



# **PEOPLE STRATEGY**

## **2022 – 2026**

# Introduction

The Nottinghamshire Plan was approved at Full Council in November 2021 and sets out a clear and ambitious vision for the future of Nottinghamshire for the next ten years in which we're working towards a healthy, prosperous, and greener future for everyone. To ensure the plan had the needs and aspirations of local people and their communities at its heart the Big Notts Survey was undertaken to find out what really matters to local people and ensure that the Nottinghamshire Plan was built around this.

Our people are critical to our ability to achieve our ambitions. People we employ directly; people employed by our partners and those from whom we commission services; people who undertake work on our behalf and are employed by themselves or others such as agency workers and consultants.

This high-level strategy sets out our priorities for the next four years to ensure that we have the right people, with the right knowledge, skills, and experience, working collaboratively in an inclusive, positive, and supportive culture with a wide range of internal and external partners to remove barriers and make things better for local residents and their communities.

To achieve this, we will need to plan our workforce in a more sustainable way. This means considering the psychological contract we have with our people and by adopting different approaches to:

- attract, retain, support, and develop our employees.
- job and organisational design including career pathways.
- empower employees to grow by giving them the tools, resources, training and working environment they need to thrive.
- foster confident leaders who inspire and empower others.
- develop the resilience and promote the wellbeing of our employees
- create a more diverse workforce where everyone feels included and valued.

The development of this high-level strategy has been influenced by feedback from employees, managers, trades unions colleagues and representatives of the self-managed groups to ensure that it reflects the things which are most important to our people. This strategy will support our aim to be an Employer of Choice and strengthen our overall approach, to help us to deliver the Nottinghamshire Plan in the Nottinghamshire Way.



Councillor Gordon Wheeler  
Chair of Personnel Committee

# Background and context

The Council is operating in and adapting to a constantly changing world. The pace and degree of change is increasing. The Council needs to continue to explore ways to do things differently, both internally and in collaboration with partners, to make public money go further. We need to find innovative ways of doing business, generating sound returns for all residents and making Nottinghamshire an even better place to live, work and visit.

The Council's previous People Strategy covered the period from 2019 to 2021. However, during the pandemic it was considered necessary to develop a bridging plan to cover the period from the height of the pandemic until the new Nottinghamshire Plan was in place.

The Workforce Resilience and Recovery Strategy approved in November 2020 set out to define the “new normal” for the Council’s workforce in the short to medium term. In the immediate short term, it related to the response to the next phase of the pandemic. An important aspect of the strategy and supporting action plan was to establish and describe a new baseline and context to support our employees’ wellbeing and resilience and organisational resilience to respond to future phases and eventual recovery from the pandemic. This is still critical to our continued success.

The new People Strategy builds on work and activities underway before the pandemic, identifies key priorities for action and develops them for the future. For example, strength-based approaches in Children’s and Adults’ services; leadership development; coaching; flexible working and continuing to be a good employer and Employer of Choice.

We will identify the positives, learning and new approaches we want to retain from how people worked and responded during the pandemic and build this into our future workforce model. We want to continue to harness the positivity, engagement, and collaboration, sustain momentum and the innovation, creativity, and willingness to change which our employees have demonstrated. We also need to identify what we want to stop or do differently in the future to ensure we continue to progress, improve, and transform the Council to meet the ambitions in the Nottinghamshire Plan.

Although, the covid pandemic has shaped much of what we have done and way we have been able to do things since 2020, there are a range of other factors which will have an impact on our workforce and ways of working, including:

- ➡ Increased digitisation
- ➡ New and emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence
- ➡ Changes to our governance arrangements
- ➡ Potential devolution of additional powers
- ➡ New regional and pan regional approaches
- ➡ Ongoing financial challenges
- ➡ Workforce availability, employment opportunities and skills development
- ➡ Wider socio-economic factors

The new People Strategy will continue to shape what work will look like within the Council in a new world context – where and how people will be working, changing expectations in relation to work, what people will be doing (new operating models, digitisation, automation), how they will collaborate and work together with refreshed approaches to organisational culture, values, and behaviours.

