

# People Strategy

  
Middlesbrough  
moving forward

# Foreword

## Message from Chief Executive and Mayor

### Welcome to our People Strategy.

It is our mission to ensure that officers and members are proud to work for and represent Middlesbrough Council. Our future target operating model will create an environment which is supportive, respectful and inclusive.

Working together across officers, members and political groups we have been able to articulate and identify how we want to continue to evolve and improve as a council, to meet the challenges that we face. Our Cultural Transformation Programme will provide structure and direction to ensure that the Council continues to move forward positively, to achieve sustainable culture change, and the People Strategy is a key element to enable us to deliver this.

This strategy builds on activities and achievements to date, with a focus on the provision of support and development of individuals, as well as addressing changes needed to policies, procedures and protocols, and the behaviours that should be demonstrated by officers and members, in their commitment to the principles of public life and our organisation values.

All of this cannot be achieved without the dedication of our employees – and we'd like to thank everyone, officers and members, for their continued work in providing quality services to the people of Middlesbrough.



### Clive Heaphy

Interim Chief Executive



### Chris Cooke

Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough



Clive Heaphy,  
Interim Chief Executive



Chris Cooke, Elected Mayor  
of Middlesbrough

**'Our Cultural Transformation Programme will provide structure and direction to ensure that the Council continues to move forward positively, to achieve sustainable culture change'**

# Introduction

The People Strategy, alongside the Member Development Strategy, underpins the wider Cultural Transformation Programme. It will also be supported by a Partnership Strategy and Transformation Strategy once finalised.

The People Strategy has been developed to ensure that:

- employees and members have the knowledge and skills needed to maximise our ability to achieve improved outcomes for residents, within the future target operating model
- the Council works effectively with partners to maximise our ability to impact positively on the town and its communities, supporting delivery of the mayor's theme that Middlesbrough is a 'successful and ambitious town'.

The People Strategy recognises that to deliver the above outcomes, in a climate of new economic realities, shrinking resources and a reduced workforce, we need to ensure that the future workforce is highly motivated, resilient, and well managed.

We recognise that all employees are instrumental in achieving our ambitions and the People Strategy sets out our aims to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels engaged and encouraged, with access to a diverse support and development offer, in order to be the best they can be and deliver the best possible services they can.

As part of our commitment, we want all employees and members to engage positively in continuous development, and the People Strategy will provide the guidance and tools to enable this, supporting employees at all levels to grow, adapt and evolve for the present and future ways of working.

# Cultural Transformation

To support the planned approach to delivering cultural transformation, the People Strategy has the following aims:

- Build on successful delivery of People Strategy type transformation delivered to staff pre-pandemic, to develop, agree and embed the values of the organisation
- Align existing Values work to the Nolan principles and refresh associated frameworks
- Deliver and further embed the frameworks that clearly set out behaviours and expectations
- Agree, implement and report on measures of success that track progress
- Sustained communications and engagement campaign.

In focusing on these aims and the key themes below, the required outcomes identified are to:

- Demonstrate clear understanding of what good looks like and how to achieve it
- Demonstrate clear, resource commitment to delivering agreed actions
- Deliver real, measurable, positive changes to organisational culture and associated behaviours.



## Vision

To be an employer of choice for the best people to deliver improved outcomes for the community we serve.

There are six key themes identified within the People Strategy to achieve our vision:

- **Recruitment & Retention**
- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**
- **Performance & Recognition**
- **Culture & Communication**
- **Learning & Development**
- **Health, Safety & Wellbeing**

# Principles and Values

The principles and values underpin how we behave and deliver our services.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who holds public office. This includes all who are elected or appointed to public office including local government, as servants of the public and stewards of public resources.

The seven principles are...

**Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

**Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



Our Values are a key element of the People Strategy as they reinforce our commitment for a healthy, safe and inclusive working environment. They will be continuously reviewed to ensure they align with the Cultural Transformation Programme and future operating model of the Council.



