Walsall Council
Our Workforce Strategy
2023-2026

Walsall Council

Contents

Introduction to our Workforce Strategy

Walsall Council has undergone significant change in recent years as part of our PROUD transformation journey and will continue to do so, as we move forward from the pandemic and respond to ever changing customer demands and increasing economic pressures in local government. Now more than ever it is vitally important that we are able to deliver excellence to meet our customer's high expectations and be well positioned to respond to changing service needs.

Walsall Council recognise and understand that we will only achieve this excellence through our outstanding workforce - our people are our most valuable and important strength. It is our amazing and committed people that deliver the best outcomes for our residents and provide high quality care and support to all of our customers.

The talent of our people will be crucial to enable the Council to successfully deliver the strategic priorities set out in Our Council Plan. With workforce costs making up over 20% of total council expenditure, Walsall Council recognise the significant contribution and impact our workforce has and are committed to investing in them. Nurturing and developing our people in a supportive and inclusive workplace will lead to creativity, innovation, continuous improvement and ultimately improved performance and service delivery for the residents of Walsall.

Our workforce strategy outlines the importance of our people and our commitments to;

- supporting our people,
- developing and training our people,
- appreciating and celebrating our people,
- trusting and empowering our people,
- proactively managing our organisational cultural journey to provide an inclusive and psychologically safe working environment where our people feel they belong.

Our Council Plan

Our workforce strategy is an extension of our organisational development strategy and assists us to deliver one of its five strategic pillars, specifically 'planning for the workforce of the future'. In addition the key objectives within these strategies align to support the delivery of our council plan priorities and our proud promises.

Our Council Plan Aim:

Inequalities are reduced, and all potential is maximised. Together we are committed to developing a healthier, cleaner, and safer Walsall and creating an environment that provides opportunities for all residents, communities, and businesses to fulfil their potential and thrive.

Our Council Plan 5 key areas of focus:

Economic   People   Internal Focus   Children   Communities
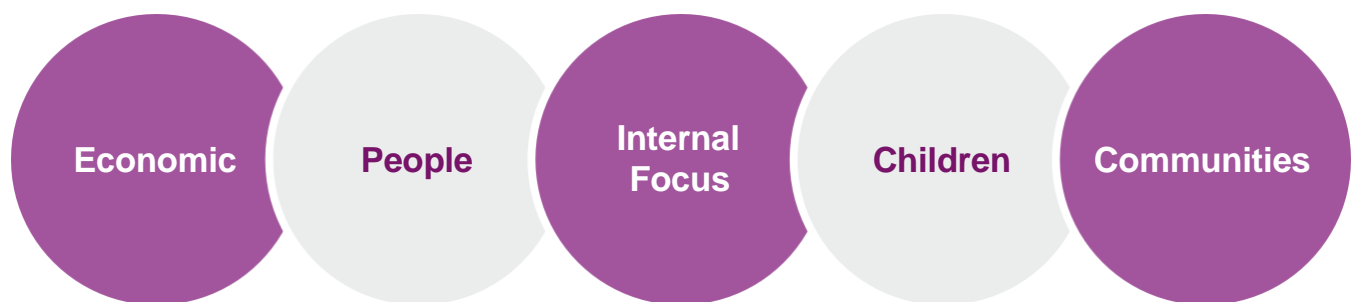
Our workforce strategy supports delivery within all 5 key areas of focus, with a particular concentration on the delivery of 'Internal Focus' – that council services are customer focused, effective, efficient and equitable.

Internal Focus Outcomes:

- We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use,
- The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring.

Our Proud Promises:

- to improve outcomes and customer experience
- to improve employee satisfaction and engagement
- to improve service efficiency and performance

Our (PLATE) values and behaviours:

- Professionalism
- Leadership
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Ethical

Our Future Workforce Challenges

The nature of work, the workforce and work relations are constantly being reshaped. There is pressure from changing demographics of the workforce, technological advancement, globalisation, competition in recruitment and retention of talent, financial constraints, and overall expectations about the flexibility of work.

The Workforce strategy aims to assist in addressing the future challenges, as well as predicting the needs of our workforce in the immediate future and longer term. Our workforce strategy aims:

- Creating a positive and psychologically safe culture that encourages respect, trust, empathy, creativity, innovation and an engaged, empowered and supported workforce.
- Employer of choice, providing an inclusive working environment and attractive employment offer to support the recruitment and retention of our future workforce.
- Upskilling the workforce to meet future needs.
- Developing our future leaders.
- Promoting equitable career progression for all employees.
- Embracing digital technology to aid automation and streamlining.
- Providing a positive work-life balance and flexibility.
- Providing coaching or mentoring and regular feedback and celebration to aid development, improve performance and encourage employees to feel valued.

