

Workforce Strategy 2024-2029

Introduction

The future of work is predicted to see an increase in the use of automation, changes to models for work and structures, and changes to the way and places that we all work. We will need to ensure that the Council is able to respond to these changes and the demands and needs of our communities. Alongside this are changes needed to make sure that our workforce is involved and engaged in order to deliver the very best for our residents.

This Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce over the next few years which will enable us to get to where we want to be as a council. This includes embedding our organisational values of 'work together, respect everyone, develop and grow, make a difference and care'.

The Strategy and action plan will ensure we proactively meet the future challenges and requirements of the organisation ensuring we have a joined up approach to resource, attract, deploy, develop and retain our workforce to deliver our current and future priorities whilst remaining flexible enough to deal with the levels of change which have become a norm within local government.

We have identified four key themes for the Workforce Strategy:

Theme 1 Talent and Development

Theme 2 Our Brand and Recruitment

Theme 3 Wellbeing and Reward

Theme 4 Inclusion and Belonging



Our Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan sets the overarching goals for the future of the borough of Maidstone.

The ambitious priorities set out in the plan recognise the Borough's potential whilst setting long-term aspirations that will benefit our residents, businesses and partners now and in the future.



Our Values

Just as important as what we do, is why and how we do it. Our values support and underpin our organisational culture. Developed by our own staff these five values clearly set out the expectations of how we work with each other to achieve our vision and the priorities in the Strategic Plan.

Our Staff Values



Our Workforce Themes

Theme 1 Talent and Development

We will support our staff by designing and implementing effective people, performance and talent management systems. This will involve reviewing the 'traditional' job roles and creating a more fluid organisation 'where talent flows to work'.

We will continue to develop our staff so they have the skills and capabilities to meet the requirements of the organisation. Our learning solutions will be innovative, creative and will embed learning to enhance our staff's skills and capabilities in order to build a workforce fit for the future.

We will create a learning culture that is understood with meaningful learning opportunities linked to supporting the strategic vision and priorities of the organisation, including recognising our role as leaders in our place. Our staff will have a growth mindset and take responsibility for their own learning journey.

Our Outcomes by 2029

- An inclusive talent management framework that will identify, select and deploy outstanding talent, allowing employees to grow and develop in the organisation.
- Clear talent and succession pipelines to grow our own talent through graduate schemes, apprenticeship schemes and developing our staff.
- We know where we have areas of expertise and where we do not and we work together internally to share and develop skills and knowledge including moving our workforce, so talent flows to work.
- Employees are digitally competent, and confident in using technology to promote and enhance agile and flexible working.
- Our leaders and managers are 'confident', - in both their technical and softer skills adept at listening, applying emotional and personal responses to allow an adaptive style of management.
- We are a learning organisation: a Council that continuously develops and learns from experiences and from other sectors as a leader of our place.

Theme 2

Our Brand and Recruitment

We will develop a clear employer brand outlining what is unique, exciting and inspiring about Maidstone Council. We will promote the Council as a great place to work by promoting the range of flexible working opportunities, our values, the opportunities to grow and develop to attract the best talent with the diversity of skills the organisation and our community needs.

Our high performing culture relies on the strength of our people. As a result, attracting, recruiting and retaining the very best talent is central to our success. To do this we will use a variety of recruitment approaches when considering the full range of work engagements, such as permanent employment, interims, short term contracts or other alternative work arrangements to ensure we achieve the best value for money and quality of service, with the right level of skills.

Our Outcomes by 2029

- Flexible and innovative recruitment practices are in place to ensure we recruit the right people to the right roles.
- Pathways into the organisation are created through apprenticeships, graduate schemes and work experience placements as well as utilising our apprenticeship levy funds to build our talent pipeline for the future.
- A clear, attractive and inclusive employer brand is created to highlight the value of working for us together with a flexible approach to recruitment, acknowledging the needs of different audiences to encourage applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- People are recruited into roles who demonstrate our values through our value based recruitment approach.

Theme 3

Wellbeing and Reward

We will apply a flexible and fair approach to reward and recognition, recognising and rewarding contributions and achievements of our workforce. We want people to feel proud to work at the Council and enjoy their time at work. This will include staff feeling valued, engaged and supported in their roles.

We will have a proactive approach to wellbeing, supporting staff to have a sustainable work life balance. Wellbeing and healthy working practices and initiatives will be central to our culture and actively promoted. Transparent and fair pay and reward frameworks will contribute to staff feelings of wellbeing.

