

**Cabinet**

**21 April 2021**

**Workforce Strategy - 2021 – 2023**

**Ordinary Decision**



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## **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Andrea Patterson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder  
for Corporate Services and Rural Issues**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To adopt the council's new Workforce Strategy for the period 2021 - 2023.

### **Executive Summary**

- 2 The council is aware that the world is changing, and how public services are delivered will continue to change. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had a major impact, and this will have a major influence on the future operating model as a council, how residents access services and what the council will need from our workforce.
- 3 The council will need to continue to embrace new technology, as well as respond to national shortages in particular professions, whilst planning to address the impact of an ageing workforce.
- 4 With the development of the council's new vision and priorities 2035 and the approach to transformation and improvements, there is a need to have a Workforce Strategy which aligns how we manage and deploy the workforce for the future.

- 5 The development of a Workforce Strategy and associated delivery plan will provide a focus on what the council needs to do to build our workforce for the future, providing a “home” for all strategic workforce initiatives, all of which will enable the council to drive cultural change across our workforce.

### **Recommendation**

- 6 Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (i) approve the adoption of the new Workforce Strategy.

## Background

- 7 Any successful organisation should aspire to have three key strategies / plans:
- a council or strategic plan setting out its vision, strategic priorities and how to achieve them;
  - a medium-term financial plan to ensure viability of the council and financial achievement;
  - a people strategy to ensure the workforce has the right skills and is fully engaged to successfully deliver the council's priorities.

## The Approach

- 8 The workforce will need to develop different skills sets in order to meet future challenges. This will help employees to thrive in a changing culture of collaborative relationships and new ways of working.
- 9 All employees will need to understand and act in accordance with the council's values, demonstrating this through their behaviours. Leaders and Managers are going to be key, demonstrating leadership, driving a different culture and helping to deliver the council's strategic priorities.
- 10 As a large and complex organisation, the council needs to review the people practices and tools with our workforce to make sure they are fit for the future. Workforce planning, talent management and succession planning will be critical to the council. This will include the council's approach to apprenticeships and the delivery of the three-year Apprentice Strategy.
- 11 Leadership of change is critical, and the council's Leaders must be equipped with mental and emotional resilience, a personal preparedness to deal with uncertainty and a readiness to act. As Leaders, they will also need to lead on the embedding of new workforce programmes, initiatives and ways of working. Therefore 'building leadership capacity' is one of the priorities within the Workforce Strategy.
- 12 Attracting and retaining talent will be imperative as the council moves forward. Ensuring our workforce feel valued and supported will be a key theme of the future. The fourth priority "Being a Good Employer" will capture strategic Human Resources and Organisational Development initiatives which will enable the council to be an employer of choice, deliver on our Strategic Equalities priorities, be

inclusive and ensure the health and being of our workforce is of highest priority.

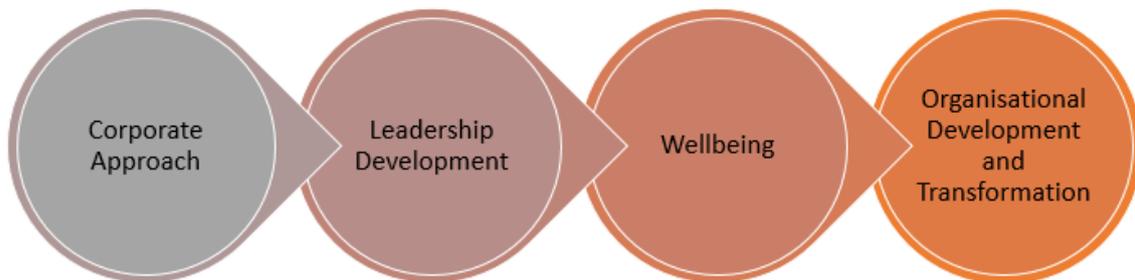
- 13 The initiatives contained within the four priority areas of the strategy will enable the council to transform our workforce.

