

Central Bedfordshire Council

People Strategy (2010 – 2012)

Paragraph from Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources – *to be inserted.*

Paragraph from Chief Executive – *to be inserted.*

1 Introduction

In this People Strategy we have set out our vision for our workforce, supported by a range of action plans that will help us achieve our vision by 2012. The strategy will be in place for all employees of the Council, but we have a number of external partnerships, and this is our people component of those partnerships.

As a Local Authority, we have a responsibility to ensure excellence, provide value for money, and to continuously improve our service delivery. We know that in order to achieve this we need a well-trained, motivated workforce with the right skills, excellent and visible leadership, all working together on our agreed priorities.

The Council comprises 66 Councillors. The Chief Executive is supported by four Directors, who with him form Central Bedfordshire's Management Team. There are three front line service directorates; Sustainable Communities, Children's Services and Social Care, Health & Housing. Each work in partnership with the emerging corporate directorate of Customer and Shared Services, as well as the strategic Office of the Chief Executive. Each Director has a number of Assistant Directors who manage a range of services and who are accountable for service delivery and performance in their given area. There are approximately 2700 colleagues in our four Directorates, and around 7000 colleagues based in our schools.

2 Vision and Priorities

"Our vision is to improve the quality of life for all in Central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique character of our communities and our environment."

The Council published its Strategic Plan in September 2008. Members had regard to the Local Area Agreement targets and public priorities, and agreed the following priorities for the first 2 years of the Council:

- Supporting and caring for an ageing population.
- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.
- Managing growth effectively.

- Creating safer communities.
- Promoting healthier lifestyles.
- Value for money

3 A People Strategy

The main purpose of this People Strategy is to underpin and support the Council's plans and objectives. It will help us to ensure that we are clear about how we intend to recruit, retain, develop and reward our colleagues both now and in the future.

The strategy complements the Council's Communications Strategy, and there are synergies between them, particularly in relation to leadership, communication and employee engagement. We also received our organisational response to the first employee survey undertaken in late 2009.

Our people are absolutely integral to helping us improve, raise our performance and achieve excellence by 2012. The strategy is in place to ensure that our people policies and practices link to and support the business strategies of the organisation, in particular:

- Providing a framework for workforce planning.
- Providing resourcing and employer branding plans that ensure we can recruit and retain the best people, and that we become an employer of choice.
- Ensuring that our organisational development activity is clearly aligned to the direction of the organisation, and that it provides clear added value.
- Ensuring that a robust performance management framework is in place, linking to service and strategic objectives.

The operational plans that will facilitate delivery of our people priorities are summarised in the next section.

4 Themes and plans

There are five main overarching themes that run through the strategy and the plans that support it:

- Resourcing
- Leadership
- Skills and capacity
- Organisational effectiveness
- Equality and diversity.

Examples of action we are taking in support of the strategy are given as follows:

4.1 Resourcing

We are developing our employer brand, linked to the corporate brand. We are ensuring that there is consistency through all stages of the employee lifecycle. One key aim is to raise the profile of Central Bedfordshire in the recruitment market.

We are streamlining and modernising our resourcing processes to create efficiencies, and improve turnaround times. This will allow for a shift in emphasis from transactional work, towards strategic planning and advice.

We are beginning to develop talent pools for generic roles, and plan to link these to external temporary supply partnerships.

We will develop selection techniques and tools in line with developing values and behavioural frameworks.

We are driving efficiencies and improvements out of our external partnerships for agency supply and recruitment advertising.

We will further embed safe employment standards into the employee lifecycle, and promote the engagement of our customers in this work.

4.2 Leadership

We are restructuring our senior management group, in order to create a sustainable model of leadership.

We are developing leadership and organisational values that we will use to assess current capacity, potential for the future, and development needs and plans for our senior managers.

We are engaging in Member development, helping to provide our Members with support to position them as leaders within the organisation, and also strategic community leaders,

4.3 Skills and capacity

We are working to understand the makeup of our current workforce. We need to identify our future needs, and ensure that we clearly understand the external labour market. In specific areas, this involves input to a wider picture e.g. Adult Social Care national minimum data set.

