## CABINET - 14TH JANUARY 2021

## Report of the Strategic Director of Environmental and Corporate Services

**Lead Member: Councillor Margaret Smidowicz** 

#### Part A

## ITEM 8 PEOPLE STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

## Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the Council's new People Strategy.

# Recommendations

- 1. That the Charnwood Borough Council People Strategy 2021 2024, as appended to this report, is approved.
- 2. That the Strategic Director of Environmental and Corporate Services is given delegated authority to make amendments to the specic actions outlined in this strategy as they are incorporated into a People Development Plan.

# **Reasons**

- So that the Council has a clear strategy in place for developing its workforce over the next four years to effectively deliver services and meet the objectives outlined in the Corporate Strategy.
- 2. To allow adjustments to be made to specific actions as they are incorporated into the People Development Plan. Possible changes are expected to be minor and may occur following consultation with staff and management groups or following evaluation feedback from the implementation of proceeding actions.

## Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The new People Strategy will replace the previous People Strategy 2017–2020 that was approved by Cabinet in March 2017.

## Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

Once approved the People Strategy will come into effect immediately (subject to possible call-in).

The new People Group has been formed as part of the transformational Swap Board and will oversee the implementation of the outcomes and actions in this strategy.

The SWaP Board is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council and oversees three work groups focussed on Services, Workspaces and People (SWaP). Each of the work groups is chaired by a Strategic Director.

## Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

# Financial Implications

It is anticipated that the majority of the costs associated with carrying out the actions incuded in the People Strategy will be met from existing budgets. If additional funds are required the prior approval of the SWaP Board will be required.

# Risk Management

There are no risks associated with the implementation of this strategy.

# Equality and Diversity

Charnwood Borough Council's Strategic Equality lead was consulted as part of the development of this Strategy. Appropriate actions related to the Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024 have been added to this strategy where appropriate.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this strategy but where appropriate, individual EIAs will be completed for specific actions included in the People Development Plan

# Sustainability

Some of the actions in this strategy related to agile working will support the Council to meet future carbon reduction targets.

Key Decision: No

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#### Part B

## Charnwood Borough Council People Strategy 2021 – 2024

#### 1. Introduction

The People Strategy sets out how the Council intends to continue to develop its workforce over the next four years to meet effectively its future strategic plans and priorities in a changed environment. The Covid-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on service delivery and future planning. The extended periods of lockdown have resulted in temporary office closures and necessitated online remote and agile working practices to be implemented. It is envisaged that this crisis will lead to a number of permanent economic and social changes to the way people work in the future and has heavily influenced the future direction of the workforce development identified in this Strategy

# 2. Key Strategies with direct relevance to the People Strategy

There are a number of corporate policy documents that have informed and influenced the development of the People Strategy including;

- a) Corporate Strategy (2020 2024)
- b) Strategic Direction (2020-2024)
- c) ICT Strategy (2016-2021)
- d) Equality & Inclusion Strategy (2020-2024)

There are also a number of external influences that have shaped the development of the People Strategy of which the most significant by far has been the 2020 Covid 19 Pandemic

# 3. The Five Themes of the People Strategy

The people strategy will focus on delivering five themes. Each theme focusses on the priority areas that this strategy aims to address and contains a set of outcomes and planned actions.

The priority order for delivering these outcomes and actions will be agreed and captured in the People Development Plan.

- 1) Charnwood's Culture
- 2) Leading Charnwood
- 3) Healthy Charnwood
- 4) Developing Charnwood
- 5) Supporting Charnwood

## 4. Consultation

The People Strategy has been developed in consultation with the Organisational Recovery Group, the People Group and the Staff Forum.

It was endorsed by the Senior Leadership Group (SLT) on the 30th September 2020.

# 5. How the actions in the strategy will be delivered and monitored

The outcomes and actions of this strategy will be incorporated into a new People Development Plan that will be overseen by the recently created People Group. This group is one of the three sub-groups formed as part of the SWaP Programme Board and will be chaired by the Strategic Director for Strategic Support, Governance and Procurement.

