

People Strategy



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Version Control

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Title | People Strategy |
| Purpose | To ensure we create the conditions for our colleagues to maximise their contribution to achieving the authority's purpose as set in the Community and Corporate Plan |
| Owner | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships |
| Approved by | Not yet approved – scheduled for Cabinet decision on 5 June |
| Date | 28/5/2024 |
| Version Number | 1.0 |
| Status | Draft |
| Review Frequency | Following any update to the Community and Corporate Plan |
| Next review date | May 2027 |
| Consultation | Staff Consultation, Joint Advisory Group (Trade Unions), Strategic Leadership Team, Cabinet. |

1. Our Strategic Context

The Community and Corporate Plan sets our ambition for the council and county of Monmouthshire. Our purpose is for Monmouthshire to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. To achieve this, it's important that we make best use of all of the authority's resources, be that budgets, people, buildings or land. We have a series of enabling strategies and plans to make sure this happens.

The world of work is changing. We've seen a much tighter employment market in recent years making it harder to fill some key jobs. New generations entering the workforce have different expectations to those who came before them. For example, we see far more use of short-term contracts and people are more likely to have portfolio careers than stay with one employer for their whole life.

Alongside this we face a growing financial challenge. We have forecast a significant budget shortfall in the medium term. This means we simply don't have the money to keep doing everything we are doing now in the same way. This is because of challenges being seen across society such as greater demand and complexity in adult social care, increasing homelessness and rising prices for the things we buy such as fuel for refuse wagons and the buses that take children to school and heat the classrooms they are taught in. We also have a clearly stated ambition to work with and alongside our communities to deliver our purpose. There are countless people throughout the county who care passionately about their place. Achieving our ambition for Monmouthshire depends on the efforts of people on and off our payroll including volunteers, partners, foster carers and contractors. This document does not cover the work of all of these groups, but it recognises that our colleagues need to have the skills and mindsets to work with them for the good of all.

Our People Strategy sets out how we will maximise our colleagues' contributions within the available financial resources. This document does not set out *what* people do. That is the preserve of our elected councillors, headteachers and governing bodies. This strategy is about *how* people work. People are our most important asset, with payroll costs making up almost half of our revenue budget. Almost everything we do to serve our communities is delivered by our people. Our colleagues collect bins, repair roads, support vulnerable people to live at home, teach children in schools, drive buses and much more. Our People Strategy exists to make sure we make the very best of these skills and talents.

2. Our Culture and Values

A healthy and effective organisational culture is essential if we are to succeed in delivering our strategies and achieving our purpose. A positive culture allows employees to understand the organisation and feel that their voice matters. This will translate into everything they do through to the quality of service received by our residents, businesses and visitors. Importantly it also leads to workforce satisfaction and retention.

We pride ourselves on being a values-based organisation. Values matter to us. They set our expectations for ourselves, each other and those we work with. Our value set was created by our colleagues many years ago and has stood the test of time.

- Teamwork – Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to do the things that most positively impact our people and places.
- Openness - We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.
- Flexibility - We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.
- Fairness - We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently; we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.
- Kindness – We will show kindness to all those we work with, putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

If we get this right, it should be clear to ourselves and those we work with. There's a table further on in the strategy that sets this out, but first it's important to understand some of the opportunities and challenges facing us – and to establish the things we need to prioritise as a result.



3. Our Workforce Context – Where are we now?

Strengths and Opportunities

- A loyal, dedicated and talented workforce, delivering the things they were employed to do.
- We have traditionally attracted people from a wide range of backgrounds, drawn by the culture and profile of our organisation.
- We've benefitted from strong retention of good people. Our organisational culture is central to this.
- Monmouthshire is an attractive place to live and work. We have great connections to large population centres like Cardiff, Newport and Bristol, which increases our potential recruitment area.
- As a small organisation we can't afford, or indeed justify, having every specialist we need on our payroll. From time-to-time we use external consultants and advisors which is a cost-effective way to bring in technical expertise and expose our staff to new skills without incurring the ongoing costs.
- A strong well-being offer, including the 'Go To' group, People Leaders Q&A, *Digital Cwtch*, free counselling and a well-regarded occupational health service.

• We have a flexible approach and, for many jobs, people don't need to travel to their base every day. This means we can recruit people who may live further afield and are enabled by technology to perform their roles remotely.



