



People Strategy 2010-2015

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PEOPLE STRATEGY 2010 – 2015

Foreword from the Chief Executive and Leader

Stratford on Avon District Council has high aspirations to be among the best councils, providing excellent services that meet the needs and wants of our service users. We want to do this effectively, maintaining as low a council tax as is reasonable. To have any chance of achieving this goal, the Council must recruit, retain and develop the best staff and councillors. This People Strategy sets a policy framework to deliver this.

The challenges the country faces as it recovers from the economic recession will be great. The public expect local government to meet all challenges that come its way, providing value for money. The public sector is very likely to contract over the coming three years, and staff and councillors will have to innovate to provide better services at lower costs. We are confident Stratford on Avon DC can meet this challenge head on.

The Council enjoys a very good working relationship with its recognised union, UNISON. This has come about as a result of many years of working together to address the difficult issues that are faced in the public sector, which impact on employees. This is a cornerstone of the People Strategy. Councillors, management and staff are one team providing services that meet the needs of residents. That 'one Council' approach can only work with the employment of the best quality staff. We demand a lot of our staff and we reward fairly. This will continue into the future.

It is often said that people are the most important asset in any organisation. We firmly believe that to be the case. This strategy shows the Council's commitment to that as well and we are delighted to endorse the Council's People Strategy, which has been produced following extensive consultation with staff and councillors.

Les Topham
Leader of the Council

Paul Lankester
Chief Executive

February 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years' the Council has seen a change of political leadership, and a re-structure of the management structure, which in turn has led to a clearer vision and a long term Corporate Strategy which runs 2008 – 2012. A further Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2007 recognised the Council's improvement and graded us as 'Good'. The Council has high ambitions and has been striving towards being recognised as 'Excellent'. To this end, an assessment in September 2008 resulted in the Council being awarded the Investors in Excellence standard.

Council Vision and Corporate Strategy 2008 – 2012

The Council's overarching vision is 'Maintaining and enhancing the heritage and green environment while building healthy, safe, informed, and active communities enjoying local services and employment opportunities'.

The recently adopted Corporate Strategy sets out to deliver on four key aims, which are: -

- A district where everyone shares an improved quality of life
- A clean and green district
- A district where business and enterprise can flourish
- An excellent council that is well managed and respected by the community

The People Strategy will directly deliver against Aim 4 of the Corporate Strategy, and will support the direct services in the delivery of all other Corporate Strategy objectives.

Council Values

The Council's values have recently been revised with the help of our staff. They have been set as four areas, which are:

- Fairness
- Honesty
- Quality
- Working Together.

In addition, the Council subscribes to a set of behaviours known as '**ASPIC**', and an agreed set of actions for giving constructive feedback, known as '**POIRS**'. Further detail is in Appendix 1.

These values will underline the delivery of the People Strategy.

Key Issues

The Council recognises that in order to deliver its ambitions, it is essential to have a robust People Strategy, which will ensure that the Council has the skilled, committed, motivated, high performance workforce needed to deliver the Council's corporate strategy and the local strategic partnership's vision. The People Strategy will address these issues under the following headings: -

- Organisational Development: Effectively building workforce support for new structures and new ways of working to deliver citizen-focused and efficient services in partnership.
- Leadership Development: Building visionary and ambitious leadership which makes the best use of both the political and managerial role, operating in a partnership

context.

- Skills Development: With partners, developing employees skills and knowledge, in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context.
- Recruitment and Retention: with partners, taking action to address key future occupational skills shortages, promote jobs and careers, identify and motivate talent, and address diversity issues.
- Pay and Rewards: Modernising pay systems to reflect new structures, new priorities and new ways of working and to reinforce high performance including a total rewards approach.

The People Strategy will also seek to complement other key organisational strategies, such as:

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Council Improvement Plan
- Service and Financial Plans
- Equality and Diversity Scheme
- Local Area Agreements.

The People Strategy will encompass the content of the previous HR Strategy, Workforce Development Plan and the Training Strategy.

Our People Strategy will seek to recognise and address the change in approach to the delivery of services which is being implemented within our county, Warwickshire, and indeed the sub-region, in that the Council is working towards an enhanced two tier system, using joint working and shared services to ensure the most cost effective and efficient delivery of services to our external and internal customers.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

External Influences and our Local Environment

As the external drivers change it is necessary for human resources to assume a forward looking role, and act as a strategic business partner to the Council. This will see human resources moving away from administering procedures and towards implementing people management policy that can support and align to the strategic aims of the Authority. To be a true business partner, human resources must transform its core service in order to create capacity to take on a broader role.

