

Workforce Innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges

Best Value thematic work in Angus Council 2023-24

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Key facts



Workforce 2022/23

4,809	Number of people working for the council – headcount
4,096	Number of people working for the council – full time equivalent
503	Number of casual/bank staff
9.4%	Turnover of staff in last year
13.98	Days lost due to absence in last year per employee



Age profile

5%	16 to 24
17%	25 to 34
27%	35 to 44
27%	45 to 54
22%	55 to 64
2%	65+

Sources: Headcount, FTE and Age Profile: *Workforce Plan Update 2023/24*; Number of casual/bank, turnover and absence (excluding teachers): *Angus Council/LGBF*

Key messages

- 1** Angus Council has updated their workforce plan to align with wider corporate plans and priorities, setting out the budget pressures the council is facing, the changing ways of working post-pandemic, and a continued need to reduce and reshape the workforce. Further strategic developments include the forthcoming digital strategy and a digital transformation programme which will have implications for the workforce and workforce planning.
- 2** The council's workforce plan recognises the significant challenges the council faces in recruitment and retention of staff and the need to focus on skills required to meet the priorities in the Council Plan. The council makes good use of apprenticeships, programmes to develop their young workforce, and partnerships with local colleges, universities and training providers. These initiatives are needed to create a sustainable workforce for the future, address the risks the council faces in recruiting and retaining staff, and improve succession planning. It is important that these are assessed to understand if they are addressing the issues faced.
- 3** The workforce plan includes an action plan which sets out actions to progress priority areas, but the progress report on the plan lacks detail on the status and progress of each of the actions. Workforce plan updates should clarify what progress has been made in these areas. Scrutiny arrangements for the workforce plan and its progress also need to be clear. Responsibility for monitoring the delivery of strategies and delivery plans is key in demonstrating how these are improving outcomes.
- 4** The council has changed its approach to workforce planning at a service level. The new approach is both data and conversation led and focuses on the needs of each service but there is no clear record of actions agreed making it difficult to track progress in workforce planning at a service level.
- 5** Angus Council has worked to improve the quality and availability of workforce data so that services are better able to use data to carry out effective workforce planning. Analysis of workforce data highlights that the council has an ageing workforce and needs to increase employment opportunities for young people, consider succession planning and support older workers in continuing their employment.
- 6** Engagement with the workforce and trade unions is a stated priority for the council. The council uses a number of tools for engaging with staff and receiving feedback on key workforce issues. There are positive relationships with trade unions with regular meetings to discuss workforce issues. The council has assessed the impact of changes to ways of working on the

workforce and wellbeing and is working with trade unions and employees on workforce changes.

- 7** The council has realised workforce benefits through its use of digital technology and will formally agree its vision in its updated digital strategy to link to priorities in the Council Plan. A new digital transformation programme is in the early stages of development and will consider how technologies can strategically alter methods of service delivery. The council needs to be able to demonstrate the workforce benefits and productivity gains through its use of digital technology.
- 8** The council has implemented 'agile working' which incorporates six different work styles. Increased opportunities to work flexibly have been positively received by staff. The council has considered the impact of hybrid working on the workforce and its wellbeing and on financial savings and efficiencies. The Council are focused on employee health and wellbeing and actively encourage staff engagement.
- 9** The workforce plan sets out actions on skills. The council has not yet carried out a planned skills audit, and it is not clear that it has implemented a digital skills development strategy and data skills programme.
- 10** The council has a number of shared service arrangements in place. There is evidence that shared working is being used to improve service delivery. Although some savings have been identified, the benefits of these are not yet fully quantified. Greater partnership working and collaboration is a key factor in how the council intends to change and make financial savings over the next five years.

Scope of the audit

1. The [2023 Local Government Overview \(LGO\)](#) notes that councils have never faced such a challenging situation. Service demands have increased after the Covid-19 pandemic and funding is forecast to reduce in real terms. Workforce pressures including recruitment in a competitive labour market, employee retention and high sickness absence levels are putting councils under continued pressure.
2. This report sets out how the council is responding to current workforce challenges through building capacity, increasing productivity and innovation.
3. The Accounts Commission's Strategy (2021-26) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The Code of Audit practice sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

Code of Audit Practice 2020 Best Value reporting requirements

Best Value reporting – extract from the Code

The Accounts Commission's approach to Best Value involves reporting on individual local government bodies and thematically across the local government sector through performance reports:

- As part of their integrated wider-scope annual audit work appointed auditors use a risk-based approach to assess and report whether the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing Best Value and is complying with its community planning duties, including reporting progress against previous Best Value findings and recommendations.
- The Accounts Commission also requires the Controller of Audit to report to the Accounts Commission on each council or Integration Joint Board (IJB) at least once over the five-year audit appointment on the body's performance on its Best Value duty. This enables the Accounts Commission to make findings for improvement where appropriate.
- The Accounts Commission reports nationally on thematic aspects of local government bodies' approaches to, and performance in, meeting their Best Value and community planning duties. Local government appointed auditors report locally on any such Best Value thematic work prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

4. This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on workforce innovation and how councils are responding to workforce challenges. In carrying out the work auditors have considered the following questions:

- How effectively are the council's workforce plans integrated with its strategic plans and priorities?

- How effectively has digital technology been used to support workforce productivity and improve service quality and outcomes?
- How effectively is the council using hybrid and remote working and other innovative working practice such as a four-day week to achieve service and staff benefits?
- What innovative practice is the council using to develop its future workforce capacity and skills needs and manage staff reductions in line with its priorities?
- What progress has the council made with sharing roles or functions across its services and/or with other councils and partners?
- How effectively is the council measuring the impact of its workforce planning approach?

5. The report includes an update on the areas covered by recommendations in the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published in July 2022.

6. An improvement action plan is included at Appendix 1 of this report. This sets out audit recommendations in key areas for this 2023/24 thematic report and the council's planned response including responsible officers and dates for implementation. It also includes recommendations brought forward from the 2022 BVAR report, and from 2022/23 Best Value thematic work.

7. The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for council's arrangements for the seven Best Value themes in the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020](#).

Workforce strategy and priorities

8. Workforce planning involves identifying and addressing future capacity and skills gaps, at operational and leadership levels. It requires strategic thinking, comprehensive workforce data and ongoing consultation and engagement with staff and trades unions.

9. A council focused on achieving Best Value will have a workforce strategy that sets out expectations on how the local authority's staff will deliver its vision, priorities and values.

10. To be effective, workforce planning must be integrated across the organisation. Workforce strategies need to support the council in achieving its strategic priorities. They must support other key plans including financial, asset, digital and transformation planning. They need to be under-pinned with a clear approach to workforce planning within services.