- There are opportunities afforded by automation and generative AI, to increase productivity. Some teams may previously have moved to a position of optimum efficiency, but developments in technology have reset the bar on what's possible.
- Most people tell us that our organisation is friendly and welcoming. We have some unevenness of practice but, in most parts, we operate as a networked rather than a hierarchical organisation.
- We benefit from positive officer/member relations and good working relationships with trade unions, evidenced through the Joint Advisory Group.
- A well-regarded defined benefits pension scheme can act as a draw to those looking to move from the private sector and increases our ability to retain workers in the final years of their careers.
- We are a large employer and also have a significant spend with suppliers and contractors which gives us the opportunity to have a positive effect on the employment practices in other organisations, for example through the specifications in our tender documentation.

Areas for Development and Challenges

- We were an early adopter of remote and hybrid working, which gives us a good selling point when recruiting. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of these approaches by others which has eroded that competitive advantage.
- Hybrid working means that some teams do not come together in person or only do so infrequently. This can inhibit creativity and stop new workers establishing the same sense of connection or growing networks within the wider organisation. However, this applies to only a small percentage of our total workforce. The vast majority of our colleagues perform roles that require them to be with clients, in vehicles, schools, libraries or leisure centres where they provide a service to the public.
- There is an unevenness in management practices across the organisation, for example some colleagues have roles that are suitable for remote working but this isn't being enabled.
- We do not have all of the development pathways in place to retain younger workers who are more likely to have portfolio careers and want to gain development and transferable skills from an employer. National research indicates that this group are not as focused on final salaries and are more likely to job-hop to increase their earnings.
- We have an older workforce, with an average (mean) age of 46 with the most common (modal) age being 55. Many people perform physically demanding jobs which become harder as we get older. We don't always have arrangements in place to help them transition into different types of work to enable them to remain in the organisation.
- Turnover in 2022-23 and 2023-24 was higher than we have typically seen in the previous ten years. This is something we need to be mindful of. This may be an adjustment after lower-than-average turnover during the pandemic when less people were moving jobs.
- We have a large number of roles which are unique to one individual creating a single point of strength but also a potential single point of weakness.
- Our sickness figures are broadly unchanged in recent years but are marginally above industry average.
- 25% of absences were down to mental health in 2019-20 compared to 24% in 2022-23. We now record work related stress as a distinct absence category. Around a third of stress absences were work related. We need to recognise that wider economic pressures are likely to be affecting many people outside of work.
- High property prices in our area mean those in lower paid professions cannot always afford to live in the area and must travel into the county.
- Our total payroll bill has increased by 3.6% over the past ten years which is significantly below the rate of inflation over the same period. Public sector pay restraint means our payroll costs, and colleagues pay, has reduced in real terms.
- We have increased the size of our workforce over the past ten years but the increased staffing is being costed to specific grants, usually from the Welsh or UK Government. This creates a risk that we are increasingly dependent on insecure and short-term grant funding for core front line service delivery and therefore more vulnerable if they were to be removed.
- Increased use of fixed-terms contracts increases uncertainty for colleagues who are worried about their own futures and can reduce the sense of attachment and belonging they have, potentially leading to increased turnover. It also creates pressure on support services like HR and Finance, where teams are doing more with less.
- We have a low ratio of HR staff to employees meaning we are often reacting to problems and operational issues rather than deploying HR business partners to strategically support change.
- The financial and demand pressures we face mean we need to continually redesign how we do things. Our organisation development capacity is very small affecting our ability to implement transformational change.

What People tell us they need to Thrive and Succeed.