Our Workforce Profile

Understanding the current profile of our workforce helps us to plan for the future. Walsall Council is committed to fairness and equality and in particular, promoting equality of opportunity for all and a culture that values and celebrates differences. As an employer, we want to ensure our workforce is representative of the community it serves and that we attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds and with a diverse set of skills and experience.

Corporate Workforce Profile
(as at 31.03.23 unless otherwise stated)

Headcount

3,015
people
(2,588 occupied FTE)

Sickness Absence

(As at 12.12.23)
10.2 days
lost on average per person (rolling 12 months)

Full v's part time

70.9% full time
29.1% part time

Employee turnover

11.7%
overall and 8% voluntary (rolling 12 months)

Vacant posts

26.9%
1108 positions

Apprenticeship posts

147
(including schools)

Sex

67.2% female
32.8% male

Age profile

32.2% aged 55+
64.4% aged 25-54
3.4% aged 16-24

Disability

6.2%
(13.9% not declared)

Gender pay gap

Difference in median
pay 0%

Underrepresented minority ethnic groups

24.7%
(8.1% not declared)

Senior roles (G14+)

60%
occupied by women,
16.9% occupied by underrepresented minority ethnic groups

Understanding Our Workforce Priorities

We have undertaken extensive research and data analysis in creating this workforce strategy and will continue to review the strategy and our progress against our markers of success on an annual basis.

We have considered:

- Our external environment
- National and local research
- Our existing workforce profile

- Employee Survey 2021 feedback
- CIPD 2022 People Impact Survey
- Cultural focus group feedback
- Organisational development theory
- External peer review challenge
- Internal skills gap analysis
- Stakeholder / Senior Management feedback
- Our Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Our Customer Strategy
- Our Council Plan

All of this information has helped to identify what skills, capabilities and capacity is needed to deliver a future fit workforce that meets the needs of our Walsall residents now and moving forward. The workforce strategy together with the organisational development strategy set out our key objectives and from these the plans we will put into action to make the difference and drive forward innovative transformation at the Council.

Workforce Strategic Objectives

It is essential that our workforce strategy not only supports us to attract and recruit the right talent in to the right roles at the right time, but also that we are able to retain, develop and support our people to thrive in our roles and working environment. For this reason we recognise the need for our workforce strategy to provide a holistic response to all of our workforce challenges, by developing a range of targeted and measurable actions that will assist us in meeting our workforce objectives.

Our workforce objectives have been categorised into the following three main areas, although are very much interlinked, for example, promoting a supportive and inclusive workplace culture will assist with us recruiting and retaining diverse talent and likewise developing our leaders will assist in progressing our cultural journey and developing our people.

Objective 1 – Welcoming, developing, and advancing a diverse mix of individuals.

Objective 2 – Attract and recruit skilled, flexible and motivated individuals now & in the future.

Objective 3 – Maximise retention by being a good employer.

Objective 1
Welcoming, developing, and advancing a diverse mix of individuals

This objective focusses on the benefits that supporting equality, diversity and inclusion brings. Not only is it morally right, not only is it fair, but studies have shown that groups of people that are diverse in gender, race, disability, and age perform better together. A study by Josh Bersin and Deloitte found that inclusive companies are almost twice as likely to be considered 'innovation leaders' in their market.

Outcomes – what we plan to achieve

A workforce that is representative of Walsall Borough, inclusive of different backgrounds, heritages, genders, socioeconomic, disabilities and cultural diversity. Where everyone has equitable opportunities and there is a sense of safety and belonging that sees everyone feel like they are part of the Walsall Council team.

Actions – required actions to achieve the objective

1. Develop digital solutions that improve current recruitment and selection insights to be provided to Executive Directorate Management teams (EDMTs) and Corporate Management Team (CMT) that will allow identification of patterns/trends in relation to the (none) appointment of people with protected characteristics that can be used to inform targeted actions (as required).

2. Improve the capturing and use of workplace profiling data for protected characteristics.

3. Improve availability of exit data to include protected characteristics (where available) to be provided to EDMTs and CMT that will allow identification of patterns/trends in relation to the reasons for leaving that can be used to inform targeted actions (as required).

4. Increase our workforce EDI monitoring data by creating a safe and culturally sensitive environment where people feel safer to disclose personal characteristic information of their own volition through a range of positive interactions including the use of Equality Champions.

5. Develop further our Recruitment & Selection Policy in a number of areas in support of EDI, including a neurodiverse friendly interview process to promote inclusion rather than seeking to provide adjustments.

6. Develop a supportive framework for staff networks that provides a consistent approach across the organisation and feeds into the Workforce Equalities Board, with a variety of underrepresented groups within the workforce including LGBTQ+, ethnicity, disabilities including neurodiversity, and any other groups where a need is identified/supported.

7. Provide an escalation diagram for current policies and processes, for individual staff where they feel that they are not being listened to or are not receiving equitable opportunity.

