

Workforce Innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges

Best Value thematic work in Scottish Borders Council 2023-24



Prepared by Audit Scotland
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Key facts



Workforce 2022/23

5,300	Number of people working for the Council – headcount
4,200	Number of people working for the Council – full time equivalent
793	Number of casual/bank staff
15%	Turnover of staff in last year
4.54%	Days lost due to absence in last year per employee



Age profile

12.6%	16 to 24
27.7%	25 to 44
43.5%	45 to 54
16.2%	55+

Key messages

- 1** In April 2024 Scottish Borders Council (“the Council”) undertook a review of its Strategic People Plan outlining the progress made by the Council since the Strategic People Plan was set in 2016. The Council recognise that further work is required to fully align the Strategic People Plan with the Council’s future Operating Model, Council and Financial plans to take account of the changing strategic and operational landscape, performance and evolving priorities.
- 2** The Council has good examples of using digital technology to improve workforce productivity and improve services, for example, its innovative workforce management approach for care staff, using Total Mobile, which has reduced administrative burden and provided care staff more time with care recipients.
- 3** The Council has an established approach to agile working, which it monitors and continues to evolve, with Council staff highlighting this as a key benefit to working for the Council.
- 4** Like many local authorities, workforce is a key challenge. The Council has implemented, and had success with, several workforce initiatives to try and address some of these challenges. The recruitment and retention of staff however remains a recognised risk.
- 5** The Council operates a shared centralised model for services such as finance HR, payroll and property and has integrated joint services with NHS Borders, and arrangements in place with City of Edinburgh Council to provide insurance services, but it has limited arrangements in place for sharing services with other Councils. It is currently exploring shared service arrangements with its sports and leisure trust Live Borders, as well as opportunities for working with Dumfries and Galloway Council.
- 6** The Council monitors progress with its workforce initiatives, and each service has its own performance indicators. There is an opportunity to enhance the Strategic People Plan however to align these to measure the impact of workforce planning and evidence the delivery of strategic workforce outcomes.

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 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. An improvement action plan is included at [Appendix 1](#) of this report. This sets out audit recommendations in key areas, and the Council's planned response including responsible officers and dates for implementation.

6. 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

In April 2024 Scottish Borders Council (“the Council”) undertook a review of its Strategic People Plan outlining the progress made by the Council since the Strategic People Plan was set in 2016. The Council recognise that further work is required to fully align the Strategic People Plan with the Council’s future Operating Model, Council and Financial plans to take account of the changing strategic and operational landscape, performance and evolving priorities.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 underpinned with detailed workforce plans within services.

10. The Council’s Strategic People Strategy 2016-2021, published in 2016 included the following information at the time of publication:

- Workforce numbers
- Staff absence levels
- Gender and age workforce profiles
- Staff turnover
- Grading and role profiles

11. The Council’s review and refresh of the Strategic People Plan in 2024, reflects on the progress made in the delivery of the 2016 People Strategy as well as setting out the strategic approach to how the Council will make sure it had the right people with the right skills through its talent management, succession planning and learning processes.

12. The Strategic People Plan is crucial for aligning workforce initiatives with the Council plan and ensuring a sustainable future. The Strategic People Plan Review and Refresh outlines the strategic approach it will use to manage and develop its workforce to achieve its objectives, these include:

- **Vision** – to be a smaller more flexible organisation,
- **Recruitment and retention** – identify key competencies and skills required, resourcing strategies to attract staff,
- **Development and training** – skill assessment, learning support, career development opportunities,
- **Performance management** – maintain clear performance metrics with the Council plan, regular appraisal and feedback mechanisms,
- **Diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives** – foster inclusive workplace culture and provide training and resources,
- **Employee wellbeing and engagement** – promote employee wellbeing and work life balance through flexible working,
- **Succession planning and leadership development** – continue to develop succession planning across the Council and promote leadership training to develop future leaders,
- **Technology and innovation** – Use technology to enhance workforce experience and use digital services to redesign services to drive improvement,
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – to further develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of workforce initiatives and promote feedback from staff,
- **Continuous improvement** – embrace a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