### **Our response to COVID-19**

- 14 As part of the council's response to COVID-19, an initial evaluation of how the council planned for, responded to and managed planning has been undertaken. This identified a number of common and very positive conclusions and reflections on the council's response in relation to:

- leadership and clear direction;
- council response and measures;
- business continuity;
- employee empowerment and engagement;
- adoption of flexible working through the use of technology;
- employee flexibility;
- cross-council and partnership working.

- 15 A number of key themes and actions were identified as follows that are linked to our Workforce Strategy and initiatives will therefore included in the Strategy to take these elements forward:



### **The Strategic Workforce Priorities**

- 16 The priorities and plans within the Workforce Strategy will act as enablers to transform our people and services by developing and putting the right transformational people practices in place.

17 Four workforce priorities have therefore been identified as follows:

<b>PRIORITY ONE</b>	<b>Planning for the Future &amp; Refocusing our Workforce</b>
All employees going in the same direction to achieve culture change and transformation. Robust workforce planning in order that the workforce development and workforce plans can be built to address priorities and challenges	
<b>PRIORITY TWO</b>	<b>Building Leadership Capacity</b>
Effective leaders get the most from the team they lead, inspiring and empowering others. They also take people on the right journey for the organisation and help us to change culture and transform.	
<b>PRIORITY THREE</b>	<b>Developing our Workforce</b>
Investing in and developing our workforce will be critical. We need to build a Workforce Development Infrastructure & whole Council approach to realise efficiencies of scale and plan appropriately, using the resources we have to maximum effect.	
<b>PRIORITY FOUR</b>	<b>Being a Good Employer</b>
The services we deliver are only as good as the people we employ so we need to focus on being a great employer, one where people want to work for. The health & wellbeing, engagement and support/encouragement and recognition we give to our workforce will lead to a workforce who aspire to do their best at all times.	

18 The proposed Workforce Strategy is attached as Appendix 2.

19 An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3, which shows that the proposed Strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan.

20 The Workforce Strategy will also have a positive impact on the issues and challenges posed by the rurality of County Durham. A rural proofing impact screening assessment (attached at Appendix 4) shows that some of the strategic HR initiatives included such as agile and remote working for the workforce, the new ways of working models proposed and the initiatives linked to the recruitment review and a blended work offer will have a positive impact on employees living in these areas. This is in addition to the ongoing initiatives concerning promoting apprenticeship opportunities and upskilling the workforce as well as work to be a more inclusive employer.

## Conclusion

21 The new Workforce Strategy sets out the council's workforce ambitions for the future under four key themes:

- Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce

- Building leadership capacity
- Developing our workforce
- Being a good employer

22 The adoption of the new Workforce Strategy provides a framework within these ambitions which can be delivered and aligned to the interlocking objectives in the 2035 Council Vision, whilst working in partnership with Trade Unions and the workforce to deliver and embed the various initiatives within the Strategy.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The initiatives set out within this report will ensure the Council are acting in accordance with employment legislation and best practice.

### **Finance**

The Workforce Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the council's workforce ambitions. Delivery within this framework will be managed within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual financing provision, monitoring and control. There are no additional financial implications associated with the strategy.

### **Staffing**

The Workforce Strategy covers council employees (excluding schools) and will be co-ordinated by the OD/WFD Team within People and Talent Management, Resources.

### **Risk**

The proposals set out within the Strategy will enable the Council to proactively manage workforce risks.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3. The Strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan. In addition, a Rural Proofing screening assessment has been completed and attached at Appendix 4.

### **Climate Change**

The Strategy will support climate change by ensuring the approach is filtered through workforce initiatives.

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

**Procurement**

None

**Disability Issues**

The Strategy will support the ongoing work in relation to our responsibilities relating to equality and diversity.

**Consultation**

Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions. Consultation on individual initiatives will take place with employee representatives and staff network groups.