# Current Workforce Profile

Understanding what our workforce and member profile looks like now helps identify potential issues and gives a base on which to measure or improvements moving forward.



## Total Workforce

Full time 61%  
Part time 36%  
Casuals 3%



## Gender

Female 69%  
Male 31%



## Sexual orientation

Heterosexual 2070  
No information 904  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual 83  
Prefer not to say 92  
Other 2



## Disability

Not disabled ~2600  
Not known ~420  
Disabled ~131



## Age

<20 29  
20-29 369  
30-39 661  
40-49 701  
50-59 934  
60 and over 457



## Ethnic origin

White British 2636  
No information 321  
Asian Indian, Pakistani, other 80  
White other 41  
Other ethnic group 23  
Prefer not to say 21  
Mixed Race 18  
Black African, Caribbean, other 11

# Current Elected Member Profile



## Age profile

<21 0	41-50 6
21-30 6	51-60 6
31-40 5	>60 24



## Ethnic origin

Withheld 28  
White British 9  
No Return 7  
Ethnicity unknown 1  
Asian Pakistani 1  
Any other white background 1

# Recruitment and Retention

There have been huge changes in candidate availability in the recruitment market following Brexit, the Covid pandemic (reassessing work/life choices) and low levels of unemployment. We need to stand out from the crowd and be an employer of choice in a competitive market.

To improve our ability to recruit, a greater focus on developing 'our offer' is required and redesigning the way we promote our brand and vacancies is essential to increase our reach within the candidate pool. Understanding candidate and employee expectations will help shape this.

Keeping our talent is key to our success in delivering outcomes, getting a return on our development investment and avoiding costly recruitment processes. Understanding what makes a difference to our employees throughout their employment and for those who chose to move on what motivated them to do so will inform our plans.

We will...	How we will deliver this
Have a strong and positive employer brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Maximise use of our recruitment system to expand our reach</li> <li>■ Streamlined recruitment process that is easy to navigate and timely</li> </ul>
Be an organisation that people want to join and stay with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer a range of employee benefits to attract diverse candidates</li> <li>■ Provide a varied development offer that enables opportunities for growth</li> </ul>
Retain talented people with the right skills and behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recruit against the Values and Principles</li> <li>■ Equip managers and staff with the relevant skills and knowledge to progress and develop</li> </ul>
Offer a modern and flexible working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review and refresh our blended working offer to ensure it reflects current and future workforce needs</li> <li>■ Maximise adoption of flexible working practices across the organisation</li> </ul>

# Culture and Communication

Work undertaken on the culture improvement programme so far, identifies the issues to address and also the positive achievements that the People Strategy will further build upon, to further embed the changes required.

We must ensure that we have a common purpose and understanding, and that all employees and members know the role they play in achieving this.

To work together moving forward, we must create opportunities for conversations that are open, genuine, and two-way, and establish an engagement culture where employees can voice their views and influence change.

Our communication should be tailored to our workforce, delivered at the right time in a clear and honest way that makes employees feel engaged and gives everyone an opportunity to ask questions and seek further information.

We will...	How we will deliver this
Be a Values-led organisation, reinforced with an embedded behaviour framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Updated Officer/Member protocol and codes of conduct</li> <li>■ Refresh and roll-out of employee Values and Principles frameworks</li> </ul>
Provide an environment where our people feel valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adopt a rich feedback culture aligned to our Values and Principles</li> <li>■ Encourage and recognise behaviours that show respect and professional challenge at all levels</li> </ul>
Ensure our people have a voice and are listened to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop engagement mechanisms and feedback processes</li> <li>■ Implement and communicate changes that reflect we have listened to staff views</li> </ul>
Communicate frequently, widely and with clear and consistent messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Utilise diverse media to reach the full workforce</li> <li>■ Support leaders and managers to use clear language at the appropriate level in all communications</li> </ul>

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We want to continuously improve as an organisation and a key part of that is having a workforce that is representative of the community we serve. As a council we remain committed to making changes which will allow our workforce to flourish and develop and to provide an inclusive environment for all.