13. The 2024 review and refresh was the first time the Council had reviewed the Strategic People Plan since it was introduced in 2016. This was primarily as the original strategy covered a period of 2016-2021 and then the Council went into special arrangements in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council now plans to revisit the review and refresh of the Strategic People Plan on an annual basis to ensure the effective delivery of the workforce strategy. The Strategic People Plan does not however provide any assessment of what the Council's future workforce requirements and profile will be in the medium to long term. In addition, it should clearly identify measurable workforce outcomes that support the Council's wider priorities.

14. Aspects of strategic workforce planning have been featured in the Council's Fit for 2024 (FF24) transformation programme, which commenced in February 2019. Job roles, team structures and payscales were reviewed to make necessary changes to embed consistency and flexibility across the organisation.

15. In August 2023 the strategic principles for the development of the Council's Operating Model were approved. The principles were developed to facilitate a transition from the FF24 transformation programme and to continue moving forward the transformation work and to ensure financial sustainability.

16. The Operating Model review involves looking at all parts of the Council and making changes that enable sustainable service delivery. As part of this Operating Model review the Council has been developing an updated People Strategy. The Council's Operating Model is divided into nine workstreams:

- Commissioning
- Customer and communities
- Data
- Digital
- Financial and environmental sustainability
- People – culture
- People – structure
- Process re-design
- Property/Estates

17. There are two people-specific work streams,

- People – culture is looking to make sure staff feel valued, empowered and inspired to deliver excellence in their roles, teams and service.
- People – structure is looking to ensure that the Council's Operating Model is underpinned by a workforce which is skilled, empowered, developed, motivated and organised to fully meet the Council's priorities and the needs of customers and communities.

18. Workforce planning takes place at service management level and at departmental level within each service across the Council. The Council's Succession Management System sets out the process for services to carry out succession planning. The Council also offers a flexible retirement package that enables staff to retire over a three-year period enabling knowledge transfer. These plans are informed by data sourced from the Council's Business World system.

19. The Council has consulted with Trade Unions as part of developing the People Strategy, but these are generally updates rather than asking for feedback to assist planning and to develop the People Strategy. Relationships between senior officers and Trade Unions work well, they have monthly meetings which are effective.

Recommendation 1

The Council should ensure that any future review and refresh of the Strategic People Plan provides an assessment of the Council's future workforce requirements and profile in the medium to long term. In addition, it should clearly identify measurable workforce outcomes that support the Council's wider priorities.

Recommendation 2

The Council has established deliverables as part of its workforce innovation and supporting the delivery set clear timescales and deliverables for the workstreams delivering aspects of the Operating Model review, including people and workforce related aspects. The Council should ensure there are clear arrangements for the reporting and monitoring of key deliverables to elected members.

Digital technology and the workforce

The Council has good examples of using digital technology to improve productivity and improve services

20. The LGO notes that digital technology will make councils' future workforces look and work quite differently. In order to achieve the change required, councils need to make good use of digital technology and use the workforce in flexible ways.

21. Digital technology has a strong bearing on a council's workforce needs. It can be used to reshape 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 (AI) applications.

22. 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.

23. In February 2019 the Council agreed the Fit For 2024 (FF24) transformation programme. Digital transformation was a key component of the FF24 programme. The FF24 programme has looked at all infrastructure, systems, devices and applications which has looked at financial and environmental sustainability and enhancing customer experience. The activity under the digital transformation programme included both major corporate change and smaller service-led enhancements.

24. In our [Best Value Assurance Report](#), published in October 2019 we provided details of the Council's outsourcing of IT services to CGI UK Limited (CGI). Since outsourcing its IT services to CGI in 2016, the Council has focused on enhancing security and modernising its systems through this partnership. These changes have delivered improvements to data security and empowered the Council's workforce by enabling remote work and simplifying access to systems. The transition to digital has been a big organisational change, bringing access to a range of solutions, for example, the rollout of Microsoft 365 has increased collaboration and enabled staff to work remotely.

