

Introduction

The principle behind the formation of this strategy is:

Achieving a plan which will assist in ensuring we have a committed, capable and skilled workforce that is focused on achieving the Council's objectives.

Background and context

Key influences and challenges

The future climate of local government is one of change. The key influences for our people strategy over the next 3-5 years include:

- The need to develop innovative recruitment and retention to secure sufficient current and future capacity to drive forward improvement
- Taking forward the pay and workforce modernisation agenda
- Implementing our post-CPA improvement plan and embedding continuous improvement
- Addressing capacity and skills gaps, particularly in the areas of leadership development, performance management and partnership working
- Work-life balance issues
- Financial pressures including the need to control the pay bill
- More complex employment legislation and new legal requirements emphasising individual rights and equality
- Changes in the way we manage our housing stock
- Development and implementation of the equalities agenda
- Securing cost effectiveness through redesign of working practices, the use of technology and greater workforce flexibility

What Oxford City Council is like

- Currently the Council employs around 1400 people in 18 business units, 1250 of these employees work full-time. There are 3 Strategic Directors responsible for a portfolio of business unit each and 3 service areas reporting directly to the Chief Executive.
- The number of people directly employed by the authority has increased by 3% in the last 3 years. This reflects a significant increase in the capital programme and additional staffing resources being allocated to Political priorities. There is an increasing move to more flexible use of staffing resources including flexible contracts, partnerships and other mixed-economy solutions.
- The Council, in common with other employers, has an ageing workforce; 43% of our staff are over the age of 45.
- There are currently 152 members of staff who have been with the Council for over 20 years, 39 of these have been with us over 30 years. At the same time we have 303 staff who have been with the Council for less than 2 years.
- Although the split between the number of female and male employees is roughly equal there is an imbalance in the grade of male and female employees with only 31% of employees in the top 5% of earners being female.
- Absence levels, both long and short term, are above average for the sector and against national averages.
- We do not employ a level of staff from black and ethnic minority groups which is representative of the population of the city but our workforce representation is much higher than the average representation across the County.
- The CPA inspection in 2003 rated the Council as weak but improving. We have taken significant steps along the improvement path but much more work is needed.

Both national and local studies reflect the increasing importance placed by employees on a more balanced lifestyle with opportunities to meet the demands of work and family and leisure. Research also tells us that a key issue for all employees is personal and professional development. Improvements in both areas will help the Council recruit and retain a committed and capable workforce. This strategy is therefore aimed at supporting individual choices about work, care and parenting, whilst balancing them with the needs of the organisation.

What Oxford and Oxfordshire are like

- Oxford City has a total population of around 134,000
- At 1.7% the unemployment rate in the city has halved in the last 10 years (compared to a national average at the same point of 2.4%)
- Oxford City has the second highest percentage of ethnic Chinese in the Country. The total ethnic representation in the city is 12.81% compared to a 6.3 % workforce representation
- Across Oxfordshire the total non-white population is 3.3%
- The Council has 48 Councillors representing 24 wards. Following the 2004 local elections the Council is run by a minority Labour administration
- Almost 95,000 people work in Oxford, which represents 32% of overall employment in the county. Yet more than half of these jobs are taken by people commuting into Oxford from elsewhere, mostly from the rest of Oxfordshire. The City Council workforce reflects this balance with around 50% of employees living outside of the city
- The population of Oxfordshire is around 606,000 with a roughly equal gender split. 70% of households are owner-occupied and 74% of residents reported 'good' health in the last census.

Outside Influences

This strategy aims to take account of all the external pressures faced by the Council, including:

- Central government policies, review (Corporate Performance Assessment) and customer expectations driving the need to improve performance
- Central government influences on the nature of Public sector service provision, for example, e-government, working in partnership across traditional agency boundaries; becoming an enabler of provision rather than a direct provider. This will demand more varied working styles and relationships
- European Directives on Race, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief, Disability and Age discrimination.
- Very low unemployment locally means the Council needs to focus on attracting and retaining new recruits and developing existing employees
- The high cost of living in the South East means the Council must be competitive in order to attract the best employees

Review and measuring success

Many of the changes we hope to achieve through this strategy are aimed at increasing morale and making Oxford City Council a better place to work. Consequently many of the changes will be subjective and difficult to measure. However, there are a number of key performance indicators and other methods we will employ to ensure we are moving in the right direction. These will include:

- MORI staff satisfaction surveys
- Recruitment and retention statistics (turnover)
- Levels of staff complaints
- Exit interview feedback

We also recognise that the sector is still changing rapidly and this strategy will need to be flexible to support different needs in the future. We will therefore carry out a full review every 12 months.

Key aims, objectives and plans

Strategic Aim: Right People

What This Means:

Innovative recruitment and retention to develop a wider talent pool, develop leadership capacity and drive improvement.

