



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**



# Stoke-on-Trent City Council Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy 2021 – 2024

Developing our workforce, supporting our City

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# STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL STRONGER TOGETHER VISION





Support vulnerable people  
in our communities to live  
their lives well



Enable our residents to  
fulfil their potential



Help businesses to  
thrive and make our city  
more prosperous



Work with our communities to  
make them healthier,  
safer and more sustainable



An innovative and commercial council,  
providing effective leadership to  
help transform outcomes

The Stronger Together vision sets out the priorities for Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the wider city. The strategic plan has been shaped by the political ambition of the City Council’s leadership, as well as the values and aims of the organisation. As such, it is as much a corporate plan for the council’s directorates and teams as it is a strategic blueprint for improving Stoke-on-Trent as a city. Our Stronger Together principle is embedded into every strategy including our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy which is set out within this document.

This strategy is part of a suite of documents, supporting the Stronger Together Vision, which includes the Digital Strategy, the Customer Service Strategy and the Asset Management Strategy, all of which are designed to support Stoke-on-Trent City Council to create a stronger city we can all be proud of.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has a clear and ambitious vision to empower both the city and its residents to achieve their full potential.

Small but mighty, we are on an impressive transformational journey, with strong civic pride and an absolute commitment to delivering best outcomes at our heart – making both the council and Stoke-on-Trent a place we can all be proud of.







City Waterside

As one of the largest local employers, the council's workforce is made up of circa 5,000 people in a wide and exciting variety of professions and roles who deliver a significant number of diverse services to the city's incredible residents. Our employees are our greatest and most valuable resource whose skills, knowledge and experience are essential to delivering our ambitions and vision. An exceptionally diverse and talented workforce, from residential care workers; environmental health professionals; architects; street cleansing; accountants; community and anti-social behaviour teams; through to swimming instructors; social workers; catering assistants; business analysts and so many more. With about 1,000 different job roles across our organisation, it is clear to see why our staff, and their skills/ knowledge are one of our proudest assets.

The vast and varied landscape in which the council operates, allows those looking to develop, learn and continually grow their skill-set an exciting and rewarding career path, working as part of the outstanding #TeamStoke. In return for their hard work and dedication to the council they benefit from being part of an inspiring journey, taking pride in the services they deliver and contributing to powering up the amazing city in which they work.

The environment in which the council operates continues to evolve with changing societal behaviours, resident needs, customer expectations and technological advances. We now live in a fast paced, digitally reliant, 24/7 society which has changed the way in which our residents live and work and how and when they want and need to access our services and support.

In order to respond to this evolution, the council has embarked on an exciting process of transformation, exploring new ways to make our services more intelligent and more relevant to the lives of the people who rely on them. We are also improving the way we use data to see where our services are working, and where we need to do things differently to deliver better outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses.

This transformation will include investment in a 'digital first' approach across the council in recognition that our customers want a more immediate, personalised service and expect to be able to contact us 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This will help us to streamline and simplify our services, enabling us to manage demand effectively and releasing capacity for those with more complex needs.

We are also in the process of developing an approach to locality working which will see us working collaboratively with partners to combine resources in the local areas based around shared priorities, delivering the right services at the right time in order to achieve positive outcomes and improved levels of service for the community.

To ensure that we can continue to support our communities and residents in this changing environment it is imperative that we have a workforce that is engaged, adaptable, flexible and has both the skills and mindset to meet these changing needs and demands and ensure we continue to deliver high quality, modern and effective services.

Over the last 18 months we have seen that our dedicated and hardworking staff cannot only deliver services effectively but also innovatively, passionately and in ever changing ways. We are keen to build on this creating a truly agile and adaptable workforce that is no longer confined to a fixed location and helps us to make the best use of our most valuable assets and resources.

Our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy sets out a clear plan of approach to workforce development, building on the already excellent work and good practice we have. It encompasses the key elements needed to attract the right people at the right time; provide a great induction experience, lifelong learning and career development; retain our talent and provide the means for staff to consider their own health and wellbeing.

## Trade Unions

We work closely with our recognised Trade Unions in order to ensure that we are able to clearly hear the voice of our employees and to resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity. Our Trade Union colleagues often have suggestions and ideas on how we can improve our services and we welcome the input that they bring.



Smithfield development in the city centre



# OUR VISION

To ensure we have a workforce made up of the right people with the right skills and values to provide excellent services to our customers in an agile and responsive way.



## Aim:

The aim of the strategy is to ensure we are an employer people are proud to work for, and where they are supported, developed and rewarded in an inclusive way that helps them to deliver the services our residents need.