Our Outcomes by 2029

- **Benefits and rewards are inclusive and offer flexibility and choice to suit diverse and changing needs to ensure the Council is competitive in the external market, these are well promoted and understood by our workforce.**
- **High performance is recognised and rewarded for both individual and team contributions.**
- **Wellbeing opportunities are actively promoted and steps are taken to support the physical and mental health of staff in the workplace.**
- **Agile and flexible working practices create a positive work-life balance.**
- **Levels of sickness absence for mental health and other long term conditions are reduced.**
- **Knowledge and skills of managers and staff are increased in order to have better awareness to manage and improve their own and others mental wellbeing.**

Theme 4

Inclusion and Belonging

We want our people to feel they are able to 'bring their authentic self' to work, knowing their unique perspective and experiences are valued as essential to the organisation, and are part of our shared organisational identity.

Having a diverse and engaged workforce will mean we better understand the needs of our stakeholders and communities we represent and help us achieve our strategic vision.

Our Outcomes by 2029

- There is an open and inclusive work environment where everyone can thrive regardless of their background, working pattern or career experience and where core policies and processes are delivered both consistently and fairly.
- Staff led networks are encouraged and created in support of shared interest in particular areas to help foster a sense of belonging and inclusion to the workplace, empowering employees and helping them bring their whole self to work.
- There is a culture of recognising the value of diverse views.
- A workforce that is continually developed through training about equality, diversity and inclusivity for all staff, including broad based awareness and specialist topics.
- Recruitment data and processes ensure the Council appeals to a diverse range of candidates, reflective of our communities, including increasing number of applicants from underrepresented groups to ensure we attract the best talent from as diverse a pool of people as possible.

Our Workforce Expectations

Our workforce expectations are developed to reflect the values of the Council and to ensure we are clear what every employee working at the Council can expect from us as their employer and in return what we can expect from them.

We will

- Provide positive leadership based on integrity and our values.
- Provide a working environment and culture based on trust.
- Respect you, ensuring you are treated fairly in the workplace - including challenging any discrimination or behaviour that is contrary to our values.
- Provide you with working conditions to thrive and succeed.
- Offer opportunities for you to access training and to develop and progress in your careers.
- We take your health, wellbeing and worklife balance seriously, and help you enhance them.
- Listen and support you to make decisions, developing a culture that supports innovation and continuous improvement.

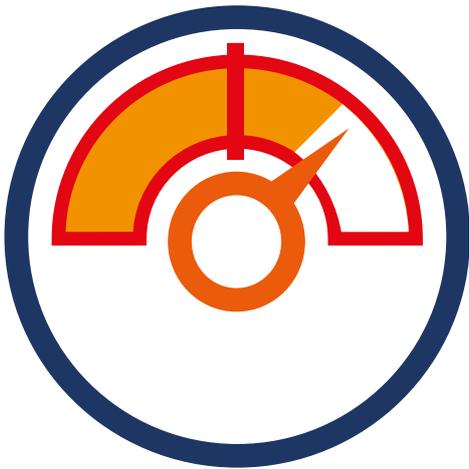
You will

- Be committed to achieving the council's priorities, by delivering well and going the extra mile.
- Actively demonstrate positive relationship skills with colleagues, partners, and residents.
- Be accountable for delivering tasks diligently and to a high standard, providing great results for your team and our communities.
- Respect each other and work proactively to create an inclusive environment and culture, based on trust and where differences are celebrated.
- Be proactive in managing your own wellbeing using the resources provided by the Council.
- Take responsibility for decision making and keeping your knowledge and training up to date, using the opportunities provided by the Council

Monitoring

We will use a range of measures to monitor our progress and success against each of the strategic themes of the workforce strategy, including:

- **Feedback from our staff engagement surveys**
- **Feedback from managers surveys**
- **Feedback from learning and development activities**
- **Exit interview feedback**
- **Key performance indicators**
- **Quarterly workforce reports**
- **Feedback on our recruitment process and new starter experiences**
- **Annual report on equality data and gender pay gap reporting**



Theme 1 - Talent and Development

Action	Outcome
Conduct a skills audit across the Council to identify talent and where we have skill gaps	Skills audit will inform our learning and development plan in 2024/25 Agree base line digital skills training for staff as well as tailored digital courses to help employees to maximise systems and technology
Review and develop our talent management framework	Individuals will be identified, selected and deployed to work across the organisation as demand and priorities change
Create career pathways and training programmes for staff at different levels of the organisation, so staff can see how they can develop in order to successfully take on leadership roles	New leaders and future leadership development programmes are created and agreed for 2024/25 Career pathways provide transferable skills that bring together common skills and abilities for professional as well as technical roles
Support and develop a flexible workforce to respond to the changing needs of the organisation	Upskill staff to allow movement across the Council's services through the opportunities provided by the apprenticeship levy
Support the development of our leaders to increase knowledge and expertise	Increase learning and skills through secondments and work shadowing opportunities both internally and externally
Deliver a suite of training for all managers, supervisors and team leaders to meet the requirements set by the Council	Managers are confident and take responsibility on dealing with people related matters and have an improved level of 'softer' skills to manage various situations Managers take responsibility to access people management data through iTrent and HR dashboard to effectively address performance issues and support staff to improve performance
Promote a culture of continuous learning and development by creating a 'time to learn' initiative	Dedicating time away from the 'day job' to develop skills and knowledge through a range of ways – i.e. reading interesting articles, watching videos, listening to podcasts, e-learning modules, joining networks

