

Report title: People Strategy Update

Meeting	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
Date	28th February 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Tyler Hawkins
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No No – no decision required
<p>Purpose of Report</p> <p>This paper seeks to update Scrutiny on the Council’s People Strategy and invites feedback from Members on progress to date.</p> <p>Scrutiny members are asked to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Thoughts and feedback on what the People Strategy has delivered to date b) How would you like to support the shaping of the next phase of the People Strategy 	
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The People Strategy Programme Board recommend that delivery of, and governance relating to the Council’s People Strategy programme continues in its current format.</p> <p>Rationale</p> <p>We believe that continuation rather than recreation of the strategy in 2025 is the right approach for the Council. It allows us the opportunity to reshape and prioritize our outcomes as well as use the feedback from our recent peer review</p> <p>Our experience tells us the themes within people strategies do not change significantly as they always focus on the employee lifecycle or what is referred to as “hire to depart”. What does tend to change is the priorities, outcomes and employment trends.</p> <p>To ensure we are comfortable with our recommendations we have worked with the policy and partnership team, who supported with research and benchmarking (<i>from a range of public and private sector organisations</i>) we know from that the six key themes/ trends within people strategies 2024/25 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility 2. Technology 3. Recruitment and retention 4. Culture and inclusion 5. Staff engagement and wellbeing 6. Workforce planning, succession planning, development pathways 	

As expected, these themes are consistent with our current strategy. The benchmarking and intelligence will help us shape recommendations for revised priorities and outcomes for our next phase.

This will of course be balanced against other Council priorities and the current high demand for People Services resources and the Council's capacity for change.

We will continue to work with policy and partnership to ensure that we understand best practice and learn from others.

We continue with our governance arrangements for the delivery of the People strategy, and will continue to engage with the steering group. We are actively exploring opportunities for working more efficiently with both the I&D steering group and the people strategy steering group.

We welcome the committees feedback on the delivery of our outcomes to date and our recommendations for the next stages of the People strategy.

Resource Implication: As is at this stage

Date signed off by Executive Director & name

Rachel Spencer-Henshall
14th February 2025

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?

N/A

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?

N/A

Electoral wards affected: N/A

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes - No personal information

1. Executive Summary

- Our desired outcomes from our People Strategy are:



- This report provides an update on the journey so far and recommends a continuation of the approach for Phase 4 in 2025/26.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 Background – People Strategy Phase 1&2

2.1.1 The first update to Scrutiny Committee on the People Strategy following its soft launch was in March 2022 followed by a report in August 2022 focused specifically on recruitment and retention challenges. A further verbal update was provided in August 2023 to the Chair of Scrutiny. A formal update was presented to Scrutiny Committee in Jan 2024 which updated on phase two and the planned approach and priorities for phase three.

2.1.2 The refreshed People Strategy was soft launched to Kirklees senior staff and managers in January 2021. We are currently in delivery phase three of the People Strategy. During phase three we have been exploring whether a continuation of the people strategy as is with revised and updated phase four priorities is the best approach or a relaunched People Strategy is the best option.

2.1.3 We have worked with the policy team to explore all options and the feedback from the recent peer review will help shape and inform any next steps. Our recommendations to date have been the continuation of the strategy and will address this later in the paper.

2.1.4 As a reminder, At the heart of the People Strategy are the Council's values and behaviours, these link to our vision, Our vision is:

“We will achieve our shared outcomes through people with the right skills, values and behaviours working in partnership in our places”.

2.1.5 Our desired outcomes from our People Strategy remain the same and are:

Skilled, Flexible and Engaged People - Our people are skilled, flexible and engaged in the work they do and the part they play in making Kirklees a great place. Wherever they work, our people are supported to be the best they can be in their job of today and tomorrow.

Effective and Compassionate leadership - Our people are led and managed effectively by skilled, people focused, compassionate and emotionally intelligent leaders at all levels. Our leaders create inclusive working environments where individuals can grow, develop and thrive.

An inclusive employer of choice - Our people are proud to work for Kirklees. Kirklees is a great, inclusive place where we attract, support and retain people who represent our communities. Our commitment to advancing inclusion in everything we do is clear, and our people feel their differences are valued and respected.