Although many of the challenges that the Council faces are nationwide issues, there are a number that are specific to our local environment. The drivers which will have an impact on the People Strategy are:

National Drivers

- Efficiency targets (annual target of 4% in efficiency gains).
- National papers (The Local Government White Paper, LGA Framework for Excellence, 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review).
- National indicators.
- Downturn in the economic climate internationally and nationally.
- Reduction in grant levels from central government.
- Change in inspection regimes (from CPA to CAA).
- UK employment law and European directives.
- Skills shortages in key professional areas (planning, building control, environmental health).
- Move towards alternative delivery methods (shared services, partnership approaches, outsourcing).
- Political environment (potential for change in political leadership).
- Developments in technologies and partnership working reducing demand for some skills and increasing demand for others.
- Changing responsibilities under the equalities agenda.
- Increasing demand for services for older people due to an ageing population.
- Increasing move towards a flexible and local pay and rewards agenda.

Local Drivers

- Enhanced two-tier working in Warwickshire.
- Service delivery transformation through shared service delivery.
- Change in services delivered (disinvestment in traditional areas).
- Political environment (desire to keep council tax at the lowest possible level).
- Population demographics (disproportionately aging population in Stratford District).
- Emerging communities (particularly eastern European).
- Rural district (impact on how we deliver our services).
- Low local unemployment.
- High cost of living in Stratford District.
- Local Area Agreements with other public sector bodies.

Internal Influences

Internal Drivers

- The potentially changing local political environment.
- Budgetary pressures.
- An increasingly diverse workforce.

- A contracting workforce.
- A drive to broaden the skill set of our workforce.
- The Council's adopted performance management strategies and procedures.
- Process improvement techniques, such as Leading Continual Process Improvement and Systems Thinking.
- Increased commissioning of service activities.

Workforce Profile

The workforce profile identifies the following critical datasets broken down to headcount, as recorded July 2009. Benchmarking figures have been used from the Warwickshire Authorities, where available. The Local Government Employment Digest (LGED), September 2008, has been used for comparison data.

Data is shown in Appendix 2.

Employee Engagement

Listening to the views of our staff is crucial if the Council is to maintain a motivated and strong workforce in the future, and remain as an employer of choice both in a local and national arena.

Staff have been given the opportunity to air their views in both our internal Staff Attitude Survey, and also through The Times Best Council and Public Sector Surveys. An action plan has been developed from the areas for improvement, and this is managed by the Staff Welfare and Communications Group and monitored by both Management Team, and the Joint Consultation and Negotiating Group.

The Council will continue to promote employee engagement with a strong internal communication strategy, including communication methods such as team briefings, Chief's Chats Chief's Emails, PULSE newsletter, Corporate Issues Forums amongst others.

Engagement is key to the future success of the Council, as is staff empowerment and ensuring that decisions can be made at the lowest appropriate level of the Council's staffing structure.

Partners and Stakeholders

Stakeholders

A sound People Strategy that will support the provision of services to our residents and visitors is of importance to stakeholders including: -

- Elected members
- Employees
- Residents
- Visitors
- Partner organisations, both public and private sector.

Partners

A key change in the deliver of the People Strategy is the new emphasis on working closely with partners to ensure the best possible outcome for our residents. This may be by means of joint working, shared services provision, or outsourcing pieces of work. It is anticipated that over the duration of this Strategy the Council will become more

diverse in terms of its workforce and will challenge traditional methods of service delivery.

