

Workforce Strategy

2015 - 2020

IN UNITY, PROGRESS



Workforce Strategy 2015-2020

Introduction

1. The aim of this workforce strategy is to support delivery of the sustained transformation necessary to achieve faster, fitter, more flexible, citizen and customer focussed services. It complements and supports delivery of Vision 2030 and the Council Plan. During a time of considerable change and uncertainty it is vital to the achievement of success to have arrangements in place which show how the workforce will be supported and developed. Improvement comes when the right people, with the right skills are deployed in the right place. This is achieved by analysing the current workforce and then identifying future requirements, skills and competencies which are needed to deliver new, different or improved services.
2. The workforce strategy is focussed on the future and built on a variety of scenarios; it is intended to be integrated with our vision, objectives and financial planning arrangements. It links service outcomes with the workforce required to deliver them and an on-going understanding of how the workforce should look in the future through continual review, re-alignment and measurement of how outcomes are being achieved. It acknowledges that there is some uncertainty about the future and so includes a degree of fluidity/flexibility. This helps to ensure we are proactive in driving the pace and extent of change.
3. The strategy builds on work already undertaken within services and corporately to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and explore options for delivering effective services within significantly reduced budgets. It defines the Council's ambition for its workforce in light of the Council Plan which is likely to affect the shape and skill base across the Council. It is anticipated that as a consequence of financial, social and technological pressures, we will be managing a greater mix of public, private and voluntary sector providers and working in a more complex arrangement of partnerships to deliver services that residents want and need. Commercial acumen, contract management, technological expertise and customer services skills are, therefore, likely to be more crucial than ever before. Leadership will need to be strong and demonstrate the key behaviours that the Council expects in order to engage with the workforce and secure delivery of high quality outcomes, for example, by setting a clear direction, expectations, motivating teams and communicating the why, what and how. Above all the Council remains committed to operating as one organisation, all working to the same vision and values, irrespective of how services are actually delivered.
4. Vision 2030 sets out the long term ambitions for the Borough and describes the role the Council anticipates playing which is further articulated in the Council Plan. The current and forecasted financial pressures are likely to drive the need to plan and direct resources more critically than ever before. We will be focussed on driving economic growth and prosperity whilst reducing inequalities in our communities and protecting vulnerable people. We want to create a safe, clean and healthy environment where people choose to live and work.

What are we like as a workforce

5. We have a workforce of approximately 7,000 employees (including schools) and provide services to around 200,000 residents. As a unitary authority we are responsible for all local government functions except fire and police and as a consequence have one of the largest and most diverse workforces in the Borough. The majority of the workforce is female (73%) and the average salary is £21,385 (£11.08 per hour). 0.96% are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background and 1.22% are disabled. We are a mature workforce (over 67.66% are aged 40 years or more and only 3.9% are aged 16–24 years). A significant proportion of staff also live within the Borough and so are customers as well as staff. To be more reflective of our population we would need to employ more young people, more men and those from a BME background. We have a less qualified population than the rest of the region to draw upon with the number of people with NVQ level 4 or above at 25.6% (2011). This is slightly lower than the region as a whole. Nearly 57% of our young people attain 5+ GCSEs at Grade A-C (2014 data) which is the highest in the region and above the national average. Unemployment rates are slightly lower than the regional average at 3.0% (compared with 3.1%) as of January 2015 but this is higher than the national average and there are significant regional variations with Southern England generally having more employment.

