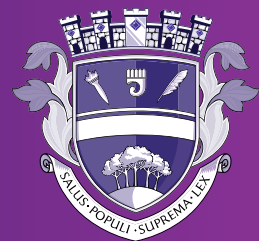


# WORKFORCE STRATEGY

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2023-2026



LONDON BOROUGH OF  
**HARROW**

# Foreword



## Cllr Paul Osborn Leader of the Council, London Borough of Harrow

**H**aving been a Councillor for 22 years, I know our employees are crucial to the success of the Council and the services we provide to our residents. This Workforce Strategy outlines our objectives for our team and how we intend to tackle the challenges we will face from 2023 to 2026.

The purpose of this Workforce Strategy is to facilitate the continuous, sustained improvement required to cultivate an innovative, diverse, agile, and representative workforce. I want to ensure that we develop a team that is not only skilled and competent but also takes pride in delivering the basics well and providing excellent services to our residents.

One of my key priorities is putting residents first. I know this is something shared by all our staff. I know in the past our policies, processes and IT systems have not always enabled us to do this. I am determined to put the right systems and policies in place and this Workforce Strategy is a key part of that.

For this strategy to be implemented

successfully, strong leadership will be essential. Leadership must exhibit the key behaviours that the Council expects – notably engaging meaningfully with the workforce and ensuring a focus on the delivery of effective services to our residents. This includes setting a clear direction, establishing expectations, maintaining open lines of communication, and demonstrating accountability.

I am also aware that there is some uncertainty about the future and in response, this strategy, and other actions I am taking, can provide a degree of flexibility to ensure that the workforce can adapt in support of achieving the Council's aims. I hope this strategy will ensure that we are proactive in consulting, leading, guiding, supporting, developing, and driving the pace and extent of change.

Many thanks for all you do for the residents of Harrow.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul S. Osborn".

# Foreword



## Alex Dewsnap Managing Director, London Borough of Harrow

**T**he Council is currently undergoing significant change and, like all councils, grappling with persistent financial pressures.

As the largest employer in the Borough, the Council has a dual responsibility: to our workforce and to our residents.

It has been several years since the Council last had a workforce strategy, and the transition towards a more planned, deliberate, and strategic approach is a critical step forward in delivering the best services we can to our residents.

We can only do this through having a motivated, well trained and skilled workforce, where working for the Council means continuous development and improvement.

For the duration of this strategy (2023/4-2025/6), we have drawn our focus themes from a variety of sources: the Council's new Corporate Plan and flagship actions, and

importantly, feedback and insights from the 'Big Conversation' with staff about the kind of employer they want the Council to be.

This includes a focus on our values and behaviours across the Council.

The strategy also considers the feedback from the Race Report and the ongoing analysis of our current workforce amidst this period of change.

My personal belief is that our people are our greatest resource, so having a workforce that feels valued and motivated regardless of what role you perform is vital. To achieve this, we need to be a good employer, making Harrow a great place to work, where you can get developed to reach your potential.

This is certainly one of my priorities as your Managing Director and as we embark on the delivery of our new strategy, I will always welcome feedback on whether we are getting this right.

# Our vision and values

The Council's vision is 'Restoring Pride in Harrow'. This is underpinned by the following priorities:



**A council that puts residents first**



**A borough that is clean and safe**



**A place where those in need are supported**

To restore pride in Harrow, the Council will start by putting residents first. We will seek to deliver a well-run Council providing good value for money for all. We will work with partners and businesses to create a clean and safe borough, where residents can be confident to settle, make roots and raise a family.

Following the adoption of the new vision and priorities, a new Corporate Plan has been crafted. This plan outlines how we will strive to meet these priorities and the measures for tracking and monitoring our progress.

Performance will be tracked using the Corporate Plan and Corporate Performance Scorecard.

**In 2016 the following values were launched and implemented:**

## Do It Together

We build strong, effective relationships across the organisation, sharing our knowledge and breaking down silos. We listen to other's opinions to inform decision making and seek opportunities to drive collaboration with those that share our outcome. We value diversity and always treat others with empathy and respect.