- *Trade Unions:* There is an excellent track record of positive and constructive relationships between the Council and the recognised trade union, Unison. Unison representatives are involved in the Workforce Development consultation process, and their views are highly valued. Consultation and negotiation takes place and is formalised through the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Group.
- *Other Local Authorities:* The Council is now working closing in joint working arrangements across a range of other local authorities, specifically those within Warwickshire, but also sub-regionally.
- *West Midlands Leaders Board (formerly WMLGA):* WMLB are the regional local government office, and provide support to the Council in a number of areas, but specifically human resources and learning development.
- *Regional Improvement Efficient Partnership:* The RIEP are responsible for co-ordinating some of the key funded projects which the Council are currently involved in. It is likely that there will be further opportunities to draw down funding and therefore this partnership remains key.
- *Learning and Skills Council:* From April 2010 it will be replaced by the Skills Funding Agency, which will oversee the distribution of funding for adult learning (post 19 years) and manage the performance of further education colleges. We will strengthen our work with local colleges, supporting activities to improve the skills levels of potential local recruits within the resident working age population.
- *The Academy:* This is a cross public sector training academy that is working towards joint procurement and commissioning of key training for public sector organisations in Coventry and Warwickshire. Currently at business case stage, the Learning & Development work stream are already reaping the benefits of joint commissioning in areas such as equalities and diversity.
- *Public Sector Partners:* Through the Local Strategic Partnerships and the Local Area Agreements the Council is working with its public sector partners to deliver more effective and joined up services across the county of Warwickshire. Partners include the police, NHS and voluntary bodies.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is essential that the People Strategy is supported by all levels of the organisation. This written Strategy provides a corporate context to people management which must be linked at a local level to the service planning process in order to ensure its success.

Human Resources will be responsible, in conjunction with the Management Team, for the development of an action plan to address areas for improvement in our people management processes. Areas of strength are identified within this Strategy document.

Reporting Procedure

The People Strategy will be endorsed by Management Team, JCNG and the Employment Committee, and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Management Team and Unison will agree the action plans that will sit beneath the Strategy and will monitor their progress on an annual basis.

Further monitoring will be carried out through the monthly Management and Unison meetings.

Resources

Given the backdrop of an increasingly difficult economic environment both externally and internally, any actions arising in the People Strategy Action Plan will either be cost neutral, be funded by savings, or managed within existing budgets. Emphasis will be given to accessing funding streams, where appropriate.

Performance Management

In order to assess performance a number of internal objective measures are used:-

- Achievement of the Council Plan
- Number of sickness absence days per employee
- Turnover
- Number of training days per employee
- Work profile information, by equality strand.

The Human Resources function is also benchmarked against other local authorities using:-

- CIPFA Benchmarking
- National Local Government Pay and Workforce Survey
- Investors in People
- Investors in Excellence
- CAA.

Contractors

It is anticipated that contractors employed by the Council, who are themselves employing staff, should adhere to the principles of the People Strategy.

SECTION TWO

OVERALL OBJECTIVE AND PHILOSOPHY

The Council's Corporate Strategy sets out how it will lead the District forward, improving the quality of life locally, so that by 2012 Stratford upon Avon is one of the top ten places to live in the country.

Organisational development is integral to ensuring that the council has in place the right people, in the right place at the right time in order to achieve our corporate aims.

Organisationally, we will drive a culture, ethos and environment in which managers and staff are supported and developed to enable them to deliver excellent services to the people in the community they serve, by putting into effect the Council's priorities.

Our aspiration is to become a true strategic business partner, operating with flexibility and pragmatism to assist with the transformation of our services to meet the changing environment. We aim to develop and empower our staff in a way that enables the Council to achieve its aims, with maximum flexibility to recruit and retain the best employees, whilst fulfilling its statutory obligations. In addition to statutory duty we will aim to make strong use of the psychological contract with staff and ensure an environment where they feel empowered and where the Council clearly demonstrates its commitment to investing in its staff as well as being recognised as having a culture which recognises the value of diversity and stands proud as an employer of equal opportunity for all staff. An underlying approach of fairness and consistency runs as a common thread through all that we do.

Continuous improvement will be sought in all our activities to ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills and ongoing development necessary to ensure they can deliver excellence in service delivery, partnership working and community leadership.

Priority Themes

From the analysis of the organisational context, our current workforce demographics and the workforce transformation required to deliver a modern public service, a number of key challenges and priorities have been identified which will enable the Council to continue its journey to excellence for its community. The challenges and the Council's commitment to delivering the changes required have been grouped into five key themes:-

1. Developing the organisation.
2. Developing leadership capacity.
3. Resourcing, recruitment and retention.
4. Developing workforce skills and capacity.
5. Pay and rewards.

Section 3 of the strategy identifies where the Council is now, where we need to be, and the key challenges. How these issues will be addressed will be identified in the People Strategy Action Plan.

People Strategy Action Plan

As a result of analysing and assessing the Council's process against the 5 key themes an action plan will be developed under each theme which will focus on key areas for delivery until 2015 (which is the term of the Council's medium term financial plan). However, recognising the fast pace of change in local government, the action plans will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The action plan will be developed as an operational document in conjunction with the Management Team.