Healthy and Well People - Our people matter; wherever they work, their wellbeing and safety is our priority. Our approach to supporting physical, mental, social, financial and digital wellbeing is person centred, supportive, proactive and preventative to enable our people to thrive.

2.1.6 The People Strategy was rightly ambitious, and over the last two years reviews have taken place both in the priorities and outcomes and the People Strategy governance arrangements to reflect the financial pressures that the Council are operating within and therefore the impact on resources. The People Strategy and the revised Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) strategy work closely together and are complementary in their aspirations.

2.2 Phase 3 Update

2.2.1 The agreed priorities to support delivery of the People Strategy outcomes for phase three were approved at the People Strategy Programme Board, regular meetings take place with the People Strategy Steering Group which is made up of representatives of key stakeholders e.g. Employee Networks and Trade Unions, (Priorities summarised below):

Phase Three Priorities

- A. Not losing the links and importance of being an Inclusive organisation, bringing our values to life, **alignment with I&D strategy**
 - Working with our networks and champions
- B. A modern and flexible workforce that is **values driven, supported by a handbook and principles** that enable efficient ways of working
 - Working in partnership with trade union colleagues
- C. **Employee engagement** and communication setting the strategy
 - Links to My Say (staff survey) and Internal Communication

D. Setting **a learning and organisational development plan** that aligns with our People

- Current and Future talent - Attraction, reward, retention and recognition

As a result of changes in council priorities and in response to financial challenges we have reprioritised some phase three activity to reflect here and now matters, this meant including some new priorities as well as some changes in timescales for existing priorities:

E. A renewed focus on outcome 4, **“healthy and well people”**

- Revised approach to sickness reporting and management, initial recommendations made to Executive Leadership Team with a follow up session in March 2025

E. Review and recommendations for **mandatory training**

- Putting the foundations in place, recommendations will be made to Executive Leadership Team in February 2025

2.2.2 Summary of the key activities delivered during phase three that contribute to delivery of our four outcomes:

Outcome 1 - Highly Skilled, Flexible and Engaged People

Workforce Planning -The workforce planning project is one of the most critical projects in our programme of work.

Like other local authorities and public sector employers we continue to have recruitment challenges. They include engineering, professional services such as legal roles and some trade related roles. We actively work to address these challenges, most recently participating in the LGA recruitment campaign and LGA task and finish groups to identify sector solutions to recruitment and retention for the common challenge areas.

However, we have invested in and have a well-resourced workforce planning team, this work has been critical as we manage financial challenges and make changes to services.

- Progress is being made in many council services. There has been some natural and expected decrease in engagement due to capacity and financial challenges and service changes have had some impact, however critical roles and succession pools continue to be identified to support priority areas. Refreshed promotion to increase engagement will roll out early in 2025 to increase the number of services actively succession planning.
- Support packages and resources developed, development of resources and approaches to meet the changing needs of the organisation has been a success.

The workforce planning offer now includes:

- Succession Planning
- Resource Planning (short term 1–2-year plans)
- Strategic Workforce Planning (longer term 3–5-year plans)
- Exit, induction and stay surveys refreshed and launched. Data is being analysed in order to inform future plans and decisions.

- A skills audit tool has been developed as part of the strategic workforce planning offer. The template has recently been utilised by the Transformation team in order to explore what upskilling staff may need to keep up with future demands and changes.
- Last 12 months – 86 new start apprenticeships, 17 new recruits, 69 upskilling, 3 plumbing trainees. In maintained schools, 5 new apprentice recruits and 25 as part of upskilling.
- Particular success in Social Work (30 currently on programme) and legal apprenticeships providing opportunities for professional qualification through apprenticeships into hard to recruit roles.
- Refreshed approach to work experiences to ensure wider reach and inclusivity

Mandatory Learning:

- Developed proposals ready for Executive Leadership Team consideration on approach to compliance training, comprising statutory and mandatory learning within a learning culture.