Angus Council has updated their workforce plan to align with wider corporate plans and priorities. The workforce plan recognises the budget pressures the council is facing, the changing ways of working post-pandemic, and a continued need to reshape the workforce

11. For the year 2022/23 Angus Council had 4,096 employees (FTE) with a headcount of 4,809, and overall pay bill of £185.5m. 22% of the workforce is aged 34 and under, with 24% aged 55 and over. There has been a slight shift in the age profile over the last year with an increase in the number of younger workers. While there was a 10% decrease in number employed between 2014/15 and 2019/20, there has been an increase again over the last couple of years, with staffing requirements of increased early years provision contributing to this.

12. The 2023-28 Workforce Plan was approved in March 2023, with the plan revised to align with the Council Plan for 2023-28, and the Finance and Change plan for 2023-26, as well as 'the significant changes, opportunities and challenges' the council is facing.

13. The Workforce Plan recognises budget pressures as the key challenge for the council. It states that the council needs to make changes to services in the face of the budget deficit and consider the make-up of the workforce. Changes to services and how they are delivered are expected, as well as closer working with partners, stakeholders and communities.

14. The plan outlines wider contextual changes, changes to how the council operates, and the impacts these have on the workforce. This includes:

- Changing patterns of work with more agile and hybrid working becoming embedded following the pandemic

- Digital transformation of council services and functions continuing
- A continued ageing of the population, including the workforce
- Working more closely with partners to consider what services will be delivered and how.

15. The council has set aims for the workforce it wants to create, stating the importance of workforce planning to help meet wider priorities. It aims to create a workforce that is the right size and shape to deliver services, is well led, has skills and behaviours to enable delivery of the digital and agile agenda, is responsive to new ways of working, and has a safe working environment.

16. The Workforce Plan sets out nine priority areas for action which are supported by a more detailed twenty-three-point action plan. The priority areas are set out in Exhibit 1, together with a summary of the Action Plan.

The council are facing challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff. Work to review the use of temporary and supply staff across services is currently underway

17. There are some areas where the council have found it difficult to recruit permanently and have therefore employed people on an agency basis to fill these gaps. This is particularly prevalent in technical, specialist areas where vacancies have proven difficult to fill through normal job advertising resulting in the need to use agency workers.

18. The use of temporary, and supply staff has been gradually increasing from 2021/22 (7 per cent temporary and 13 per cent supply staff) to 2023/24 (10 per cent temporary and 17 per cent supply staff). The majority of this increase is within Education.

19. Out-with Education the council has also seen an increase in temporary contracts due to their budget situation. This is due to either the council being granted a temporary budget or grants in place at that time allowing them to employ further temporary staff.

The Workforce Plan includes an action plan which sets out actions to progress priority areas, but the progress report on the plan lacks detail on the status and progress of individual actions

20. The Workforce Action Plan's twenty-three actions aim to deliver workforce planning priorities. The Action Plan sets out each action, the intended impact, completion date and who is responsible. The council states that it will be reviewed on an annual basis, updated and monitored to ensure it remains reflective of the council's priorities.

21. The first update report of the workforce plan however does not provide a comprehensive update on the status and progress of each of the twenty-three actions. Instead, it 'highlights some of the achievements' from work done so far during 2023/24 and 'areas of focus for 2024/25'. This makes it unclear whether the actions set out are still a priority for the council,

whether they have been carried out or whether they are to be developed in the future.

22. For example, under the 'Developing the workforce' theme there are seven actions in the original action plan, but the progress report provides no update against key actions such as undertaking a skills audit, implementing a digital skills and data skills programme.

Recommendation 1

The council should improve and develop its reporting on progress of workforce planning so that it is clear what actions are being progressed, which are complete and what outcomes achieved.

Exhibit 1: Angus Council key workforce priorities

Priority and summary	Actions
<p>Employee health and wellbeing</p> <p>Workforce is the greatest resource, and its wellbeing must be prioritised. Need to engage staff and adjust workloads to match staff reductions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver workforce survey to confirm areas of focus • Develop and implement a health and wellbeing strategy, resources and events • Provide, monitor and review the Employee Assistance Programme
<p>Retention of our workforce</p> <p>Workforce retention a challenge due to new context – more flexible work opportunities, with many able to work anywhere and have flexible work hours. Has stimulated a lot of movement in our workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify actions to increase workforce diversity • Identify likely workforce gaps and options to fill gaps • Develop retraining/redeployment for displaced employees • Promote voluntary severance and phased retirement • Achieve 'Fair Work' recognition • Achieve Living Wage accreditation • Review progression and career grade structures
<p>Developing our workforce</p> <p>Investment in development to secure skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviours to deliver services.</p> <p>Digital agenda</p> <p>More digital processes will need employees who are digital role models, with digital skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a skills audit • Implement a digital skills development strategy • Implement data skills programme • Develop trauma informed awareness and skills • Introduce more generic role profiles where appropriate • Strategic leadership development tools • Maximise workforce opportunities for young people
<p>Developing our young workforce</p>	
<p>Leadership and management development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement LEAD programme
<p>Workforce profiling and planning</p> <p>Updating service workforce plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Resourcelink data for better workforce planning

Employee and trade union engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement engagement strategy • Monitor consultation and negotiation frameworks with Trade unions
Reward and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete review of pay and grading structure
Partnership and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for collaboration on review of policies and practice

Source: Audit Scotland - information from Angus Council Workforce Plan 23-28

Corporate plans highlight the significant change ahead due to the financial pressures the council is facing with further workforce reductions and changes to take place

23. The Council Plan (2023-28) was updated in 2024 due to significant developments that took place in 2023, including a new Chief Executive taking up post, and the severe impact of Storm Babet on Angus communities in late autumn 2023. The update builds on the council's commitment to work closely with partners, stakeholders and communities, and takes account of the council's role in the longer-term recovery from Storm Babet as well as Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. Stronger partnerships are a key part of the Council's plans for the period of the plan.

24. The Council Plan sets out a priority for the council being 'efficient and effective'. Exhibit 2 outlines how the Plan aligns to the Workforce Plan, in referencing the pressurised financial environment, the need to focus on health and wellbeing of the workforce and develop the workforce and its skills.

25. The Workforce Plan states that the Change Plan has £2 million of savings from workforce changes over the three years - £1 million from workforce reductions linked to collaboration and organisation design, and £1 million from workforce reductions from non-statutory services, delivered through support services.

26. The council report that exact numbers of staff reductions are not known but will be informed by service reviews. These are the main vehicle for identifying specific staff changes. Around 20 service reviews were carried out in 2023/24 and involved consultation with staff and trade unions.

Further strategic developments including the forthcoming digital strategy and launch of a new digital transformation programme will have implications for the workforce and council priorities

The council will consider a new digital strategy in September 2024, and then plan to develop a programme of digital transformation projects. This is intended to bring about organisational change with technology and people as the two essential strands. Close working between digital transformation and HR leads in the development phase of this strategy and programme will continue as the programme is put in place.