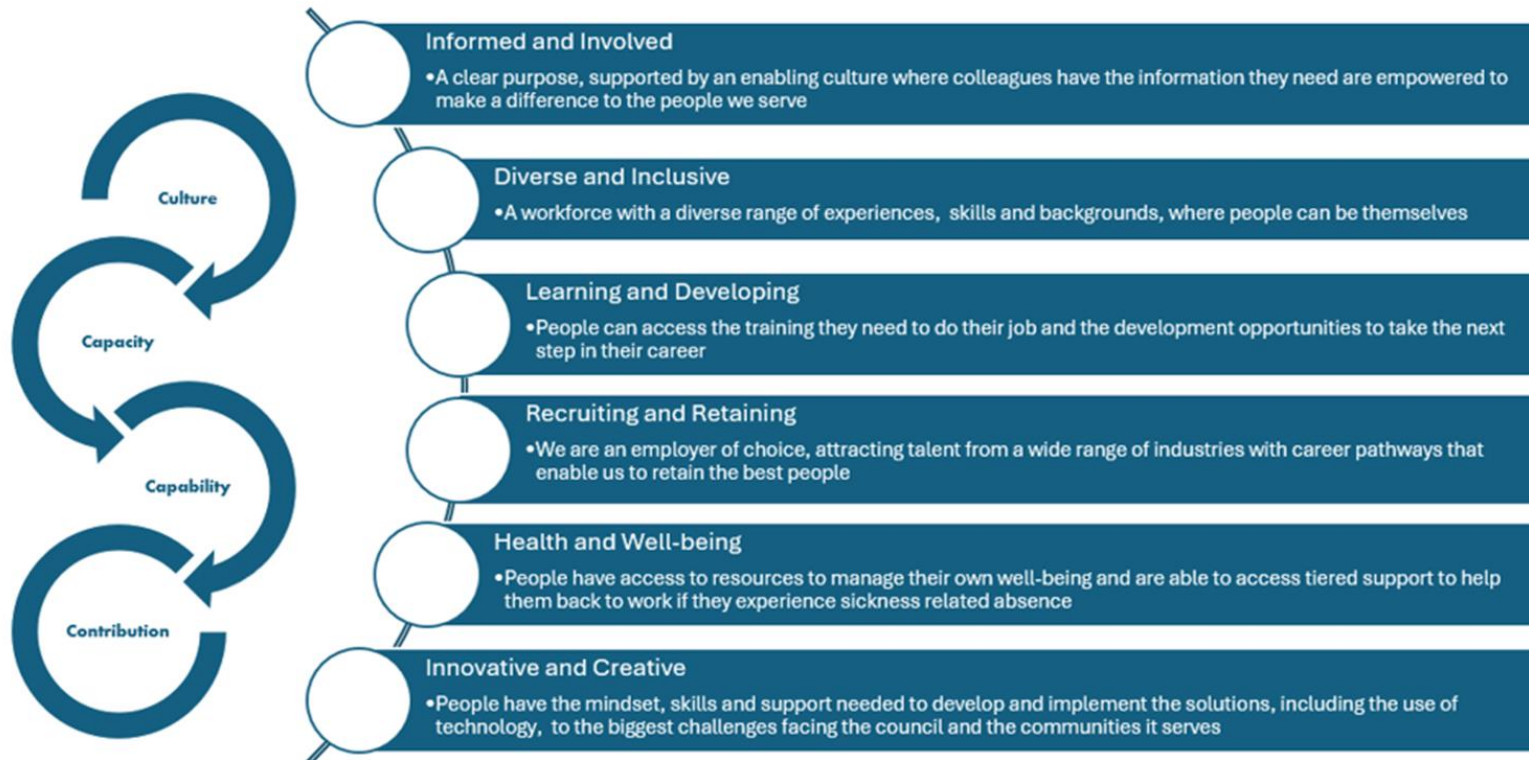
There is a rich body of research into the factors that increase employee motivation and engagement. We've examined this and spoken with our colleagues about what matters to them. This has resulted in a set of conditions, the things we need to have in place to make sure everyone is able to give their best for the people of Monmouthshire.

- **Autonomy** – The freedom to make decisions, express creativity and navigate work with a sense of control.
- **Inclusivity** – Colleagues perspectives are not just acknowledged but celebrated and there is opportunity to be involved in the discussions and decisions that shape how work is done.
- **Learning and Development** – The opportunity to improve in their current role.
- **Career Progression Pathway / Opportunities** – Many colleagues want the chance to develop new skills that will help them progress their career.
- **Recognition for their Effort and Contribution** – People work hard, many put in more hours and effort than we have any right to expect.
- **Accountability** – Sometimes people will not get it right. Pushing boundaries and mistakes made in the name of innovation are an opportunity to learn, but where people are consistently not delivering or under-performing they need to be held accountable.
- **Safe Working Environment** – People need to feel safe and comfortable in their work environment.
- **The Tools to do the Job** – People need to have the right tools to do the job, whether that is plant and machinery or a waterproof jacket.
- **Flexibility** – Not all jobs are the same, but where possible employees will have flexibility in where and when they do their job. Purpose and achievement are more important than where people are sat or the time they work.
- **Well-being** – An offer which is integrated into how we work rather than an add-on.
- **Work/Life Balance** – Many teams are stretched. It's important that people can take time away from work and are not continually checking e-mails or messages when they are on leave just to keep up.
- **Certainty and Stability** – We do not use zero hours contracts, but we also need to ensure that we do everything we can to provide stability and a sense of belonging for those colleagues employees on fixed term contracts.
- **Purpose** – Ensuring a connection to the wider purpose of the organisation and an understanding their contribution to the whole.
- **Two-Way Communication** – To be involved in developing ideas and having an understanding of the decisions that are being made and what it means for them.
- **Values** – To know that the organisation is holding true to its values.
- **Belief / Hope / Confidence** – that challenging times will not last for ever.
- **Social Connections and Professional Networks** – Some groups of staff are spending more time working from home. This can be isolating, reduce informal learning opportunities and loosen the bonds that exist between colleagues which can help people through difficult times.