Through our annual equality and inclusion report we can identify target areas for priority.

We will work to understand any potential barriers that have a negative impact on equality, diversity and inclusion and put plans in place to address these.

Championing under-represented groups, we will focus on specific development opportunities. We will expand our workforce data reporting from gender pay gap to include wider protected characteristics starting with race and disability.

We will...	How we will deliver this
Create better links with our wider community to promote employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work collaboratively with services and internal and external partners to strengthen links to the community</li> <li>Understand how communities access employment opportunities and tailor promotions accordingly</li> </ul>
Strive to have a diverse workforce representative of our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly communicate our organisational commitment to EDI</li> <li>Work with employees and members to increase understanding on the value of EDI and how to support it</li> </ul>
Create an environment of inclusion, ensuring employees feel able to be their whole selves at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide great employee support networks to give everyone a voice</li> <li>External accreditation of our efforts to demonstrate commitment</li> </ul>
Work proactively on initiatives to raise awareness and support under-represented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a diverse calendar of events for employees</li> <li>Explore development opportunities for under-represented groups including potential future leaders</li> </ul>

# Learning and Development

Having learning and development at the heart of our culture ensures our employees have the necessary behaviours, skills and knowledge to carry out their roles, whilst improving retention rates. To meet the changing demands, customer expectations and the challenge and benefit of new technologies, employee skills need to evolve alongside.

A robust learning and development offer will deliver a workforce that is not only fit for now but fit for the future.

Offering a blended learning approach gives the flexibility for development to be tailored as required, and creates a more engaging experience for employees.

We need to ensure our members, leaders and managers have the skills they need to support employees and deliver their own roles successfully.

We will...	How we will deliver this
<p><b>We will be a learning organisation that enables all employees to maximise their potential</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Capture development needs through a new performance management framework</li> <li>■ Identify career aspirations and explore routes to support progression</li> </ul>
<p><b>Develop our leaders and managers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure leaders and managers are clear on their responsibilities and understand what development is available to them</li> <li>■ Offer a diverse leadership and management development programme that meets current and future needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Offer a rich and diverse learning and development programme for all employees</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Grow our blended learning offer utilising our learning management system combined with face-to-face learning</li> <li>■ Increase engagement with coaching and mentoring programmes to develop talent at all levels</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluate impact of learning and development to ensure it delivers results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Feedback system to OD to evaluate and report on levels of engagement and impact of learning</li> <li>■ Actively review learning and development outcomes in performance appraisal process</li> </ul>

# Performance and Recognition

Our focus on values and behaviours will be further strengthened with a performance management framework. We aim to attract the best people to deliver our services and need to focus on support, development and stretch to keep employees engaged, and able to provide the best services they can.

Understanding how employees make a difference is key to creating a positive engaging culture and providing clear objectives linked to the Council Plan provides this. Regular communication is valuable and can be more powerful alongside opportunities to provide more formal feedback and recognition.

We recognise that our employees work to deliver a range of services for the benefit of our community and without their efforts we would not succeed. Taking the opportunity to recognise those efforts and celebrate achievements is an important step in creating a positive culture.

We will...	How we will deliver this
Communicate expectations aligned to the Council Plan and linked strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop and communicate directorate and service level plans</li> <li>■ Managers will set objectives linked to the Council Plan and Values and Principles frameworks</li> </ul>
Capture and monitor performance outcomes across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Introduce a robust performance management and reporting framework</li> <li>■ Agree associated development plans to manage all levels of performance</li> </ul>
Ensure those with high potential are identified, stretched, and developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Build talent management into performance framework conversations</li> <li>■ Provide access to a range of development opportunities</li> </ul>
Recognise and celebrate employee achievements and behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acknowledge and recognise good practice and behaviours</li> <li>■ Celebration of achievements</li> </ul>

# Health, Safety and Wellbeing

We recognise the importance of the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, and the need to have a range of support available now and in the future. Supporting employees to be well and stay well is key to our success. We will provide a working environment that helps employees to thrive.