# <u>Appendix</u>

People Strategy 2021 - 2024



# Charnwood Borough Council People Strategy 2021 – 2024



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## **Foreword**

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us"

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Across the world in 2020, the Covid-19 crisis has brought about significant change and Charnwood Borough Council employees have risen to the challenge presented. Two of the four themes contained in the current People Strategy have focussed strongly on 'developing a customer-focused culture' and 'modern and flexible working practices.' There is no doubt that the speed of response to the needs of the Community and flexibility of our employees working with partners has been clearly evident.

Against this background I am privileged to be asked to introduce Charnwood's People Strategy for 2020-2024 which outlines the Five Themes Charnwood Culture, Leading Charnwood, Healthy Charnwood, Developing Charnwood and Supporting Charnwood, together with its identified outcomes and planned actions. The People Strategy will support our Corporate Strategy (2020-2024) and in particular the priorities contained in the 'Your Council' theme where our employees and elected members will work together as one council to bring positive change to Charnwood.

These themes contain the essence of the aspirations expressed in the surveys and discussions with employees to bring about the change they would wish to engage in to demonstrate a 'Can Do' attitude - with staff enabled and empowered to be proactive. Culture does not change because we desire to change it. It changes when the organisation is transformed and this is clearly underway. As the Council continues to develop a smarter, agile workforce the culture will reflect the realities of people working together, no longer in a mainly office-based culture but from home, to deliver high-quality customer service in what will continue to be a challenging environment. This is not without its difficulties and opportunities to develop and ensure our processes support the needs of all employees and contribute to their wellbeing. The Strategy also outlines the steps that need to be taken to recruit, develop and retain the best people to deliver our services.

Psychologists tell us that there are 'those that watch things happen, those that make things happen and those that were never aware that anything happened at all!' Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to this Strategy and to 'making things happen' for Charnwood in one of the most difficult years possible.

Cllr Margaret Smidowicz MSc HRD, BA (Hons) JP Lead Member for Strategic Support



## Introduction

The People Strategy sets out how the Council intends to continue to develop its workforce over the next four years to meet effectively its future strategic plans and priorities in a changed environment. The Covid-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on service delivery and future planning. The extended periods of lockdown have resulted in temporary office closures and necessitated online remote and agile working practices to be implemented. It is envisaged that this crisis will lead to a number of permanent economic and social changes to the way people work in the future and has heavily influenced the future direction of the workforce development identified in this Strategy.

# Review of the 2017 – 2020 People Strategy

The previous People Strategy focussed on the following themes;

- A customer focussed culture
- Modern & flexible working practices
- Leadership, empowerment and innovation
- Workforce recruitment, development and retention
- People Strategy Implementation

A number of actions were completed / implemented from the Strategy including;

- The establishment and coordination of the Corporate Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Working Group
- The achievement of a series of customer service improvements recognised in a series of highly successful CSE reviews
- The review and development of the Charny Awards
- The establishment of a Leicestershire District Learning & Development network to informally share ideas and resources
- The development of a Leicestershire wide District Council shadowing scheme
- The delivery of core training for managers on managing performance alongside the new capability procedures
- The delivery of a series of lunchtime leadership and coaching workshops for all managers
- The introduction of development workshops for aspiring Heads of Service
- Funded Management Degrees and Masters in Senior Leadership options developed with local Universities.
- The development and implementation of two core training workshops for all staff; Brilliant Customer Service and the Customer Service Team
- The creation of 8 new apprenticeship opportunities across the council and utilised the digital account funding to develop another 11 staff.
- A programme of workshops and events to support staff wellbeing
- Researched, benchmarked and reviewed salaries in key roles, where we face recruitment challenges

There were three actions not fully completed from the previous People Strategy that are going to be picked up in the new strategy. This includes developing smart working at Charnwood. Smart working workshops were developed and delivered for managers and staff, an intranet page was established to promote and develop smart working and staff and managers put forward ideas for pilots. This work will continue with the development of a new Agile Working Policy.

This also had an impact on delaying the review of Personal Reviews, as this was to be based on new ways of working emerging from the smart working project and also the review of recruitment that was also to be based on new requirements following implementation of smart working.

