



Shropshire
Council

Workforce Strategy

2020/21 – 2022/23



Contents

Page

Foreword – Leader and Chief Executive

1. What is the Workforce Strategy?

2. Why do we need one?

3. How did we develop the Strategy?

4. The Council’s Financial Position

5. What does the Council look like now?

6. What does the Council need to look like in future?

7. How do we get there?

8. What are our priorities?

9. How will we measure if this is working?



Foreword

Leader and Chief Executive

In these times where our budgets are under more pressure than ever before we believe it remains very important that there is as much development for our staff as possible. We have updated this Workforce Strategy to outline our plans for the next few years and demonstrate a commitment to investment in our staff. We are in a period of unprecedented change in local government from financial constraints to transforming the way we work, utilising technology and being more responsive to the customer.

Our staff are one of our most valuable assets and we must ensure that all staff feel engaged and motivated so that they can deliver the best possible services to the residents of Shropshire. It is imperative that staff feel they have a voice and can contribute to improving the way we do things – most often it is the staff on the frontline who know their services and customers the best and how things can be done better to improve the lives of others.

Peter Nutting
Leader

Clive Wright
Chief Executive



1. What is a Workforce Strategy?

The Workforce Strategy links to and supports the Council's strategic priorities by identifying what the workforce needs to look like and how it needs to operate to deliver outcomes for the residents of Shropshire.

The strategy helps provide the direction and to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right level and at the right cost.

It is a 2 year plan that aligns with other key strategies but will be reviewed each year to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

It's not just about the people though. Our Workforce Strategy needs to align with our Digital/IT Strategy and our Agile Strategy so that the workforce has the tools to do their jobs effectively, can work flexibly and be responsive to customer needs.

2. Why do we need one?

A talented and aligned workforce is crucial for bringing the strategic priorities to life and ensures the organisation delivers on its objectives.

Direct people costs make up 33% of total expenditure. The cost of getting it wrong can therefore be significant.

Getting it right delivers significant improvements:

- value improvement and cost reduction – through ensuring the workforce is the right size.
- assurance that organisational objectives can be delivered
- better productivity – through workforce alignment to the operating model
- competitive advantage through a more skilled and innovative workforce that has the right skills, in the right place at the right time
- higher quality and timeliness of customer delivery, greater staff engagement and retention and lower levels of stress.

3. How did we develop the Strategy?

We first published our Workforce Strategy in 2016 when we were embarking on a major transformation programme across the council. This review of the strategy has taken stock of what we have achieved since that time, where we are now and where we need to go (and how we get there).

We have looked at research undertaken by the New Local Government Network (NLGN) and the Local Government Association (LGA) called “Outside the Box.....the Council Workforce of Tomorrow” to inform and structure our plans.

The research highlights the strengths and weaknesses in the existing employment 'deal' and goes on to explore what needs to be done to recast it in the future. The emphasis is on what we need to do as leaders and managers. Above all, the call is to empower people to be more flexible, innovative and entrepreneurial. We often talk about cultural change but find it challenging to remove barriers to different ways of working.

The report also highlights the need to work across the sector to promote local government as a dynamic and inclusive employer so that we can attract the best candidates.

The report concludes that only by changing the hierarchical working culture of local government and becoming even more outward-facing, will councils provide a genuinely 'new deal' that attracts and engages colleagues while encouraging them to flourish.

As outlined in the Digital Strategy, to enable change we need our staff to be committed and need them to:

1. Strive to make things better;
2. Be open to change;
3. Be open to challenge;
4. Be willing to learn – Committing time to create and achieve your ‘digital journey’
5. Share their experience – helping others learn along the way;
6. Get excited as our working lives are going to be better



4. The Council's Financial Position

As most councils are, Shropshire Council is facing unprecedented times in terms of cuts to budgets, increasing pressure on services and having to deliver more with less. In order to meet these challenges, we need to review our services; what we offer and how we offer it; make efficiencies through our back-office systems and ensure our staff are equipped with the right skills and are engaged and motivated to continue to deliver excellent services to residents.

Since 2016 the number of employees that we employ has reduced by 25% through service redesign and restructure. However, the council still delivers over 700 different services.

We are looking to be more commercial and innovative in what we do – investing wisely to generate income for the longer term and offer improved, customer focussed services to local businesses, and residents of Shropshire. We are looking to grow our economy in Shropshire by attracting large businesses into the county, retain young people through our partnership with the University of Chester and develop skills across the county in a number of key areas.