We will take opportunities to enhance our workforce diversity through engagement with the community e.g. Local Employer Partnership through Job Centre Plus, apprenticeship schemes, Future Job Fund jobs.

We have signed up to the Skills Pledge, committing us to ensure that employees are trained to Level 2.

We have developed clear learning and development plans.

4.4 Organisational effectiveness

We will support and complement the work being undertaken to create and refine the Children's and Adults' Workforce Strategies, and to deliver transformational change in areas such as Learning Transformation, and Personalisation.

We are beginning to identify skills and competencies needed in the future to deliver new or changed services.

We have a Council wide performance development and review process in place. 2010/11 will see us linking individual targets more closely with organisational goals and objectives.

4.5 *Equalities*

It is important that we value and promote the diversity (taking into account age, disability, gender, transgender, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation) of Central Bedfordshire's employees through:

Working towards the achievement of a workforce that reflects the community, through the development of a range of positive action initiatives.

Ensuring that equity and fairness are fundamental in the application of all HR frameworks, policies and procedures. We must send out clear messages that as an organisation we will not tolerate harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination of any individuals or groups.

Promoting equality of opportunity in the delivery of all services and employment practices.

Identifying, utilising and recognising the differences a diverse workforce can provide.

Raising awareness of equality issues in training courses.

Ensuring that colleagues feel that they are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Assessing patterns relating to recruitment, training, equal pay, performance assessment, promotion, disciplinary and grievance procedures and staff retention. We will also publish annual monitoring reports

5 Context

We have achieved a great deal, recognising that our workforce has been through fundamental change in the creation of the new Authority. We continue to deliver high quality services, and where we have challenges, we have clear and robust improvement plans and programmes.

Although we are moving away from our initial transitional phase, the economic and financial context mean that as an organisation we face more change. We must manage

this well. We must also value our staff throughout the process of budget reductions, and re-shaping and transformation of services.

We undertook our first employee survey in the autumn of 2009, and the following high level summary of the results gives us an insight into the focus that we need to have:

- A 55% response rate shows that there is a strong desire for colleagues to provide input, and to engage with us as an organisation.
- Whilst people say they support the Strategic Plan, they feel disconnected and distant from it.
- Team objectives are well understood, but there needs to be a clearer line of sight to organisational objectives and performance.
- In relation to levels of job satisfaction, discretionary effort is high, but we need to make better use of people's talents and skills in order to get the best out of them.
- Colleagues generally feel positive about their immediate line managers, who are supportive and who provide clear direction, and this was reported as a high performing area.
- In relation to the senior management team, there was some feeling of remoteness, with visibility and accessibility having been issues.
- Generally, our training and development offering is positive and relevant.
- When considering current and desired culture, we need to move from a perception that we are bureaucratic, hierarchical and trying to do too much too quickly, to a Council that is community focused, caring, proactive and innovative.

The following is a high level summary of the current position, together with future direction.

5.1 Where are we now?

Although we have made significant progress in creating one unitary Council, there is still a sense of three Councils continuing to form into one. However, we are beginning to generate clear direction and create a real sense of 'One Council'.

We need to celebrate our early successes, but also acknowledge the initial frustrations felt by colleagues in bringing processes and systems together, and optimising technology.

We have clear plans to improve our accommodation and our technology infrastructure within the next six months.

We are also facing real budget pressures and this will inform our medium term planning and the design of some of our services.

We have published our Organisational Plan – a set of milestones for the next 18 months to 2 years, themed in the following way:

- Getting the Basics Right
- Leadership of Place

- Transformation
- Programmes and Projects

We have embarked on a fundamental review of our Senior Management Group with a target of reducing the cost base by 20%, creating fit for purpose management structures for the future.