The 2021 – 2024 People Strategy looks to build on the work already carried in these areas through the agile working project and will see the development of a new appraisal process and the review of recruitment practices following development work planned to develop a behavioural framework.

# Key Strategies with direct relevance to the People Strategy

# Corporate Strategy (2020 – 2024)

The Corporate Strategy sets out the council's main strategic priorities over the next four years. There are four key themes within the strategy;

- 1) Caring for the environment
- 2) Healthy communities
- 3) A thriving economy
- 4) Your council

The Your Council theme outlines several priorities, many of which are directly relevant to this People Strategy;

We will continue to improve customer service and develop our staff to help them deliver outstanding services. Our services will be increasingly available at the fingertips of residents through our digital channels. However, the opportunity to talk to our staff in person will always be there for people who need it.

We recognise there are financial challenges ahead for local government and we will use them as an opportunity to transform into a more efficient, effective and innovative organisation.

We will collaborate with partners, in the public and private sector, in a variety of ways to bring improvements to our services and the borough of Charnwood.

Our employees and elected members will work together as one council to bring positive change to Charnwood.

And we commit strongly to listening, talking and engaging with residents as we work together to create a more vibrant and prosperous Charnwood

#### Charnwood's Values

The Corporate Strategy also identifies the council's values;

Pride in Charnwood - we take pride in our work and our borough and are ambitious for the future

Customer Focused - we listen to our customers and are focused on delivering excellent services

Working Together - we work together with pace and positivity as one council and in partnership with others

These values were developed initially through staff focus groups and have been recently updated in consultation with the staff forum. They provide a clear statement on the culture the council aspires to promote and develop through its staff, members and leadership teams.

# Strategic Direction (2020-2024)

The Strategic Direction document accompanies the Corporate Strategy 2020-24 and sets out the key operating principles the Council will adopt to achieve its objectives and deliver outstanding services for residents. It identifies the council's ambition to be one of the most effective, efficient and influential councils in the country.

The document also sets out challenges to be addressed in the delivery of the Corporate Strategy including; the COVID 19 pandemic, a reduction in funding and increasing costs, increasing demand for council services, climate change and rapid changes in technology

The Strategic Direction document identifies how the council will operate in a number of key areas. The three areas that are most relevant to this People Strategy are;

- 4. The Council
- 7. Our people
- 8. Transformation and Efficiency

# **ICT Strategy (2016-2021)**

The actions resulting from the council's Information and Communication Strategy has had a significant influence on the development of this People Strategy. The adoption of cloud-based technology (e.g. MS 365 and MS Teams) has created opportunities for the organisation to be more agile in where and when people work and has significantly improved the council's resilience in adapting to the challenges faced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The development and co-ordination of both people and technology is crucial to the future success of the council and this will continue with the development of a new ICS strategy from 2021 onwards.

# **Equality & Inclusion Strategy (2020-2024)**

There are invariably linkages between the Council's People Strategy and the Equality & Inclusion Strategy, which guide practice across the Council and provide a non-discriminatory and supportive working environment for all staff. It is important that the Council:

- Ensures all staff, and potential employees receive fair and respectful treatment and are not subject to discrimination or harassment
- Pays 'due regard' and considers equality impacts before we make decisions affecting employees. This may be demonstrated through an Equality Impact Assessment or other activities/ assessments
- Monitors and assesses the impact of our policies and decisions and to change, where reasonably possible, whether they are actually reducing levels of inequality
- To enhance understanding of and promote equality and diversity at all levels within Charnwood Borough Council.
- To have a diverse workforce that aims to be representative of the Borough.

# **Key external factors**

There are a number of external factors that have influenced this strategy, however, the most significant has been the current 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic and subsequent lockdown and restrictions. This has had a highly significant impact on the services that we deliver and the way we work in direct response to the crisis and the organisation's future plans. The pandemic has also had a negative impact on the national economy, which in turn, is likely to affect the council's future budget, unemployment in the local area and our plans to support apprenticeships. The mental health of the UK population continues to face significant challenges and it is more important than ever that we focus on support our employees' health and wellbeing.