## Make It Happen

We are outcomes focused, setting clear objectives within a framework and articulating what success looks like. We are decisive, agile and quick to act. We know what to do and have the conviction to do it. We break down barriers and enable others to be more effective.

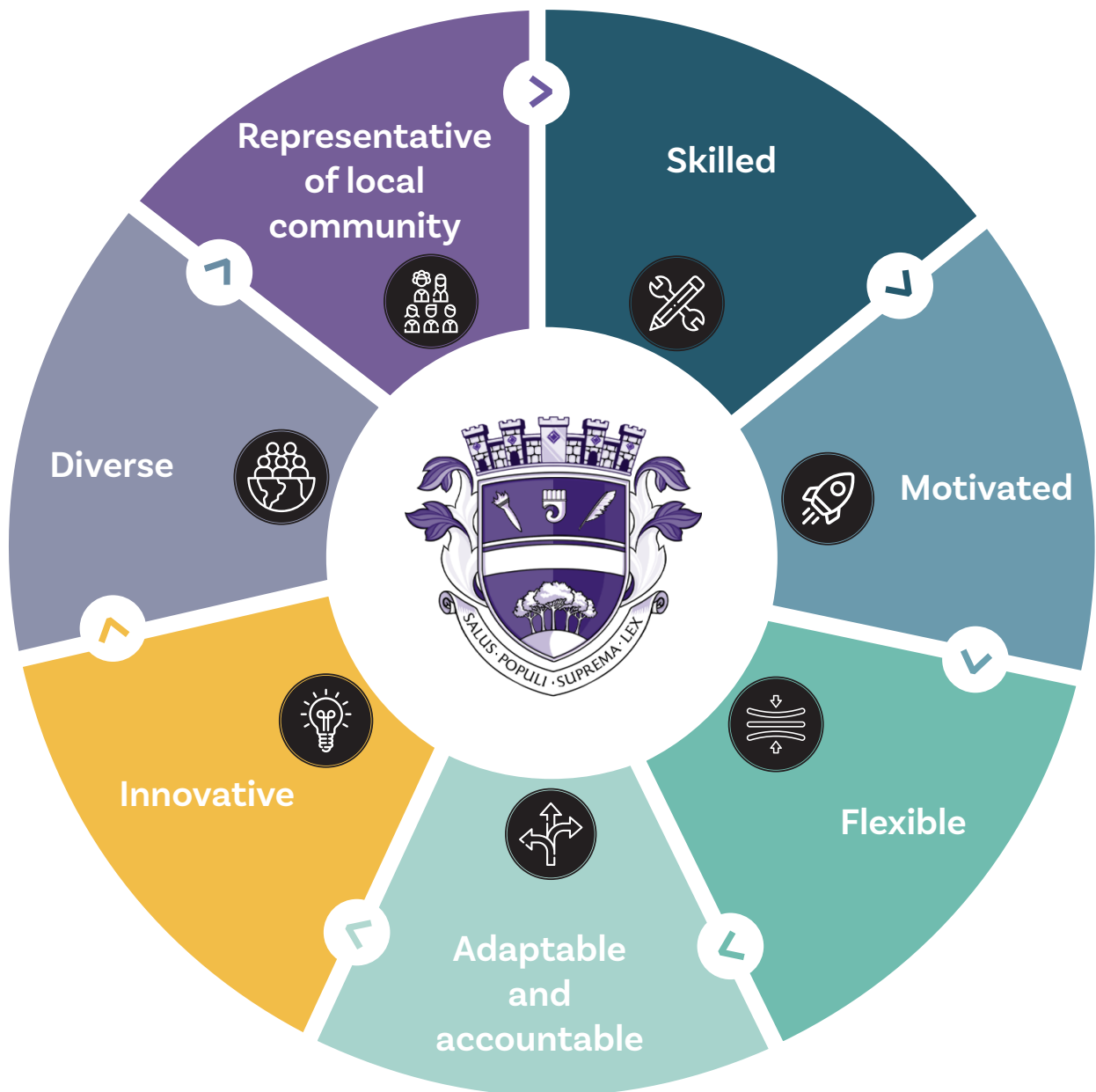
## Be Courageous

We are ambitious about what's possible, challenging the status quo and ready to step up and accept a challenge. We make brave decisions to achieve success, delivering on our promises and inspiring others to 'Think Big'.