Exhibit 2 How the Workforce Plan (2023-28) links with other key plans and strategies

Plan/strategy	Links with the Workforce Plan 2023-28
Council Plan 2023-28 (Update 2024)	<p>The Angus Council Plan sets out four priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for the economy • Caring for our people • Caring for our place • Angus Council is efficient and effective <p>The fourth priority sets out specific aims for the workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the workforce is supported through organisational change • Modernise the workforce and retrain staff where appropriate • Ensure consistent implementation of our agile working strategy <p>The plan focuses on the challenging financial context, the need to respond and support the workforce through this challenging time.</p> <p>It also sets out an aim to ‘create a range of succession planning solutions’ by March 2025. This will be to develop and retain new people in services where there are concerns around filling roles and training people for when staff members leave.</p> <p>The priorities set out in the Council Plan broadly aligning with the priorities and actions set out in the Workforce Plan.</p>
Finance and Change Plan (2023-26)	<p>The Plan sets out the financial savings the council must make over the three years. Organisational development and change will include staff reductions, putting pressure on remaining staff, and needing a focus on staff health and wellbeing, aligning with the Workforce Plan.</p> <p>47% of expenditure is employee costs. Changes already made include stopping recruitment to non-essential posts and a review of vacant posts to identify savings.</p> <p>Workforce reductions will take place across services, including previously protected areas such as education, health & social care. Service reviews are taking place to plan changes at individual service level.</p> <p>The vision for Change includes ‘Empowered Staff’, with less hierarchy and more devolved decision making.</p> <p>The Change programme sets out the savings over the three years for each department. Some staffing reductions are set out, but it is difficult to get a picture of the overall numbers of staff or types of post that will be affected. The council report that exact numbers of staff reductions are not known but will be informed by service reviews.</p>

The Council has changed its approach to workforce planning at a service level

27. Audit Scotland's BVAR report for Angus Council from July 2022 found that the council had developed its workforce planning arrangements since the previous Best Value report. A strategic workforce plan was in place with service workforce plans being updated.

28. Audit Scotland's Best Value report on Leadership for 2022/23 made the following recommendation:

The council should develop its Directorate workforce planning arrangements to ensure sufficient focus on recruitment, retention and succession planning as service delivery transforms

29. The Council agreed to the recommendation and reported that:

'Workforce planning sessions are underway with Service Leaders and Directors. They are focused on improving our use of people data, identifying likely requirements and actions needed to ensure resilience and development of services. Directorate plans will be completed January – March 2024.'

30. The council has however changed its approach to workforce planning. There are no separate workforce planning documents for services, instead Directorates have actions that they monitor through their Directorate leadership teams.

The new approach to workforce planning is both data and conversation led but there is no clear record of actions agreed, making it difficult to track progress in workforce planning at a service level

31. Quarterly workforce planning discussions between individual service leads and HR leads were introduced in November 2023. Services are provided with a data pack in advance of the discussions. This contains key workforce data such as sickness absence, vacancies, establishment numbers.

32. Angus Council report that this data and conversation led approach has been well received by services, with a more tailored focus on service needs. It reflects the variation across services in how they are structured and operate, and the variation in workforce needs and challenges.

33. While this provides a more dynamic and tailored approach to service level workforce planning there is currently no formal record of the outcome and actions that arise from these conversations, making it difficult to track progress and support accountability. There is also a lack of a clear record of workforce planning and actions at a service level. HR report that they are making arrangements to check service level systems for actions and progress that can be reported in strategic workforce plan updates, but this is not yet in place.

Recommendation 2

The council needs to have a clear approach to recording and reporting on workforce planning at a service level, so that there is transparency and accountability on what actions are being taken and what progress is being made.

The council has worked to improve the quality and availability of workforce data so that services are better able to use data and carry out effective workforce planning

34. The council uses the ResourceLink system to provide workforce data. The first year of the corporate workforce plan has focused on making sure workforce data is as accurate as possible and that there is a reliable baseline for informing workforce planning. This process has involved a series of data cleansing exercises and joint work between HR and individual services.

35. This work supports the preparation of data packs that are used in the quarterly workforce discussions between HR and services. Data packs include:

- Establishment and vacancy report
- A people data pack with a corporate level and directorate level on headcount and breakdown by length of service, gender, generation, sickness and attrition
- Long term sickness absence
- Overall sickness absence
- Active casework
- Corporate mandatory training completion

36. Improvements to data quality are aimed at improving the use of data, allowing analysis of trends and trajectory of the workforce, and being more proactive rather than reactive on workforce issues.

The council's analysis of workforce data has highlighted an ageing workforce and the need to take action to increase employment opportunities for young people, consider succession planning and support older workers in continuing their employment.

37. The council's workforce plan includes analysis of the age profile of the workforce. The older age profile impacts on succession planning and highlights a need to attract young people into the workforce. The plan recognises recruitment and retention as an issue for the council with this ageing demographic, and also recognises that some service areas are more affected by others with particular skills gaps and hard to fill vacancies.

38. Succession planning has been a particular focus for the council in the first year of the workforce plan. Some services have identified a risk of people in senior positions leaving the organisation at the same time. The aims of succession planning are that the council has people ready to move into roles.

39. The first steps in succession planning have been establishing reliable data to understand where the risk is and holding conversations with services on the risk and how it can be addressed. The workforce plan update states that 'people conversations' for 2024/25 will continue to focus on succession planning and designing the workforce needed for the future.

40. The council has put in place solutions including Modern and Graduate apprenticeship programmes to develop the talent for the future and also look at redesigning roles when vacancies occur so that they can attract a wider group of applicants. Clear progression routes for developing the young workforce are set out including work experience for school pupils, the apprenticeship programme, and support for young people who are care experienced, have disabilities or are young carers to join the workforce.

41. Recent update reports to Corporate Leadership Team have noted that that there have been positive outcomes in some services where they have put different approaches in place, such as reviewing role profiles and creating career grade posts, making use of the Restart scheme for long term unemployed, or where there has been greater flexibility in terms of requirements.

42. The HR team has made recommendations based on learning from these approaches and tailored to the workforce issues that individual services face. For example, there are concerns in relation to succession planning in the Finance and Assets team. Discussions are planned with the service to create career grade to address these issues.

43. There is scope for wider learning across the organisation from sharing practice and outcomes from different approaches to workforce challenges.

Engagement with the workforce and trade unions is a priority for the council. The council uses a number of tools for engaging with staff and receiving feedback on key workforce issues.

44. The council has staff and trade union engagement as one of its priority areas within its workforce plans. It has a number of activities in place to engage and secure staff including employee voice sessions and staff surveys.

45. There are positive relationships with trade unions with fortnightly trade union liaison meetings attended by Human Resources and Organisational Development which provide an opportunity for trade union colleagues to raise any concerns they have. Staff and trade unions are also involved in service changes, including service reviews.

46. There has been a recent change to workforce surveys with more frequent shorter surveys, rather than annual surveys. This has allowed workforce engagement to focus on specific themes.

Digital technology and the workforce

The council has noted that it has realised workforce benefits through its use of digital technology and is to formally agree its vision within an updated digital strategy linking to priorities in the Council Plan. As part of the wider change programme, a new digital transformation programme is in the early stages of development to consider how technologies can strategically alter methods of service delivery.