We have used this to inform the development of the objectives and action plan. This list isn't static and we will continue to evolve our understanding through discussions with our colleagues and engagement with professionals and academics in the sector.

Our Objectives

We have drawn together all of this information to produce six objectives. This is followed by a table that sets out what we expect people to see and feel if we get this right:



What this Looks Like

| For Colleagues | For Leaders | For the Organisation | For Residents |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues understand their role and how it contributes to the authority's purpose. • Colleagues can demonstrate how they live the authority's values. • Colleagues are able to contribute ideas and are recognised for their contribution. • Colleagues have regular discussions about their performance and opportunities for development. • Colleagues are accessing training for their current role and to support career development. • Colleagues have the equipment they need to do their jobs effectively. • Colleagues have access to a range of tools to manage well-being. • Colleagues have the skills and mindsets to work across geographical and organisational boundaries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders understand their role and how it contributes to the authority's purpose. • Leaders demonstrate positive leadership underpinned by authority's values. • Leaders communicate key decisions from Council and Cabinet. • Leaders take ownership of and proactively manage change. • Leaders have conversations with team members to manage their performance and keep them motivated. • Leaders take well-being and work/life balance seriously and help colleagues enhance these. • Leaders develop their teams and grow new leaders. • Leaders celebrate success and recognise effort and contribution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can evidence progress towards objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan. • We can demonstrate our values and this is recognised by councillors, residents and businesses. • We have confidence in our workforce to deliver – and celebrate success. • We make the best use of our peoples' talents and create the capacity to deliver our objectives. • We are an employer of choice in our own sector and beyond. • We continually learn from and apply cutting edge practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will always aim to put the customer at the heart of all we do. • Our staff will be polite, turn up on time and have a 'can do' attitude. • If you talk to someone and they can't help you, they will do their best to put you in touch with someone who can. |

Action Plan

The actions below describe some the immediate things we will put in place to help achieve our objectives. There is additional activity being developed that will contribute and which will feature in future updates of this action plan. The action plan will also be enhanced by more detailed activity within service business plans at team level.

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Informed and Involved | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Develop a new approach to staff appraisal to ensure that everyone can articulate their contribution to the organisation's purpose and give us a clear understanding of training and development needs. | Head of Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New appraisal scheme launched – July 2024 • Percentage of staff receiving an appraisal • Training needed analysis in place – March 2025 |
| | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Develop a programme to roll-out the skills and tools taught as part of the InFuSe programme and ensure these are targeted at the biggest challenges facing the organisation alongside operational efficiencies. <i>(This action is also featured under 'Innovative and Creative')</i> | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships Deputy Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme in place – December 2024 |
| | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Improve briefing and cascade of information to our workforce about the business of Council and Cabinet to maintain the connection to the direction set by, and decisions taken by, our politicians. | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff survey in place – March 2025 • Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 |

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Informed and Involved | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Improve our use and analysis of workforce data. | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce data is featured in all service business plans and a whole authority dashboard – September 2024 |
| | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Ensure clear communication about new starters, leavers and internal promotions so colleagues and councillors always know who is responsible for key areas of work. | Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New section features in our regular staff newsletter 'The Compass' – September 2024 |
| | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Develop a series of face-to-face staff briefing and events which build on the <i>Digital Cwtch</i> and other online events to maintain the connections and networks that promote the values and culture of the organisation and involve staff in developing the ideas that will be the lifeblood of future public service delivery. | Head of Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme of activity in place Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 |
| | A clear purpose, supported by an enabling culture where colleagues have the information they need and are empowered to make a difference to the people we serve. | Support our staff to take action to reduce their carbon footprint – both in the workplace, at home and while travelling. | Head of Human Resources Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measured by commuting data from Net Zero Carbon submission to Welsh Government |