25. The Council has invested significantly in new mobility technology for frontline staff working across communities, examples include:

- Total Mobile, a mobile workforce management tool for care staff which provides access to real-time information and dashboards, enhancing

service performance insights and enabling data-driven decision-making for improved service delivery and resource allocation. The mobile application has mobilised and empowered 360 key front-line staff, delivering 590,000 care visits annually over 4,730 kilometres of rural geography. The benefits that have derived from this include a reduction of an estimated 100 hours per week of administrative burden, staff having more time with care recipients, staff having access to the right information when needed and being able to update the records in real time and enable data driven decision making

- Confirm is the Council's Infrastructure Asset Management System to capture and map SBC's infrastructure assets (e.g. Roads, Bridges and Structures, Street Lighting) and detailed information about them. The Council's mobile application enables frontline workers in the field to view mapped assets, update them, undertake inspections, raise defects and receive and carry out repair tasks.

26. The Council has taken steps to reduce paper-based forms, instead using the deployment of online forms to make online interactions the preferred method for customer interactions. Since its rollout over 300 forms have been replaced and delivered online, which has resulted in increased efficiencies for both staff and customers.

27. The Council has identified the need to connect non-office staff to IT systems, to provide access to systems and address digital exclusion. The Council has assigned trainers to attend sites, and they have provided training on these systems as well as lifestyle skills of using internet to staff to help IT literacy. The Council has also utilised digital champions to assist individuals with digital initiatives.

28. The Council's 'Inspire Learning' programme is aimed at improving access to digital technology, developing educators' digital skills, integrating digital technology into teaching, empowering leaders to drive innovation, and ensuring equity for all students. Over 16,000 devices have been used for learning by children and teachers in 68 primary and secondary schools. The Inspire Programme has received Apple Professional Learning Provider accreditation and as one of only two in the UK, to provide Apple accredited training to teachers.

29. Digital is being reviewed as part of the Operating Model review. This review is presently looking at what processes are being undertaken and identifying assets that are not digitally enabled, along with analysing lessons learned and savings derived from ongoing pathfinder projects. As of March 2024, there were six tasks in progress and six still to be started.

Flexible working and other innovative staff deployment

The Council has an established approach to agile working, which it monitors and continues to evolve

30. 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.

31. Home-working and hybrid working (a combination of office and home-based working) have now become commonplace. Some councils are also considering more radical working practices such as a standard four-day working week. Whatever the working practice, employers need to ensure that service quality and productivity are maintained.

32. Agile and flexible working policies have been in place at the Council since 2007 but have been modified and further developed during the pandemic and post-pandemic to reflect the Council's new working environment. The Council has detailed guidance for agile and flexible working, which it reviews regularly.

33. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council was able to react quickly to move to remote working, due to it previously rolling out Microsoft 365 before the pandemic. Working through the Covid-19 pandemic was challenging; with many being initially reluctant to work from home, however, significant numbers of the Council workforce have embraced this different way of working. The Viva Engage platform introduced during Covid-19 has also proven to help with staff engagement, with staff from across the Council sharing information. It also creates a social space for staff including sharing of community activities and events and improves the visibility of leadership.

34. The Council has utilised the learning from working during the Covid-19 pandemic to change how they work post-pandemic. As a result, the Council's agile working principles have evolved, and been co-designed with services and its staff.

35. The Council now offers greater flexibility with agile working, which allows employees to work in a workplace or from home if this is in accordance with service requirements.

36. The Council is aware that agile working places new demands on its managers and staff. To address this, they continually review existing learning and development programmes and activities, and where appropriate create new

ones to ensure new ways of working and changes to culture are fully supported.