5.2 *Where do we want to be?*

We want our colleagues to be proud to work for an organisation that makes a difference – taking pride in the services they deliver to the public. We want them to feel respected and valued, with a clear sense of what the organisation they work for is trying to do. However, they also need to be clear as to what the organisation expects of them, in terms of contribution, attitude and behaviours.

Our colleagues need to have the necessary tools to do the job. They should also feel that their hard work and effort is recognised by managers, and by the public. We should also ensure that they have the necessary flexibility and freedom to act.

We want Members to feel that the whole council is pulling together to help deliver our improvement agenda.

We want all our colleagues and Members to share a positive collective sense of purpose – to continuously improve the quality of service provided by the Council.

5.3 *What needs to change?*

Colleagues need to have a clear and strong sense that we are creating ‘One Council’ with clarity of purpose and direction. To do this, we need to engage with all parts of the organisation, ensuring that our performance management processes are robust and effective.

Our communications channels will be timely, relevant and clear, and we will turn our strategies into clear plans that are delivered. We will develop organisational values and behavioural competencies to ensure that expectations are clearly articulated and understood.

So that colleagues are positive about improvement, and aspire to the highest possible standards, we need to ensure that our strategies and service plans are clearly documented and communicated. This will help all colleagues have a clear understanding of how the work we do can play a part in improving the quality of our services.

We will all be prepared to play our part by taking pride in what we do, and we should ensure, through the implementation of our plans, that colleagues feel they are appropriately trained, skilled and rewarded for their efforts.

We will ensure that our senior managers provide clear leadership, and as part of our restructuring of top tiers, we are giving priority to the development of behaviours and values that we are seeking to embed for Central Bedfordshire.

6 Role of Human Resources (HR)

It is important to define the role and positioning of HR in the organisation. The key roles of HR are to:

- Provide a strategic approach to people management across the organisation.
- Provide professional support, guidance and direction in respect of all employment matters, acting as HR business partners – developing managers as people managers, and creating a real sense of partnership.
- Create and maintain a constructive and productive relationship with recognised trade unions.
- Provide a clear framework for corporate and service specific learning and development.
- Provide direction and focus for organisational development priorities and activities.
- Create and implement a clear resourcing plan that adds demonstrable value to the organisation.
- To provide an appropriate framework for workforce planning in order that the organisation is able to plan for future needs.

The HR service is part of the Customer and Shared Services Directorate, which has a clear focus on the quality of external customer service. It is important that HR has a clear line of sight to our external customers and partners, whilst also providing a high quality service to internal customers.

We intend to create a customer charter, so that we clearly set out what services we will provide, and to what quality, and our customers will be clear about what they can expect.

In addition, the HR service is going through review, and has clear improvement plans, including enhancing our approach to business partnering.

7 Early Priorities – our Organisational Plan

We have created an Organisational Plan for the next 12 to 18 months. This has been published on our intranet so that all colleagues are aware and signed up to our immediate plans. The Plan is divided into a number of clear themes, each with headline milestones, and target outcomes. We need to ensure that we are equipped and able to deliver in all areas, and the implementation of the People Strategy will help us to do this. Our themes and sub-themes are:

Getting the basics right

- Resources
- Organisational Leadership
- Infrastructure
- Performance
- Staff survey

Leadership of Place

- Comprehensive Area Assessment
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Local Area Agreement refresh and review
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Local Development Frameworks
- Local Strategic Partnership

Transformation

- Total Place (Pilot with Luton BC)
- Business Transformation Strategy
- Reputation management

Programmes and Projects

- Transforming Learning Plan
- Establishing a Children's Trust, and locality planning arrangements
- Transforming People's Lives
- Municipal Waste Strategy
- Town Centre Master Plan
- Passenger Transport Review
- Bedfordshire Recycling and Energy Project
- Luton / Dunstable Busway
- Review of Housing Services

8 The Golden Thread

It is important to understand where the people strategy will fit in to the development of Central Bedfordshire. The following diagram seeks to provide a picture of the 'golden thread' and show the influences on our planning processes.

