



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Fresh Start

Bright Future

Our West Way

People Strategy

2022–2025

Trust | High Performance | Respect | Innovate | Value | Empower

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Putting Our people at the centre – Our West Way



We are delighted to introduce our first People Strategy, following the formation of West Northamptonshire Council on 1st April 2021. It has been developed to support the Council's vision, values and commitments from our [Corporate Plan](#). Our Council's vision is to make West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work, visit and thrive.

Our People Strategy is about our workforce. It explains what we will do to make sure that we have the skills to deliver the outcomes for West Northants set out in the Councils Corporate Plan. To attract and retain those skills, we aim to ensure the Council is a place where:

- people aspire to work,
- there is an opportunity to learn and grow,
- workforce achievements are acknowledged and recognised,
- the work environment is safe, healthy, diverse and engaging.

This document shows some of the ways we will be supporting this, by working with our employees to build the capability, skill, behaviours and culture we need to make this vision a reality.

It aims to ensure that West Northamptonshire Council is an employer of choice, providing a stimulating and rewarding sustainable environment for its people.

Assembling a unitary council was a major change for our people, having transferred in from four predecessor organisations. We are a new Council and this is a fresh start for our people. We have already invested £3.1 million in pay for 2021/22, exceeding our initial pay budget to ensure the lowest paid received the greatest uplift. This is also our opportunity to set out what type of employer we want to be, what our employee offer should look like, and to set out what activities and key projects need to be undertaken to get us there.

The Council recognises the importance of co-designing our future organisation with our people to establish the 'West Way'. To make this happen, we have been actively seeking views, opinions and suggestions internally through all staff Chief Executive briefings, bespoke focus groups, Trade Union forums, staff networks, transformation coffee mornings and internal 'pulse' surveys, to name but a few.

Our first Employee Survey was also launched in October 2021. We had a good response rate with rich information from our workforce across all services and roles. Our employees told us what we do well, but crucially where we could do better and how they wanted to be supported. We now need to act on this, to drive change and deliver best practice across the authority. This level of two-way communication and engagement is a conscious direction and is a step towards developing: our culture, the 'West Way', and a work environment that reflects our values, one which enables all our employees to THRIVE.

Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive

Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Corporate Services

Introduction

Our employees are at the heart of the delivery of services to our community

We know that our employees are the heart of our vision, essential to delivering our key priorities as a Council and West Northants, with many of our employees living locally. Our People Strategy has been developed to help everyone to reach their fullest potential, empowering them to help make West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work, visit and thrive. The delivery of our vision and priorities can only be achieved if we are able to retain and recruit the right people, with the right skills and the right attitude; those who will innovate and collaborate to deliver transformation of our services and maximise our organisational potential.

Therefore, we want to retain our talented workforce by developing, engaging and empowering them in the delivery of key priorities. We want to become a chosen employer with a focus on improving wellbeing, trust, inclusivity and empowerment. We recognise that our strength is in our people, who have achieved so much to date as they have come together to form one council.

To establish a high performing and inclusive culture, which has innovation and collaboration at its core, we need to get the basics right. We need to understand our employees, engage and listen to them, ensuring effective feedback mechanisms are in place. This will enable us to provide opportunities, competitive pay and benefits and a learning culture for all to develop into their best selves and achieve their full potential.

As a newly established employer, we recognise that we have a lot to achieve and that we must move away from the legacy of the predecessor organisations, through thinking and delivering as one council. Therefore, this is an ambitious people strategy, underpinned by a significant programme of work to be delivered over the course of the next three years.

Setting out our employment offer, 'Our West Way', will ensure: fairness and transparency, appropriate reward and recognition, and clear management expectations, thereby fostering psychological safety in the workplace and a learning culture. This will create an environment where employees feel valued, and comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas, playing a key role in transforming services for our residents and making things better for all.

Our drive to thrive

Everything we want to achieve for West Northants depends on having the right people in place and doing the right things.

We need to retain, recruit and develop talented and committed staff to provide the best services for our local residents and businesses.

By making the most of people's skills and experience, we can take full advantage of the opportunities created by the new council. Everyone needs to be performing at their best to make the most of the opportunity we have with our new Council.

To support this, West Northants Council has developed a set of values in consultation with our staff, members and stakeholders. These values underpin how we work and what partners and customers can expect from us. We want to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses and for our staff – we want everyone to THRIVE.

Similarly, where services are provided through partners or external organisations, we will work with them to make sure these values are carried through in delivering services on our behalf.

Our organisational culture will continue to develop as we carry on improving our services and ways of working as the new West Northamptonshire Council.

THRIVE

Our Core Values

TRUST

We are honest, fair, transparent and accountable. We can be trusted to do what we say we will.



HIGH PERFORMANCE

We get the basics right and what we do, we do well. We manage our business efficiently.



RESPECT

We respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.



INNOVATE

We encourage curiosity, we are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.



