

East Herts Council (EHC) Human Resources & Organisational Development Strategy 2021-2025



Summary

This document sets out the broad HR aims and objectives which the Council will pursue to ensure that its people management practices supports the realisation of the Council's Corporate SEED Priorities and delivers effective Organisational Development which underpins the Council's Transformation Programme.

Key aims of the strategy agreed by the East Herts Together Group:

- Reflects the Council's Staff Values, (embedding and fostering a value based culture)
- Supports corporate SEED priorities
- Supports creativity, innovation and efficiencies
- Supports effective performance management and development
- Promotes wellbeing
- Celebrates employee success
- Supports change regarding blended working and new working practices
- Reflects current ways of working and flexibility

EHC Transformation Programme contains six strands all of which will be supported by this HR & OD Strategy:

Work strands and constituent work packages	
Commercial skills	
	Commercial strategy
	Fees and Charges Policy
Lean processes	
	Corporate business support hub
	Options appraisal and business case for one customer view / Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
Modern workforce development	
	Blended working policy
	Staff development allied to delivery of <i>Transforming East Herts</i> , including commercial skills training and lean / six sigma training
Modern workspace	
	Work space needs and options
	Modern front of house
	Asset management strategy
Service reviews - overall work strand	
	Service review framework
	Planning service review
Technology	
	ICON review
	Microsoft 365 deployment
	ICT equipment / telephony review and deployment

The Vision to be achieved by the Transformation Programme which is underpinned by this Strategy is:

'By 2025 East Herts Council will be a customer focused, financially sustainable, effective organisation with flexible, empowered employees'.

The Transformation Programme requires significant savings and increases in income to be made, so it is essential that the HR Strategy enables and supports this vision to be achieved. The Strategy runs from 2021 to 2025.



The Council's Corporate Plan (2020/21 – 2023/24) was agreed in January 2020 and sets out a range of actions and objectives against 4 overall, 'SEED' priorities. These are refreshed each year in terms of annual actions towards meeting the SEED Priorities. The **East Herts Together** Group made up of a cross service team of Managers and Staff meets regularly as working group to develop our employment and staff practices/ways of working to be:

- One team with a clear and recognisable organisational culture that everybody understands and adheres to.
- A consistent set of employment tools and practices which are truly embedded.
- A 4 year HR and OD Strategy that supports the corporate priorities and strengthens the one team approach.
- Values and behaviours are supported by consistent management practice, staff and management competencies, strong management training and underpinned by clear and appropriate policies.
- Focused on providing excellent customer service to our residents and all whom we work with.

The HR strategy aims to support the accomplishment of the above through:

- recruiting, retaining and developing a quality workforce to deliver quality services;
- supporting our managers to manage high standards of performance;
- developing the competencies required by the Council to successfully deliver the above and support the Corporate Priorities, the annual corporate action plan as well as the Transformation Programme.

Key HR Strategic Aims

- *Develop the Council's culture (in line with Values), staffing offer and management capability to ensure that staff see the Council as an employer of choice/recommend it as a great place to work,*
- *Support Flexibility and Continuous Improvement*
- *Develop and embed core competencies for both staff and managers to ensure expectations are clear and key behaviours developed consistently*
- *Develop the Council's Employer Brand*
- *Be seen as an integral and contributory part of achieving the Council's priorities and delivery of services*
- *Work with LT and staff to review the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of the current staffing structure and ways of working and make recommendations as appropriate;*
- *Continue to invest in all staff by supporting effective staff development and appraisal and improving communication across the Council and its centres;*
- *Support the organisation in the provision of a quality service to all its residents and customers;*
- *Ensure the efficient use of human and financial resources to reflect the changing priorities of the Council;*
- *Create a flexible organisation which encourages the maximum ownership of the Council's strategic aims and objectives by the staff and through this their commitment to achieving them;*
- *Support the Council's role as a fair and reasonable employer;*
- *Ensure human resource management is integrated into the strategic planning process.*

