers and staff Increase awareness of Mental Health First Aiders	Managers recognise mental illness and sign post staff for further support Reduced levels of mental illness Understanding of the role and responsibilities of a Mental Health First Aider and ensuring support mechanisms are provided to Mental Health First Aiders
Work with external organisations to develop proactive health and wellbeing initiatives	Increase understanding and knowledge of health and wellbeing

Theme 4 - Organisational Change and Design

Action	Outcome
Organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities of the Council	Staff are more engaged and have a greater understanding of our values and priorities
Develop our leaders and managers to champion the organisational change process	Leaders and managers are confident and are able to manage change by having access to a range of tools that are easily understood that focus on outcomes
Leaders and managers to communicate key changes clearly, consistently and transparently to ensure everyone understands the changes and the impact	Employees are engaged and support the change with less resistance and increased levels of buy-in on organisational initiatives
Develop training for staff and managers to recognise and manage stress and reduce the organisational causes of stress	Managers can recognise signs of stress and have the knowledge to address the causes which improves levels of absenteeism, performance and employee retention.
Managers to be skilled in the use of data analytics to help and support decision making	Organisational decisions are based on accurate and timely data
Supporting the design and implementation of alternative business / service delivery models	Managers are developed to undertake changes to roles in response to business requirements and new skills that will be required in the future