# Our strategy

This workforce strategy will ensure that we are proactive in driving the pace and extent of change. We will create an organisational culture that encourages and makes better use of talent within the workforce. We will also provide opportunities for all, especially young people, and ensure that staff are engaged, motivated, and supported in learning new skills and adopting new ways of working.

## How we want the Council to be...





# OUR CONTEXT

London Borough of Harrow (LBH) in line with all other Local Authorities, is facing challenging times. The financial context requires us to take immediate action to address the challenges that we anticipate over our 3-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). We need to foster a culture capable of adapting to a new financial landscape, thereby ensuring a council that is fit for purpose.

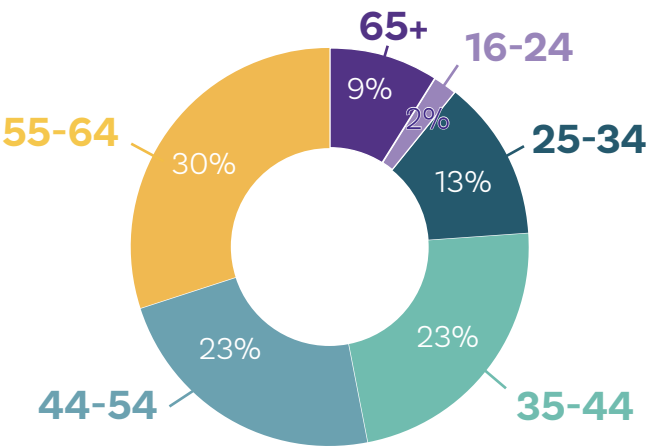
This context accentuates the need for effective workforce planning to anticipate and proactively shape the development of the next generation of skilled specialist staff. To successfully address this challenge, a well-structured approach to workforce development is required.



# Our workforce

London Borough of Harrow currently has 2,022 staff of whom 50% are Harrow residents and 25% are part-time employees.