Resourcing the Strategy

- The Council's Human Resources and Organisational Development Service will have both a strategic and a support role, working in partnership with Heads of Service, Service Managers and line management to maximise the effectiveness of our people management practices.
- The Human Resources Team will:
 - Lead on strategic HR planning, policy development and implementation of strategy, plans and policy.
 - Act as internal consultant and coach, guiding and assisting line managers to manage effectively.
 - Give expert casework advice and support in handling employee relations issues.
 - Enhance the responsiveness of our services to local manager needs by continuing to proactively meet with managers on at least a quarterly basis.
 - Lead on consultation on Human Resources issues with staff and the Trade Union.
 - Provide centralised administrative services to support the carrying out of key areas of Human Resources activity – e.g. recruitment, appraisal, staff development, payroll, contract management, employee record-keeping.
 - Continue to maximise the use of technology to ensure effective Human Resources administration, support and reporting. This will include development of the staff zone on the intranet and MyView for manager/staff access to Human Resources information and specific self-administration of employee data on the Council's HR System (MyView/Resource Link).
 - Develop clear HR Service Standards for managers and Carry out bi-annual internal surveys of customer (manager) satisfaction with Human Resources services.
 - Develop an annual action plan to deliver this strategy and report progress to both LT and HRC

Key HR Areas and Objectives

In this strategy 'staff' is a general term used to describe all those working to enable the Council to achieve its objectives. This includes employees, volunteers, apprentices and those on work experience.

Objective 1: Organisation and Work Design

To encourage and adopt appropriate management and staffing structures and ways of organising work, which achieve the Council's objectives and make the best use of employees' skills and interests while maximising career development opportunities.

- Periodically review management and staff structures to ensure alignment with stakeholder and service needs, and ensure effective and consistent use of staff resources in consultation with those involved.
- Develop appropriate manager: subordinate ratios in order to ensure that line managers can fully realise the potential of their staff and develop services and service quality.
- Design structures which enable succession planning and career development.
- Nurture innovative, collaborative and flexible models of working which focus on the outcomes to be achieved and the needs of the organisation, rather than on fixed job roles.
- Explore and support different flexible working practices including a blended (home and office) way of working which enables staff to balance work and life priorities with service needs and make the Council more adaptable, flexible, innovative and effective as an organisation.

Objective 2: Employee Resourcing

Recruit, motivate and retain the highest quality staff with the skills and competences required to deliver the Council's strategic and service area objectives.

- Develop our employer brand to demonstrate externally that we are the employer of choice for:

Integrity and values

Pride in services
Personal and career development
Diversity and respect
Wellbeing
Teamwork
Sound benefits

- Review staffing implications from service wide Corporate Plans and continue to review staffing requirements so they can meet the needs of the service within available budgets. This should include workforce planning and will require improved join up with finance and managers.
- Ensure that staff with appropriate skills are recruited to individual Services, within budgets available, to meet the needs of the Council and achieve the Strategic Aims and Objectives.
- Develop and maintain a competence-based approach to recruiting people with strong transferable skills.
- Maintain and develop a robust assessment-centre approach to selection and train all interviewers so they can apply the Council's high standards of selection.
- Periodically review our application and testing processes in the light of technological advances, so as to strike the right balance between quality of process/outcome, speed of recruitment and costs.
- Identify posts that are difficult to recruit to:
 - i. continue to identify alternative means of recruiting to such posts;
 - ii. improve staff retention in such areas;
- Promote and monitor equal opportunities/equality in the recruitment of all staff and being pro-active in lifting barriers to people with disabilities and people from other protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Further develop apprenticeship and trainee schemes to attract talent from all sections of the community in line with funding and resources.
- Identify and invest in appropriate career path and development opportunities to facilitate staff retention and succession planning.

- Effectively manage and develop the bank of casual staff and agency supply chain to maximise the quality and minimise the cost of providing flexible cover for vacancies or absences. Maintain under review our relationships with 'Vendor Neutral' supplier and their supply chain of employment agencies to maximise quality and minimise cost.

Objective 3: Pay, Benefits and Reward Management

Pay and broader rewards system which is relevant to the Council's needs, affordable, transparent and perceived to be fair.

- Maintain, but review the revised **pay structure and systems** and the **specific rates of pay and benefits** offered to ensure they are:
 - Affordable
 - Consistent with our broader strategic objectives
 - Competitive, to facilitate effective recruitment and retention
 - Fair, equitable and transparent
- Review Flexi time scheme, Homeworking, Overtime, Toil, Honorariums to ensure fairness, consistency of application and most importantly that they are fit for purpose
- Continue to recognise the crucial significance of, and review the delivery of non-financial reward and recognition for employee contribution.
- Review MyRewards and other benefits to ensure they are valued by staff and provide value for money, be clear if the reward is seen as a benefit for staff or expected to provide a corporate outcome i.e. reduced flu sickness absence from flu jobs or providing staff with a benefit just as a benefit.