Our vision for the workforce

6. Our vision is to have a workforce which understands and is committed to the vision for Gateshead; is innovative, creative, diverse and inclusive. We need to be adaptable and quick to deal with change so that we can shape the future rather than be reactive and outpaced. We want everyone to feel involved in how we operate and how we deliver services to ensure we are effective in meeting residents' needs. This involves a need to be clearer about responsibility and accountability in order to focus on outcomes. We need to work inclusively with partners to plan and deliver services which cross traditional boundaries and ensure there is a seamless experience for customers. We will be less concerned about who delivers the service and more concerned to ensure that the quality is right.
7. Performance management is key to help ensure we are focussing on the right things and that we are able to address performance issues promptly and effectively at corporate, service and individual levels. Engagement with employees is also vital to generate ideas and find innovative solutions. Productive and engaged employees secure delivery of excellent services while disengaged staff are less productive and likely to have a higher rate of absence. Employees know they are fundamental in creating the changes needed, especially at a time when resources are so tight and there is a need to capture innovative solutions.

Priorities

8. Key priorities for the workforce are:

- A strong, ambitious, responsible and resilient leadership culture which enables us to lead and manage change proactively and at pace.
- An engaged and empowered workforce, equipped with the right skills and knowledge to deliver the best possible outcomes for our customers and confident in the responsibilities they have.
- An ability to work at pace through in-depth understanding of demand and acceptance that resources need to be targeted sensitively. As a consequence of this we need a pay and reward strategy which is fit for purpose and future proofed.
- To work in a modern and flexible way, using business acumen to maximise the potential of ICT.
- To develop a workforce which recognises the diversity of the community we serve and maximises all our assets.

Above all we want a workforce that is Fit for the Future and proud to work for Gateshead.

To achieve the vision we will focus on:

Skills and behaviours

9. To have visionary and ambitious leaders who can motivate the workforce to deliver services effectively in challenging times and managers who can develop teams to demonstrate flexibility, innovation, good decision-making and excellent customer service. They will lead by example and generate confidence across the workforce about the future.

Recruitment and retention

10. To recruit and retain a workforce with the skills and values needed; to develop talent through effective succession and career planning arrangements and maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce actively challenging and addressing accessibility barriers and issues. Priority will be given to help develop staff in current and potential new roles but this may need to be balanced with a judgement about how quickly the Council needs to acquire expertise in certain activities.

Pay, reward and recognition

11. To understand and provide good and flexible reward packages within the current financial constraints, and ensure fairness across the entire workforce. At a time of continued financial constraint it is more important than ever to see how rewards other

than pay can become part of the package to reward employees and attract new talent. Great work and ideas will be recognised and shared.

Wellbeing and engagement

12. To be an organisation where risks are managed sensibly and proportionately to promote and manage wellbeing through effective engagement and other activities which will make a valuable contribution to people's welfare and productivity. Our approach will reflect the diversity across the workforce to ensure it is effective and proportionate.

Performance and change

13. To be an organisation that can transform quickly and effectively by concentrating on the right things and achieving our goals. This will be achieved by understanding how well we are performing and taking timely and appropriate action to address any risks. A clear and consistent approach to managing change will also be used to help keep people aware of what is expected. We want to ensure our values are demonstrated every day through engagement and a culture which is collaborative, inclusive and creative. We want to develop an agile and flexible workforce that embraces new ways of working and maximises use of technology to support efficient working. We want to create a culture where change is embraced and employees feel responsible for making change happen.

Workforce plan

14. The workforce strategy describes the way the Council needs and intends to shape and change the workforce over the next five years. This will be supported by a detailed plan which sets out the activities which are proposed to deliver the required development and transformation of the workforce both in terms of skills and behaviours. The plan will be constructed by taking stock of where we are now and where we need to get to by 2020. It will take into account a wide range of service propositions which need to be refined through the transformation programme; identification of future workforce needs; ensuring staff are deployed/redeployed as efficiently, effectively and flexibly as possible; working bottom up as well as top down; providing individuals with a clear understanding of future development, expectations and opportunities; and ensuring that customers receive planned, timely, efficient services. It will be a key guide in helping ensure we balance what is right for Gateshead as a place as well as an employer to secure equity and fairness as far as is practicable and as set out in our equal opportunities policy.
15. The commissioning framework and business plans will provide a vision of what services should look like in the short, medium and long term, built around evidence of need. These plans need to be used to compare with the current position in order to map out what and how things need to be different across the workforce. They will also identify skills gaps and where resources are deployed on activities which are no

longer necessary or desirable. The workforce plan will describe how the gap will be addressed. The plan will take into account the need for adequate arrangements to be put in place to meet continuous professional development requirements and demonstrate best practice.