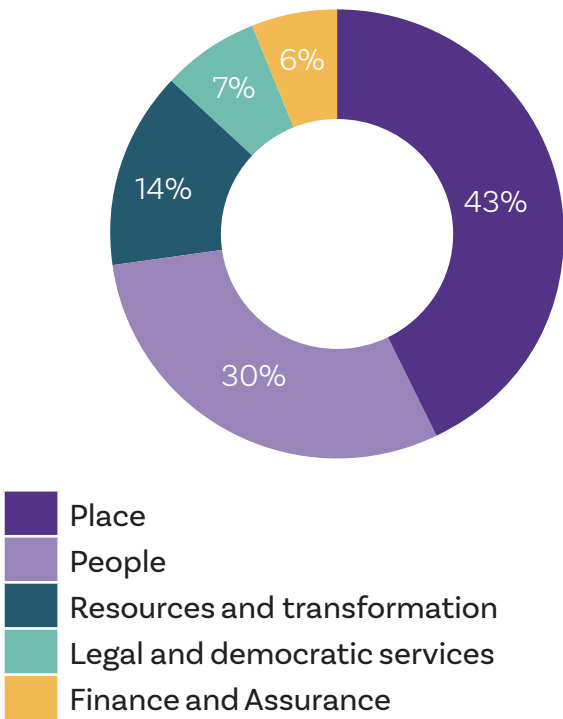
## Age of workforce by percentage



## Directorates

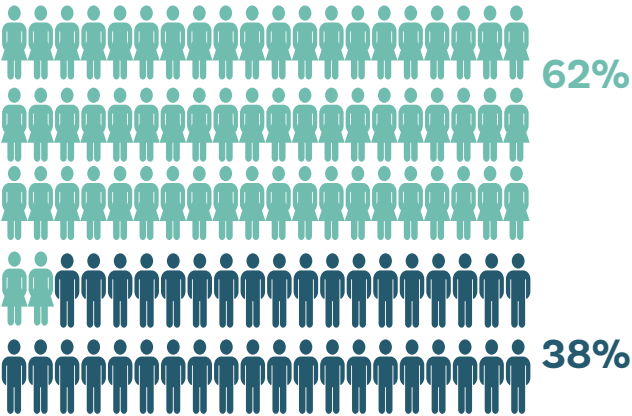
The two biggest directorates are Place (43%) covering Housing, Environment, Regeneration, Economy, Leisure and Culture and Climate Change and People (30%) covering Adults and Children Social Care, Public Health, Education and Commissioning.

## Headcount by directorate

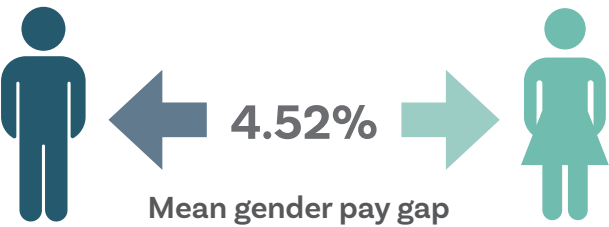


## Gender

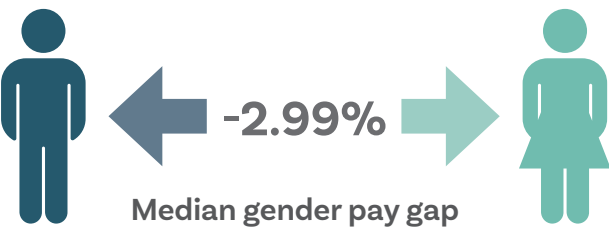
62% of the workforce is female.



## Gender Pay Gap:



On average, males earned 4.52% more than females.



In contrast, the median gender pay gap is -2.99%, suggesting that, at the midpoint of the income distribution, males earned 2.99% less than females. In practical terms, this means that women earned approximately 3 pence more for every pound earned by males.



# OUR KEY FINDINGS

The council has gathered valuable feedback from various sources, including the Big Conversation, Peer Review, Corporate Plan, Flagship action, Race Action Plan, and workforce metrics. All of which contribute to supporting this strategic approach.





# Our key findings

## The Big Conversation

The Big Conversation was launched in February 2023 to engage positively with staff about the type of organisation we want to be moving forward and was taken into consideration in writing this strategy. Members of staff were involved in defining and shaping the kind of council we aspire to be. The following feedback was received regarding their aspirations for what they want the London Borough of Harrow to become:



- A **fair, equitable** workplace.
- Every level to be **resourced** to do the work.
- To show **empathy** and **respect** by people to taking responsibility, to work better together, communicate well.
- To build an **integrated** and **cohesive** council.
- The council to be **accessible** and **responsive** to residents and **work collaboratively** with the community.
- To have clear **priorities** and recognise the need to focus, prioritise, and deliver.
- To continue work on **equality, diversity** and **inclusion**.
- A **learning** and **transparent culture**.
- Achievements to be **celebrated** and **recognised**.
- The council to be financially **secure, efficient**, and **stable**.
- Effective and **consistent communication** across the council.
- To ensure **effective management, promote modernisation**, reduce bureaucracy, foster a forward-thinking and outward-oriented approach, and implement **excellent staff management practices**.
- Be a council staff are proud to work for: **attract, develop, and retain** talent.
- To work **flexibly**, with clear and concise, accessible corporate policies and procedures.
- Clear accountabilities between elected members and employees.
- To be joined up: promote **collaboration** and **teamwork** across the council.