Objective 4: Performance Management

Actively and consistently manage performance to deliver quality services and achieve the Council's planned outcomes

- Develop and maintain core competencies for both staff and managers to ensure they reflect the organisational competencies needed to achieve the Council's Values, strategic goals and Corporate themes including more efficient ways of working.

- Develop a competence-based approach to staff selection, performance management, development and succession management.
- Continue to support the Leadership Team and Managers to define clear performance objectives and measures/outcomes at organisation, divisional, team and individual levels.
- Develop a 360 degree appraisal feedback scheme which includes peer, subordinates, client and stakeholder feedback/assessment of performance. This will increase accountability and recognition.
- Ensure that managers are fully trained so they can achieve and maintain high performance from their staff and are accountable for measuring and reporting on performance of their section and its individual employees.
- Promote a culture of recognition and celebration of staff achievements. Review current methods and develop to ensure new competencies are recognised and more recognition and motivation is achieved. Review Staff Forum and the current Staff Recognition Scheme.

Objective 5: Learning & Development

Develop a learning organisation which provides the support and resources for staff to perform to high standards and realise their full potential.

- Deliver effective organisational induction and training programmes to enable staff to acquire essential skills in:
 - Delivering quality services to clients (especially residents)
 - EHC's core competences
 - Management
 - Effective use of EHC's IT and Digital systems
 - Promoting Equality and Diversity
 - Promoting workplace health and safety
 - Managing diversity and safeguarding in service delivery and employment
- Provide high impact management training so that managers are fully competent to lead, manage and grow their services and their staff.

- Sustain an environment where staff are aware of, and take responsibility for, their own continuous professional development. Provide support for managers and staff to use our appraisal process as a tool for structured personal development planning.
- Develop the performance and respond to the staff development needs of all staff as identified through the appraisal system, the staff development forum (once this is set up), Service away days (again once set up) and support staff so they can respond to new initiatives, legislation, delivery needs and developing their careers.
- Develop an annual away day for all teams and services to undertake a SWOT to identify priorities for corporate service plans and team development plans.
- Develop a cross service staff development forum (SDF) to help inform development needs and review progress.
- Maintain and further develop a broad variety of on-the-job learning opportunities to enable staff to develop their professional skills and compete successfully for career development opportunities within the Council. (For example: coaching, shadowing, working groups, team away-days, project work, mentoring, internal skills-sharing workshops.)
- Continue to schedule and provide staff briefings and bite-size staff development sessions (which meet common needs identified to ensure improvement, growth and development as identified by the review of annual plans, the SDF and the Team Away days), to allow key messages to be shared and for whole council networking and development to be achieved.
- Continue to appoint on promotion a significant proportion of our staff, specialists and managers from among our own staff – identifying suitable vacancies as internal only in the first instance as appropriate.
- Identify and promote cross-organisational joint working opportunities such as the SEED cross service teams which foster sharing of knowledge and best practice across services/teams.
- Encourage and support staff to study for relevant professional qualifications as part of our staff development programme.
- Use a range of methods, including staff, manager and client feedback, to regularly evaluate and review the contribution of learning and

development interventions to achieve defined outcomes (this is an area where it is recognised more feedback and analysis could be achieved - Engagement).

- Promote and monitor equal opportunities in the development of all staff and being pro-active in lifting barriers to people with disabilities and people from other protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 – such data will be produced and then analysed as part of the Council's annual Staff Equality Data report.

Objective 6: Employee Engagement

Encourage staff ownership of, and pride in, the Council's goals and achievements. Ensure staff are clear on where they fit in the golden thread and engage them to improve the way services are delivered and ensure that they engage with residents/clients to achieve this.

- Develop a staff charter or 'Deal' which sets out to staff what they can expect as a member of staff and what the council expects back (this will complement and work alongside both the Officer Code of Conduct and Core Competencies)
- Regularly review information, consultation, engagement and involvement strategies to ensure they are effective and well-received.
- Hold regular all staff briefings as well CEO email updates to provide staff with a platform to be both briefed and engage in key issues.
- Provide clear visible and approachable leadership from the Leadership Team and from the Service Manager group.
- Involve and include staff when planning and managing organisational changes, and clearly communicate the reasons for conclusions reached and decisions made.
- Use team and project-based working methods which stimulate and reward staff innovation and creativity so as to continuously improve service performance.
- Maintain an effective and constructive working relationship with the recognised Trade Union (Unison) for employment and related matters.