The building blocks for the strategy and workplan are as follows:

Skills and behaviours development

16. The ability to lead and manage through the challenges facing us over the next five years and more will be critical in maintaining a sustainable organisation and customer centred services. We will strengthen our focus on the skills and behaviours necessary to do this at the very top levels and will inspire all managers responsible for leading staff. In this challenging and complex environment it is more important than ever that learning and development is focussed on those things that will achieve effective performance and delivery of priorities over the medium to long term.
17. We will have ambitious managers and leaders who can develop, motivate and lead the organisation in challenging times. We will balance service needs with the corporate good to ensure we focus on the longer term. We will identify and nurture leaders of tomorrow to build, maintain and invest in a high performing leadership team which is able to drive the agenda forward. We will continue to develop teams to ensure they have the right behaviours and skills necessary to deliver services in a challenging environment so that effective decision-making, innovation and flexibility are encouraged and supported.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- a) Leadership skills clearly demonstrated and performance improved.
- b) Learning and skills development are delivered to maximise provision in the most effective way.
- c) Potential leaders of the future are identified with a profile that is representative of the workforce and future proofed.
- d) Outcomes from learning and development activity are clearly linked to priorities and demonstrate added value to the organisation.
- e) Individual performance is demonstrably improved through development of skills.
- f) Individual development aspirations are improved through the opportunities provided. This may mean identifying opportunities to leave the Council or experience other working environments.

Recruitment and retention

18. We want to ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right time with the necessary skills and behaviours to meet the Council's ambitions. This may mean refreshing the workforce by bringing in new talent on a temporary or permanent basis, as well as providing opportunities for existing staff to develop. Having a greater turnover rate may be necessary to bring in new skills and talent in some areas. We will need to ensure we are quick in dealing with the financial challenge

alongside the redesign of services and expectations of customers. It is vital to deploy resources in the most effective way while retaining and building talent which is appropriate for the future not the past. We will undertake workforce planning and organisational design activities to predict future needs and prepare for significant changes in the size and composition of the workforce. We also want to ensure we identify opportunities for employees to develop their careers in a way that is sustainable. This may mean encouraging opportunities to test a new working environment outside the Council.

Anticipated outcomes

- a) Ensure the shape and size of the organisation is fit for purpose, sustainable and flexible.
- b) Provide opportunities for progression both within and outside the Council balancing opportunities to develop staff alongside assessment of need to refresh the workforce or bring in new skills which cannot be grown in-house quickly and are needed to keep the organisation sustainable.
- c) Help staff leave the organisation with dignity, fairness and integrity.
- d) Ensure the right policies and procedures are in place to balance retention with the need to recruit people with new skills and expertise.
- e) Ensure the Council has an approach to recruitment and retention which encourages and nurtures talent, either through direct employment or other delivery models and recognises customer expectations.

Pay, reward and recognition

19. We want to be able to retain and recruit a diverse range of talented people. Reward and recognition is a fundamental part of this. We will work hard to provide the best reward packages possible which will recognise the difficult financial climate and ensure fairness across the workforce. Balancing the pay bill with fair and motivating reward is challenging in this climate and the foreseeable future. However, we recognise we need to be competitive to retain the best people and provide support for those most in need. We will keep our pay arrangements under review and will work with the trade unions to ensure consistency in treatment and understand where there are issues which might need to be addressed. We will ensure benefits such as flexible working arrangements are fair and maximise accessibility for all.
20. The financial climate means that the Council will need to explore new delivery models. This will be pursued under the Council's Commissioning Framework. Where new delivery models are agreed which are outside the Council's terms and conditions measures will be put in place to maintain fair and strong employment practices in terms of issues such as fair pay and reward, pensions, and other HR policies and procedures.