To do this we need clear strategies that set us on the right road. We need to be clear about the destination and what we want to achieve. We also need to be agile to changing circumstances and external factors so that we keep on course to that destination.

We have invested in our infrastructure and systems which will enable us to work differently and much more responsively to customer need.

We are also embracing mobile and agile working and working in a 'Smart' way. Work is about what you do, not where you do it. This aligns to our Asset Management Strategy – reducing the reliance on a large estate of council buildings for staff.



5. What does the Council look like now?

We employ
5,911 staff
(4196 Full Time
Equivalents)



2,463 work in schools
3,448 work across
the council



17.6% are Male
82.4% are Female
Non schools 22.7% Male
and 77.3% Female



1.32% are of Black and
Minority Ethnic origin

Retention rates (turnover)
8.37% for all
employees
4.18% for non-school
employees

1.94% have declared a
disability

- Shropshire Council services:
- Adult Services
 - Children's Services (inc Schools)
 - Finance, Governance & Assurance
 - Legal and Democratic Services
 - Place
 - Workforce and Transformation

Average days lost to sickness

8.37% for all staff
8.61% for non-school
staff

What have we been doing since we published our first Workforce Strategy?

A lot has happened since we launched the first Workforce Strategy in 2016. Here's some examples against the priorities we set:

Staff Engagement

We launched a Staff Survey in December 2018 which had 1,213 responses and over 5,000 comments. The report can be viewed here:

<https://staff.shropshire.gov.uk/media/708773/staff-survey-report.pdf>

We have looked at the key things from the survey and compiling a "You Said, We Did" update for staff which was communicated in the autumn 2019.

Wellbeing Events – a programme of events has taken place over the last few years aimed at improving the wellbeing of staff.

- In 2017, we purchased a Healthcare Monitor to support employees to manage their own wellbeing through monitoring their weight and blood pressure. Since it was purchased, it has been used 4,537 times.
- Various wellbeing events have been run at Shirehall within some other locations too, i.e., Bridgnorth, Oswestry and Shrewsbury. These have included information and advice on nutrition, financial wellbeing, physio clinics and therapeutic massages and have been attended by over 1000 employees.
- Health MOT's sessions have been provided to enable health screening for diabetes, cholesterol, etc. Since 2017, 410 sessions have been attended.
- Wellbeing challenges have been facilitated to encourage and promote physical activity. The two five-week Step challenges were undertaken by 221 employees with 50,125,533.00 steps being recorded during the challenges.
- Yoga and Mindfulness taster sessions have been facilitated. The yoga sessions have continued with the venue being provided and the participants directly engaging with the teacher for payment.
- During Mental Health Week in May 2019, the Mental Health Policy was launched, a podcast on Mindfulness, our revised intranet Wellbeing Pages were re-launched. There was a heartfelt account from an employee about their own struggle with mental health with information from their manager on how they support them in the workplace.

Apprenticeships – we have embedded our approach to upskilling the workforce via apprenticeships since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017. We have encouraged all our employees to take up apprenticeships (up to Masters Degree level) to develop their skills and are on track to meet the public sector target of 2.3% of the workforce by 2020. To date we have had over 150 applications from employees to undertake an apprenticeship and over 100 employees engaged on an apprenticeship. 12 learners have successfully completed their apprenticeship and by November 2020 we should have a further 28 completed. Apprenticeships range from Level 2 to Level 7, covering topics such as Business Administration, Social Media & Digital Marketing, Data Analyst and Leadership and Management.

Pay Changes

In October 2018 we restored the pay cuts that staff took in 2011/12 which resulted in our pay structures aligning back to the national rates of pay. This was important to recognise the value of our staff and address increasing recruitment and retention issues. We also introduced a scheme for staff to buy additional annual leave so that they could balance the demands of work and life and have more choice.

Staff Ideas Factory – we haven't yet developed this as the technology at the time wasn't able to support this in an efficient way. Now we have upgraded our IT systems we will look at how we can automate this and provide a channel for our staff to share their ideas. In the interim we have developed "Staff Ask Clive" as part of our monthly staff newsletter which is a short survey that all staff can complete to ask a question or make a suggestion (anonymously if they wish) directly to the Chief Executive.

Proud to work for Shropshire Council campaign – 'Proud to make a difference' is a campaign to promote Shropshire Council's successes, as well as inform people of its exciting and ambitious plans for the future.

2018 was a successful year for the council - something that it's extremely proud of, given the financial pressures it continues to face.