# Our key findings

## LGA Peer Challenge

The LGA were invited to carry out a Peer Challenge of the London Borough of Harrow. This challenge was undertaken in February 2023 and their final report was received in late April. The Peer team considered five themes that form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. Some of the following recommendations will be taken forward from the review:

- **Corporate Plan** While the flagship actions are helpful in providing focus, the council should ensure that they do not distract from the business as usual. The Council should take steps to embed the Corporate Plan across the council and establish alignment with other key policies and strategies.
- **Improvement, transformation and capacity** There is a need for a defined strategic improvement programme with sequenced actions, supported by further capacity for transformation and change.

LBH could also consider zoning the council office by service area to boost teamwork and encourage collaboration. The council should engage in discussions with staff to establish expectations regarding when and why they should be in the office, with these expectations being informed by service needs and job roles. Following this, regular monitoring will be necessary to ensure compliance with the agreed-upon approach.

- **Performance** Introduce a consistent Council-wide performance framework which provides organisational assurance. Ensure this performance monitoring is used to inform service delivery and decision-making.
- **Human Resources and Organisational Development** Systems, processes and policies need to be reviewed, refreshed and made fit for purpose to deliver the council priorities as a matter of urgency. It is important that a culture is developed to ensure that all council services understand and comply with agreed corporate policies.
- **Workforce Strategy and Culture** The Council should develop a workforce strategy setting out plans to attract, recruit, retain and develop the workforce with the skills and capabilities required to achieve the council objectives.

The existing member training and development offer should be evaluated and in line with member feedback, should be expanded, targeting key roles such as Cabinet members and committee chairs.





# Our key findings

## Corporate Plan and Flagship Actions

The Corporate Plan and Flagship Actions have served as channels that have contributed to the development of this workforce strategy. This has emphasized the importance of restoring pride in the Council.

As a result, we adopted the following actions:

- To ensure the Council's vision is reflected in attraction, development, and retention of talent.
- To support managers and leaders to work collaboratively with members.
- To execute a suite of workforce planning processes, ensuring the availability of skilled resources as needed.
- To strengthen/bolster staff in developing **effective customer service** skills, mindsets, and capabilities. The Customer Service Academy will be established, and will be a priority, monitored regularly to ensure that its learning provision aligns with the evolving needs of our residents.
- To ensure comprehensive support for **those in need**, the council will take the following actions: agreeing on the Apprenticeship Strategy and Plan, monitoring the levy expenditures, and implementing a reporting mechanism. Opportunities to involve borough residents in apprenticeship roles will be clearly identified, and with specific consideration given to care leavers. Furthermore, the Council will determine where internships and work experience can assist.





# OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

To address the challenges presented by our changing context and to realise our vision, a comprehensive Workforce Strategy is needed. This strategy will guide us towards our desired future state, a place where both we and our residents want us to be. It focuses on five key priorities, identified through engagement, evaluation, and feedback from our workforce. Our overarching ambition is 'to be a council staff are proud to work for'.

To deliver on each of these priorities, we have devised a series of initiatives that will feed into a Workforce Development Action Plan.

We will regularly assess our progress, identify gaps, and seek expert advice. Being self-critical and possessing market intelligence will allow us to challenge our assumptions and ensure we remain competitive and a Council staff are proud to work for.



# Objectives and priorities

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## Priority 1

**Culture and Performance Change** Creating a resilient, high performing Council with a culture and way of working that enables everyone to perform to their best for the benefit of residents.



## Priority 2

Provide the framework for effective intervention to ensure our workforce is future proofed and is fit for purpose.



## Priority 3

Engagement, involvement and collaboration happen across all levels in the organisation.



## Priority 4

Strong and sustained commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to wellbeing.



## Priority 5

Leaders and managers are developed, supported and challenged to be their best.



**Be a Council staff are proud to work for.**



# Priority 1: Culture and performance change

Creating a resilient, high performing Council with a culture and way of working that enables everyone to perform to their best for the benefit of residents.