47. The Accounts Commission's Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023 report notes that digital technology will make councils' future workforces look and work quite differently. To achieve the change required, councils need to make good use of digital technology and use the workforce in flexible ways.

48. Digital technology has a strong bearing on a council's workforce needs. It can be used to re-shape jobs to increase productivity and reduce back-office functions while improving service quality. Technology solutions include online services, customer relationship management systems, mobile digital devices and more recently, artificial intelligence applications.

49. Councils need to be innovative in their use of technology and build on new working practices that emerged during the pandemic. In doing so, they must also consider service quality and the needs of people experiencing digital exclusion.

The Digital Strategy, and Data Strategy, are currently being updated to ensure alignment with the Council Plan and other associated strategies.

50. For the council to be considered a digital council it needs a clear digital vision and strategy that sets out how digital transformation will deliver better outcomes for people. The strategies require to be supported by plans detailing actions, timescales and the required investment in technology, people and skills.

51. Our 2022/23 Annual Audit Report on Angus Council issued in October 2023 identified that the council's digital strategy required to be updated to reflect the current Council Plan and priorities. Officers have indicated that a new Digital Strategy has now been developed and will be considered by members in September 2024, alongside a new Data strategy. Officers also indicated that a digital strategy delivery plan is in development to set-out a multi-year plan of digital initiatives and outcomes to deliver these strategies.

52. Audit Scotland's 2021 Digital Progress in Local Government report highlighted that councils were starting to develop strategies to make better use of data. Data standards, governance and ethics are important areas in which councils need to make progress.

53. Officers highlighted that Angus Council's forthcoming Data Strategy considers 5 key workstreams: data architecture; data foundations; data governance; data skills; and data analytics.

54. A digital transformation programme is in the early stages of development to consider how technologies can strategically alter methods of service delivery. Audit Scotland's 2021 Digital Progress in Local Government report highlighted that:

- workforce plans must be aligned with digital transformation plans and be dynamic, taking account of how new technologies will affect the workforce, such as the introduction of automation and artificial intelligence (AI)
- councils need to develop a benefits-realisation approach that includes financial and non-financial benefits for staff, citizens and communities.

55. Digital transformation to date has mainly been driven through the Finance & Change Plan reviews when considering financial savings and efficiencies. The council have now embarked on developing a digital transformation programme, evaluating how emerging technology like generative AI and robotic process automation can support further automation and efficiencies. This should allow the council to develop an approach to consider financial and non-financial benefits for staff, citizens and communities. This process commenced with a 'Tech for tomorrow' event in June 2024 attended by a number of officers looking at how technologies can strategically alter the methods of service delivery.

56. Nationally there are several groups attended by officers where good practice and developments across the field are considered and close links have also been developed with other local councils (e.g. Dundee City Council and Perth & Kinross Council) to consider where the council could benefit from joint working (e.g. shared service desk; procurement; payroll).

Recommendation 3

The updated digital strategies should reflect the Council Plan and priorities. The refreshed digital strategy and digital transformation programme also needs to clearly set out how the councils plans for digital technology will shape the workforce, what workforce benefits are expected and what needs to be put in place in terms of support and skills development.

In developing the Digital Strategy, the council engaged with staff at various levels across directorates. Public consultation of the strategy relied on national forums.

57. Audit Scotland's 2021 Digital Progress in Local Government report highlighted that:

- digital strategies are most effective when leaders champion change and staff are engaged
- there has been a lack of citizen involvement in digital service design and not enough focus on outcomes in monitoring progress of digital programmes.

58. The Corporate Leadership Team and staff have been involved in the development of the draft strategies and will continue to be involved in the development of the digital transformation programme through various forums including through the Digital Strategy Board.

59. Officers have indicated that in the development of the council's digital strategy, reliance has been placed on national forums (e.g. Local Government Digital Office, SOCITM) to provide a public perspective on the changes required to digital services to ensure accessibility and consider digital exclusion. No local consultation with the public has been undertaken in this area.

Digital skills have been identified as a key improvement area within the Workforce Plan. Workforce Plan updates should clarify what progress has been made in these areas.

60. Our Best Value Assurance Report issued in July 2022 highlighted that a digital maturity assessment had recently been completed. This concluded that the council was progressing well in its digital maturity strategy. One of the key challenges the council had to address was digital skills, ensuring that it has the appropriate resources in place to deliver its digital strategy.

61. The council's Workforce Plan 2023-28 approved in March 2023 highlighted several areas where improvements were required with actions identified corporately and for directorates in relation to digital. These improvements included actions to consider a skills audit together with improving digital and data skills within the workforce.

62. The Workforce Plan update 2023/24 considered in February 2024 gave an overview of achievements in relation to digital activities during the year. However, it was not clear how the specific actions in the Workforce Plan 2023-28 had been addressed or progressed. This makes it difficult to evaluate whether the council is delivering on its priorities in relation to digital skills.

63. Interviews with officers highlighted that the skills audit is not currently being undertaken as it would not provide value until there is a clear operating model going forward. There are several examples of where digital training is promoted and being undertaken by staff and digital champions are in place across the council. Officers have also advised that

digital and data skills are part of the draft Digital and Data Strategies. To support the strategies the council should have detailed workforce and skills development plans, including for leadership teams and elected members, that align with its digital transformation plans.

Responsibilities for monitoring of delivery of strategies and delivery plans is key in demonstrating how these are improving outcomes.

64. Officers have indicated that measures to monitor the council's digital ambitions in relation to workforce will be set out in the Digital and Data Strategies and the 3-year delivery plans, with performance targets detailed. Monitoring of the implementation of delivery plans, by officers and elected members, is key to demonstrating how the strategies are improving outcomes within the council.

65. The Internal Audit reported on Digital Strategy & Governance in August 2023 highlighted several areas for improvement in relation to governance arrangements for the Digital Strategy Board. These included a need for revised membership to improve directorate/service representation and the need for formal terms of reference for this group, including providing oversight over the digital delivery plan.

Digital technology is used to support workforce productivity, service delivery and outcomes. The council need to be able to demonstrate the workforce benefits and productivity gains through its use of digital technology.

66. The council highlighted that it has continued to deliver digital technology to deliver effective and efficient public services to benefit customers who can interact digitally, anytime, anyplace on any device and provide benefits for the workforce, allowing staff to put emphasis on high value tasks rather than focusing on manual, transactional and inefficient processes.

67. The Digital Strategy Board terms of reference indicate that its role includes providing oversight and direction for the council's digital initiatives including prioritisation of digital activities. This should include evaluating evidence of how reviews of the delivery of digital technology are impacting outcomes.

68. Over the last year, the council has moved several systems to the suppliers modern, cloud-hosted offering which has supported greater automation to deliver these benefits. An example provided, by the council, of new technology to support delivery was migrating from an on-premises contact centre/telephony solution to a new cloud-based solution. The business case for this review was to deliver specific benefits to contact centre staff working from home, reduction in revenue costs and staff being more agile and contactable. Officers have indicated that the review has delivered significant cost savings, additional benefits to customers though the addition of multiple contact channels and an improved workforce experience now staff can work remotely, although no firm evidence of the impact on workforce productivity or other workforce benefits has been provided.