This strategy sets out our aspirations for the future of our workforce, provides the building blocks and sets the foundations for future workforce planning, development, and transformation. As such it provides for a route map from where we are now, with key milestones to where we want to be in the future which will ensure we are able to develop and deliver the future vision as set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan.

## Underpinning Principles

The People Strategy is underpinned by a set of identified principles, which are set out below:

- We will continue to invest in our workforce to build our organisational resilience.
- We will use a data and evidence-based approach to develop our workforce plans.
- Workforce plans will also reflect the physical and psychological environment and working relationships and ensure the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our employees is considered at every stage of planning.
- The intention is to create and foster an inclusive, fair, and flexible working environment where the differing needs of colleagues are recognised and respected alongside service needs.
- Managers will be empowered to make decisions about how their teams operate within the parameters of updated Council policies and procedures.
- Employees will be engaged in developing and implementing activities and approaches to ensure their needs are met.
- Learning and experiences gained throughout the Covid emergency will be used to shape the future workforce and ways of working.
- Any plans put in place will build on existing foundations and be sufficiently flexible to reflect changing requirements, need and context.
- We will continue to engage regularly with the recognised trades unions, self-managed support networks and groups and our employees, to understand their issues and to work together wherever possible to address these and identify the best way forward.

# Key Themes

The activities to deliver the strategy have been grouped into themes which are set out below:

## Workforce planning and resourcing

Key priorities in the People Strategy are the review of our recruitment and retention approaches and development of a range of resourcing models, recognising that there is not a “one size fits all” approach to workforce planning. To ensure that we have the right skills going forward, we need to identify what these will be and have plans in place to effectively enable us to develop a “build, buy, borrow or share” approach which will include partner organisations as well as a complementary contingent workforce. The latter will be delivered through the renewed agency managed service but also recognise the value of consultants to complete appropriately defined targeted pieces of specialist work. The principles of effective vacancy management and value for money will underpin all the activity in this area.

Increasingly the use of workforce data and analytics will inform our future people related strategies and workforce plans. Detailed knowledge and understanding of our current workforce and their expectations and aspirations will inform future recruitment and development activity. Early identification of new skills required will enable us to plan more effectively for the future and ensure we are at the forefront of the race for talent and have a continually developing talent pipeline.

People are increasingly likely to change jobs more often and be employed or engaged in work in different ways by a range of organisations. There will be competition for scarce skills which make it more important to identify and plan for our future people requirements. The implementation of the Employment and Skills Strategy, including apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and work placements, will be critical to ensuring we have the people with the knowledge and skills we need.

Once we have recruited new people to the workforce and continue to assess and develop the skills of our existing workforce, it is essential that there are clear and accessible career pathways which underpin succession planning to build resilience and future proofing into our resourcing model.

The Council aims to continue to be an employer of choice to ensure that we are able to attract and retain the best people who share our values and are invested in making this Council a success and who in turn feel invested in by the Council as their chosen employer. This is a complex and multi-faceted process that needs to ensure whilst presenting an attractive proposition to future employees that, as a good employer, the needs of our current workforce continue to be met.

Sitting alongside this overarching strategy, our contingent workforce will be provided in the main part through our recommissioned Managed Service. This provides the opportunity to align the culture and vision for the Council with that of

our provider and for them to provide an additional talent pipeline to close any skills gaps and assist in areas where we lack the capacity to deliver.

## **Organisational culture**

This theme deals with the behavioural and social elements of working for the Council and the individual and collective norms which form the organisational culture. This includes capturing and locking in the learning, engagement, and positive behaviours from the Council's response to the pandemic and using these as a springboard for the future. It will also build on work undertaken within departments on values and beliefs to develop a shared corporate vision of who we are as an organisation and how we do things in Nottinghamshire.