**We will cultivate a culture of continuous improvement aligned with our vision, values, and priorities. This involves setting and communicating clear performance and conduct standards. We'll monitor our performance, promptly address risks, and enable efficient change without disrupting productivity. Our goal is to promote a data-driven, collaborative, and innovative culture that enhances services for our residents. We'll manage change consistently to keep everyone informed and aligned with expectations. To achieve this, we commit to:**

- Development of our Harrow leadership and management development programme.
- Corporate leadership team (CLT) development in team building and creating and leading future focused high performing teams, delivered in CLTs, workshops, coaching and meetings, as part of our Harrow leadership development programme.
- Development and implementation of a Management and Leadership Competency framework.
- The establishment of corporate priorities and their cascade throughout the whole council underpinning effective goals, performance, development and ways of working to embed this.
- Establishing clear guidelines for conducting effective one-on-one meetings, so everyone understands what is expected of them, is aware of how they are performing, and have regular opportunities to discuss their performance, development, and wellbeing with their manager.
- The review of core people-management policies and practices so frameworks that underpin our people management practices are sound and clearly understood.
- Ensure that data are available for managers to apply robust performance management, to support development and increase productivity.
- Development and Implementation of the Data Strategy.
- Continue to develop our corporate learning and development offer, reviewing and building on what has already been developed and delivered.
- Ongoing reporting of mandatory training and compliance to upskill the workforce – ensuring that everyone who works for the Council understands and meets mandated learning and development requirements.
- Develop a culture of continuous learning which encourages all staff to set aside at least two development days each year.
- Implement a consistent council-wide performance framework which provides organisational assurance. Ensure this performance monitoring is used to inform service delivery and decision making.
- Develop a suite of performance information and data packs which go through formal council governance arrangements e.g., reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.
- Development and implementation of zones for the council office by service area to enhance team working and support collaboration.
- Discuss and agree with staff on a set of expectations about when and why they should be in the office and provide reasonable support and adjustment where required.





## Priority 2:

**Provide the framework for effective intervention to ensure our workforce is future proofed and is fit for purpose.**

**It is essential that we continue to enhance our people capability as we adapt to an ever-changing work environment. These changes include evolving expectations from our residents, service users, current workforce, and potential employees. Addressing these challenges will require careful consideration of our Employee Value Proposition (EVP), along with responses to more immediate priorities. To achieve this, we will undertake the following:**

- Review and implement directorate Workforce Development plans in line with Service plans to help services forecast and plan their workforce requirements.
- Launch an induction programme to successfully on-board new colleagues.
- Delivery of our apprenticeship strategy and plan – this will assist us in ‘growing our own’ talent pipeline (especially important for our ‘hard to fill’ roles and professions); developing our existing workforce through the appropriate use of apprenticeships and increasingly developing opportunities for residents of the borough to join us as apprentices – including previously looked after children.
- Recruitment review – Introduce training for recruiting managers, delivering transparency throughout the recruitment processes and providing interviewee support for staff.
- Individual and team development – ensuring we have the capability as and when required to deliver high quality services. Work to understand these needs – including through Organisational Development diagnostics, gap and learning needs analysis processes – linking this to a wide range of development opportunities for all staff.
- Reduction in agency spend by £3.5m - A clear approach to the use of temporary and agency staff at all levels will be essential to ensure we have the right ‘resourcing mix’ going forward in addition to recruitment and retention initiatives.
- Ensuring that we maintain a highly regarded Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is crucial, especially given our ageing workforce. A thorough review of our existing EVP is necessary to understand its appeal to both current and potential employees. This review must consider not just salaries, but also factors like flexible working opportunities, annual leave, and other benefits. Through this strategic review, we will gain insights into where the Council needs to invest to ensure it can attract and retain the workforce required to deliver services to our residents.
- Mentoring and coaching programs: establishing formal mentoring and coaching programs where experienced employees can guide and support less experienced colleagues. This promotes knowledge transfer, career development, and professional growth.
- Introduction of Directorates buddying system.
- Review of the exit interview process – This will assist hard-to-fill positions, conducting benchmarking analysis, enhancing international recruitment campaigns, adjusting job design, collaboration with educational institutions and streamlining bureaucratic processes to enhance recruitment and retention strategies.
- Right size the organisation - Ensure the shape and size of the organisation is fit for purpose, sustainable and flexible – Successful implementation of the Council’s new structure.