## Objectives:



Attracting and retaining talented people



Developing our management and leadership skills



Developing the skills of our workforce



Developing an inclusive workforce where all can belong and thrive



Supporting and rewarding our people

# OUR CORE VALUES, BEHAVIOURS AND EXPECTATIONS



One Council, One Vision, One Team is what epitomises the organisational culture and clearly sets out that the council is an organisation that has a clear direction of travel and wants everyone to be part of the collective journey. Our workplace values and behaviours are the guiding principles at the heart of everything we do and ensure that we do the right things in the right way.



## Ownership and accountability

We will be accountable for our own actions and take decisions in an open and transparent manner, empowering people to take ownership in their communities.



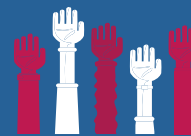
## Ambition

We will be ambitious for our towns and the city and make each contact with the council an opportunity to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents.



## Respect

We will put respect at the heart of how we work with colleagues and residents, valuing the contribution they make to the city, the towns within it and the communities they support.



## Involvement

We will work together with our residents, involving people in decisions, listen and take on new ideas.



## Work with each other

We will seek out opportunities to work with people and organisations to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and the city.

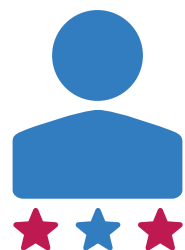
How our employees work with each other, our residents and our partners is key to achieving our vision. We need to be kind to all who are involved with the work the council does, showing strength, courage, warmth, concern and integrity in the actions we take.

This strategy clearly sets out how we will support and develop our workforce and offer them new ways of working to better enhance their work/life balance.

However, we also expect a number of things in return:

- Be proud to work for Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Care about the residents and the quality of the services we are providing
- Be reliable, diligent, trustworthy and accountable
- Have ownership of their role and contribute to improvements
- Embrace team working and take a responsive and flexible approach
- Continuously strive to develop their skills and knowledge
- To get involved, share their views, challenge the norm
- Respect colleagues and always strive to deliver their best for the team and the council
- Be ambitious not only for themselves but the council as a whole
- Look after their health and wellbeing





# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENTED PEOPLE

Stoke-on-Trent is a city on the up and with such ambitious and exciting plans for the future we need to ensure we are attracting the right people with the right skills, knowledge and values to fill our roles. Our objective will be to attract and recruit high calibre candidates who are committed and passionate about working with us and for the city's residents, promoting the council as an exciting team to be part of.

We work in an ever-changing environment and our recruitment methods need to reflect this. The use of digital technology, working with local educational providers and a good transport network into the area means we can work with both local talent whilst also striving to attract the best out of area talent to support any skills gaps.

Our city is a diverse mix of age, ethnicity and ability and we need to take a lead in ensuring our procedures and roles are inclusive for all when recruiting employees. A diverse workforce and an inclusive culture are essential ingredients for sustained organisational success. Being part of #TeamStoke should be one of inclusivity, empowerment and welcoming to all who would like to join our exceptional team and deliver outcomes for the amazing residents we serve every day.

## Cornerstone Employer

Stoke-on-Trent City Council as one of the largest employers in the city has been asked to become a Cornerstone Employer.

In doing so we would join a focus group of local employers who will drive forward a local strategy to support and offer engagement opportunities to our young people.



## Children and Family Services Recruitment Campaign

We are committed to putting families and communities at the heart of our decision making and our ambition is to improve their lives and life experiences. In order to achieve this, we invested in a high-quality recruitment campaign to attract a number of ambitious, passionate and caring individuals to join us on our journey.

## Our Commitments

- Raise the profile of the council as an employer locally, regionally and nationally and be recognised as a great place to work.
- Specifically raise the profile of the council as an employer with the young people of the city and provide them with pathways to gain employment with us.
- Recognise our skills gaps and hard to recruit to roles and develop plans to support recruitment into these roles, so that we provide a compelling package that sets us apart from the competition.
- Develop, implement and review a robust and responsive recruitment procedure to attract the best candidates from all backgrounds for all level of job roles.
- Establish a robust system of talent identification and development within our workforce to ensure that people are given the support to progress and are therefore likely to stay.
- Support the development of apprenticeship roles across our workforce
- Secure regular feedback so we know what is and isn't working for our workforce to ensure we retain good workers.





# DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF OUR WORKFORCE

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is extremely proud of the employees we have working across the city and recognises the skills and knowledge these employees have built up over the years. A career with #TeamStoke is an exciting and varied one, therefore we should continue to enhance those valuable skills and experiences regularly with a view to retaining the talent already within the organisation. Investment in the continual support, coaching, training and development of the existing workforce is fundamental to our service delivery that continues to strive for excellence. Paramount to engaging and empowering our employees is a strong induction process, a detailed training plan for each role, recognising and developing our talent and offering progression, all of which are underpinned by the council's policies and procedures and emulated by the management population.

## Learning Management System

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has invested in a new state-of-the-art learning management system, that will revolutionise the way our employees engage with learning and development. Our system has advanced functionality designed to champion employee development through talent management modules, in addition to efficient reporting tools enabling managers to run one-click reports to view their team's progress. The learning management system is easy to use to make bookings and complete online learning. You can log into the LMS via a mobile, tablet or laptop allowing you to engage with learning on the go if that's what works best for you. Our exciting new system provides a brilliant opportunity for our entire workforce to have access to a wide range of online learning to enable us to move away from classroom based training which will give colleagues more choice in how and when they learn. Quick fire e-learning modules will include Prioritising Projects, Negotiation Strategies, Preparing for Presentations, Becoming a Better Listener, Reasonable Adjustments, Gender Reassignment Discrimination, and Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing.



Home Dashboard My Learning Record My Bookings P.L.A.N. Team Reports Find Learning Katie Russell




# Progress Learning Actions Nurture

## Progress Learning Actions Nurture

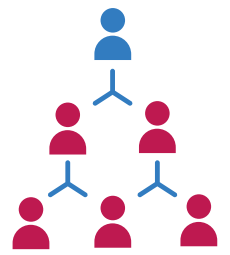
As a council we need to ensure that our employees have the right skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively support the residents of Stoke-on-Trent. Utilising our P.L.A.N's we want everyone to understand that conversations between staff and their manager, both in the annual P.L.A.N. and through ongoing 1:1s, are about:

- supporting wellbeing
- understanding and meeting learning and development needs
- offering direction and purpose, aligned to our Stronger Together priorities
- valuing and appreciating employee contribution

## Our Commitments

- Develop, implement and review our workforce planning approach to ensure we have skills matrices that clearly define the skills required for each job role.
- Identify and develop appropriate pathways which ensure our workforce have the specific digital knowledge and skills required to respond to the newly emerging ways of working.
- Establish a talent development system and succession planning pathways for job roles across teams, recognising and cultivating the talent we already have in our teams.
- Embed a clear induction procedure, incorporating both corporate and team priorities.
- Review, amend and communicate our personal development planning process P.L.A.N. (Progress, Learning, Actions, and Nurture).
- Develop a refreshed learning and development plan based on new software platform with a blended programme of learning and development training aligned to the requirements from the skills matrices.
- Roll out A.D.A.P.T (Analysis, Data, Action, Plan, Transform) network to drive excellence in continuous improvement, as an enabler of the transformation programme, giving our employees the opportunity to share ideas and contribute to improvements.
- Creating a positive transformational workplace culture, where we empower our talented employees and encourage innovation, continually learn from what we do, and collaborate with others to get the best results.
- Promote the benefits of buddying, coaching, mentoring and external placements (e.g. private sector partners) as tools to support our employees.





## DEVELOPING OUR MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Our managers and leaders across the council play a critical role in us achieving the strategic priorities and supporting the effective changes in the provision of the services we deliver. The continual development and empowerment of our managers and leaders is a key priority to ensure they promote a positive and inclusive culture; open communication; high performance and an environment which encourages challenge appropriately.

Effective leadership and management development is key to ensuring we work together as one team to create a flexible and agile culture where employees feel empowered and trusted to do their jobs. Collaboration and networking enables leaders and managers to work more closely together, understanding the wider environment and the impact our services have on local people.

### A.D.A.P.T Analyse. Data. Action. Plan. Transform

The A.D.A.P.T Network is about developing a new way of working where continuous improvement is business as usual, building confidence in generating ideas for improvement. A collaborative approach involving staff, customers and key stakeholders in delivering improvements.

Any employee can participate and play an active role in supporting the delivery of improvement projects identified in the operational and team plans, as well as being able to put forward their own ideas.