69. The council also noted it has continued to deliver more automated, digital processes through its Customer Relationship Management platform to improve the customer experience and provide huge benefits to the workforce.

70. The council has not produced evidence of how reviews of the delivery of digital technology are impacting on workforce productivity or providing other workforce benefits.

Recommendation 4

The council needs to be able to demonstrate the impacts and benefits arising from digital transformation, with regular progress reports on outcomes. There should be an update to the terms of reference for the Digital Strategy Board which clearly sets out its roles and responsibilities, including its oversight in assessing the impact of the delivery of digital initiatives.

Flexible working and other innovative staff deployment

The Council has implemented ‘agile working’ which incorporates six different work styles. Increased opportunities to work flexibly have been positively received by staff. The council has considered the impact of hybrid working on the workforce and its wellbeing and on financial savings and efficiencies.

71. During the pandemic councils needed to make the best use of their existing workforce while continuing to monitor employee wellbeing. Councils continue to look to new ways of working to improve job satisfaction and reduce sickness absence and staff turnover.

72. Home-working and hybrid working (a combination of office and home-based working) have now become commonplace. However, whatever the working practice, employers need to ensure that service quality and productivity are maintained.

The Council has adopted agile working with hybrid and home working supporting their agile working strategy

73. During the pandemic the council adapted their agile working strategy, incorporating different work styles. A review was undertaken of workstyles to help identify which roles must be carried out from a council building and those which can be undertaken by employees working from home or from another location.

74. Employees were given the choice to voluntarily opt out of their Agile 1 workstyle, in place pre pandemic, and opt into Agile 2 which contains the following new workstyles for the council:

- **Workstyle 1** – Fixed with most of the employee’s time spent delivering front line services e.g. waste operatives, social care officers, education
- **Workstyle 2a** – Fixed with employees being located a fixed desk within council premises – noted this workstyle is relatively rare and seen as an exception
- **Workstyle 2b** – Fixed with work regularly undertaken at a fixed point with shared desks at council premises – no requirement for out of office working
- **Workstyle 3** – Flexi with work carried out at different locations and employees are office desk-based for more than 50 per cent of their working time

- **Workstyle 4** – Hybrid with work carried out at different locations and employees are office desk-based for less than 50 per cent of their working time
- **Workstyle 5** – Hybrid with most of the employees work activity (80 per cent and above) carried out at home or another location

75. More than 70 per cent of those who were offered a new workstyle chose to accept it and 96 per cent of employees have confirmed their workstyles for the future. The majority of those who do not work within education, front-line services or a fixed based place of employment are on workstyle 5.

76. Support and training were provided to individuals to give a clear idea of what working within these different workstyles means. This included new learning and courses which supported the development of skills required for effective home working aimed at both managers and individuals.

77. The council also updated their flexitime scheme to support more flexible and agile ways of working. For some employees this allows for contracted hours to be worked at any time, although in some services core hours are essential for service delivery. There has been positive feedback from staff on the opportunities to work flexibly.

The council has been proactive in managing its estate, responding to new opportunities and delivering financial savings through its agile programme

78. In 2015 the council's Agile and Working and Estate Programme was approved where the proposal sought to rationalise their office estate reducing the number of operational properties within scope from 42 to 10 over a five-year programme.

79. The Agile Working and Estate Rationalisation programme has delivered £3.68 million of revenue savings, capital receipts of £1.33 million and emissions savings of 298 tonnes of carbon reduction. The council has significantly transformed its mode of operation, achieved partly through a reduction in the Council Estate. The programme approach, focussing on buildings, people and technology was the vehicle to progress this transformation.

80. The council are currently considering the future of Angus House, the Council's headquarters, with an increase in hybrid working resulting in a decrease in office usage. A Council report in May 2024 set out an options appraisal for the council remaining in Angus House and leasing surplus space.

81. Angus House is valued at £2.5 million and should the council and Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) consolidate their accommodation to one floor, the resulting surplus accommodation could potentially generate £486k in lease income. The appraisal also considered a 50 per cent occupancy at Angus House which would give an estimated net revenue saving of £243k. A further option is for the council to sell Angus House.

82. The council's Change Programme also includes further estate rationalisation with target savings of £375k.

83. The most recent survey with Angus House looked at the number of people coming into the office and found that desk usage was decreasing with more people choosing hybrid working. Based on this survey, the council noted they are not trying to bring people back into the office as it was not seen to be beneficial for employees.

84. There was an exception to this with younger employees, employees on the Restart Programme and temporary staff reporting some difficulties with their learning and being able to access the required support in an office setting. The council are currently looking at a more centralised and supported programme for these groups of employees going forward.

The council has assessed the impact of changes to ways of working on the workforce and wellbeing and is working with trade unions and employees on workforce changes.

85. Trade Unions and colleagues are involved in the workforce change and service review from the first stage of the process. Once an initial Review Initiation Document has been developed, it is shared with Trade Unions who are invited to join the review team.

86. The council have a Managing Workforce Change Plan in place which looks at service reviews and involves employees, Trade Unions and stakeholders. The plan consists of four stages which includes:

- **Stage 1** - determining whether to undertake the review with discussion on the most appropriate way to communicate this with employees
- **Stage 2** - development of ideas and proposals that will ensure an effective service is provided now and in future
- **Stage 3** - developing and finalising proposed new service delivery models and/or staffing structures highlighting the details of workforce effects
- **Stage 4** - issuing a consultation paper to all affected employees, Trade Unions and stakeholders. This fully details any reductions in post numbers that may result in redundancies and proposed structure charts. The consultation period for review is a minimum of 21 calendar days and during this time employees, Trade Unions and stakeholders can raise questions, share their opinions and submit a formal response.

There is a focused approach to employee health and wellbeing, and the council actively encourage staff engagement

87. The council hold regular employee voice and staff engagement sessions which provide a regular opportunity for staff to hear about, shape and give feedback on proposed organisational initiatives at an early stage. The topic of a previous session was workload management, and current sessions are on health and safety.

88. These sessions are seen to be particularly important for the future given the potential significant changes to service provision, design and staffing that will be required as part of the council's Finance and Change Plan.

89. The council replaced their annual workforce survey with shorter more focused surveys which run four times a year. The surveys are part of their Fit for the Future programme which combines strategic input from external drivers with the internal input to work with leaders across the organisation and identify areas for improvement. There has been a higher percentage of people taking part in the shorter surveys, with the last survey having a 28 per cent response rate. This is a higher rate than previous surveys, providing a bigger sense of issues across the whole organisation and their cultures.

90. The council's first people survey of the year focused on feeling well at work. The survey asked a range of questions with results based on a scale of one to four, with four being positive. Overall results largely reflected positive feedback with the majority of responses scoring three.