VALUE

We value each others skills, experience and ideas and we celebrate our similarities, differences and environment.



EMPOWER

We believe in people, will listen, learn and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.



Our 6 corporate priorities

Green and Clean

1

Environment & Wellbeing

- Carbon neutral by 2030
- Climate summit in first few months
- Increased wildlife species & more trees
- Increased electric charging & energy efficiency
- Vibrant towns & villages
- High quality parks

Improved Life Chances

2

Health, Social Care & Families

- Healthy, safe and protected Children
- Increased aspirations in young people
- Investment in new schools & provision
- Adults supported to live independently
- Care provided for those that need it
- Reduced hospital stays and delays
- Joined up and local services with health
- Safe and secure accommodation for all

Connected Communities

3

Transport & Connectivity

- Improved road, rail and bus networks
- Completion of major roads projects
- Improved road quality
- Increased use of electric vehicle & charging points
- Enhanced broadband and mobile connectivity

Thriving Villages & Towns

4

Place shaping & Homes

- Regeneration of our core town centres
- Safer communities with less anti social behaviour
- Flourishing and supported small business
- Sustainable planning for growth
- Increased affordable housing & Council homes
- Raised standards of privately rented homes

Economic Development

5

Growth & Prosperity

- Published west strategic infrastructure plan
- Framework for long term economic growth
- Increased inward investment
- Building on our rich heritage
- Increased visitors to our attractions
- Infrastructure benefits and investment through our role in regional forums and plans

Robust Resource Management

6

Transparency & financial probity

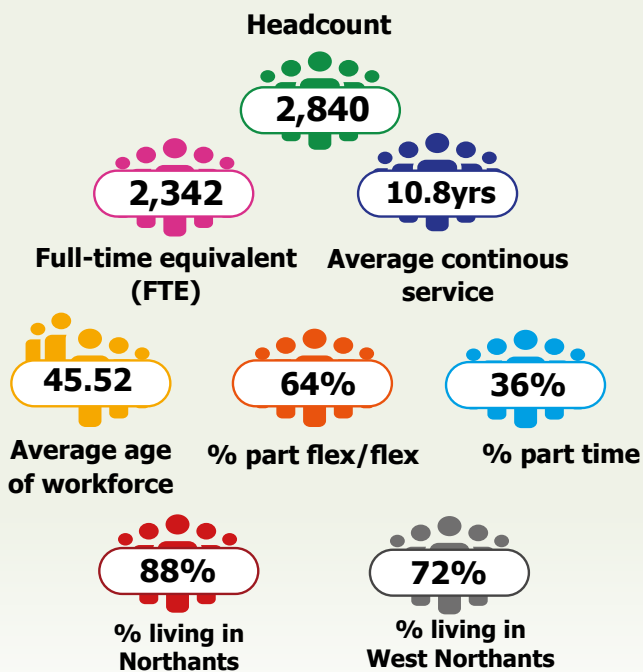
- Council tax rises capped at £99 a year
- Stable finances and rainy day reserves
- Robust scrutiny of spending
- Open and transparent decision making
- Financial prudence underpinning long term decisions and plans
- Optimised debt management

One organisation, one workforce

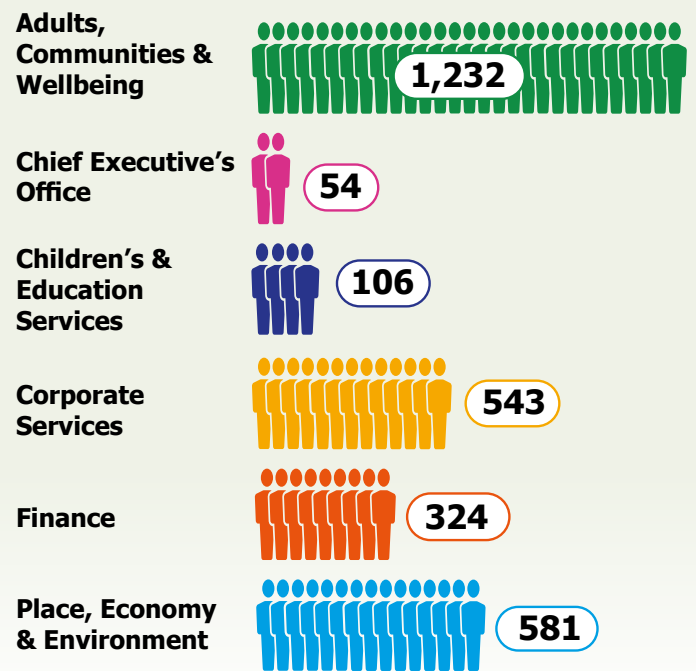
This is headline information on the makeup of our workforce, following the transfer of the four previous councils into the new West Northamptonshire Council unitary authority. As transferred data is limited in this area, there is more work to be done to understand our people and their protected characteristics. This now presents an opportunity to revisit the data and help employees understand the importance and personal benefits of sharing their data with us. This People Strategy and underpinning programme can then support individuals to becoming part of a high performing, inclusive workforce.