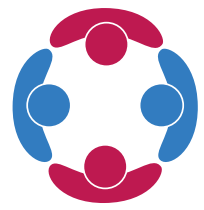


### Our Commitments

- Clearly articulate what it means to be a manager and leader at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and what behaviours we expect from them.
- Ensure all managers and leaders have access to development and training opportunities that equips them with the skills to manage in a more flexible, agile and commercial environment.
- Develop effective engagement opportunities for all managers and leaders to be able to share learning.
- Provide managers with the tools to effectively support our employees' wellbeing, personal development and career progression.
- Develop an aspiring manager programme to help encourage our talented people to develop into their chosen career path.







# DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

We are determined to develop a diverse and inclusive workforce that is more representative of the fantastic city that we serve, where everyone feels supported, their voices are heard and they all have equal prospects of progress based only on merit. One of our equality objectives is to improve access to employment for groups which experience barriers to work and as a large local employer we will lead by example and ensure our jobs are accessible to everyone in a fair and open way.

## Race Equality Group

In September 2020, we developed a new Race Equality Group which is chaired by the City Director with other group members representing a cross section of employees from all directorates. The group reviews council policies, procedures and general ways of working in respect to race equality and makes tangible recommendations to ensure equality is embedded in all the council's functions and activities and that we are striving to make our workforce fully representative of our local community.



## Support for Carers

Stoke-on-Trent City Council recognises that its employees are the organisation's most valuable asset and understands that employees have a life outside of work which may include responsibility for looking after children and/or other caring responsibilities and that they may need support to combine work with care. Therefore, in 2021 we launched a carers' procedure which sets out the support we will offer these employees, offers guidance to help balance working and caring commitments and will support the recruitment and retention of employees with caring responsibilities.

## Our Commitments

- Set clear targets for increasing the number of BAME employees in our workforce and managing actively towards those targets, using tested approaches from other organisations and sectors.
- Engage with all of our workforce to understand barriers to progress and then actively addressing them.
- Engage with different communities in our city on a consistent basis to build trust that the council is an organisation which is good to work for.
- Communicate clearly and consistently that we are an organisation that will not tolerate discrimination or prejudice of any sort, and backing this up with consistent actions.
- Recognise groups that may have particular support needs to fulfil their potential at work and making appropriate provision, e.g. carers, people with disabilities, and embracing neurodiversity and access to mental health support.
- Develop proposals to improve our support for staff with disabilities





# SUPPORTING AND REWARDING OUR PEOPLE

As one of the largest employers in the city we want to continue to develop our reputation as an employer of choice. Recognising and celebrating our employees' contributions to achieving our strategic priorities, valuing diversity and promoting an inclusive workforce should be standard practice. The council also wants to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees is seen as a priority as we believe that to enable our people to perform well we must encourage a positive, supportive, well managed, healthy workplace. Whilst we endeavour to retain our employees, new openings for them and changes to our services means opportunities arise that they will choose to take. When our employees leave the council for whatever reason we aim for them to depart well trained and equipped to face the new challenges ahead.

## Staff Awards

2021 will see the delivery of our fifth Staff Awards, designed to highlight the diverse and inspiring work that goes on across this great city. The fantastic work our employees do makes a real difference to our city and the people we serve and we want to celebrate this. Teams and individuals across the organisation continually go the extra mile and this is something that we need to highlight in as many ways as possible. As part of our 'One Council, One Vision, One Team' approach, we want to build a culture where saying 'well done and thanks' to colleagues is always part of what we do.



## Fostering Friendly

Stoke-on-Trent City Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child. In August 2020, the council introduced a new fostering friendly policy which was accredited by the Fostering Network making us an official Fostering Friendly Employer.

## Our Commitments

- Celebrate and thank our individuals' and teams' performance, through our personal development planning process and our staff awards programme.
- Have processes in place to ensure that the physical work environment is safe and that any risks are assessed and managed.
- Offer a confidential counselling service and access to an occupational health service.
- Encourage employees to think about their own health and wellbeing and feel confident to make suggestions on actions we could take to support this.
- Review and keep updated our human resources policies and procedures to support our employees.
- Ensure all our employees understand how agile and flexible ways of working will support the council and help them achieve a good level of work life balance.
- Review and communicate our staff benefits.
- Review and analyse the reasons for employees leaving their roles.
- Offer an outplacement support package, incorporating appropriate training courses, partner and HR support.
- Have in place opportunities for employees to investigate retirement and what it means to them.
- Ensure the Asset Management and Digital strategies support our workforce to deliver services.
- Bring forward a package of proposed changes to terms and conditions and working practices to support agile and flexible working.
- Review some sub-structures, layers and spans to ensure the size, shape and management of our workforce reflects efficient and effective working practices and benchmark appropriately with similar organisations.





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