The council is constantly striving to do things differently, including being more commercial. This often involves investing money to save in the long-term. However, why the council does this isn't necessarily well understood.

Recognising and celebrating these achievements, ensuring that the services it delivers are branded appropriately, as well as explaining why the council is spending money (and what money) is important if the council is to empower staff and councillors and increase the positive perception amongst residents. All of these things help the council to build on its brand.

Developing our Managers

Management Development Modules were developed and delivered quarterly in 2016 on the following themes: Handling Redundancy, Discipline & Grievance, Capability and Sickness Absence Management. Since then we've developed a further module including Performance Management. All 5 modules are now delivered on a 6 monthly basis or when there is a need identified.

We developed our Shropshire Leadership Programmes (for existing Senior Managers and Future Leaders) in 2017 and are now embarking on our third programme in 2019/20 (60

delegates). Over 120 leaders have gone through the programme so far which includes the following modules:

- DiSC Profiling
- Leading through Change
- Engaging Communication
- Performance Optimisation
- Political Awareness
- Emotional Intelligence
- Commercial & Sales
- Personal Resilience & Reflection
- Presentation Skills
- Celebration Event

Business Design

As part of the overhaul of our IT Systems and infrastructure we have replaced our back office systems with a new Social Care System (Liquid Logic), a new HR/Payroll/Finance/Procurement System (Business World ERP) and a new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) and Contact Centre. In addition, staff now have access to a wealth of Office 365 tools such as Teams, Sharepoint, Skype and Power BI. This will all enable us to work smarter and more collaboratively whilst providing a more responsive service to our customers and citizens.

As part of this we have also looked at how technology can help us to work in a more mobile and agile way – working differently, not being tied to having to work from a set location and therefore reducing travel and accommodation costs. Our ‘Smart’ working is being piloted in areas of the council and alongside the refurbishment of our main HQ we will look to embed this as a way of working in the future.

We are at the start of this journey with a long way to go. We will be reviewing our processes and practices as part of this so that we reduce waste and make them as efficient as possible.

Creativity & Innovation

The Council’s Vision is to “Innovate to Thrive” which means we are serious about innovation and have big ambitions for the future.

We have started to develop our leaders and future leaders in commercial skills and entrepreneurship so that they can think differently about how we operate as a local authority. There are things that we do really well and services we can provide to others to generate income which pays for frontline services to the community.

We are looking at doing different things to support the economy of Shropshire – creating our own Housing Development Company and investing in local shopping centres. This requires different knowledge, experience and skills so we need robust workforce and succession plans to help us achieve our ambitions.

With our advances in technology and systems enables us to be much more creative and innovative about the services we provide and the processes that underpin them. It's an exciting time where developments are taking shape for the future.

Managing the Changes

It is essential that we support our employees through the changes we are making to the way we do things. To do this we have further developed and expanded our online Learning Management System, Leap into Learning, and there are over 320 free online training modules available to staff.

As mentioned earlier, a programme of Wellbeing Events has been provided over the last 3 years which supports our employees to better manage their health and wellbeing and to cope with changes that take effect.

To support our staff with the changes in systems and technology we have developed and delivered a range of IT Literacy modules for staff to ensure they are fully equipped and upskilled to maximise the new technology available to us.

We continue to support staff in terms of personal development, career development job change/move support through a variety of different tools available. Since 2016 the size of the workforce has reduced by 25% from 7,900 in 2016.



6. What does the Council need to look like in future?

As the pressure on budgets continues and there will be considerably less money, the council will not be able to deliver the same services as it does now and will need to prioritise how the budget is spent. The organisation will look very different in future. However, given the work that has already been undertaken over the last few years replacing our IT systems and infrastructure this presents us with opportunities to transform the way we operate so that we are more responsive to customer needs and agile in our approach.

The 'Future Council' will be:

Business Focussed/Commercial – generating income through investments and provision of services

Flexible, adaptable and innovative – to deal with a changing environment as well as finding innovative ways to deliver services. Act in a more agile way – using technology to deliver services differently and reduce our reliance on traditional ways of working.

Outcome focussed and high performing – whatever we do will need to have identifiable outcomes and meet the needs of our residents. All staff will need to work to the best of their ability and give 100%.

Engaged, motivated and resilient – our staff need to feel well informed, clear on the direction of the organisation and resilient to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

Customer Focussed – ensuring residents, contractors, members and colleagues receive the best customer service at all times and are treated with respect.