- Approach will be widely communicated with expectations of managers and employees

Engagement:

Cross council working group established to work on My Say survey and the topic of engagement:

- Reviewing how to increase completion rate from those who are front line /operational and have less access to IT
- Reviewing questions and timings in preparation for Q4 roll out, recommendations will be presented to ELT

Attraction:

Current and Future talent - Attraction, reward, retention and recognition:

- Developing e-learning capabilities to meet demand for “on demand” learning and free capacity for L&OD capacity
- A Kirklees Social Worker is featured in a national recruitment campaign
- Understanding and testing AI capabilities to explore capabilities and potential opportunities to develop employee experience
- Developing an early careers strategy to cement our established commitments and good practice with areas to further develop

Outcome 2 - Effective and Compassionate Leadership

Performance Management and Appraisal (My Conversation) – soft launched and package of support for managers

- Managers guide created and a version for staff
- Every full My Conversation will cover all 4 quadrants – Wellbeing, Reflections, Contributions and Development
- From April 2024 everyone will receive at least 2 recorded My Conversations per year
- Continuous development of approach based on feedback
- Initial positive feedback from peer review

Outcome 3 - An Inclusive Employer of Choice

- Project Search - 2022/23 cohort graduated with 62% job outcomes, 2023-24 underway
- 2024 intake -11 Interns in Kirklees Council and 7 in the Dewsbury hospital site.
- Neurodiversity awareness training developed and embedded as a further positive outcome
- Linking closely with SEND transformation and NDTI
- Commenced feedback with Trade Union on proposed changes to employee handbook and policy's, prioritising those that will have benefits to staff and Council
- Working with the tackling inequalities programme board to identify areas of focus and priority
- Engagement and joint working with employee networks on a number of policies
- Not losing the links and importance of being an Inclusive organisation, bringing our values to life, **alignment with I&D strategy:**
 - The Council's new I&D Strategy launched
 - Revised High Fives (our recognition scheme for staff), even more values driven
 - Engaged with Policy and Partnership team to review best practice for future People Strategy
 - Working with policy and partnership colleagues to build on ways of working with our networks

Outcome 4 – Healthy and well People

- Council won the Society of Occupational Medicine outstanding Occupational Health Initiative award for the last 2 years. 2023/24 was for development of a pathway for staff struggling with Neurodiversity in the workplace and for 2024/25, recognition was received for relocating the Restorative Practice (RP) team within Employee Health Care (EHC) and ensuring RP principals were embedded into every EHC service line.
- Delivered a stress prevention project with Children and Adult care teams who identified with high sickness absence. The HSE stress indicator tool identified the top 3 workplace stressors for both teams to be demand, control and change. Each Senior Leadership team produced an action plan to address staff concerns wherever possible. Managers within Adult Care teams reported a reduction in sickness absence after the project had been completed.
- Prevention of sickness absence; staff can now self-refer to EHC for a wellbeing consultation. Wellbeing technicians identify personal stressors and offer internal and/or external signposting to 3rd party specialists. The technician will also prepare a wellbeing

action plan for the employee to engage in a constructive conversation with their manager.

Adopted an alternative 3-hour mediation model, which focuses on workplace relationships. EHC have seen an increase in requests for this service with successful outcomes. In 2024 30 mediations delivered with 14 positive outcomes.

3 Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

Our Workforce is crucial to delivering our Council plan and outcomes, our People Strategy is our commitment to our workforce. [Council priorities - Council Plan 2024/25 | Kirklees Council](#)

3.2 Financial Implications

Plans currently within existing budget

3.3 Legal Implications

The People Service policy section keeps abreast of changing legislation with support from our Legal Department. Considerations of the People Strategy moving forward will include the Employment Rights Bill updates.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

There are no specific implications

3.5 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

There is nothing additional to add to this report at this time.

3.6 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

When further work programs are identified IIA's will be carried out.

4 Consultation

The report has received sign off from our Executive Director, Rachel Spencer-Henshall and has also been reviewed by the workstream leads currently working on the People Strategy to ensure that the information we are presenting is current and accurate.

5 Engagement

People strategy steering group / Quarterly

Employee Networks

Trade Unions (as part of steering group and Workforce matters)

6 Next steps and timelines

- Delivery of the People Strategy programme will continue.
- Any actions from this Scrutiny meeting will be noted and considered as part of the programme.

8 Contact officer

Michelle Moss – HR Manager, Ext. 71771

11 Service Director responsible

Shauna Coyle – Head of People Services