- Right size the organisation - Ensure the shape and size of the organisation is fit for purpose, sustainable and flexible - Successful implementation of the Council's new structure.
- Implementation of technology solutions - Identifying areas of inefficiency and implement technological solutions to automate tasks and enhance productivity.
- Ensure that our learning and development activities are clearly linked to priorities and demonstrate added value to the organisation.
- Development and implementation of a Recruitment and Resourcing Strategy - Given the recent age profile of the Council, which indicates an aging workforce, it becomes crucial to prioritise initiatives related to career pathways and succession planning - Develop a succession-planning framework that meets the need to 'grow and develop our own staff' alongside the need to attract fresh, external talent and perspectives.
- Improvement to the HR&OD Service to ensure that we get the basics right and deliver an effective service.
- Employer Branding and Recruitment Marketing. Develop a compelling employer brand that showcases the council's unique value proposition as an employer. Promote the council's commitment to public service, community impact, career growth, and work culture through targeted recruitment marketing campaigns and employer branding initiatives.
- Design career frameworks linked to service specific workforce plans to address recruitment and retention of hard to fill roles.



## Priority 3: Engagement and collaboration

Engagement, involvement and collaboration across all levels in the organisation

**Our workforce needs to feel valued and respected. The pandemic has had a negative impact on opportunities for our people to come together, collaborate, and engage. Feedback from the 'Big Conversation' as well as the Peer Review, clearly indicates that we need to enhance our efforts to engage with our staff providing them with more opportunities to work together collaboratively as it is critical for eliminating operational silos. To achieve this, we will build on/ undertake the following:**

- Continue to build upon the range of staff groups and to re-energise a change champion network. These will need continued support and development during the period of this strategy to ensure there is a strong employee voice.
- The first Big Conversation has now been held and the outcomes of that have informed this strategy. Going forward, the Big Conversation approach to engaging with staff needs to continue so that co-creation and involvement remains central to our way of working. Commitment to one Big Conversation event each year to help create more opportunities for collaboration, discussion and reflection across our services.
- Recent changes to our leadership groups (through the formation of the new Corporate Leadership Forum) and the launch of the Managers forum similarly require embedding.
- We have faced an ongoing challenge in engaging with some groups of staff – particularly those without access to e-mail systems. An action plan to address this will be developed with managers in those services.
- Build positive industrial relations across the Council, working together with our trade union colleagues to make a positive difference.
- Hold yearly staff Recognition event – Recognition and Reward plays an important role in ensuring people feel valued and so that their colleagues can gain a better appreciation both of the scale of the services we provide and 'what good looks like'. In addition, we will celebrate and promote our staff achievements through case studies and staff stories.
- A strong employee voice is vital to our ambitions. We plan to conduct a comprehensive staff survey to assess engagement and identify necessary actions. Using the results of this survey, we will identify areas of improvement and implement an action plan to address employee concerns.
- Development of various forums to enable employees to connect with the organisation e.g., Collaborative coffees, lunch and learn sessions, regular one to ones etc.
- Our organisational values and behaviours require review – the first Big Conversation provided a great deal of insight into areas that need to be addressed – importantly highlighting the need to embed the existing values and behaviours into our everyday working practices.





## Priority 4: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Our sustained commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to wellbeing

**Work on the Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) agenda is ongoing and a priority for the Council. Moving forward we now need to embed EDI into everything we do. The EDI Team will lead on developing all three strands of the Council's approach to this agenda:**

- Addressing inequality in life outcomes - Using the Corporate Plan, a comprehensive medium-term strategic vision, to ensure that those in need within our borough, regardless of background, are supported and can reach their full potential.
- A review of our services - Senior leadership will lead a thorough review of the way we provide our services. We will speak to service users and examine issues of cultural sensitivity and any unconscious bias that may affect outcomes for different groups.
- Action as an employer - To ensure senior management is representative of our communities, examine pay gap issues, put programmes in place to nurture talent across all protected characteristics and review our internal HR policies and practices to ensure they are fair and equitable.
- Continue to address the recommendations from our internal Race Action plan.
- Create a safe space/culture to openly listen to staff, promote an inclusive workforce and address issues where colleagues are not acting in line with our values or expectations and the Dignity and Respect at Work principles.
- Allow everyone to contribute and feel part of an organisation, where all employees feel empowered and thrive.