Data reflective of the establishment as at: 4th January 2022.

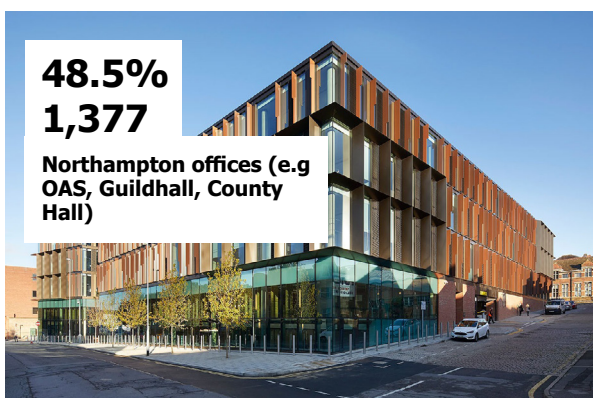
Make-up of our workforce



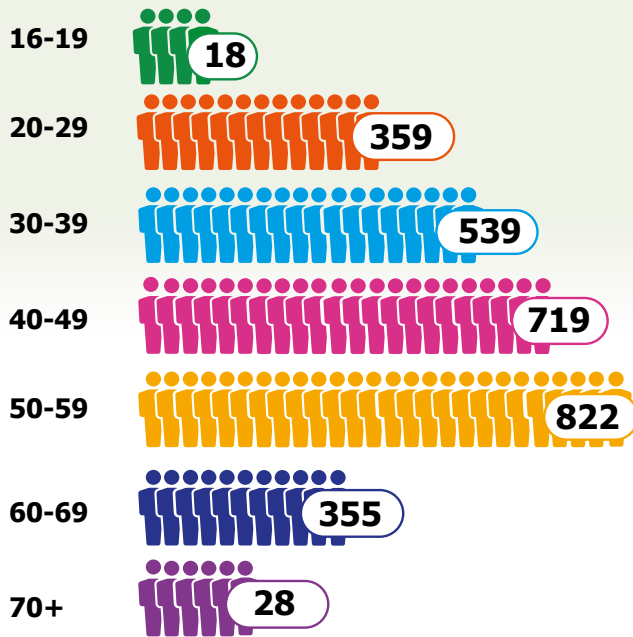
Workforce by Directorate



Breakdown by Workbase



Age of Workforce

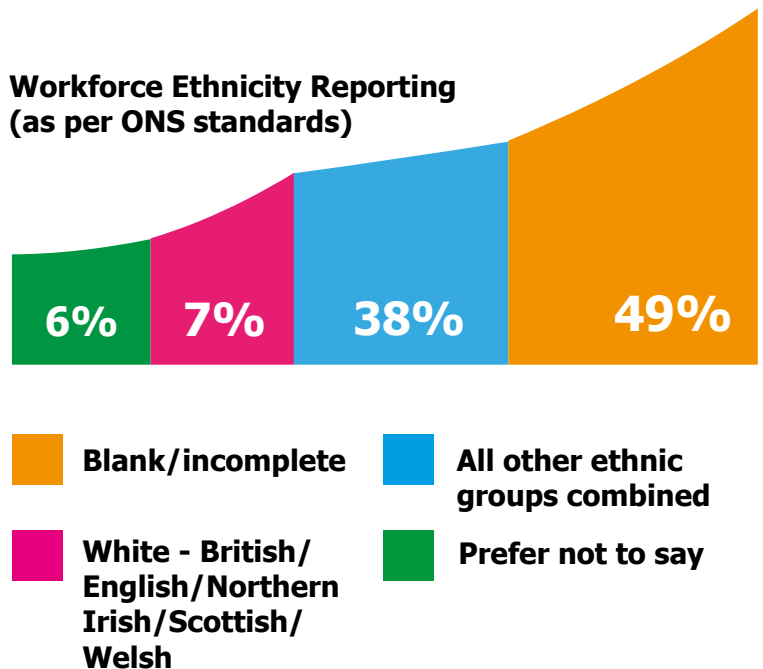


Gender, Diversity and Disability

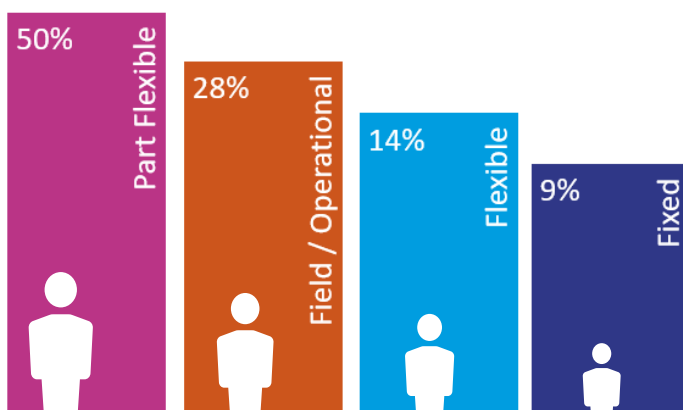
Gender	Female 2063 (73%)	Male 777 (27%)		
Protected Data	Diversity data not completed 1166 (41%)			
Disability	Yes 98 (3%)	No 627 (22%)	Prefer not to say: 177 (6%)	Blank 1938 (68%)