Leadership – all staff, at every level, demonstrate visible, fair and pro-active leadership ensuring that our staff are supported, but where poor performance is identified it is managed effectively.

Working in a safe, healthy and supportive environment – ensuring our staff are safe at all times and work in a healthy and supportive environment enabling them to be at their best.

Represent the Council positively – I am proud of and committed to our County, its people, and our work.

Take responsibility – I am honest, taking ownership for my actions and decisions and using the resources which I am trusted with wisely

Be consistent – I will communicate clearly, being reliable in the way that I motivate and work with others, maintaining a focus on getting the job done

Be helpful – I respect and care for others, treating everyone fairly, listening to and acting on the things that people say

8. What are our priorities?

Supporting Innovation & Change

Supporting the organisation with the right tools to adapt to support innovation and adapt to change through upskilling, knowledge sharing.

Our work in this area includes:

- Supporting our managers and staff to utilise the new technology available to them to redesign their service offer (i.e. maximise value for the customer; make processes as efficient as they can be; minimise the office footprint required to deliver the service).
- Upskilling and developing the workforce through apprenticeships
- Encouraging different approaches to mobile and agile working – it's not about where you work but what you do.
- Encouraging services to be more commercial and generate income to support front line services through commercial skills training.
- Supporting and developing our current leaders and future leaders to develop a culture of curiosity, innovation and change.
- Engaging with our employees on a regular basis through staff surveys to help reshape our service offer. Keep employees updated using "you said, we did" feedback.
- Supporting and developing employees to become digital champions and digital leaders.
- Supporting the introduction of a staff volunteer scheme.
- Ensuring all workforce related processes and records are digitised, facilitating agile working, reporting and efficiency.

Ensuring the Business is Fit for the Future

Supporting the organisation to deliver workforce changes it requires to future proof itself and deliver the council's priorities.

Our work in this area includes:

- Supporting organisational change ensuring we have one which is the right size, right shape, right cost, right place, with the right skills at the right time.
 - Ensure current employees reach their full potential ('grow our own')
 - Retain our best staff and support those that don't fit with the organisation's direction to find alternatives
 - Attract the best candidates for new roles
- Developing our leaders of the future.

- Developing and co-ordinating the council's approach to performance management and review.
- Developing a Workplace Wellbeing Strategy, reducing the impact to the organisation of sickness absence and building resilience
- Leading on the development and promotion of the required staff behaviours which enable engagement, change, collaboration, responsiveness and flexibility.
- Driving forward the commercial opportunities for Workforce & Transformation to generate income for the council.

Supporting Operations

Ensuring that the organisation stays safe, helps treat staff fairly, consistently and in compliance with employment law, regulatory and statutory requirements and recognised best practices, as well as helping to control costs.

Our work in this area includes:

- Case Management (HR, Health & Safety, Occupational Health)
- Regulatory and mandatory training
- Safe recruitment and induction
- Managing and protecting our employee and organisation data
- Administering the terms and conditions of our staff appropriately
- Payroll administration including compliance with HMRC and Pensions Regulations
- Policy development, review and implementation
- Engagement with recognised Trade Unions
- Job Evaluation, Pay and Grading
- Apprentice and Graduate recruitment and development

Our Innovation & Development Plans will provide the specific actions that the teams will focus on to deliver on these priorities.

Strategic Support Group

Business Partners from HR, IT, and Finance will work together with colleagues in other support services to support the organisation's business and service objectives. A co-ordinated approach which will support innovation and change and speed up the change process.



9. How will we measure if this is working?

A review will take place annually of this strategy to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Information that will inform this review will come from the following sources:

Feedback:

- from managers and staff via briefings.
- staff survey(s) – Including regular skills surveys and wellbeing surveys
- Customer/client feedback

Data reporting (from the quarterly HR Balanced Scorecard):

- Staff turnover
- Vacant/Unfilled vacancies?
- Staff sickness/Absence levels
- Recruitment campaigns – how attractive is Shropshire Council as an employer, conversion rates from applicant to employee and successful probation periods.
- Performance Development Reviews and Plans in place
- Staff Satisfaction rates from Engagement Survey, Training completions (from Leap into Learning) – Including employee's 'Digital Journey's'
- Employee volunteer days

The strategy, alongside the Digital/IT Strategy and Agile Strategy will be regularly reviewed by the Workforce & Transformation senior management team and outcomes fed upwards to Directors/Cabinet & Directors.





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