37. Agile and flexible working opportunities are often cited as one of the benefits of working for the Council. The Council has noted that staff now have a greater work-life balance, reduced travel time, reduced carbon emissions, reduction in travel costs and time, more flexibility within the working day and greater job autonomy.

38. An annual staff survey was implemented in 2022, to improve staff engagement. The results from an organisation-wide employee survey in 2023 show an improvement over 47 questions from 2022, with an overall engagement score of 64 per cent, which is attributed to a change in leadership and better communication and engagement with staff. Seventy-six per cent (63 per cent in 2022) of the respondents noted they enjoy working for the Council, and 35 per cent (26 per cent in 2022) noted that their team has the capacity to cope with its current workload. The Council has shared the results with staff and created action plans for each service and department.

39. Agile working has become an increasingly competitive area for employers seeking to attract talent. The Council has utilised agile and flexible working to assist with in recruitment and retention of staff. A good example of this is the Council being able to recruit a lead educational psychologist by utilising its agile and flexible working policy. This a post that in the past the Council has struggled to find appropriate applicants, but by offering an agile and flexible position it was able to extend the search area for an applicant and recruit outside of the Scottish Borders.

40. As part of the FF24 transformation programme, the Council has looked at enhancing the quality of its estate, whilst reducing the overall financial and environmental footprint. The five key objectives outlined to help the Council achieve its overall vision of sustainability are:

- To operate an efficient, fit-for-purpose, sustainable estate
- To be appropriately sized
- To meet the needs of our communities and their strong identities
- To have digitally enabled working environments that can be effectively managed
- To support the Council Plan through the delivery of joined up services.

41. The establishment of a corporate landlord model has allowed the Council a single view of the estate and explore a joined-up use of the Council properties, examples include offices in Newton St Boswells as a Civic Hub, opening the facility up as a workspace for other organisations including Live Borders and NHS Borders to enable more collaborative working and share operational costs.

Developing future skills and capacity

Like many local authorities, workforce is a key challenge for the Council. The Council has implemented, and had success with, several workforce initiatives to try and address some of these challenges. This has included success initiatives across education and social work. However, the recruitment and retention of staff remains a risk.

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. In our Best Value Assurance report published in October 2019 and the [Best Value thematic report on leadership of the development of new local strategic priorities](#), published in September 2023 we noted that the recruitment and retention of staff was and remains a key risk and challenge for the Council. The Council has responded to these risks and challenges by developing several initiatives.

45. In 2017 the Council rolled out a 'Grow Your Own' teacher programme to address recruitment of teaching staff particularly in Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. Since 2017 the scheme has provided 19 high school teachers and 19 primary teachers and there are currently a further five teachers in the training programme. The Inspire Learning Programme has received Apple Professional Learning Provider accreditation which provides support and training to other local authorities and has become a key tool in attracting teaching staff to the Borders.

46. Following the success of the scheme grow your own scheme it has been extended to address the recruitment of qualified social workers, offering existing permanent staff the opportunity to have a pathway to a social work qualification. Since 2021 the scheme has provided 11 fully qualified social workers and three mental health officers. Over the next two years, it is expected to provide an additional 11 fully qualified social workers and four mental health officers.

47. The recruitment of staff into roles within Adult Social Care has been a long-term challenge for the Council, as has the supply of readily available affordable housing in the Scottish Borders. In February 2022 the corporate management team approved the lease of five properties for 12 months within the Eildon Housing Association (EHA). The main driver for this was to pilot the incentive of the offer of temporary accommodation of up to six months to those recruited into full-time roles within Adult Social Care from out with the area. Three out of the five properties are now filled with employees on full-time contracts. The remaining two properties have candidates undertaking sponsorship requirements and will be offered a full-time contract.

48. In November 2023, the Council introduced a career pathway guide. A Career Pathway (CP) is a series of jobs, which allows current and potential new staff to see the sequence of steps for progressing into different or promoted roles across the Council. The Council is looking at utilising CP to alleviate recruitment difficulties if candidates lack the essential criteria for the role and is linking these through its 'Grow Your Own' scheme and its succession planning system.