Significant external factors include developing technology, customer demand and expectations, climate change and the international focus on equal opportunities, including the ongoing debates around opportunities for the BAME and LGBTQ communities in the UK.

# The Five Themes of the People Strategy

The people strategy will focus on delivering five themes as detailed below. Each theme focusses on the priority areas that this strategy aims to address and contains a set of outcomes and planned actions.

The priority order for delivering these outcomes and actions will be agreed and captured in the People Development Plan that will be overseen by the new People Group.

- 1) Charnwood's Culture
- 2) Leading Charnwood
- 3) Healthy Charnwood
- 4) Developing Charnwood
- 5) Supporting Charnwood



# 1) Charnwood's Culture

As the council continues to modernise, the organisation will need to focus on developing a smarter and agile workforce with extensive communication skills along with a positive 'can do' attitude.

A new staff behavioural framework based on the organisational values will be developed. Staff will be asked to self-assess against the framework which will then form the basis of a discussion with their manager around their own development needs.

Charnwood Borough Council has been steadily developing its capacity for agile working in recent years. However, 2020 has seen a revolution in more flexible working as the lockdown requirements following the Covid-19 crisis has almost overnight shifted the organisation from a mainly office-based culture to one that is very much focussed on staff working remotely from home. There have of course been many challenges to this significant shift in working practice, however the change has almost universally been hailed as a success largely due to the rapid and effective deployment of MS Teams.

It is essential that we continue to build on this rapid change and continue to develop the organisation into a modern, agile organisation. This includes developing more flexibility around when and where staff work. Through the development of a new agile/ smart working policy, it is planned that more staff will work remotely in the future and this will free up some of the existing office space.

There are a number of potential benefits in developing more agile/ smart working practices including; improved productivity, improved work / life balance along with staff motivation, the potential for better and more flexible services for customers, reduced overheads from reduced office space, greater resilience in the case of future emergencies, a lesser impact on the environment, better potential for flexible partnership working and reduced sickness levels.

In order to understand how the organisation has developed over the last four years and set a baseline for future analysis, it is proposed that a full staff survey and Organisational Cultural Inventory (OCI) are completed in early 2021. The OCI survey provides a baseline comparison of the perceived culture of the organisation against a widely used model and also provides an opportunity to identify aspirational culture change that can be reviewed at a later date. The Staff and OCI surveys were last completed in 2017 and it is proposed that they will be revisited again in 2024.

## Outcomes for this theme

- Charnwood will have a modern and agile workforce
- Charnwood will be a workforce that is representative of its wider population
- Employees are empowered to deliver excellent services, using better technology to increase flexibility, efficiency and customer access.
- Employees live and breathe the Charnwood values in the way they work
- Employees understand that how they go about their work and interact with colleagues, partners and customers, is just as important as what they do

## Actions for this theme

- Develop and implement a new Agile Working Policy that will promote flexibility in when and where staff work in the future
- Develop a behavioural framework based on smart / agile working and the values of the organisation
- Develop opportunities to embrace cultural change and allow opportunity to grow a representative workforce.
- Develop an identity / brand to for the framework to promote it as the way we work at Charnwood
- Develop a self-assessment tool for the framework that will link into a new Personal Review process
- Support employees with a development programme that reflects the behavioural framework
- Conduct an Organisational Cultural Inventory (OCI) survey and ensure appropriate questions assess employees views on the organisational culture in the staff survey.

# 2) Leading Charnwood

For the organisation to grow and achieve its future objectives and priorities, it is essential that effective leadership and management is commonplace at all levels of the council. This is particularly important as the council strives to become a more agile and smarter organisation.

It is proposed that a Management Charter is developed which will summarise the role of managers in supporting staff working remotely, together with a more detailed leadership and management behaviour framework. The behaviour framework will encompass competencies and also brings in a wider perspective on how managers and staff work.

It is envisaged that a 360-degree assessment process will be introduced to identify potential skill gaps and development needs. The management development programme will expand and adapt to provide appropriate learning and development opportunities at all levels of the organisation. These development opportunities will include a mixture of e-learning, online and face-to-face events and we will look for varied and greater opportunities to share good practice.