We have presented this data in line with the Office for National Statistics standards and advice published on Gov.uk. Unfortunately due to our high non-recorded rates, it is difficult to identify a true picture of the ethnicity of our workforce. Employees continue to have access to self service functionality in ERP Gold which enables our workforce to view, manage and amend their personal information and managers are continued to encourage employees to record their ethnicity and share their diversity data with us.

Workforce Ethnicity Reporting (as per ONS standards)



Ways of Working



We have identified 4 'worker types' in West Northamptonshire Council and the majority of our workforce undertake hybrid working. It is important that we ensure that our employees can work remotely and collaboratively with other council staff and other key partners and communities, and that they also are able to have a local presence, are visible and feel connected to our local communities.

Our first employee survey (Oct 2021)

As a new council, it was important that we commenced with a baseline of employee views to engage our workforce of transferred employees and new starters. We wanted to understand how our workforce were feeling following the transition to a Unitary council, and more about the different inherited cultures as we look to create a new one council culture for West Northamptonshire, in which all employees can THRIVE.



What did our people tell us?

What makes this a great place for people to work?

"The commitment of staff to do great things for their communities. The positive and helpful nature of colleagues."

"I feel proud to work within a business that really helps people - Not just in the extreme, but also with the smaller things that impact all residents. I am able to speak openly and honestly with my manager and I truly believe that she cares what I have to say, and that makes an incredible difference!"

"My manager and wider team are very positive, supportive and forward thinking, we have opportunities to help shape the direction of the service."

What would make this a better place to work?

"It would be good if there were more opportunities to get involved in organisational wide projects to enable more interaction with business areas that you don't generally come into contact with."

"Better opportunities for progression for entry level staff."

"Teams working together and not in silos - I have seen an improvement so fingers crossed we are moving in the right direction."

"Increase in communication of intended direction. Visibility of the council plan for the next 12 months, 3 years & 5 years."



54% of our employees chose to complete the survey (industry average 40-60%) which was ran by Best Companies, an independent provider. Best Companies was chosen to facilitate the survey as they use our response data to derive engagement scores, which can be compared against established companies in receipt of their 'Ones to watch' accreditation, which is a special status awarded to organisations where workplace engagement shows promising signs for the future.

As an organisation of just 6 months old at point of completion, our people gave us overall scores which were very close to more mature, accredited organisations in several areas including how they felt about wellbeing, my team and my manager.

The employee survey highlighted areas of opportunity and our workforce told us clearly where we could do better, including how they identified with West Northamptonshire as a new organisation as well as communication of priorities and direction from leadership. We now need to act on this insight, in order to make a difference and improve levels of engagement and satisfaction across every team, service and directorate.

What next?

Listening, co-design and action. Using focus groups and working with employees, managers, our leaderships team, staff networks and Trade Unions, we are designing action plans to deliver improvements. The cross-cutting themes arising from the survey are key areas for activity under this strategy. We will also be re-visiting areas with our pulse surveys to measure and understand the difference we are making.



Our 3 areas of strategic focus from our employee survey results



What do we want to achieve?

Our HR Service vision

Enabling the delivery of the six corporate priorities through our people, to help West Northamptonshire THRIVE:

HR Services will lead the creation and delivery of one culture for West Northamptonshire Council, with a focus on improving wellbeing, trust, inclusivity and empowerment. Our people will innovate and collaborate, delivering transformation of local government services and maximising organisational potential.

We will put in place strategies to attract, develop and retain a skilled, diverse and highly engaged workforce, operating in a healthy and safe work environment, to become a chosen employer for those living in Northamptonshire and beyond.

As well as excellence in delivering the basics of HR for our people, we will also support the design of career pathways enabling everyone to develop, from those at the start of their careers through to our experienced professionals. We aim to ensure individual potential can be identified, developed and rewarded.

We will know we have succeeded when:

We live our THRIVE values in the way we do our work and how we work with others.

We work towards a common purpose, we work collaboratively, we understand which areas are doing things well and we share that learning.

There is excellent management and leadership, our managers are advocates for change and drive improvement and innovation.

We understand the needs of our diverse workforce, we engage, we listen, we respond.

We take control of our learning and development regardless of what stage of our career we are at.

Individual and organisational wellbeing is embedded in everything we do. We are healthy, content, resilient and productive to collectively maximise the impact for West Northamptonshire customers.