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Diverse and Inclusive | A workforce with a diverse range of experiences, skills and backgrounds where people can be themselves. | Build on our recently attained Disability Confident Employer status to ensure we attract and retain a diversity of talent and reduce the disability pay gap. | Equality and Welsh Language Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average difference in pay between employees who are disabled and those who are not (£) |
| | A workforce with a diverse range of experiences, skills and backgrounds where people can be themselves. | Undertake research to identify the actions likely to have greatest success in reducing the gender pay gap in the authority. | Equality and Welsh Language Manager Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research concluded and recommendations made – September 2025 • Average difference in pay between males and females (£) |
| | A workforce with a diverse range of experiences, skills and backgrounds where people can be themselves. | Encourage and support the development of staff groups to share experiences and identify opportunities for support, building on the example of the dyslexia group started by colleagues. | Equality and Welsh Language Manager Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of more staff groups |
| Learning and Development | People can access the training they need to do their job and the development opportunities to take the next step in their career. | Launch the new e-learning system (Thinqi) to ensure staff can access the training they need to do their current role and the development opportunities they need to take their career to the next level. | Head of Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning system launched authority-wide – June 2024 • Percentage of non-teaching workforce accessing courses on Thinqi. |

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Learning and Development | People can access the training they need to do their job and the development opportunities to take the next step in their career. | Create a new training space for the organisation to reduce costs and ensure we have a physical space for learning to accompany our new online platform. | Head of Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New training space is in place – 2025 |
| | People can access the training they need to do their job and the development opportunities to take the next step in their career. | Ensure our workforce have the knowledge and skills to achieve objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan. | Head Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be measured via individual performance appraisals |
| Recruiting and Retaining | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Embed workforce planning across the organisation to address shortages and ensure career pathways are in place. | Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover • Expenditure on agency staff • Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 |
| | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Create a pathway to enable colleagues in physically demanding roles to develop the skills and knowledge to secure other roles at later stages of their careers. | Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathway in place • To be measured by retention data in key departments |
| | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Introduce a new scheme for work experience, apprenticeships and graduate recruitment. | Head Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New scheme in place – December 2024 • Number of i) apprentices ii) interns iii) graduates employed by the council |

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Recruiting and Retaining | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Launch a new e-recruitment system to improve process efficiency and improve the recruitment and onboarding experience for recruiting managers and potential and new employees. | Head of Systems and Payroll | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-recruitment system in place – June 2024 Average number of applicants for each new role |
| | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Promote career development opportunities to ensure that we keep good people in local government. | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turnover (%) Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 |
| | We are an employer of choice, attracting talent from a wide range of industries with career pathways that enable us to retain the best people. | Build and use networks to attract talent and ensure our workforce are continually seeking the ideas and cutting-edge practice that could be applied in Monmouthshire. | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 |
| Health and Well-being | Colleagues have access to the resources to manage their own well-being and can access tiered support to help them back to work if they experience sickness related absence. | Continue to develop and promote our well-being offer and staff benefits package. | Head of Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff benefits page in place – September 2025 Measures to be informed by staff survey – March 2025 Sickness absence (%) |
| | Colleagues have access to the resources to manage their own well-being and can access tiered support to help them back to work if they experience sickness related absence. | Undertake audits of our culture to ensure that we have early signs of any emerging issues that need to be addressed. | Head Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture audit undertaken – March 2026 |

| | Objective | Action | Responsible Officer | Measures / Milestones & Timescale |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Innovative and Creative | People have the mindset, skills and support needed to develop and implement the solutions, including the use of technology, to the biggest challenges facing the council and the communities we serve. | Ensure that we have a good understanding of the future of work, in areas such as automation and artificial intelligence, and use these to inform our workforce development. | Head Organisation and Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone to be identified as this work is developed. |
| | People have the mindset, skills and support needed to develop and implement the solutions, including the use of technology, to the biggest challenges facing the council and the communities we serve. | Develop a programme to roll-out the skills and tools taught as part of the InFuSe programme and ensure these are targeted at the biggest challenges facing the organisation alongside operational efficiencies. <i>(This action is also featured under 'Informed and Involved')</i> | Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships Deputy Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme in place – December 2024 |