Developing future skills and capacity

The council make good use of apprenticeships and have programmes to develop their young workforce, these initiatives are needed to help ensure a sustainable workforce for the future, address the risks the council faces in recruiting and retaining staff, and make sure there are staff ready to replace experienced leavers

91. Councils need to find innovative ways to ensure the workforce capacity and skills they need to deliver services in the future. Training and development opportunities can help to attract and retain employees and ensure skills are in place. Many councils work with their partners to offer apprenticeship schemes or vocational qualifications. Succession planning is also important to develop future leaders and ensure that essential skills are in place.

92. Jobs can be re-designed to optimise the workforce and improve services. For example, generic roles across health and social care disciplines. Leaders need to engage with staff and trade unions over fundamental workforce reform. This is particularly challenging in an environment of potential job losses.

The council's workforce plan recognises the challenges the council faces in recruitment and retention of staff and the need to focus on skills required to help meet the priorities in the Council Plan

93. Recruitment and retention are considered within the Council's overall Strategic Workforce Plan. The council faces challenges with an ageing workforce, hard to fill vacancies in certain occupations due to both national and local skills gaps, and difficulty competing with other employers due to more favourable pay rates.

94. It was noted that across the workforce hybrid working has had a significant impact in terms of recruitment, with their agile approach allowing them to recruit from further afield, providing the opportunity to fill capacity gaps.

95. They have initiatives in place that will be expanded across the council to ensure they have a sustainable workforce for the future. Strategies include job redesign, 'growing our own', and retrain and redeploy for areas where posts are decreasing to areas of need.

96. Their Change Plan and Programme aims to identify opportunities to retrain and redeploy employees from areas where posts are decreasing to

areas of need. Several people across the organisation have been redeployed into a variety of roles through the council's redeployment policy. Redeployment has been used regularly through workforce change. This has proven to be successful although there is now concern that there will be fewer jobs to redeploy to due to fewer vacancies.

The council have initiatives in place to develop their young workforce and provide the workforce for the future

97. They currently have 235 employees aged 16 to 24 years old within the council (3 per cent of the workforce) and have employed 43 modern and 5 graduate apprenticeships.

98. The council offer an 18-month modern apprenticeship that allows young people to gain work experience and a qualification. The programme offers the chance to complete a bespoke modern apprenticeship leadership training programme delivered by Angus Council staff. Modern Apprentices are offered a guaranteed job interview.

99. The council's focus over the last three years has seen a holistic approach to supporting their apprentices through their job roles, completing qualifications, personal development, leadership qualities, attending a structured peer form, cross-service project opportunities and mentoring.

100. The Graduate Apprenticeships Scheme operates in Information Technology, an area of the council where there are hard to fill vacancies and where skills need develop rapidly alongside technological change.

101. The council has committed to the Young Persons Guarantee which aims to give all young people aged 16 to 24 the opportunity of a job, apprenticeship, further or higher education, training or volunteering.

102. Other skills development and employability initiatives include:

- **Get Ready for Work** - a 12-week paid working placement that is available for young people aged 16 to 24 who are not currently in employment, training or education and facing one or more barriers to employment. During the 12 weeks, the young person will work up to 20 hours per week whilst undertaking the Level 4 SQA Certificate in Work Readiness. They have a guaranteed job after successful completion.
- **Angus Works** - an extended work experience programme open to all S4-S6 pupils. The programme runs for 22 weeks and forms part of the pupil's timetable. Successful applicants are allocated to appropriate roles across the council. All young people who successfully complete the programme will gain recognition in the form of an 'employer endorsement' outlining tasks undertaken, experience gained, and personal attributes and traits shown by the pupils, which can then be used in future applications for jobs, colleges and universities.
- **Long-Term Unemployed Programme** - which supports people back into employment. 2023/24 was the first year the programme was open to 20 to 24-year-olds. They currently have nine young people on the programme with their contribution seen as significant in terms of service delivery and changing the culture of teams.

103. The council should continue to invest in developing young people in Angus and the Council including creating more opportunities where they link to succession planning and are affordable.

The council and HSCP have measures in place to address issues with workforce capacity within health and social care services

104. The AHSCP encourages managers to temporarily recruit above their staffing establishments during staff recruitment exercises. Managers must have a plan to return to original establishment numbers within two years although this has been seen as a welcome route on temporarily increasing staff numbers.

105. The development of a Social Care bank has been introduced across adult services to support staffing shortages and relieve the pressures on the existing workforce.

106. An Employer of Choice working group has been established to focus on the opportunities to attract, recruit and retain talent. Actions are underway to help promote Angus Council as an attractive employer and support services experiencing recruitment challenges ensuring vacancies reach a broader audience.

107. A newly qualified social workers programme aims to both attract and train newly qualified social work professions in Angus. They have been working to introduce a new role of pre-registration social worker which is designed to bridge the gap between social work student and newly qualified social worker.

The council is facing recruitment challenges in children's services and is working with Dundee and Aberdeen Universities in relation to social work placements, and training providers to deliver their apprenticeships

108. Social work services are working jointly with Dundee and Aberdeen Universities to increase the number of social work student placements available within Angus. During the reporting period, there were 17 students on placements across adult and children services with seven of the students securing permanent posts following qualification.

109. One of the recommendations within their succession planning is to develop closer relationships with Further and Higher Education to create a pipeline of applicants. Recent initiatives have been successful in Planning and Social Work.

110. Apprenticeships that the Council offer are done so in conjunction with Angus and Dundee Colleges and private training providers.

Leadership and management development is a priority for the council in creating the right culture that supports Angus through this time of change

111. The council launched the LEAD 1 development programme in 2022. It provides a Leadership and Management Development programme that

targets first level leader, supporting development of the leaders of the future, that the council sees as vital in achieving its organisational goals.

112. The programme has been well received with 57 people participating in the programme in its first year, and the council stating that it needs to do more to capture the impact of the programme.

The council engage with staff and are working with Trade Unions on how best to support and retain staff

113. Within their Workforce Plan the council note that effective employee engagement and participation has been shown to reduce turnover and improve productivity and efficiency.

114. To support effective engagement and encourage participation the council use employee engagement tools to gather feedback using pulse surveys on focused and current issues allowing them to respond to emerging concerns effectively.

115. Trade Unions are involved in all conversations relating to the workforce. There are positive relationships with open discussions around the council's current situation and future plans. Trade Unions also attend the Corporate Leadership Team meetings. Agendas are shared in advance of these to ensure there is good transparency and allow representatives to be part of discussions.

The Workforce Plan sets out actions on skills, but it has not yet carried out a planned skills audit, and it is not clear what progress has been made on implementing a digital skills development strategy and data skills programme

116. A skills audit was intended to give a clear picture of the wide range of skills available across the organisation to allow resources to be effectively directed and deployed to meet organisational needs. This has not been carried out with the council stating that a corporate skills audit will be part of the organisation design programme, following on from work with the new Chief Executive and elected members to on priorities and service design.