We feel connected and engaged with our colleagues, our partners, our customers, whether we are working remotely or directly within the local community.



How will we achieve our vision?

The people strategy is a critical building block of West Northamptonshire Council's Corporate plan. It contains three key strategic themes, each comprised of several different underpinning workstreams, projects and deliverables:



Attracting and retaining talent

Talent acquisition & organisation orientation

Recruiting the relevant skills and abilities for current and future needs is key to the long-term success of the Council. We are developing a Talent Acquisition and Management Team to lead and support the council in becoming a chosen employer.

Over the next year and beyond, we will be developing an employer brand and employer value proposition, ensuring we are noticed in the markets to attract the best talent and tapping into organisations that support inclusion. To increase our pool of talent we need to ensure we are advertising in the right places. We established nine Staff Networks earlier in the year and working with this diverse range of our employees, we will widen our advertising opportunities and our candidate pools.

To enable us to support our talent acquisition ambitions, we are procuring a market leading recruitment and applicant tracking system that is scheduled to go-live in mid-2022. Supporting this, the Acquisition Team will provide easily understandable tool kits and training for managers to navigate the new system.

The importance of onboarding our new talent cannot be underestimated. The best candidates are now won and lost in the period after their offer and acceptance of a role, prior to starting. How we manage this period is therefore more important than ever and the delivery style and method of these first post-offer contacts will shape the candidates view of the true approach to engagement that the council takes.

The intention over the next year is to design this programme of first contact to include a buddy system, alternative use of technology to share and involve the new candidate in our culture, with information and contact that is informative and inclusive.

Care Leaving Champion: "I am going into my 7th month of being in this role and I just love it! Before I started I had a lot of anxiety about it but I can't express enough how welcoming and professional everyone was and it made settling in way easier."

Employee Survey: What can your organisation do to support you at this time? "Review processes for certain tasks such as the recruitment process it is so slow and inefficient." (anon)

We will:

- Identify and implement strategies for recruiting into hard to fill and high turnover roles
- Procure and implement a replacement recruitment system
- Provide short-term support mechanisms to aid managers in using the current e-Recruitment platform
- Develop our employer brand and define Employer Value Propositions (EVP)
- Develop an advertising strategy ensuring diversity, inclusivity and maximum coverage
- Develop work experience, intern & volunteering policy
- Develop a new three tier organisational induction programme
- Deliver orientation tools for each tier, including the implementation of a buddy system.



Attracting and retaining talent

Talent management

We are developing a defined, strategic approach to attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining and deploying those people whose knowledge, skills and capabilities have been identified as key to the delivery of our objectives. The Talent and Succession strategy will also fully utilise apprenticeship opportunities.

We will be developing our internal and new talent by exploring available national and local initiatives to recognise ability through providing opportunities to those who's skill sets can be developed and deployed across the organisation. These initiatives include graduate schemes, apprenticeships and the development of our care leavers.

We will also design our own 'West Northants Futures Development Programme (FDP)' to develop internal employees to become the West Northants leaders of the future.

People Survey: What makes this a great place to work? "I have been given the opportunity to progress in my career within my team" (anon)

We will:

- Develop an in-house 'West Northants Futures Development Programme (FDP)', in addition to the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)
- Talent mapping & succession planning, identifying skills / capabilities of existing workforce, aligning to growth strategy
- Retention planning - Review exit interview process to create a consistent approach, metrics to inform retention strategy
- Assurance reviews to ensure Diversity & Inclusion underpins talent management and progression.



Attracting and retaining talent

Pay, reward & recognition

Following the transfer of four councils into West Northants on a variety of terms, conditions and remuneration, we are now in the process of designing our pay and reward strategy which will be a key tool in attracting and retaining employees, motivating them to deliver consistently effective performance against the corporate objectives.

To achieve this, we will create our new job family architecture and conduct extensive pay modelling, to design an affordable and attractive pay and reward model. We will also engage with our employees to understand how they flourish with recognition and how to maximise the opportunities to do this including lifestyle, benefits packages and flexibility.

This work will be the backbone of our career pathway design, as we know we have many career opportunities in West Northamptonshire, and we want to make it easier for all our people to see how they can develop and progress their local government career within our organisation.

Employee Survey: What can your organisation do to support you at this time? "Look into better benefits for staff, align pay sooner." (anon)

"Look at fair pay levels across WNC" (anon)

We will:

- Design new job family architecture
- Design a logical, transparent, legal and affordable new pay structure
- Create and develop our employee benefits offer
- Introduce benefits statements and utilise total benefits statements in recruitment activity
- Create our employee recognition frameworks, looking to develop multiple frameworks where everyone can find something that works for them.

Achieving our goals through our high performing and flexible workforce

Leadership & management

Our existing and new hire workforce will have a wide range of management and leadership skills, abilities and experience. We also recognise that how our employees are managed going forward in West Northamptonshire will impact on our levels of retention, attraction, performance, engagement, satisfaction, motivation, career progression and personal development. Our leadership and management community should inspire our workforce to innovate and collaborate, to be their best selves at work, and to become future leaders and managers in West Northamptonshire Council.