49. The Council provides training and development opportunities to staff through its online learning management system, SBlearn, which is designed to help Council employees with a programme of online learning and can be tracked and recorded as they complete modules, courses and assessments. The learning management system now hosts 682 resources compared to 142 resources on launch in 2013. SBlearn includes mandatory training for all staff and IT system guidance. It also provides learning pathways – which is a collection of modules designed for specific staff groups and provides staff development support materials.

50. The Council has rolled out a new digital people and succession planning process across the Council. The integration of these processes allows the Council to build a flexible and skilled workforce capable of meeting evolving business needs. People planning and succession planning are essential strategic processes to ensure the Council has the right staff with the requisite skills to meet its current and future business needs.

51. Since 2014 the Council's modern apprentice programme has had 269 apprentices, with 190 of those apprentices being retained by the Council. 36 per cent were working within education children services, 31 per cent in resilient communities and 23 per cent in infrastructure and environment with the remainder being working across other Council directorates. The Council presently have 42 modern apprentices.

52. The Council employs a total of 793 on fixed-term temporary contracts, which equates to 15 per cent of the total workforce. Seventy-two per cent of the total number of temporary workers (571), are employed in the education department, 257 are Additional Needs Assistants. The education service is currently under review, and because of that recruitment over the last few months has been on a temporary basis. The Council has advised that one of the aims of the review is to ensure employees have permanent contracts wherever possible.

53. There are also several Council employees, the vast majority in Adult Social Care, who are foreign workers working under visas. Their contract of employment must reflect the time limit on the visa. The Council has recently taken on 60 employees following the failure of a private care provider, in order to retain skills and offer continuity service, all of these employees are on temporary contracts as they are sponsored workers.

Joint workforce arrangements across services and partners

The Council have integrated joint services with NHS Borders, and arrangements in place with City of Edinburgh Council to provide insurance services, but it has limited arrangements in place for sharing services with other councils. It is currently exploring shared service arrangements with its sports and leisure trust Live Borders, as well as opportunities for working with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

54. 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.

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

56. The Council has previously shared its internal auditor with another Council, but the Council does not presently have any formal arrangements in place for sharing services with other Councils.

57. The Council have integrated joint services with NHS Borders and work collaboratively with NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Integration Joint Board to develop a joint workforce planning across all services within the integration scheme. In addition, the Council utilise the services of City of Edinburgh Council to provide insurance services.

58. The Council provided staff to support the pay and grading restructure project completed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). This provided staff the opportunity to help contribute to the project and also develop new skills.

59. The Council supports community led plans involving South of Scotland Enterprise, Borders Community Action, Registered Social Landlords, Police Scotland and other community partners. This supports joint working arrangements across the bodies to support the delivery of local outcomes.

60. The Council is presently exploring opportunities with Live Borders, the sport and leisure trust to see how shared service arrangements could be focused to

streamline operations and make cost savings as it faces significant financial challenges.

61. The Council is also exploring opportunities for working with Dumfries and Galloway Council. A joint project team has been established with both councils on the integrated cancer journey. The councils are also exploring resources to support digital transformation across Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders region.

Measuring the impact of workforce planning

The Council monitors progress with its workforce initiatives, and each service has its own performance indicators, and while it has recently refreshed its Strategic People Strategy, it is not clear how the Council intends to align these to measure the impact of workforce planning

62. 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.

63. As the Council has not yet developed its People Strategy it is not clear how it intends to align its current workforce performance reporting to measure the impact of workforce planning.

64. The Council does have metrics within its previous Strategic People Strategy, which it has recently reported against in its recent review and refresh in April 2024. The report includes:

- Details regarding the Council's modern apprenticeship scheme, a breakdown of those retained by the Council
- Details of staff absences
- Details of staff learning and development investment by service.

65. The Council intends to complete this report on an annual basis, and it will be aligned with the Operating Model, Council and Finance Plans to take account the changing strategic and operational landscape, previous performance and evolving priorities.

