

Cabinet
13 September 2023

Approval of new People Strategy Action Plan for Devon County Council Report of the Director of People & Culture

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) endorse the People Strategy Action Plan and all of the activities / projects contained therein
- (b) delegate authority for minor amendments to the Director of People & Culture in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation

2) Background

Cabinet approved the new [People Strategy](#) for DCC in June 2023 which was identified as priority to develop in response to a number of issues. For instance, recent issues highlighted from the Race Equality Audit (2021) coupled with other behavioural related concerns identified in Children's Services over the last year, through a high number of operational related HR matters, has driven the need to refocus on activities in relation to our staff and the organisation's culture.

A key priority for the People Strategy is also to outline how we will ensure that we have the appropriately skilled and talented people we need to deliver services to our communities and ensure that our Council is fit for the future, in a highly competitive market. Further to this, we want all staff to understand and embody our values of care and kindness, along with our responsibility to strive for better outcomes and good value for the people of Devon.

It is critical that we also focus on the quality of our relationships and engagement with key stakeholders and partners to ensure that, working together, our strong values and collective approach ensure the best outcomes for the people of Devon.

The Action Plan outlines how we will focus on delivery of this over the next 3 years.

3) Main Body

The Strategy was designed based around a focus on the 6 key themes of:

1. Voice
2. Recruitment
3. Wellbeing
4. Belonging
5. Learning
6. Reward

The 6 themes were shaped by feedback from previous staff surveys, findings from the Race Equality Audit, benchmarking against other organisations, research of the recruitment market, themes identified through 'Exit Interviews' with staff leaving DCC and feedback from staff reference groups. The themes have then been consulted on earlier this year as outlined in Section 5 below. The activities undertaken in relation to each theme will directly impact upon the culture and performance of our workforce.

The Action Plan details how we will deliver against the strategy's aims over the next 3 years. Some of the actions listed have been in progress this year already, which Cabinet are already cited on. For instance, A Spotlight Review in April regarding the 'Cost of living crisis' made a recommendation to Cabinet, which noted the implementation of a staff-wide discount scheme as part of the resolution. The Benefits Platform which will go live later this year will deliver this and is listed as one of the actions in the Plan.

It is proposed that progress against the Action Plan be reviewed as follows:

- People & Culture Leadership Team on a monthly basis
- Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation on a monthly basis
- Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis
- Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.

Key Performance Indicators will be developed in relation to each theme to monitor progress against as each activity is developed.

4) Options / Alternatives

The People Strategy has been endorsed by Cabinet and in order to ensure delivery of it, an Action Plan is required. There are multiple options that have been scoped as part of designing the Action Plan, considering a range of feedback received through the consultation and engagement outlined in Section 5. Those selected have been based on considerations such as DCC's current context, including financial sustainability, and our cultural maturity. For example, the 'Outward mindset' approach currently being rolled out across Devon's Integrated Care Board, has been identified as a priority learning approach to address cultural issues within the organisation.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

The [Cabinet Report](#) submitted in June 2023 outlined the extensive engagement and collaboration undertaken to design the strategy with staff, Senior Leadership Team, Trades Unions and elected Members to gain their views about what matters from their perspective. As part of shaping the strategy, feedback has been collated from all of the stakeholders outlined above around the key actions required to deliver the strategy which have been used to create the Action Plan.

The following methods of consultation were used to inform the development of the Action Plan:

- Staff engagement survey in November 2022 which received 1857 responses, the themes from this are shared here: [What you told us in our Autumn 2022 People Survey - news \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)
- Feedback from staff following Senior Leadership Teams virtual briefing sessions held on 14 March & 2 May 2023 [Catch up on our May Microsoft Teams Sessions with our senior leaders - news \(devon.gov.uk\)](#). Following the second briefing, 46 responses received to this survey.
- External survey and analysis undertaken by our external recruitment agency, ThirtyThree, to understand the ways of working people find most appealing; the perceptions associated with County Councils as employers and why someone may or may not want to work for a County Council. This survey had 2005 respondents working in the private sector.
- Regular consultation has taken place with Senior Officers across all parts of DCC over the past 3 months and members of the corporate Equality team.
- HR senior leadership team and key stakeholders, including Trades Unions, have been consulted and provided detailed feedback.
- Multiple visits to DCC offices by the Senior Leadership Team to engage, in person, with staff and gain a greater insight into the key factors that are important for them about working for DCC
- Session with care leavers and senior officers to understand their perspectives
- Exit interview data has been reviewed from those leaving DCC to understand their reasons
- Engagement with over 30 cross-party elected members who attended the Member engagement day on 12 May 2023 and provided feedback
- Race Equality Audit [Race Equality Audit 2021 \(Anti-racism at Devon County Council\) - tasks and guides](#)
- Benchmarking and review of Workforce and People Strategies from other organisations across the public sector.