We are therefore designing a programme of leadership development for our tiers 1-3 leaders and across our management cohort including the use of level 5, 6 and 7 apprenticeships in leadership and management, mentoring and partnering with organisations that have established programmes. We will also be establishing internal and external coaching programmes and peer group self-learning, action learning sets, and developing this as a successful tool throughout the organisation.

Feedback from our People Strategy focus groups unsurprisingly showed inconsistency in management approaches through our new organisation. Transferring managers have a variety of styles and skills and it is therefore a priority to set standards and expectations for this group. Therefore closely relating to the leadership programme activity is our in-house Management Programme (MALPE) which is being developed to run over 12 weeks and will help to ensure consistency of message, management and direction of

travel across our management cohort.

MALPE is for experienced managers to brush up their skills and will also support the creation of management networks to share best practise.

Attendee of People Strategy Focus Group: "Developing a potential placement rotation with local public sector partners is an exciting proposition for development." (anon)

Employee Survey: What makes this is a good place to work? "My manager and wider team are very positive, supportive and forward thinking. We have opportunities to help shape the direction of the service." (anon)

We will:

- Design a Leadership Development programme for Tier 1-3
- Design a Management Development programme aimed at those new to management or managers/team leaders who require management development training
- Develop a mentoring programme, partnering with other councils/public sector partners
- Develop the internal and external coaching offer across WNC including for leadership
- Produce and sustain peer self-learning groups as a result of leadership / management training, enabling ongoing development.



Achieving our goals through our high performing and flexible workforce

Establishing high performing teams

To establish consistent high performing teams we are looking internally and sharing our successes and how they have been achieved between directorates, services and teams, respecting and listening to our peers.

The key to high performance is to co-design corporate, directorate and service plans so that all our people understand the key priorities and are fully engaged in the delivery of them. Also key is listening to employees, getting feedback and providing safe spaces to share thoughts and ideas, to design and innovate whether that is face to face in an office or virtually in a hybrid working environment.

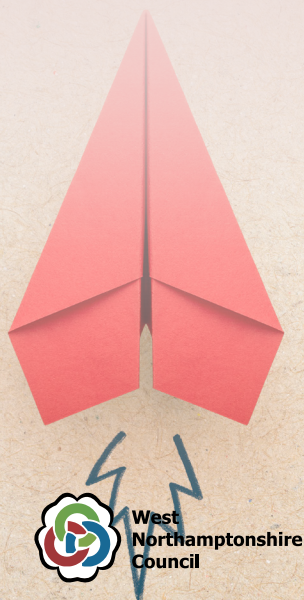
A performance management process that focusses on jointly setting clear objectives, reviewing, providing feedback and if necessary, re-establishing direction. It will also support the development of high performing teams. We will therefore develop a new, progressive and effective performance management programme with a focus on continuous feedback rather than backward looking reviews, on employee development and on innovation and enabling technology to deliver more for our residents. This will support employees to achieve their potential, their career goals and bring their best selves to work.

Apprentice, Leaving Care Team: "My line manager is very supportive of my ideas and the opportunity I have at hand."

Employee Survey, what makes this a good place to work? "I have the opportunity to create events and activities which show my talents and passions. My manager is encouraging and supportive, especially when it comes to my development" (anon)

We will:

- Review and develop our approach to managing individual performance, using external research, best practise and input from across our workforce
- Develop Psychological Safety in the workplace
- Remove silos to allow for cross workforce engagement and collaboration to enable knowledge sharing and expertise transfer
- Introduce Manager / Leadership Scorecards with positive success measures being shared and linked to teams and organisational performance.
- Ensure there are mechanisms in place to enable the identification and utilisation of the skills and knowledge of our workforce.



Achieving our goals through our high performing and flexible workforce

Diversity & inclusion

Inclusion is the access to equal opportunity and treatment within the workplace. It is proven to improve the culture and success of organisations by bringing together and sharing of a wealth of experience and ideas. How the council approaches diversity and inclusion in the workplace should reflect our ambitions for residents and vice versa.

Staff Networks were set up at the point of transfer to West Northamptonshire in April 2021. There are nine networks covering a range of areas to enhance employee inclusion through peer-to-peer support and a collective voice. These networks are a safe space to share concerns whilst also initiating and supporting organisational feedback, policy change and increased opportunities.

As well as the deliverables around diversity and inclusion through our talent management workstream we will be developing a five-year plan and target for inclusion in senior roles.

The starting position has to be a council wide review of the personal data held on our HR system ERP Gold. This is currently varied due to approaches at the transferring councils prior to April 2021. To develop a baseline, employees will be required to update their personal data using their self-service access. This will provide a complete set of personal data for all employees, to include the choice not to provide detail as a tick box. This information will then be used to understand a full picture of the council and where greater efforts need to be directed to increase opportunity for all.