How we value and treat our people to create the right environment to support and engage them in organisational change will have a significant impact on our success. Equity, fairness, and inclusivity need to run through our approach to our people, people who access our services, residents, and their communities.

The Nottinghamshire Way programme will involve employees from across the Council and utilise various cultural inquiry tools to help define the culture of the Council and the way we work. This work will be used to identify the steps the Council needs to take and key milestones to being a progressive, forward thinking organisation, delivering improved outcomes for local people and a great place to work.

Within this theme there is also activity to review the employment relationship and restate and reaffirm the psychological contract and the commitments therein. This includes ensuring that employees are provided with tools, opportunities, and support to empower and enable them to deliver in a positive, supportive culture, based on trust.

This theme will also draw upon information from corporate and departmental employee wellbeing surveys; feedback provided through the Extended Leadership Team; discussions as part of the Webinar programme with the Corporate Leadership Team; Exit Interviews; EPDR's and more informal and anecdotal feedback from employees, staff support networks and trades union representatives.

## **Leadership development**

As the Council moves into the next phases of response, recovery and living with covid, the Council needs to develop strong, confident, adaptive, inclusive, and engaging leadership capacity with a clearly articulated vision of success and positive role modelling. The leadership development theme builds on the level of confidence amongst leaders and managers to do things differently, in new ways and operate in a new context to remove barriers to change, foster innovation and creativity which has been demonstrated during the pandemic. This will build on the momentum and positive experiences during the pandemic and learning from the less positive aspects.

The ability to lead positively and with optimism is one of the core approaches identified for the successful delivery of the ambitions and priorities set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan by supporting an organisational culture which values, engages and develops our people. The core attributes we are seeking to develop and maintain in our current and future leaders include:

- The ability to enable change
- The ability to and use of coaching skills and approaches
- Supportive and empowering
- Adaptive
- Inspirational
- Encouraging
- Advocating for and modelling our values
- Positive and forward looking
- Confident
- Collaborative and collegiate

The response to the pandemic has seen a changing profile and importance of the role of managers with the need for enhanced skills to lead and manage differently including supporting people in their personal and professional development and having difficult conversations, challenging presenteeism cultures and more effective performance management and data/evidence-based approaches to enhance productivity. Work will therefore be undertaken to redefine and clarify the roles, accountabilities, responsibilities and expectations of managers and leaders across the organisation. New tools and toolkits will be developed within a framework of policies and procedures, building on what is already available, to encourage ownership and ensure managers are supported to undertake their roles.

There will be a focus on empowering leaders, managers, and employees by removing perceived and real barriers, including the fear of failure and need to ask for permission, which can impede effective leadership, change, creativity, and innovation.

The leadership theme will also build and develop activity already underway, such as coaching and developing strength-based leadership approaches, across the Council. The refreshed leadership development programme will be launched in early 2022 and has been developed to support leading in new ways in a new context. This includes providing and promoting opportunities for career development and career pathways to support and enable those with ambitions to progress.

## People development

The People Development theme will ensure that employees have the support, skills, and tools to enable them to undertake their roles and encourage and empower employees to shape the way they work. It also identifies activities to involve front line employees more in re-evaluating the way in which we do things and identifying and implementing opportunities for change, service improvement and transformation. This will include continuous improvement cycles, data-driven decision making and empowerment which encourage innovation, creativity, learning and service-led change.

The new Employment Opportunities and Skills Development Strategy creates a cohesive programme of development opportunities for current and future employees to ensure we can address existing and emerging skills gaps. This strategy will form a critical part of our workforce planning and resourcing activity to ensure we have the right people, with the knowledge, skills and experience required at the right time and have an ongoing talent pipeline to sustain and refresh this supply.

Whilst we share common values and behaviours, our workforce possesses a range of attributes which will prepare them to face the challenges of delivering efficient and effective public services to the people of Nottinghamshire. The key attributes are listed below, and whilst the list is not exhaustive, it provides a helpful reminder to enable our people to meet current and emerging priorities.