The pandemic has had a lasting effect and coupled with significant energy costs, the rise in inflation and cost-of-living crisis we recognise the psychological impact on our staff. Therefore building strength and resilience across the workforce is critical for future sustainability.

This theme builds on the existing range of support we have in place and the introduction of a Wellbeing Strategy will allow us to review our approach, capture the positive steps already taken, and plan for the future.

Employee surveys and focus groups will help us target our plans which will cover physical and mental wellbeing as well as flexibility and blended working.

We will...	How we will deliver this
<p>Prioritise health, safety and wellbeing to ensure we have a resilient and healthy workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Introduce a Wellbeing Strategy</li> <li>■ Review relevant HR policies and procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Provide all employees with relevant training and support to ensure safe working practices are applied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of mandatory Health and Safety Training</li> <li>■ Capture individual needs and requirements through regular discussion</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure access to a wellbeing offer that responds to employee needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Targeted initiatives in response to employee survey or reacting to events</li> <li>■ Promotion via multiple methods to reach the whole workforce</li> </ul>
<p>Offer an environment that supports employees to adopt a healthy work life balance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work in partnership with Public Health on wellbeing campaigns</li> <li>■ Review and promote policies that support work life balance</li> </ul>

# Implementation

The People Strategy will be implemented through a combination of existing action plans and programmes of work and the introduction of new approaches. These will be reviewed and realigned to ensure a cohesive, collective approach to ensure delivery of the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Existing action plans and programmes, along with new areas of work include:

- EDI Action Plan – Disability Confident, Race at Work Charter
- Blended Working Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including Better Health at Work Award
- Diverse Development Programmes
- Gender Pay Gap expanded to include Ethnic Origin and Disability
- Workforce Profile Data
- Member Development Strategy and Development Programme
- Cultural Transformation Programme
- Transformation Strategy
- Partnership Strategy.

Action plans and specific targeted plans and work will be developed to deliver actions not already under way. Targets and key milestones will be identified to monitor progress against the People Strategy aims.

In addition to cross-council planning, this will involve departmental leadership teams being fully engaged in the development of plans to reflect specific service needs.

## Delivering the People Strategy - The role of HR

The role of Human Resources is to support the Council in realising and achieving the Mayor's Vision and corporate priorities through its people. Owning the People Strategy, HR will work with leaders and managers to attract and retain a highly motivated workforce. We will deliver the People Strategy by providing professional expertise, projects, policies, and processes which:

- are future focused and provide flexibility to facilitate growth, change and innovation
- contribute to the creation of a positive and inclusive working environment
- make employees feel valued and able to achieve their full potential
- support all employees to carry out their roles effectively
- ensure compliance with legislation
- make the most efficient and effective use of resources.

# How will we know it's working?

Our aim is to have a diverse workforce who are proud to work for Middlesbrough Council, with high performing teams that are customer focussed. Our leaders will lead by example, and everyone will demonstrate the right behaviours. This will be demonstrated through:

- Higher rate of candidate attraction
- Successful recruitment
- Reduction in turnover
- Reduced sickness absence
- More diverse workforce
- Positive employee engagement rates
- Staff satisfaction rates
- Reductions in standards complaints.

## Monitor and Review

To ensure focus upon and strengthen delivery of the People Strategy, associated delivery plans will be developed and the activity required to deliver the measures of success will be monitored in-line with the approved governance arrangements and the corporate performance management arrangements.

Alongside this, the delivery plans will either adhere to the corporate Programme and Project Management Framework, and / or have robust milestone plans to be assessed against. Progress against delivery of the

activities required will be monitored on a monthly basis and reported to the Independent Improvement Advisory Board, as part of the formal arrangements in place for the corporate governance improvement plan, alongside updates to meetings of full Council.

Whilst we acknowledge some objectives and outcomes may take more than a year to achieve, the People Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it can adapt to organisational needs.