Diversity and inclusion is of course more than a set of tasks, the focus is weaved through all of our People Strategy workstreams and future thinking.



Employee Survey: What would make this a better place to work? "The wider use of staff networks." (anon)

"More diversity in Leadership." (anon)

We will:

- Carry out action planning with employees and staff networks
- Conduct assurance reviews of recruitment processes to ensure transparency
- Introduce equality champions (enablers and supports) within the staff networks
- Develop a D&I strategy to ensure equality of opportunity for diverse workforce
- Baseline 'as is' workforce Diversity & Inclusion data including update of self-service personal protected characteristics data post transfer, to aid target setting to drive future inclusion.

Achieving our goals through our high performing and flexible workforce

A culture of learning & development

We encourage a learning culture across our workforce through in-house training and development programmes, apprenticeships, clear career pathways and graduate development/future development programmes. This culture is a key attraction criteria and also enables the organisation to deliver the corporate priorities through innovation and internally future proof and not solely rely on external options.

Starting from the beginning, we will be working with local schools and our closest universities to develop work experience, intern and volunteering programmes within a variety of services.

We will be researching and procuring appropriate Apprenticeship programmes to meet the needs of our Services, targeting hard to fill roles, supporting the delivery of career pathways and a range of personal development. Our strategy, as well as internal development, supports local residents into local government careers.

Fully developed learning cultures support and encourage self-directed learning. By the council ensuring the appropriate tools are in place and communicating where and how to use them effectively, individuals can then identify their own learning goals and drive their own development.



Employee Survey: What can your organisation do to support you?

“A clear and concise training programme.” (anon)

“Make sure there is adequate training for staff to develop their skills. If the organisation invests in its staff, the staff will invest in the organisation. the door swings both ways” (anon)

“Better training support to diversify skills so I can move to other departments/ services so that I can develop and grow my career. This also means if a need arises talent can be found internally to plug gaps within the organisation. Up-skilling should be a high priority.” (anon)

We will:

- Create and deliver an apprenticeship strategy for West Northamptonshire Council
- Identify and highlight existing career pathways, and create new ones, establishing links with partner organisations and referencing the new job family architecture
- Identify, design & expand tools in place to support self-directed learning so individuals can identify their own learning goals and drive their own development. Drive participation / update via effective communications
- Review mandatory training offer to create mandatory training based around job roles
- Review in-house core training offer (open programme offer) [once our learning and development service is brought back 'in-house'].

Achieving our goals through our high performing and flexible workforce

Organisational design and organisational development

Business partnering the organisation for transformation. Supporting and advising on service design, spans of control and layers, following corporate wide direction and encouraging digital analysis as part of the design of services.

Supporting the post transfer Transformation Strategy and enhancing the organisations performance, aligning workflows and resources with requirement and budgets.

We will:

- Review and make changes to the establishment to give a clearer view of the current organisational design, exploring the use of additional tools, e.g. modeller to support managers in better understanding the makeup of their workforce to inform transformation and change.
- Develop and agree the corporate approach to spans of control, organisational layers/ levels and scope within the organisational design
- Enable organisation wide adoption of appropriate technology including Power BI metrics for accurate tracking and reporting
- Ensure the organisation develops by having a planned and systematic approach to enabling high performance through the engagement of our people
- Deploy organisational development strategies around changes and improvement of the organisations' processes and structures
- Through organisational development expertise provide consultancy regarding processes and systems to directorates and services related to performance management, talent management, diversity and employee wellbeing.

Creating a culture of engagement & wellbeing

Culture of engagement

Workplace culture begins with its people and cannot be simply achieved through a top down mandate. Nor can culture be shifted overnight. It takes sustained effort from all levels across the organisation. We aim to have one clearly defined direction of travel on the culture with employees who are motivated and engaged, working in cohesive teams that collaborate across the organisation. We need individuals and teams to be clear on how they contribute to the success of the organisation, and their part in delivering the council priorities (the golden thread).

Over the last nine months Council wide engagement opportunities have been high, from "all staff" briefings and Q&A with the Chief Executive, external employee survey, internal pulse surveys, bespoke focus groups, the staff networks, transformation coffee mornings and directorate and service engagement and networking events. Whilst the opportunities are there for those who would like to get involved, the hard work is engaging those who are less willing or don't feel able for some reason to be part of these activities. Our Engagement Strategy will be developed to set a standard, process and plan to fully engage our workforce over the next three years at an individual, team and organisational level.

The employee survey gave us clear feedback from employees on areas of success and where we need to jointly improve. We are developing a post survey programme of activity which will include using an organisation wide engagement tool to deep dive into areas of the survey results where employees feel we have more work to do. This will be part of the co-design with employees and our trade unions of the action planning and next steps, including through focus groups, targeted pulse surveys

and working with our trade union and staff network colleagues.