117. There are a number of digital skills programmes in place, but it is not clear that the council has a digital skills development strategy or data skills programme, as outlined in the Workforce Action Plan. Digital and data skills development will be important for the council as it in implementing its forthcoming Digital strategy.

Recommendation 5

The council should carry out its planned skills audit in the near future to identify any skills gaps, and ensure training and support is in place so they have a skilled workforce to meet the demand for their services. They also should assess and report on the impact that current skills and capacity development programmes are having on filling skills gaps and succession planning.

Joint workforce arrangements across services and partners

The council has a number of shared service arrangements in place. There is evidence that shared working is being used to improve service delivery. Although some savings have been identified through shared arrangements the benefits of these are not yet fully quantified

118. Councils should look to work collaboratively with their partners to make the best use of their existing workforces and plan for the particular workforce needs in their areas. They should also work across traditional service department roles within councils to deliver improved services and outcomes.

119. Examples of this include generic working across health and social care, professional posts or functions shared between councils, and services delivered through empowered communities.

Greater partnership working and collaboration is a key factor in how the council intends to change and make financial savings over the next five years

120. One of the key priorities within the Council Plan is creating stronger partnerships. The council's vision for the future states that greater emphasis on collaboration across local authority boundaries will be a key element in their approach to delivering sustainable services.

121. Their approach during 2023/24 was refined and now includes two transformation programmes, one to manage the internal service change and the other to manage changes including external partners and their shared and collaborative service delivery. There is future identified savings within the two programmes with internal services identifying £115k in 2024/25 and £225k in 2025/26 and external partners (shared services) identifying £130k in 2025/26.

122. Within the Angus Community Planning Partnership there are partnership plans and strategies at a Tayside, Angus and local level. Each partner involved has their own plans and strategies which should contribute to an overall positive outcome. To understand each other's priorities and commitments effectively they realise they need to ensure there are strong links between partners, agencies, the private and voluntary sectors and communities.

123. One of the key workforce challenges within the AHSCP is that an integrated approach to the provision of health and social care services will mean greater collaboration with NHS and partners in the third and independent sector and community groups.

124. The council's Commercialisation Strategy has the aim to develop better commercial relationships with partners and suppliers in the private, third and public sector undertaking major functions on their behalf. This will include ensuring that they contribute to the priorities and outcomes expressed in the councils Corporate Plan.

The council work in partnership with Dundee City Council to provide waste management services and an out of hours social work service. They also share a Chief Internal Auditor. The two councils are currently progressing a shared payroll service

125. The council work in partnership with Dundee City Council to deliver its waste management statutory obligations. The Dundee and Angus Residual Waste Contract between the partners and councils (Dundee City and Angus) and contractor MEB commenced in November 2017. The inter-council arrangements will derive practical and financial benefits for both councils over the duration of the contract period.

126. The council has recently progressed a shared service arrangement with Dundee City Council relating to Internal Audit. This began with a pilot arrangement in October 2022 with Angus Council sharing their Chief Internal Auditor on a part time basis with Dundee City Council due to recruitment issues they were facing.

127. There is now a formal arrangement in place based on an equal split of time. The incumbent staff member continues to be a directly employed member of staff when acting for Angus Council and formally seconded to Dundee City Council when acting in that capacity. This provides leadership of professional audit services to both councils.

128. The council have a partnership agreement with Dundee City Council for the provisions of an Out of Hours Social Work Service. This provides an immediate social work response to vulnerable people in crisis out with normal working hours. Their joint approach allows for an efficient use of staff resources.

129. The Out of Hours Social Work Service is managed by Dundee City Council's Children and Family Service and works in partnership with key professionals from Health, Police, private and third sector agencies as well as service users, parents and carers.

130. They are currently working on a shared payroll service and have met regularly with Dundee City Council to discuss collaboration which includes payroll team structure, number of staff they pay, processes and future developments within the system. There has been a delay with a service review however a meeting is now planned for August 2024 which will involve further discussions.

The council engages in a model of shared services via Tayside Contracts to deliver a range of services

131. Tayside Contracts delivers a range of catering, construction, fleet and facilities management services. This is based on a Joint Committee

established by Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Perth and Kinross Council.

132. Tayside Contracts is the largest and longest serving local authority shared services in Scotland and currently has 3,200 posts which provide essential public services to over 400,000 residents on behalf of the three councils.

133. Having this model of shared services in place brings efficiencies to all three councils along with reducing potential workforce pressures they could face if they were to deliver these services separately.

The TayCities Region Deal aims to develop skills of the current workforce and increase employment opportunities

134. The TayCities Region Deal 2019-2029 brings together public, private and voluntary organisations in the council areas of Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth and Kinross to deliver a smarter and fairer region. Under the Deal, business, higher and further education, local government and third sector will work closely together to create growth and sustainability.

135. Strategic objectives and targets for the initial ten-year period include skills development, reducing unemployment and increasing employment levels better than the Scottish average by 2029, whilst increasing productivity and creating higher paid jobs.

Recommendation 6

The council should explore and consider opportunities to further develop shared services with other councils and partners as part of workforce planning and more efficient use of resources

Measuring the impact of workforce planning

136. Councils should monitor the impact of their workforce planning and delivery approaches. This should include cost, service quality and productivity benefits as well as employee wellbeing. This in-turn should inform their workforce planning approach. Councils and their partners should also understand the wider impact of their employment practice on the local economy.

The council has indicators of progress to provide strategic oversight of progress against council priorities set out in its new plan

137. The Council Plan 2023-28 (Update 2024) sets out Indicators of Progress for each of the plan's four priority areas. The 'Our Council' priority includes Indicators of progress for the actions it will take to support and develop the workforce, these are set out in Exhibit 3. The council will monitor performance against indicators through the Scrutiny and Audit Committee, and in the Angus Council Annual Performance Report. The first reports on these indicators are not available yet but they will provide an important indication of the progress the council is making with workforce planning.

138. Updated performance statistics for staff absence levels for 22/23 are available. These show an increase in staff absence from the 20/21 baseline, with teacher absence levels at 7.43, and overall staff absence levels at 13.98 for 2022/23. This indicates that there is work for the council to do if it is to achieve the targets set for 2025/26 and 2027/28. 2022/23 figures for the 'Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for current use' do however show good progress with performance at 95.59%.

The council published the first update report on its Workforce Plan in February 2024, providing an overview of progress on the plan. There is no clear evidence yet if the plan is making impact as intended

139. The update report 'highlights some of the achievements' from work done so far during 2023/24 and 'areas of focus for 2024/25'. It lacks detail on the status and progress of each of the twenty-three actions set out in the Workforce Plan.

140. The Workforce Action Plan sets out the intended impact from each action. It may be too early to demonstrate whether the plan is having the impact intended but there is a need for clearer and more comprehensive monitoring of actions on the status of each action, and understanding of what progress is being made.

141. The update report notes progress in the strategic approach to workforce planning with closer working with HR and service leads. This approach will support future planning and help the council in addressing the workforce challenges it is facing.