8. Actively focus on encouraging applications from diverse backgrounds by using annonymised selection techniques (technology allowing), ensuring interview panels are diverse (wherever possible) and reviewing where employment opportunities are advertised.

9. Develop new EDI related employment policies including a Transgender Equality Policy and Neurodiversity Policy, ensuring adequate training is provided to people managers across the organisation.

10. As part of the marketing strategy, target areas of the community with the aim of increasing knowledge and awareness of our Council jobs of the future and actively promote our commitment to diversity and inclusion (using role models and case studies).

11. Further develop management training and resources to heighten awareness and provide activities for teams to build psychological safety, to ensure everyone's voice is heard.

12. Investigate the delivery of leadership programmes that encourage participation from underrepresented groups.

13. Review Dignity at Work and Grievance policies to ensure they are fit for purpose and that the workforce are aware of them and how to use them to resolve/address issues.

14. Monitor the impact of EDI training within the organisation and review the offer accordingly

Objective 2
Attract and recruit skilled, flexible and motivated individuals now and in the future

This objective focusses on the identification of current skills gaps and hard to recruit to positions, finding new and innovative solutions to recruiting the talented people we need now and in the future. This is crucial as we see an aging population within the current workforce. There will also be a need to predict the skills needed in the future to ensure skills gaps do not materialise and impact on the day-to-day business of the Council. The Walsall offer will be reflective of the expectations of the workforce, creating desirable roles and an attractive employment offer.

Outcomes – what we plan to achieve

The recruitment of a workforce that hold the necessary qualifications and/or experience to perform their role, who consistently go above and beyond in the performance of their duties, providing an outstanding customer experience. Proactive in the identification of skills that will be required in the future and ensuring that employee training is provided, or external individuals are recruited in a timely way.

Actions – required actions to achieve the objective

1. Investigate the possibility of an employee referral programme, where employees are asked to recommend suitable candidates for vacant roles.

2. Review and consider other in-house promotional activities including work experience schemes, graduate schemes, and reviewing apprenticeship uptake.

3. Diversify outreach strategies, partnering with educational establishments and attendance at planned recruitment events delivered by service area managers and promoting existing employee attendance (to promote and share experiences).

4. Review current partnership working and investigate further opportunities for the benefit of recruitment.

5. Investigate the use of social media for the promotion of vacancies, expanding the range of audiences exposed to job vacancy advertisements and to share positive employment experiences.

6. Identify and implement an annual skills gap analysis process, to assist in identifying current and future skills gaps, as well as risks for each service area. Linking skills development required to the Learning & Development offer.

7. Investigate the potential development of a skills academy for difficult to recruit posts.

8. Introduce a Continuous Performance Management process that concentrates on quality conversations regarding skills development, PLATE behaviours and career progression and is linked to succession planning for the team.

9. Promote informal learning, understanding lived experiences, shadowing, coaching, and mentoring by providing training on the 70:20:10 learning model to people managers to encourage personal development and progression of employees.

10. Creation of career pathways in key service areas and across the Council, to provide a transparent route for employees, so they know the specific requirements for progression.

11. Improve leaver's guidance for managers to effectively capture and retain the knowledge of employee's who leave the organisation.

12. Ensure that the 'Disability Confident Employer' status is retained.

13. Marketing and promotion of the council, as an employer of choice

14. Review the Recruitment & Selection Policy to support the provision of simple and effective processes.

Objective 3
Maximise retention by being a good employer

This objective focusses on the retention of knowledgeable, talented, and committed staff to the organisation by ensuring that they feel valued, recognised, and rewarded for the work that they do. By reducing the number of leavers, knowledge will be retained, and recruitment costs reduced. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, the cost to hire new employees has grown by 34% since 2009.

Outcomes – what we plan to achieve

The majority of the workforce is positive when discussing their employment, which is shown in improving employee survey results. When employee's leave the organisation, it is as a result of progressing their career rather than dissatisfaction with their manager, the culture, inadequate salary, lack of recognition or limited career advancement.

Actions – required actions to achieve the objective

1. Actively monitor and manage our cultural aims, by engaging, trusting, empowering, and supporting all employees to deliver and we will demonstrate our values, through our words and our actions.

2. Engage workforce with the employee survey and in-between with focus groups to have continual feedback regarding how employees are feeling.

3. Review and then actively promote the employee benefits offer and introduce a total rewards statement.

4. Develop robust data on sickness attrition and reasons for leaving, to be provided to EDMTs and CMT and Service Areas to follow up specific actions with support from HR/OD as required.

5. Review the onboarding programme, developing an employee onboarding programme and a separate manager onboarding programme that sets expectations of a manager within Walsall Council.

6. Develop a cross-organisational buddy/mentor programme for new starters, so employees are making links in other service areas.