#### Outcomes for this theme

- Leaders and Managers who successfully lead, manage and meet the challenges of delivering services in a virtual and flexible world
- Leaders and Managers who form and maintain strong teams (permanent and matrix) Leaders and Managers who support a culture of innovation and creativity
- Leaders and Managers who drive the Charnwood culture, ensuring the 'essence' of Charnwood is understood by all
- Leaders and Managers who welcome and actively seek commercial opportunities and strive to have the most efficient and effective services

 Develop a workforce of leaders and managers that are representative of the Charnwood population

Actions required to achieve this theme:

- Develop and promote leadership behaviour framework
- Develop a Management Charter that will identify how managers can support staff working remotely
- Build on existing leadership development
- Establishment of an extended leadership team to develop middle managers and improve engagement across the organisation
- Develop opportunity for positive action initiatives which aim to reduce the gender pay gap and support BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled employees to break the barrier into senior leadership

## 3) Healthy Charnwood

In 2019 an independent staff wellbeing survey was conducted through the Leicestershire Partnership. The survey revealed a number of issues including workplace stress, mental health, physical health and relatively high use of alcohol within our staff group. The Covid-19 restrictions have seen a raft of new initiatives implemented to support staff in looking after the health and wellbeing and helping managers to better support staff. As an organisation we need to build on recent initiatives that have included online yoga and mindfulness sessions together with other approaches to bring staff working remotely together through online participation

It is proposed that a new health and wellbeing group is established with input from areas across the organisation as a whole. An action plan will be developed to address both the issues raised by the 2019 survey and the challenges experienced from remote working.

It is hoped that the independent staff wellbeing survey can be revisited in the next three years but regardless of whether that is possible, the staff survey will continue to address important aspects of staff wellbeing through asking targeted questions.

We are also looking to develop Mental Health First Aid support provision provided by trained volunteer staff which will supplement the existing external AMICA confidential Counselling and Psychological Support service.

## Outcomes for this theme

- We have a healthy motivated workforce that can perform effectively regardless of where, when and how they work
- Staff feel supported by their managers and the organisation regardless of where, when and how they work.
- We improve the physical and mental health of our workforce through addressing some of the key issues raised in the wellbeing survey
- Staff are supported to be more resilient to change and empowered to meet future challenges with a positive frame of mind
- We support staff, through reasonable adjustments, to work to their full potential

Actions required to achieve this theme

- We identify actions and activities that will address any areas of concern picked up by the staff wellbeing survey
- We form a new Health and Wellbeing Group that pulls together resources and co-ordinates actions and activities to support health and wellbeing across the council
- We review and develop internal and external services available to staff to support their mental health
- We continue to develop opportunities for staff and act upon requests for reasonable adjustments
- An internal Mental First Aid support network is introduced to supplement existing provision

# 4) Developing Charnwood

Charnwood Borough Council has a comprehensive corporate Learning & Development programme consisting mainly of face-to face workshops and e-learning materials, both of which are co-ordinated through the My Learning programme using the Learning Pool LMS. Since the Covid-19 crisis, much of the face to face provision has been moved to online delivery using MS Teams or Zoom software. It is anticipated that the use of online delivery will increase over the next four years' but will not completely replace face to face workshops once the Covid-19 restrictions start to ease.

Extensive use is already made of partnership learning opportunities with neighbouring local authorities, but this could be developed further with the continuing development of the North Leicestershire partnership. This could include the development of a shared Learning Management System (LMS) platform to develop, deliver, evaluate and administer our learning programmes in the future.

The Personal Review process will be reviewed and developed so that it better meets the needs of the organisation in the future. With a significant move towards more agile/ smart and flexible working, there will need to be much more focus on managing outputs and outcomes rather than 'busyness' and 'presenteeism'.

It is envisaged that a new performance management process will focus more on regular informal meetings than annual reviews. There will still be a need to set objectives and review performance and included within this there will be a need for discussions relating to individual employees' development needs. There is the potential to develop a new recording system based on either the iTrent or Learning Pool systems. However, those platforms will need to be developed as there are no 'off the shelf' options available.