**Attributes:**

- The desire for continuous learning and willingness to learn
- Willing to take personal responsibility
- Ability to develop and maintain an attitude which welcomes change
- Respect and valuing other people
- A sense of fairness and equity
- Kindness
- A mindset which accepts and embraces technology as an opportunity
- Agile and adaptable
- Enthusiastic with a drive for collective success
- Collaborative
- Understanding the importance of, building, and maintaining effective relationships
- Good communication skills
- Resilient
- High performing
- Ability to work to local and national standards and frameworks to achieve the best possible outcomes
- Willingness to be engaged/involved
- Inclusive
- Creative and innovative

Our approach will include reviewing corporate and departmental or role specific competencies to ensure consistency and development of transferrable skills to encourage collaboration and working across the Council and ensure we maximise the use of the skills we have developed. It also includes skills development programmes for specific areas and specific/technical skills in addition to enhancing more generic skills which the Council will need for the future e.g., digital skills. This will be delivered within the context of improving awareness and better use of the existing learning and development offer, enhanced where necessary to provide additional resources and support for employees, to encourage greater responsibility for learning and personal development.

This strategy also includes a review of our approach to role and job design and career pathways across the whole Council to enhance opportunities for career development and ensure greater consistency to enable us to grow, develop and retain our own staff and encourage collaborative working as the Council moves away from hierarchical,

silo-based career paths to portfolio careers maximising the development and use of transferrable skills.

This theme also considers the way in which employees are recognised, rewarded, and valued for the work that they do at an individual and team level to develop a workforce which is empowered and engaged in improving outcomes for local people.

## **Employee health and wellbeing**

We recognise the impact the pandemic has had on the health, wellbeing and resilience of our employees and the importance of having a range of support available to our workforce now and for the future.

The valuable intelligence gathered via a number of employee surveys has been used to shape this strategy. Further surveys, alongside other tools such as webinars, focus groups and question and answer sessions as well as ad hoc feedback will be used to gather additional information from a wide cross section of the Council's workforce as we continue to respond to the demands of the pandemic, into the recovery phase and beyond.

Throughout the first wave of the pandemic increased peer support and collaboration was evident with people finding new and different ways to work together and help each other. As the pandemic has continued people have had to draw on their reserves of resilience. The need to develop and sustain organisational and individual resilience over the medium to longer term as we continue to live with covid is becoming increasingly important and is a key theme in this strategy.

Over time the psychological impacts of bereavement and trauma and sustained periods of change and uncertainty and resultant anxieties have become increasingly apparent; particularly amongst those undertaking frontline roles for long periods. Considering the psychological impacts on our employees and the people they support, building strength and resilience across the workforce to ensure our workforce is sustainable for the future is critical. The need to support employees to deal with increasingly difficult and changing situations, at home and work, over longer periods and the resultant fatigue is key to the wellbeing theme of this strategy.

This theme builds on existing provision and approaches, reviews and adapts them to reflect the increasingly difficult and complex circumstances that the Council and its workforce find themselves in. This starts with promotion and making better use of our existing packages and support mechanisms for employees including Workplace Health Champions, Mental Health First Aiders, the Council's Buddy Scheme, expanded Counselling Service, Coaching, line management, staff support networks and self-managed groups. These will then be added to and supplemented as necessary. This work needs to reflect known health inequalities across the Council's workforce and the differing needs of particular staff groups. Sharing best practice with local partners, exemplar national employers and existing staff support networks and trades union colleagues will facilitate this work.

## **Smarter working and the working environment**

The workplaces of the future for the Council will be environments designed to help drive the organisation forward with a shared sense of purpose and a culture of collaboration which reinforces the Council's vision as a forward-thinking organisation. They will need to reflect an increasingly agile and flexible workforce, make smarter use of hybrid workspaces which merge the physical and virtual office with a reduced office estate spread countywide. Workspaces will reflect the need to ensure meaningful encounters and collaboration between employees and with their managers, knowledge sharing and reflect purposeful and different ways of working when people come into shared spaces. Working environments will be designed to support a culture that promotes wellbeing and productivity, including positive cultures of change management with staff being given flexibility and trust in how to organise their work. This theme in the People Strategy aligns with elements of the Investing in Nottinghamshire programme and Hybrid Working Strategy.