1. Developing the Organisation

Where are we now?

- Adoption of continual improvement process, e.g. Leading Continuous Process Improvement (LCPI), Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs) and Systems Thinking.
- Adoption of a corporate change management approach – Kotter's 8 step approach.
- Benchmarking with Excellent Council's / Value for Money exercises.
- Achievement of the Equality Standard Level 3.
- Robust portfolio of communication methodologies rolled out across the Council, e.g. Chief's Chat's, Chief's Email, team briefings, staff newsletter, staff survey etc.
- Strong union relationships strengthened by monthly meetings, in addition to the quarterly Joint Consultation and Negotiation Group.
- Equality Impact Assessments for all new policy and procedures.
- Embedded performance management methodologies, e.g. appraisal scheme, service and financial planning.
- Recognition of staff achievement through schemes such as the Chairman's Staff Awards.

Where do we want to be?

- Anticipating and tackling key current and future workforce challenges.
- Developing an organisational climate that encourages innovation and creativity.
- Encouraging employee engagement in service transformation.
- Developing new ways of working.
- Supporting staff through organisational changes.
- Promotion of high performance practices.
- Progressing up the levels of the Generic Equality Standard.

2. Developing Leadership Capacity

Where are we now?

- Development of Leadership Programmes such as the Strategic Leadership Programme, an ILM Level 7 endorsed programme designed specifically for local government and delivered cross-authority.
- Partnership working with the WMRIEP to develop the regional Catalyst-Future Leaders programme.
- Access to the WMRIEP Accelerate-Steps to Leadership Programme as an associate partner.
- Cross public sector mentoring scheme in Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Existing management competency framework, introduced in 2006, which is integral to performance management and sits alongside an annual 360 degree feedback process.

Where do we want to be?

- Taking effective action to attract, develop and retain the leaders of today and the leaders of the future.
- Taking effective action to attract, develop and retain the political leaders of today and the political leaders of the future.
- Fostering the development of leadership skills and leadership behaviour at all levels in the Council.
- Development of an effective approach to succession planning.
- Encouraging the increase in the percentage of women, people from black and ethnic minority background and people with disabilities in leadership positions.

3. Resourcing, Recruitment and Retention

Where are we now?

- LCPI review of the recruitment process, with the main change being the introduction of an automated recruitment form. This is currently being piloted.
- Strong links with local schools and colleges for work placements.
- Attendance at local career fairs.
- Preferred agency agreement with local temporary staff agency, reducing the hourly rate paid.
- HR System, enabling the timely and accurate provision of establishment data.
- Ongoing achievement of the Disability Two Ticks Award.
- Close links with JobcentrePlus.
- Reduction in the annual spend against employment agency staff.

Where do we want to be?

- Identifying future workforce requirements as part of partnership, corporate and service planning.
- Ensuring balance in the workforce demographic, to address current and future issues.
- Promotion of jobs and careers to local schools, colleges and universities.
- Developing effective work experience, trainee and apprenticeship programmes and skills pathways.
- Reducing the expenditure on agency staff.

4. Developing Workforce Skills and Capacity

Where are we now?

- Corporate accreditation with Investors in People, est. 1996.
- Warwickshire and Coventry Learning and Development Consortium, working cross-authority on training provision.
- Coventry and Warwickshire Training Academy – participation in the learning and development work stream, developing cross public sector mentoring, and joint procurement of preferred training providers for equalities and diversity and the front line manager programme.
- Introduction of an innovative Employee Volunteering Scheme to aid development.
- Introduction of competency frameworks at all levels of the Council.

Where do we want to be?

- Defining current and future skills needs.
- Assessing current workforce capability and skills gaps.
- Taking positive action to develop or share the skills required.
- Enabling staff to work flexibly to use transferable skills.
- Developing the workforce 'skills for life'.
- Ensuring equality of access to development opportunities across all diversity groups and working patterns.

5. Pay and Rewards

Where are we now?

- Implementation of the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme in 2005.
- Review and implementation of a revised grading structure in 2005.
- Equal Pay Audit carried out in 2009.
- Health Care cash plan launched for all staff – December 2008.
- Substantial staff discount list from local services in the district.
- Introduction of performance related incremental progression in 2006.
- Established procedure for applying market supplements where appropriate.