In order to make sure the organisation is recruiting the right people with a positive and flexible attitude to working for the council, it is intended that the current recruitment and selection process be reviewed. It is envisaged that following the review, there will be more emphasis on assessing potential applicant's attitude and approach to work than the current system of scoring against essential and desirable criteria. It is

possible that this could include some form of assessment against the proposed behaviour framework. The review will also consider how the application process can be modernised and potentially be expanded so that the council can accept CVs as part of recruitment rather than insisting on application forms only.

#### Outcomes for this theme

- All employees have a clear understanding of their role in the organisation and how this fits in with the strategic aims of the organisation.
- Everyone is set clear objectives for their job role and guidance on the standards they are expected to achieve.
- All employees receive regular support and guidance from their manager, regardless of where or how they work
- All employees receive regular feedback on their performance and the opportunity to constructively discuss their development needs.
- Staff can access a comprehensive learning and development programme with varied content and flexible delivery patterns to suit different working patterns and learning styles
- The organisation recruits people with a positive attitude that reflects our values and our ambition as a modern, flexible, high performing Council.
- Ensure any new processes are inclusive of all protected characteristics, to support a range of staff to perform highly

## Actions required to achieve this theme

- Develop a new performance management process that meets the needs of a modern, flexible workforce and promotes regular high performance and regular communication.
- Provide support and training for managers to effectively conduct performance reviews
- The learning and development programme will be extended to develop staff in priority areas identified in the new behavioural framework as essential to a modern smart and agile organisation.
- The number of e-learning and remote learning opportunities are increased whilst still retaining a healthy balance of face to face learning once Covid 19 related restrictions are lifted.
- The recruitment process is reviewed and updated so that it both reflects a modern flexible organisation and enables us to recruit people with the right skills and attitude
- Focus on ensuring our processes support the needs of all employees and targets a diverse range of people and skills/abilities

# 5) Supporting Charnwood

Charnwood Borough Council is currently going through a period of significant change, with more emphasis on digital self-service and flexible and agile working practices. The council needs to ensure that our Human Resources, Learning & Development, Organisational Development, Health & Safety and Property Services functions are providing the support necessary to support staff and managers through these challenging times.

It is anticipated that a number of service reviews will take place from 2020, to reorganise and consolidate services and also to address an anticipated budget deficit in the future.

As there is the potential for team restructures, staff redeployment and possible redundancies, consideration will need to be given to how staff are supported through that process.

## Outcomes for this theme

- Managers and staff can access professional Human Resources, Learning & Development and Health & Safety support, guidance and policies appropriate to their working patterns and unique service or personal requirements.
- The wellbeing and morale of staff is considered as part of any future office accommodation reviews to ensure a motivate, productive and flexible workforce
- Staff are supported to develop their personal resilience during times of change and uncertainty

# Actions required to achieve this theme

- Opportunities are continually sought to develop informal and formal partnerships to deliver comprehensive, flexible and cost-effective support services.
- Specific plans to support restructures are prepared for any changes, working closely with unions and staff support groups
- Equality Impact Assessments be conducted, where appropriate, to assess the needs/ requirements of staff and to provide mitigating action surrounding any potential adverse impact of restructures
- Actions under the other themes are challenged to ensure they support staff resilience to change

# How the actions in the strategy will be delivered and monitored

The outcomes and actions of this strategy will be incorporated into a new People Development Plan that will be overseen by the recently created People Group.

This group is one of the three sub-groups formed as part of the SWaP Programme Board and will be chaired by the Strategic Director for Strategic Support, Governance and Procurement.

The membership of this group as of December 2020 is as follows;

Name	Position	People Group Role
Simon Jackson	Strategic Director, Strategic Support, Governance & Procurement	Chair
Alison Simmons	Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing	Member
Julie Robinson	Head of Neighbourhood Services	Member
Pete Oliver	Head of Landlord Services	Member
Helen Gretton	I&OD Manager	Member
Anna Cairns	HR Manager	Member
Sally Dobrowolska	Senior HR Adviser	Member
Daley Francis	Comms Officer	Member
Kevin Brewin	L&OD Coordinator	Member and Support