Actions We Will Take

Objective	Action	Success Measures
Develop innovative recruitment solutions to ensure the Council is able to attract and retain high calibre staff from all sectors	Review of recruitment practices and supporting policies to ensure good practice and maximum flexibility	Increased organisational capacity Reduced turnover
Develop and promote clear career paths linked to development and performance	Identification of posts that lend themselves to career paths and succession planning both within Business Units and Corporately Extend use of long career-graded posts in relevant areas Develop partnerships with local universities and colleges	Improved recruitment and retention
Use exit information to inform future recruitment and retention	Revised Exit Interview questionnaire and interview process Development of standard management information	Effective management information to facilitate learning from exit information.

<p>Develop benefits packages (financial and non-financial) to allow recognition of good performance.</p>	<p>Review pay structures Consider provision of other, non-financial reward Develop policies for payment of subscription fees to required professional bodies</p>	<p>Improved recruitment and retention</p>
<p>Enhance the image of Oxford City Council as an employer, with particular emphasis on attracting talent from other sectors</p>	<p>Actively promote opportunities to employees from other sectors through advertising and media</p> <p>Further promote benefits prior to and during recruitment and employment, for example flexible working and pension scheme</p> <p>Improve media relationship</p>	<p>Improved recruitment and retention</p> <p>Enhanced staff satisfaction</p> <p>Wider talent pool from which to recruit</p>

Strategic Aim: Reward and Recognise

What this means:

Develop a culture that encourages and rewards excellence, perseverance, flexibility and initiative.

Actions We Will Take:

Objective	Actions	Success Measures
Operate a fair, competitive and transparent reward system	Implement a job evaluation scheme Carry out an equal pay audit Assess regional and national salary package comparisons	Recruitment and retention levels Reduced grading appeals
Improve the employee benefits package and consider introduction of menu benefits	Consider wider scope for relocation benefits Implement full flextime scheme Investigate other benefits including healthcare, childcare vouchers etc	Improved recruitment success Reduced turnover Enhanced ability to attract from outside of the Local Government sector
Use zero-cost schemes to motivate and celebrate success	Recognition through saying 'thank you', celebrate achievements Reward success, for example with leisure memberships, time off, lunches/team events	Improved morale
Manage poor performance more consistently and effectively	Line management training in Performance Management including absence management, appraisals and	Reduced absenteeism Reduced staff complaints and appeals

	performance development plans Introduce open and transparent frameworks for dealing with performance issues.	Reduced staff turnover Increased capacity
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Strategic Aim: Foster good employee relations

What this means:

Ensure good communication in all directions, work in partnership with trade unions and ensure fair and equitable policies and dispute resolution procedures.

Actions we will take

Objective	Action	Success Measures
Develop partnership working with recognised trade unions on key corporate issues	Extend partnership working on key areas, such as development of learning centres and Improvement Board	Increased staff involvement Positive partnership working
Extend remit of JCC to enhance effectiveness of existing consultation structures	Agree revised terms of reference for the Joint Consultative Committee	Increased information sharing
Ensure any collective issues are dealt with quickly and effectively	Introduce formal dispute resolution procedures	Agreed and effective policies for resolution of collective disputes
Ensure all employment policies are fair and equitable and support positive employee relations	Continue policy review	Revised policies which provide good practice solutions to all employee issues
Achieve transparent and integrated approach to employee relations	Develop employee relations framework to include joint working principles, time off agreement, dispute resolution procedures, formal consultation and negotiation agreements etc	Agreed employee relations framework

Strategic Aim: Strive for Equality and Flexibility

What this means:

Implement corporate equalities policy, use flexible working to achieve work/life balance and develop a flexible workforce that evolves in line with organisational demands

Actions we will take

Objective	Actions	Success Measures
Implement corporate equalities policy	Work towards Level 2 of the Equality Standard	BVPs Increased workforce representation
Develop 'decent office standard'	Ensure appropriate basic facilities in all work environments	Access for all staff to basic facilities
Review and update flex scheme	Achieve true flexibility	Improved morale Improved cover Reduced absence rates
Develop range of flexible policies	Agree policies on homeworking, variable hours, annualised hours, part-time, term-time with evaluation of effect on fixed-hours and shift work	Added flexibility Improved morale Reduced absence rates Increased recruitment success
Develop aspirational performance reviews	All staff to be reviewed twice per year Developmental targets to be set and monitored Links with career planning to be embedded	Higher rate of internal promotion Enhanced ability to plan succession Co-operative working Enhanced capacity through flexibility
Develop a flexible, corporate project-	Team of skilled and experienced officers	Reduced delays in progressing corporate

team	to be available to enhance capacity and/or performance in any area of the council.	<p>initiatives</p> <p>Enhance corporate performance</p> <p>Provision of opportunities for skills development</p>
Ensure the removal of barriers to achieving a truly representative workforce	<p>Develop policy for staff working beyond 65</p> <p>Ensure opportunity for women in senior posts, including extending job-sharing and part-time working at senior levels</p> <p>Ensure accessibility to all posts to people from all backgrounds and actively promoted inclusivity in advertising</p> <p>Ensure opportunities do not preclude people with disabilities</p>	Appropriate representation levels
Develop more flexible workforce	<p>Extend graduate trainee scheme and similar programmes</p> <p>Develop key skills framework to facilitate generic corporate skills base</p> <p>Promote job shadowing and secondment both internally and externally supported by coaching and mentoring schemes</p>	Enhanced ability to respond to changing needs and use resources appropriately

Strategic Aim: Change, Innovation and Capacity

What this means:

Working within an environment that is impacted upon by Legislation, Political Change and ongoing changes in Working Practice can be challenging. As a result, Oxford City Council needs to have practices in place that allow for flexibility in the workforce, promote communication and consultation with employees and ensure effective planning for change.