6) Strategic Plan

The Council adopted its “Best Place” Strategic Plan at its meeting on 2 December 2021. The Plan – <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan/> - sets out the Council’s vision, ambition, and overall priorities for 2021 to 2025. A [report](#) taken to Cabinet on 12 July 2023 outlined the corporate plan for the next 12 months, linked to the Strategic Plan. The

delivery of the People Strategy is identified as one of the six areas of focus for the next 12 months, and its successful implementation will enable staff to be best placed to deliver the outcomes in the Strategic Plan. It will also contribute to supporting the delivery of our corporate Equality, Diversity & Inclusion agenda, most predominantly through the 'Belonging' theme but also underpinning our approach across all areas of the Strategy.

The People Strategy explicitly highlights our collective role as corporate parents and our responsibility to our care leavers. The Action Plan outlines work both underway and planned in relation to each theme of the strategy.

7) Financial Considerations

The feedback from all of the engagement listed in Section 5 was used to design the Action Plan which will enable delivery of this strategy. The costs of the Action Plan can be contained through existing budget allocation to the People & Culture directorate.

8) Legal Considerations

Employment Law has been considered and impacts are reflected as part of developing the strategy and Action Plan. However, there will be further multiple Employment Law based considerations in relation to the detail of delivery of this strategy. Therefore, the lawful implications and consequences of the themes of the Action Plan will be considered and taken into account throughout its implementation.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The Strategy itself has no specific sustainability impacts; however, individual activities as they are scoped in more detail, may have impacts, for example in relation to staff travel or office accommodation, and the subsequent effect on the environment, that will need to be factored into any approach. Therefore, in the same way that Financial and Legal considerations will be considered, this will also be undertaken in relation to Environmental Impacts.

10) Equality Considerations

Equality matters are a focus of each theme within the Strategy and the area of 'Belonging' will predominantly centre around delivery of actions in relation to DCC's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion agenda. The strategy has been developed in liaison with DCC's Equality Team and an overarching high level impact assessment has been completed. As with the other considerations within this report, the different elements of the Action Plan will require full Equality Impacts Assessments as they are scoped, designed and rolled out.

11) Risk Management Considerations

This Action Plan will impact on two risks already cited on DCC's Risk Register. These include:

- Recruitment & Retention in relation to ensuring DCC is able to attract and retain the right staff in a highly competitive current market.
- Industrial Relations Climate with regards to any changes to current Terms & Conditions or environment having an impact on staff delivery of services, such as through Industrial Action.

The implications of each risk have been taken into account and mitigated where possible through the existing DCC Risk Register.

Financial sustainability has been considered as part of developing the Action Plan and so activities have been contained within scope of the budget allocation for the People & Culture directorate.

In addition to these risks, there is the potential for legal challenge in relation to not addressing some of the cultural issues raised, such as those raised through the Race Equality Audit or behaviours within some services.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The People Strategy has been adopted and delivery of the attached Action Plan will provide a more effective and organisation wide collaborative approach to address workforce related issues.

This would enable better use of existing resources, avoiding duplication and outline a more holistic and proactive way to address the issues raised. It also provides greater clarity over progress and reporting arrangements. Issues raised in the Race Equality Audit and other behavioural issues raised are more likely to be addressed than by dealing with approaches in a siloed way.

Name

Director - Maria Chakraborty, Director of People & Culture

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation:
Councillor Andrew Saywell

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper

Date

File Reference

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