Where do we want to be?

- Ensuring equal pay structures in line with the 2004 national agreement.
- Introducing a total rewards approach to pay, and considering a flexible pay and rewards strategy.
- Improving the quality of workforce data to assist with performance management and cost control.
- Investing in training managers to appropriately and fairly manage the performance of employees.

SUMMARY

In summary, the Council has a long standing commitment to a culture of continuous improvement and has made key cultural changes, in line with its vision to achieve excellence.

The Council's People Strategy aims to go beyond the mandatory and strive towards achieving the Council's wider corporate agenda. The Strategy strongly supports the organisational development work that is already taking place within the Council, and a number of issues identified as critical by the DCLG, EO and NJC have already been achieved.

The action plan which will support this Strategy, aims to move the Council even further forward, and to support a community leadership approach, with external partners.

This Strategy will cover the life span of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan to 2015.

References

In developing the People Strategy key national guidance documents have been considered in relation to the Council's local internal and external environment, these are:

- Pay and Workforce Strategy 2007 (IDeA and LGE 2007).
- Tomorrow's People (Audit Commission, June 2008).
- Local Government Workforce Strategy Update (Spring/Summer 2009).

Appendix 1

The Council subscribes to a set of behaviours known as **ASPIC**:-

- By focusing on the process **Avoid blaming** the person.
- Ensure you preserve the **Self-confidence** and **self-esteem** of all your colleagues.
- Create effective **Partnerships** with both your internal and external customers and suppliers.
- Take **Initiative** to improve work processes and partnerships.
- Lead by example, both these principles and our **Core Values**.

And an agreed set of actions for giving constructive feedback, known as '**POIRS**': -

- Show your **Positive** intent.
- Describe specifically what you have **Observed**.
- State the **Impact** of the behaviour or action.
- Ask the other person to **Respond**.
- Focus the discussion on **Solutions**.

Appendix 2

Workforce Profile and Dataset

a) Gender

	Male	Female	Total
SDC Headcount 2005	165	212	377
SDC Headcount 2009	146	209	355
SDC 2005 %	44%	56%	
SDC 2009 %	41%	59%	
Local Government	25%	75%	
Whole Economy	51%	49%	

b) Ethnicity

	Minority Ethnic Background	White	Undisclosed	Total
SDC Headcount 2005	6	331	40	377
SDC Headcount 2009	11	317	27	355
SDC 2005 %	1.6%	87.8%	10.6%	
SDC 2009 %	3.1%	89.3%	7.6%	
Local Government	7.3%	92.5	0%	
Whole Economy	9.2%	90.8%	0%	

The comparison ethnicity data from the census for the local population is 1.34% (2004/2005), compared with the Council figure of 3.1%.

c) Disability

	None Declared	Declared Disability	Undisclosed	Total
SDC headcount 2005	325	7	45	377
SDC headcount 2009	307	13	35	355
SDC 2005 %	86%	2%	12%	
SDC 2009 %	86%	4%	10%	
Local Government	73%	27%	0%	
Whole Economy	78%	22%	0%	

The comparison disability data from the census for the local population is 10.69% (2004/2005), compared with the Council figure of 4%.

d) Age

	16 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 49	50 plus	Totals
SDC headcount 2005	7	120	119	131	377
SDC Headcount 2009	10	110	106	129	355
SDC 2005 %	2%	32%	31%	35%	
SDC 2009 %	3%	31%	30%	36%	
Local Government	7%	28%	31%	34%	
Whole Economy	15%	35%	25%	25%	

e) Contracts

There are currently 27 employees on fixed term contracts. [June 2009 figure]

f) Full Time and Part Time Employees

	Full Time	Part Time	Totals
SDC headcount 2005	284	93	377
SDC Headcount 2009	267	88	355
SDC 2005 %	75%	25%	
SDC 2009 %	75%	25%	
Local Government	48%	52%	
Whole Economy	75%	25%	

g) Religion and Belief

	Christian	Sikh	No Religion	Not disclosed	Total
SDC headcount 2009	161	1	41	152	355
SCD 2009 %	45.4%	0.3%	11.5%	42.8%	

h) Sexual Orientation

	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Gay	Not Disclosed
SDC Headcount 2009	206	1	2	146
SDC 2009 %	73%	0.3%	0.6%	72.1%

People Strategy Linkages