Actions we will take

Objective	Actions	Success measures
Managing Change	<p>Leadership Development programme</p> <p>Identify training needs at the beginning of the change process</p> <p>Provide flexibility in work practices that reflect the changing funding streams, for example through flexible job descriptions and training for work beyond the Council</p> <p>Have clear procedures for communicating how change will impact on staff</p>	<p>Increased morale</p> <p>Improved retention of key staff</p> <p>Improved flexibility in responding to government initiatives</p>
Business Planning	<p>Have a set approach to Project Management/planning corporately so that we are all planning for change in the same way</p> <p>Link business planning at all levels</p>	<p>Consistent approach understood by all</p>
Partnership Working, Sharing Best	<p>Establish a flexible policy for our staff to</p>	<p>Enhanced learning from best practice</p>

Practice	<p>take secondments outside of the Council</p> <p>Be clear about what our role is in external partnerships with staff</p> <p>Ensure that learning from partnerships is shared among staff</p>	outside the organisation
Build organisational capacity through greater workforce development, planning and flexibility	<p>Equip managers with necessary skills to plan future workforce needs</p> <p>Create flexibility through the use of generic job descriptions, promotion of secondment opportunities, shared services and the use of technology</p> <p>Develop the use of skills audits and matrices to ensure all skills are used to best capacity within the organisation</p>	<p>Increased capacity</p> <p>Increased ability to respond to changing demands</p>

Strategic Aim: Develop and Invest in people

What This Means

Develop strong leaders, promote career development, develop a culture of learning and encourage employees to take responsibility for their own continuous development

Actions We Will Take

Objective	Action	Success Measures
Develop an integrated programme of leadership development for employees at all levels	Work through improvement plan in partnership with Gatenby Sanderson to develop leadership at all levels	Enhanced corporate performance Provisions of learning and career opportunities Increased morale
Identify posts which lend themselves to succession planning and careers paths and develop learning plans	Business managers to identify appropriate posts and work with Human Resources to develop learning plans	Posts and individuals identified
Ensure that individual employees understand organisational objectives and their role	Ensure business plan clearly links to corporate plan Ensure individual PDPs clearly link to business plans Use induction and corporate awareness sessions	Staff have better understanding of corporate objectives Increased morale through increased involvement
Develop learning culture	Maximise workplace learning opportunities Train all managers to consistent standard against agreed corporate	Managers trained Enhanced corporate performance Mentors network

	<p>competence framework</p> <p>Further develop trainers network</p> <p>Use bite-size sessions corporately and within business units to share learning</p> <p>Formalise feedback from all learning events and maximise use of management information to share learning</p> <p>Develop links with other authorities and use feedback routes to share good practice</p> <p>Develop and broaden use of individual and corporate trainee posts</p> <p>Develop mentors network</p>	
Provide resources and opportunities to encourage employees to take ownership of their own learning	<p>Use roadshows to raise awareness and promote specific opportunities</p> <p>Use induction programme</p> <p>Use core brief and staff newsletter</p>	<p>Greater involvement</p> <p>Enhanced morale</p>
Embed Investors in People standard	Use standard as benchmark for good practice in the organisation	<p>Enhanced morale and satisfaction</p> <p>Effective use of learning</p> <p>Greater understanding of corporate objectives</p>

Strategic Aim: Safe and healthy working environment

What This Means

Ensuring that the organisation is a safe place to work and promoting work for health and health for work

Actions We Will Take

Objective	Actions	Success Measures
Continue with planned systematic approach to safety audits and monitoring of implementation of recommendations	Safety audits according to agreed programme	All issues identified and action plans agreed
Ensure that staff at all levels sufficient and appropriate information, instruction and training to properly discharge their health and safety responsibilities	Awareness raising initiatives Induction programme	Greater awareness of responsibilities among all staff and managers
Develop partnership working with Occupational health	Joint working with occupational health on accident prevention, absence reduction and health management.	Greater awareness of health and safety issues. Reduced absence levels. Increased morale.
Continue to monitor absence levels by business unit and corporately to build sound base of management information	Monthly monitoring reports Detailed breakdown of information for business managers	Increased understanding of particular issues Reduced absence levels
Raise awareness of health and safety duties and absence management policies	Employee information to be circulated widely	All employee aware of health and safety responsibilities All employees aware of action to reduce absence levels
Further reduce absence levels	Investigate further initiatives to facilitate improved attendance	Reduction in absence levels Enhanced morale, increased capacity