**The wellbeing agenda remains a priority for the Council. Developed during the pandemic, the work on wellbeing has resulted in a wellbeing strategy and plan together with an active group of wellbeing champions and a regularly updated intranet site with resources and materials. The Council's employee assistance programme (EAP) provision has recently been changed and its use and impact will continue to be monitored, along with insights from an analysis of sickness and other absence statistics. In order to deliver this, we will:**

- Ensure residents, contractors, members and colleagues receive the best customer service at all times and are treated with respect.
- Ensure that the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy is embedded and that the relevant training to support this policy is delivered.
- Develop a programme of work and initiatives to support employees Health and Wellbeing.
- Devise promotional campaigns to ensure staff are aware of the benefits and well-being support available to them.
- Support staff in their transitions out of the workplace with dignity, fairness, and integrity.



## Priority 5:

**Leaders and managers are developed, supported and challenged to be their best**

**Leadership** – Leaders have, of course a significant influence on how an organisation feels, thinks and acts. The delivery of excellent and innovative services needs managers who possess exceptional leadership skills. These individuals should be able to promote the Council’s vision, positively engage staff with new ways of working, and manage change effectively. The Council requires managers who can manage, motivate, and empower employees to achieve high levels of performance and take responsibility and accountability to deliver their objectives. Managers should demonstrate visible, fair and pro-active leadership ensuring that our staff are supported, and where poor performance is identified it is managed effectively.

**We want ambitious managers and leaders who can develop, motivate and lead the organisation in challenging times. We will continue to develop teams to ensure they have the right behaviours and skills necessary to deliver services in a challenging environment so that effective decision making, innovation, and flexibility are encouraged and supported.**

- Implementation and embedding of the Leadership and management competency framework.
- Financial Planning - through strategic planning, enhanced business acumen and clear understanding of the impact of financial decision making.
- Cross directorate team working and peer learning, effective governance and improved communication and engagement.
- Develop a New and promoted manager induction for all newly appointed team managers, which makes clear what the Council’s Manager skill sets and behaviours are.
- Introduction of managers Conference/forum.
- Review and embedding of the Effective People Managers training and an intranet page specifically for managers.
- Managers are developed to undertake difficult and supportive conversations.
- Managers are accountable for meeting their team’s objectives and implementing their priorities.
- Leaders and managers are visible.
- Development and implementation of a Management and Leadership development programme.
- Review and develop policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they support effective employee performance and facilitate changes that will modernise and improve services.
- Ensure that Managers are accountable for managing their staff effectively.
- Review the existing performance management arrangements, such as our appraisal process and accompanying policies and procedures.

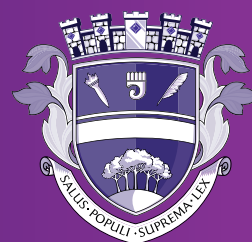
# HOW WILL OUR STRATEGY BE DELIVERED

We are committed to fulfilling everything we have set out to achieve. This strategy will guide Directorates in developing Workforce Action Plans, supported by HR Business Partners, which align with service operational plans, reflect future workforce priorities, and needs. This will help embed the strategy into the Council's day-to-day work.

We will track our progress through performance scorecards, employee surveys, and feedback collected from events, such as 'Big Conversations', peer reviews, exit interviews, appraisals, and one-to-one meetings. We will establish a Workforce Strategy Board, involving leads from each directorate responsible for workforce actions. Most importantly, we will pay close attention to feedback from our residents, service users, and visitors about our people and our performance.







LONDON BOROUGH OF  
**HARROW**