7. Create a new customer focused Ways of Working Policy and refresh the Right to Request Flexible Working Policy.

8. Scope out a pay and grading structure project, and present options for agreement with CMT.

9. Review the provision of support provided for employee's applying for progression opportunities within the council, specifically 121 coaching and workshop activities.

10. Consider different ways that managers can recognise employees and roll-out a method of recognition, such as Viva Insights.

11. Roll-out of Connected Working across an increased number of teams to improve the management capabilities of all people managers and develop a learning culture within teams.

12. L&D to focus on current skills gaps identified in the report and work with Service Areas to target areas of development.

13. An annual skills gap analysis to be undertaken, to determine L&D priorities for specific Service Areas and teams.

14. Develop a talent strategy and promote.

15. Improving and promoting the health and wellbeing offer.

16. Consult with employees to identify preferred ways of celebrating success.

Markers of Success

Outcome 1 - Welcoming, developing, and advancing a diverse mix of individuals.

- Recruitment data to show an increase in candidates from underrepresented groups progressing to higher stages in the selection process over time.
- The workforce data shows a movement towards being representative of Walsall borough in terms of underrepresented characteristics.
- Reduction in the number of employee's that choose not to disclose if they have a disability or identification of ethnicity.
- An increase in the number of job applications from underrepresented groups, particularly those identifying as having disabilities.

Outcome 2 - Attract and recruit skilled, flexible, and motivated individuals now and in the future.

- Increase in numbers of applicants from referrals and other in-house schemes.
- Increase in applications from activities undertaken.
- Increase in successful recruitment campaigns, leading to a reduction in unfilled vacancies.
- Annual review shows positive progress towards reducing skills gaps.
- Positive statistics on the impact to an individual's way of working from training and coaching.
- Developing a way of tracking and measuring an increase in internal promotions.

Outcome 3 - Maximise retention by being a good employer

- Reduction in sickness absence rates and attrition over time, maintained in line with regional/national benchmarking.
- Reduction in recruitment costs linked to attrition/successful recruitment campaigns and monitored annually.
- Results of the employee's exit questionnaire, showing positive reasons for leaving.
- Results of the employee survey, improving over the next 3 years.

In support of the workforce strategy a detailed 3-year action plan will be developed to monitor, track and progress delivery against each of the three strategic workforce objectives and as part of this action plan the relevant markers of success will be expanded upon in more detail, measurable and reportable to Walsall Council's Corporate Management Team.

Employee Charter

The Council is committed to developing a culture where every member of staff feels valued, recognised, and supported. A culture where there is openness, safety to speak up, mutual respect and where a healthy work-life balance can be achieved. Where all staff are developed to reach their full potential and teams strive for continuous improvement, putting the customer at the centre of what they do. It is the workforce, their skills and commitment that drive us to improving services across Walsall. Our employee charter sets out the expectations as an employee, as a manager and as an employer.

As an employer we will provide:

- A psychologically safe environment that encourages inclusion and where you can raise concerns and ask questions without fear of being embarrassed, marginalised, or punished.
- An environment where you are encouraged to develop through recognised qualifications, on-the-job training or through personal coaching or mentoring.
- A drive for all teams to be high performing and develop trust and mutual respect, a coaching and learning culture, open and clear communication, a shared vision and clear direction, effective work practices, a team-first mentality and be diverse, valuing the benefits that diversity can bring to the team.
- The opportunity to contribute your ideas and concerns to the wider organisation through focus groups and the employee survey, which will then be reviewed and actioned.

As a manager you will be expected to:

- Provide regular and constructive feedback to team members that allows continuous growth and development.
- Be a positive role model for the organisation's values and behaviours, holding people to account when values and behaviours fall below expectations.
- Encourage constructive feedback on themselves and their service.
- Champion all aspects of psychological safety and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, so every member of the team feels supported and respected.
- Support staff to develop their skills and career aspirations.
- Promote teamwork, innovation, creativity, flexibility and collaboration with other teams and service areas.
- Provide leadership, guidance, and encouragement to continually improve the service and achieve identified objectives or targets.

As an employee you will be expected to:

- Contribute to a positive culture, treating everyone with dignity and respect.
- Understand the need to continuously develop skills and knowledge and make best use of opportunities to learn and develop, asking for help or training when needed.
- Get involved, be open to new ways of working and put forward ideas and suggestions for continuous improvement.
- Perform your role to the highest possible standards, taking ownership and accepting the responsibilities this brings.
- Take pride in being part of the Council and live our values in your daily workplace activities.
- Work positively with others and value collaboration, be a team player, engage and communicate.
- Place high quality provision, customer care and business success at the centre of your work.
- Be inclusive, embrace diversity and ensure you treat everyone with fairness, giving them the same opportunities.

For further information contact the Head of Strategic HRM or the Head of OD.

Last Updated Jan 2024