We need to design and integrate new behaviours across teams to reflect how we work, live our values and in our success stories. We are working towards one, new, embedded organisational culture focused on a high performing culture.

Performance Appraisal Review Focus Group member: "It's a breath of fresh air to be asked for views at the design phase."

People Strategy Focus Group member: "It is appreciated that people have been able to get involved at the beginning, early involvement is important."

We will:

- Conduct an initial baselining of culture and engagement across the authority (employee survey development & roll-out)
- Carry out action planning implementation from the results
- Design an organisational behaviours framework that embodies our values
- Create a workforce engagement strategy to ensure an ongoing conversation with our employees, the gathering and analysing of their feedback in real time
- Work with our communication team to transform our internal communications strategy and approach, ensuring the employee voice is heard throughout the organisation, particularly our frontline & operational roles (non-technologically inclusive)
- Initiate a council wide engagement event to celebrate WNC's first birthday.



Creating a culture of engagement & wellbeing

Work environment

We are working to create the right conditions for a modern, flexible and agile workforce to thrive, and in doing so drive productivity, improve service quality, customer experience and improve staff wellbeing. We will be implementing a hybrid working model based on worker profiles across the council.

It's important to ensure staff have the right access to the right tools to work collaboratively and succeed in their role. We will be delivering policies and training to enable managers to unlock the potential of a hybrid workforce to drive productivity and improve quality standards and make best use of resources. Managers need to ensure employees have clear objectives, the availability to organise or attend network events with their teams, peers and management as well as buddying approaches and physical or virtual opportunities to catch up with their peers, reducing isolation and perceived de-skilling.

There is huge value in a flexible, hybrid workforce. Whilst it enables our employees to achieve their objectives and deliver a quality service to our residents, it also is a key factor in attracting talent. We will be providing collaborative working spaces in our buildings. This way of working will support creativity and innovation, ensure services are as close as possible to our communities in addition to reducing our carbon footprint from mileage and office utilities, supporting our aim to be greener by 2030.

Employee Survey, What would make this a better place to work: "The ability to work from home where appropriate" (anon)

People Strategy Focus Group: "Post transfer the ability to work out of offices that are local to where you live reduces your commute." (anon)

We will:

- Deliver the workforce elements of the Future Ways of Working Programme
- Drive adoption and enable effective working in blended working environments
- Develop networking strategies across job families, services, levels and working environments (Networking for success)
- Develop guidance and training for remote workforce, disconnecting and a healthy balance.



Creating a culture of engagement & wellbeing

Wellbeing

As a new organisation we have the opportunity to design wellbeing priorities and activities that truly reflect the needs of our workforce, taking into account the importance of wellbeing in our employees and lessons learnt during the pandemic.

A holistic approach to wellbeing will be a key part of our employer value proposition and brand, supporting us to retain and attract talent, encourage our employees and help them to reach their potential. This will increase resilience and improve performance.

We have nine Staff Networks that give employees the opportunity to share thoughts and views with their peers and have a stronger voice where it may be appropriate to change. We are designing a new performance review process based on continuous conversations to ensure ongoing performance, development and wellbeing discussions between line managers and employees. We are exploring the wellbeing approach to the working day with an agile approach of trying new ideas and continuing if the response from employees is positive.

Where possible we want to educate, encourage and share ideas with employees on looking after their own mental health and wellbeing. Where times become personally challenging, we have a Mental Health First Aiders programme (MHFA) which provides trained employees to help colleagues identify, spot triggers and signs and offer help to those experiencing mental health issues. We will develop this over 2022 and roll out to managers sessions to build an awareness of employees that may be struggling and the signs, to have the confidence to have effective mental health conversations with their teams and to support a colleague in distress.

Through our strategy we will put wellbeing at the heart of the leadership approach of West Northants.

Supporting new ways of working require employee and manager support through the initial changes to a blended work environment whilst supporting their performance, development and wellbeing. Celebrating and sharing the successes of services doing this well and offering line manager buddy systems to support consistency of good ideas and communication styles. Ensuring the blended work environment enables the Council and its employees to be high performing and THRIVE.

People Strategy Focus Group: "Flexible and remote working since the pandemic work:life balance has improved, much happier and healthier." (anon)

Employee Survey, What makes this a great place to work: "The work-life balance opportunities. Support offered for mental health - I have moved from the private sector so am blown away by this. The Staff Networks." (anon)

We will:

- Develop the council's Wellbeing Strategy
- Introduce a programme support offer to employees, including nutrition, open spaces and mental health first aiders
- Introduce a programme supporting healthy ways of working
- Develop wellbeing scores and bespoke wellbeing plans based job families & levels
- Establish a wellbeing baseline (development of focused Wellbeing Survey)
- Adhere to Northamptonshire Wellbeing Standards
- Explore the value and criteria for the National Wellbeing Charter.