- Use and develop a range of tools to monitor staff perceptions of the Council's management and communications processes - including staff satisfaction surveys, exit questionnaires and upward appraisal feedback.
- Act on the findings from staff satisfaction surveys.

Objective 7: Diversity

Create and maintain a workplace where every individual feels valued and respected for what they can offer, and where the diversity of the people we serve is reflected in our staff group.

- Promote a culture which celebrates diversity, through induction, training, staff involvement in a Equality and Diversity working group (which will be set up) and other new initiatives, and publication of diversity progress and achievements (including maintain an effective Equality and Diversity policy; publishing an annual Staff Equality Data report in line with Equality Act).
- Measure progress in the diversity profile of our workforce and benchmark against other relevant organisations, our community data and publicly available data.
- Effectively mainstream diversity objectives across the council, through team and individual performance expectations and embedding in the core competencies for both staff and management, and ensure that individual managers and staff are fully engaged in the Council's ambitions in this area.
- Ensure that all of our recruitment and employment policies and practices are designed to promote the principles of inclusion, diversity and fair treatment of all.
- Actively market our employer brand as a diverse workplace to attract candidates from all sections of the community.
- Use recruitment selection criteria focused on excellent transferable skills.
- Operate leave provisions and flexible working provisions which enable staff to strike an appropriate balance between work and their life outside.
- Maintain and periodically review council practice against the standards required of the Disability Confident Scheme.

- Consider signing up to the Race at Work Charter or similar initiatives and review practice against the standards required.
- Consider experimenting with appropriate positive training and development initiatives for members of under-represented (in our workforce profile) groups in order to enable them to compete on equal terms for employment and promotion opportunities.
- Build links with research, training and employment organisations who can help us further our diversity objectives.

Objective 8: Wellbeing, Health & Welfare

Actively support and promote the health and well-being of staff.

- Provide information and guidance to staff on healthy living and wellbeing by maintaining and developing the wellbeing section on the intranet.
- Deliver the Councils Live Well Work Well Strategy for wellbeing with HR working in partnership with the Communications and Community Wellbeing teams.
- Effectively manage, and periodically review, our Health and Safety service to ensure:

Policies, procedures and guidance notes are updated in light of changing law and best practice

Annual risk-assessment reviews

Compliance monitoring

Accident monitoring

Effective induction and training programmes

- Effectively manage, and periodically review the externally contracted employee assistance programme (which provides counselling).
- Take effective measures to maximise employee attendance, including:
 - Active implementation of our Absence Management Policy
 - Carry out stress risk assessments and deliver action plans
 - Training for all managers

Effective partnership with Occupational Health to support employee health at work.

Managing stress or resilience training for managers and staff as appropriate

Objective 9: Employment Administration

Comply with law and best practice in the employment of staff and avoidance of destructive workplace conflict.

- Keep up to date with and take relevant action to, ensure the Council meets its legal responsibilities as an employer with reference to new and forthcoming legislation and changing case law.
- Ensure a corporate and consistent approach to employment policy, staff welfare and terms and conditions of service through effective consultation and mutual co-operation with the trade union and staff.
- Maintain, under continuous review, employment policies and procedures and provide good quality guidance, training and support for managers in their implementation.
- Develop and Monitor Service Standards for the Human Resources Section
- Maintain a computerised Human Resources system (which includes direct manager and staff access and automated workflows and forms) to enable effective use of staff and management time and to ensure the Human Resources Section maintain and monitor appropriate Human Resources records and provide management information.
- Maintain an effective and cost-effective relationship with employment and commercial solicitors, insurers and other professional advisers to minimise financial and other risk to the Council.

Measuring Effectiveness

- The HR Team will:
 - Produce for LT and HRC approval a HR Strategy Annual Action Plan which sets out key actions for the year and how we will measure annual progress.
 - Regularly collect quantitative and qualitative data to measure the impact and effectiveness of our HR strategy and practices and the return on our investment in Human Resources staffing and other resources.
 - Seek to demonstrate the link between HR indicators of success and achievement of corporate goals and outcomes.
 - Use cost-effective means to collect benchmarking data with which to measure performance against comparative organisations and obtain best practice ideas for improving our Human Resources processes.
 - Strive for awards and publicity as opportunities to accredit and promote achievements.
 - Periodically review the kind of information that the Leadership Team and HRC, LJP, Full Council and Executive require to measure the impact of our HR strategy on organisational performance.
 - Continue to maintain an effective working relationship with the recognised Trade Union Unison.