Theme 2 - Our Brand and Recruitment

Action	Outcome
Develop our media brand and social media presence to attract a wider and more diverse audience for job opportunities	Better use of social media for advertising Council is attractive place to work through the Council brand Increase in number of applicants for hard to recruit positions by using flexible and innovative recruitment practices
Develop and implement a behavioural framework to support our values	Candidates are recruited with the right skillset and mindset
Establish a values-based recruitment approach	People recruited into roles that demonstrate our shared values Job description templates are value-based to aid the recruitment process
Review and streamline the recruitment process Develop the web recruitment module in iTrent Provide training to managers on the updated recruitment process	Candidate and manager experience is improved and applicants are appointed to roles more quickly Recruitment page is refreshed with focus on personal experience on 'why I work here' and agile working is promoted to attract a wider and diverse pool of talent
Work with partners to promote working at the Council at local schools, colleges and universities Increase our presence at job fairs to attract new talent	A new work experience offer is in place. We have excellent links with schools, colleges and universities as well as utilising our apprenticeship levy funds to builds our talent pipeline for the future
Create 'apprentice first approach' framework so that apprenticeships are routinely considered for entry level roles	Increase in the number of apprentices to support the growth of our talent
Review the exit interview process and monitor reasons for leaving	Increase in the number of staff completing exit interviews Employee experience is improved through our learning on the reasons for leaving
Monitor and continually review the induction process	New starters are fully supported through induction and feedback is provided on their experience New managers including senior managers are provided with knowledge on the Council and supported through the induction process by their managers

Theme 3 - Wellbeing and Reward

Action	Outcome
Continue to promote the benefits package to all staff	Employees have an understanding of rewards and benefits available through the Council
Review our rewards and employee benefits offer to ensure its competitive with other public sector employers	Employees feel valued for their contribution
Develop ways to increase staff recognition to ensure individual and team performance are celebrated and publicised	Employee contribution and achievement is recognised
Support services to develop appropriate career grade structures for succession planning	Employees are provided with opportunities to progress within their current professions Improved retention of talented employees through enhanced development opportunities
Promote and celebrate our non-financial benefits	Staff awareness is increased on the total employee benefits offer that includes hybrid/ flexible working, learning and development and apprentice opportunities to upskill and retain staff, commitment to health and wellbeing of our staff and the importance of staff recognition through Staff Awards
Develop initiatives to increase awareness of resilience and wellbeing Continue promoting national health and wellbeing initiatives	Employees take responsibility for their wellbeing through events and communication on ways to look after your health
Continue roll out of Resilience Training to managers and staff Increase awareness of Mental Health First Aiders	Managers recognise mental illness and sign post staff for further support Reduced levels of mental illness Understanding of the role and responsibilities of a Mental Health First Aider
Work with external organisations to develop proactive health and wellbeing initiatives	Increase understanding and knowledge of health and wellbeing

Theme 4 - Inclusion and Belonging

Action	Outcome
Provide training to create awareness on EDI	Staff have greater understanding on EDI Managers understand their responsibility to being an inclusive manager
Support employees to develop staff network groups i.e. carers, disabilities, LGBT	EDI issues are discussed openly, honestly and respectfully where everyone learns from each other and helps to build an inclusive workplace
Support the outcomes of the staff survey on equalities	Greater understanding and respect for different cultures
Develop team talks on EDI to discuss at team meetings	Greater understanding on EDI within the workplace and how to address issues
Develop creative, inclusive communication mechanisms so all Council staff, including those who don't access information online, are informed of Council news and developments	Staff are more engaged, involved, listened to and invited to contribute their experience, expertise and ideas
Embed our values and behaviours with all staff	Staff feeling valued, included, safe, supported and places inclusivity in everything we do
Encourage staff to declare their protected characteristics confidentially through employee self service	Increase in awareness on the different needs of our workforce and support decision making
Continue to analyse application and shortlisting data to identify ways to make our recruitment more inclusive and to ensure non-discrimination	The Council has a diverse workforce that reflects the community