Exhibit 3 Angus Council Indicators of progress related to workforce for the ‘Our Council’ priority

We will	Measure	Baseline 2020/21	Target 2025/26	Target 2027/28
Ensure our workforce are supported through organisational change	The average number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence for teachers	4.2	6	5
	The average number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence for all other local government employees	10.5	10	9
	Staff feel proud to work for Angus Council (Employee Engagement Survey) – Scale 0 to 10	6	7	7.5
Modernise our workforce and retrain staff where appropriate	Number of employees being retrained/reskilled	NA	TBC	TBC
Ensure consistent implementation of our agile working strategy	Total number of operational buildings	145	135	130
	Proportion of our operational buildings that are suitable for their current use	93.8%	95%	96%
	Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition	96.4%	97%	98%

Source: Angus Council Plan 2023-28 (Update 2024)

Scrutiny arrangements for the Workforce Plan and its progress are not clear. Reports do not go to any specific council committee and the format of reports makes it difficult to assess progress against the plan

142. The Workforce Plan Update for 2023/24 was prepared and approved at a special council meeting in February 2024, alongside an update on the Council Plan and Finance and Change Plan, and part of the wider suite of budget papers. The format of the report with highlights of progress rather than comprehensive coverage of each action, may make scrutiny of progress more difficult for elected members.

143. The council report that annual performance reports are prepared in September, and that the HR team are working on new data which will go to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee twice a year. It is not clear which council committees are responsible for scrutinising progress of the workforce plan and making decisions on the council's approach to workforce planning.

Recommendation 7

The council needs to clearly set out its scrutiny arrangements for workforce planning – with clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring, oversight and decision-making on workforce planning at Committee and officer level.

Appendix 1

Improvement action plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Workforce Action Plan</p> <p>There needs to be clear reporting on the 23 actions set out in the workforce Action Plan so that it is clear what progress is being made.</p> <p><i>Risk – the council does not know what progress is being made and whether they need to address any actions that are not progressing.</i></p>	<p>The council should improve and develop its reporting on progress of workforce planning so that it is clear what actions are being progressed, which are complete and what outcomes achieved.</p>	<p>Develop Pentana Workforce Plan portal to manage progress with 23 strategic actions and appropriate reporting arrangements</p> <p>Service Leader – HR/OD/BS; and Service Leader – Gov, Change & Strategic Policy</p> <p>October 2024 – for portal development; and December 2024 – for performance reporting arrangements</p>
<p>2. Service Workforce Plans</p> <p>The council has brought in a new approach to workforce planning at a service level. Currently there is no formal record or reporting on the planning that is taking place, meaning there is a lack of transparency, accountability or clarity on what progress is being made.</p> <p><i>Risk – the council does not have a clear record of how workforce planning is progressing at a service level</i></p>	<p>The council needs to have a clear approach to recording and reporting on workforce planning at a service level, so that there is transparency and accountability on what actions are being taken and what progress is being made.</p>	<p>Identify Directorate level actions and link to Pentana Workforce Plan portal to manage progress with Directorate level actions and appropriate reporting arrangements</p> <p>All Directors; Service Leader – HR/OD/BS; and Service Leader – Gov, Change & Strategic Policy</p> <p>October 2024 – for identifying Directorate actions/ portal input; and December 2024 – for performance reporting arrangements</p>
<p>3. Digital strategy</p> <p>Our 2022/23 Annual Audit Report issued in October 2023 identified that the council's digital strategy required to be updated and reflect the current Council Plan and priorities. Officers indicated a target date of December 2023. The strategy has yet to be approved.</p>	<p>The updated digital strategies should reflect the Council Plan and priorities. The refreshed digital strategy and digital transformation programme also needs to clearly set out how the councils plans for digital tech will shape the workforce, what workforce benefits are expected and what needs to be put in place in terms of</p>	<p>Digital Strategy and Data Strategy to be considered by elected members.</p> <p>Service Leader - Digital Enablement & IT</p> <p>October 2024</p> <p>A digital transformation programme is in the early stages of development</p>

Risk – the council does not have appropriate strategies in place to support delivery of the Council Plan and Workforce Plan.

support and skills development.

4. Digital impacts and governance

The council needs to understand the impacts that digital strategies and plans are having. There must be appropriate governance and oversight in place.

Risk – the council does not know the impact that digital transformation plans are having, nor has adequate governance in place for effective oversight.

The council needs to be able to demonstrate the impacts and benefits arising from digital transformation, including for the workforce, citizens and financial benefits, with regular updates and progress reports on the outcomes from the programme. The terms of reference for the Digital Strategy Board should clearly set out its roles and responsibilities, including decision making authority, and its oversight of strategic digital projects and the impact they are having.

Update Terms of Reference for the Digital Strategy Board, including roles and responsibilities of membership; scope of decision-making authority; and reporting arrangements to Change Board/ Committee (covering progress and impact)

Service Leader - Digital Enablement & IT; and Service Leader – Gov, Change & Strategic Policy

November 2024

5. Skills audit and impact of skills programmes

The council had planned to carry out a skills audit as detailed within their Workforce Plan 2023-28; this was intended to give a clear picture of the wide range of skills available across the organisation. This was never carried out with the council stating it was not clear how this would fit with their operating model going forward. The council has a range of skills programme in place but there is no evidence of how effective these programmes are in addressing skills gaps and issues.

Risk – staff do not have the required skills to carry out their role effectively and initiatives put in place do not address the workforce risks the council faces.

The council should consider carrying out a skills audit in the near future to identify any skills gaps, and ensure training and support is in place so they have a skilled workforce to meet the demand for their services. They also should assess and report on the impact that current skills and capacity development programmes are having on filling skills gaps and succession planning.

At a suitable time, undertake skills audit across all Council services, along with comparison of staff development programmes to identify any skills and succession planning gaps

Service Leader – HR/OD/BS

Timing to be confirmed – likely starting during 2025/26

6. Shared Services

The council have joint workforce arrangements in place and have the vision of greater emphasis on collaboration across local authority boundaries. There is an opportunity to develop shared functions within the public, private and third sector.

Risk – the Council are not making the most efficient use of resources

The council should explore and consider opportunities to develop shared services with other councils and partners as part of workforce planning and more efficient use of resources.

Continue to explore opportunities for shared services with other councils and partners, including consideration of options while undertaking workforce planning

All Directors

Ongoing action

7. Performance reporting and scrutiny

There is a lack of clarity over which Committees are responsible for scrutinising the Workforce Plan and its progress.

Risk – there is insufficient scrutiny of workforce plans and the progress they are making.

The council needs to clearly set out its scrutiny arrangements for workforce planning – with clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring, oversight and decision making on workforce planning at Committee and officer level.

Update Policy & Resources Committee Terms of Reference to explicitly include responsibility for monitoring, oversight and decision making on workforce planning matters; and include workforce planning data as part of officer-based performance management framework

Service Leader – Legal & Procurement; Service Leader – HR/OD/BS; and Service Leader – Gov, Change & Strategic Policy

December 2024

Workforce innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges

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