Anticipated Outcomes

- a) Employees understand the totality of their employment package.
- b) Outstanding contribution by services or individuals is recognised and evidenced by staff satisfaction data.
- c) Ensure our approach to total reward is refreshed and up to date.
- d) That the total employment bill is sustainable and fair given the financial climate.

- e) That the approach to pay and reward is fair and transparent.
- f) That we ensure any new service delivery models protect the Council's commitment to fair terms and conditions and working practices.

Wellbeing and engagement

21. Risks will be managed sensibly and proportionately. Promotion of staff wellbeing is an integral part of our culture and will continue to be actively managed. We have a strong and positive employee relations and engagement culture which is essential to ensure employees feel well informed, involved and can access a variety of ways to feed in views. We will continue to do all we can to ensure we are fit and positive at work. We will encompass both physical and mental being to ensure arrangements are in place, especially where new service models are being introduced.

Anticipated Outcomes

- a) A healthy workforce (measured by number of days lost through sickness absence and referrals to Occupational Health).
- b) Employee's satisfaction with work/life balance.
- c) Confidence in the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity
- d) Good access to flexible working arrangements
- e) A good range of support for wellbeing.
- f) Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment.
- g) A strong, positive culture of employee involvement and engagement.

Performance and change

22. Transformation of services is essential, both to tackle the financial challenges as well as deal with increasing demands and technological advances. Service delivery is likely to be different in a number of areas in order to deliver what people need and expect. As a consequence, it is highly likely that the number of Council employees will be reduced. Different ways of delivering services such as, employee mutuals and social enterprises, joint arrangements and strategic partnerships will form part of our discussions, to see how services, jobs and finances can be balanced in the best way possible to provide security for the medium to long term, both in terms of services and jobs. We need to be able to effect change quickly and effectively without impacting on productivity or delivery. We want to encourage a culture of collaboration, innovation and creativity both within and outside the Council to provide the best possible services to our residents.
23. We will develop change management practices to help people through different types of change; develop links with partners to build a stronger support system which will identify a greater range of opportunities for employees and refresh our approach to performance management to ensure appraisal is linked to business need and helps ensure that employees understand how their role fits into the bigger picture. There may be a need to significantly reduce the size of some services but this will be looked at alongside opportunities to grow activities through trading or new partnership

arrangements where there could be new income streams or additional investment. This will also involve ensuring that there is a good understanding of both good and under performance and that the right measures are in place to address under performance whether it is due to capability or other factors. Introduction and development of a new payroll and HR system should provide both managers and staff with readily accessible information to tackle performance in a timely fashion. It may be necessary to make some policies less flexible in order to ensure we are competitive and meeting customer needs as efficiently as possible.

24. Best practice in respect of supporting diversity will be incorporated into all activity and workforce data monitored to support improvement. Barriers will be identified and addressed promptly and successfully.

Anticipated Outcomes

- a) Employees understand the Council's ambitions as well as their own priorities and know what they need to do to achieve them through effective use of supervisory sessions, team meetings, appraisals and other opportunities to engage with the changes being considered or implemented.
 - b) There is a clear programme of transformation and employees understand how they might be affected and how to get involved.
 - c) There will be increased partnership working leading to potentially different solutions for parts of the workforce. Solutions will need to be sustainable and take account of on-going commitments such as pension provision.
 - d) The workforce profile and supporting data will help ensure the Council is able to proactively manage its talent pool and mitigate against loss of capability through retirements, new delivery models etc.
 - e) Employee satisfaction levels show that there are a good variety of opportunities to influence how the Council works.
 - f) Customer and resident satisfaction with services is unaffected or improves even when new models of delivery are introduced.
25. The diagram below demonstrates how the different elements and features of the strategy fit together to achieve improvement.