66. The Council completes quarterly performance reports to the Council's Executive, however, there are only a few metrics within this associated with the workforce (for example staff absences) and it does not provide an overall assessment of performance against workforce planning. With the planned annual review and refresh of the strategic people plan, it is important that this considers performance against key metrics to evidence the delivery of strategic workforce initiatives and areas that require attention.

67. The Council also have a year-round transformation oversight group with elected members which has access to workforce data. Risk registers are reported every quarter and there is an annual report from the Director of People, Performance and Change to the audit committee. Workforce data is reported on in the equality mainstreaming and update reports go to full Council. Each service has its own performance indicators down to team and individual levels.

68. In October 2023 the Council produced an agile working impact report, which included an analysis of workforce productivity before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The review looked at 153 workforce outputs where productivity could be assessed and the overall assessment was 88 per cent were unchanged. 53 outputs showed positive change – 82 outputs remained static and 9 outputs had a lower rate of productivity.

69. The Council has reviewed staff leaver's data as part of the People–Structure workstream for the Operating model review. This was to better understand the reasons for staff leaving and the Council intends to use the findings from the report to help the Council with its workforce retention plans.

Recommendation 3

The Council's People Strategy should set out how it intends to assess its performance and what metrics it will use (e.g. sickness absence levels, turnover rates, staffing establishment composition) to measure the impact of its workforce planning and initiatives.

Appendix 1

Improvement Action plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Enhancing the Strategic People plan</p> <p>The Council should ensure that the Strategic People Plan is aligned with the Council's Operating Model, Council and Financial plans to take account of the changing strategic and operational landscape, performance and evolving priorities. This should include identifying the Council's future workforce requirements over the medium to longer term and measurable workforce outcomes that support the Council's wider priorities.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk that the Council does not have a consolidated strategic people plan in place to support a systematic and strategic approach to workforce planning.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure that any future review and refresh of the Strategic People Plan provides an assessment of the Council's future workforce requirements and profile in the medium to long term. In addition, it should identify key outcomes to be delivered under the plan that reflect Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely (SMART) objectives.</p>	<p>Medium and long term forecasting information will be included in the annual strategic People Plan. The plan will contain SMART objectives that reflect the Council's requirements.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director People, Performance and Change</p> <p>Implementation date: March 2025</p>
<p>2. Reporting and monitoring to elected members</p> <p>The Council has established deliverables as part of its workforce innovation and supporting the delivery set clear timescales and deliverables for the workstreams delivering aspects of the Operating Model review, including the Strategic People Plan. However, there are currently</p>	<p>The Council should ensure there are clear arrangements for the reporting and monitoring of key deliverables to elected members.</p>	<p>The Members Transformation Group has had oversight of the Operating Model workstreams to date and this will continue with the Budget Working Group.</p> <p>The Strategic People Plan will be presented at Council annually.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director People, Performance and Change</p>

no formal arrangements for how these will be reported to elected members.

Risk – There is a risk that members do not have the visibility to monitor and scrutinise deliver of workstreams underpinning the Operating Model review.

Implementation date:
December 2024

3. Monitoring the impact of workforce planning

The Council monitors progress with its workforce initiatives, and each service has its own performance indicators, and while it has recently refreshed its Strategic People Plan, it is not clear how the Council intends to align these to measure the impact of workforce planning

Risk: There is a risk that the Council is unable to assess the impact and efficacy of people strategy and underlying workforce plans.

The Council's Strategic People Plan should set out how it intends to assess its performance and what metrics it will use (e.g. sickness absence levels, turnover rates, staffing establishment composition) to measure the impact of its workforce planning and initiatives.

Workforce metrics will be included in the Strategic People Plan and reported. Some additional metrics will be included in the quarterly Performance Report that is considered by the Executive Committee.

Responsible Officer:

Director People, Performance and Change

Implementation date:

March 2025

Workforce innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges

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