This theme also reflects the need for the Council to review its approach and develop a fit for purpose support package for increased home working reflecting the different aspects of technology, equipment and wellbeing and ensuring accessibility for all. Managers will need to be skilled in supporting and leading their teams remotely and employees will need ongoing support and training as we increase the use of digital technology.

Digital innovation, efficiency, automation, and workforce enablement are key aspects of this theme with enhanced utilisation of software platforms to support information sharing, increased productivity, and collaboration to ensure that staff support each other in a meaningful way which delivers improved outcomes and meets objectives wherever people are working from, whatever they are working on and whichever part of organisation they work in.

The strategy and associated action plans reflect the need for flexibility, agility and pace and the need to learn from and incorporate the positives from the "test bed" we created during our response to the pandemic. Working patterns and arrangements for the future will need to build on the work already underway to become a truly flexible employer in all aspects.

# Implementation of the strategy

The People Strategy has been informed by the work of the cross-council Workforce Resilience and Recovery Working Group building on corporate and departmental feedback and activity and utilising results and feedback from the wellbeing surveys and feedback from the Q&A sessions already held with the Corporate Leadership Team. It reflects learning and experience during the response to the pandemic and builds on activity underway in departments and corporately prior to the pandemic. It is proposed to continue to use a series of task and finish groups led by members of the working group, supported by corporate enabling services, to take forward the scoping and implementation of the strategy and associated action plans. It is also planned to engage the Council's Extended Leadership Team in taking forward these activities to encourage broader ownership of the solutions.

The Workforce Resilience and Recovery Group will also play a role in the workforce aspects of the next phases of cross -council transformation and act as a sounding board in relation to workforce issues such as organisational redesign to avoid duplication of effort and help ensure alignment with various ongoing areas of work. For example, the Smarter Working and Investing in Nottinghamshire programmes, Leadership Development and the Nottinghamshire Way programmes.

A key aspect of the implementation of the strategy and the development of the future culture of the organisation is communication and engagement with employees from across the Council, including front line workers. Implementation of the strategy therefore includes a review of how the Council communicates and engages with employees. This work is already underway with an initial mapping of existing channels and approaches within departments to identify possible learning which can be applied across the whole Council to improve consistency of messaging as a quick win. This programme of work has led to the development of a new Employee Communication and Engagement Strategy to support ongoing engagement, involvement and empowerment of employees and their managers by working through line managers and their teams and encouraging more bottom-up communication and collaboration and cross council working.

An initial area of activity will involve communication about the strategy itself involving managers and employees what we are doing, explaining why and what we hope to achieve, timescales for the work and seeking views and input. This will include ongoing involvement of trades union representatives and staff support networks and groups. This will ensure a broad range of views are reflected in the development and implementation of the annual action plans that will set out how we will achieve the objectives of the People Strategy and vision and actions set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan and ensure that we have a forward looking and resilient council focussed on the needs and aspirations of local people.

Discussions have also taken place with the employee self-managed groups to ensure proper consideration is given to the potential impacts on all colleagues across the Council. This includes black, Asian and minority ethnic employees, LGBT+ employees and employees with a disability or underlying health condition. Working with these

support networks has resulted in very positive and constructive engagement which it is intended to build on as part of implementation of the People Strategy.

The People Strategy will be implemented initially through existing action plans and programmes of work where possible, adapted to meet the objectives and long-term vision of the Nottinghamshire Plan. These will be reviewed and realigned to ensure a cohesive, collective approach to ensure delivery of the priorities set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan and underpinning People Strategy.

Existing action plans and programmes of work include:

- Health and Wellbeing Action Plan
- Health and Safety Action Plan
- Investing in Nottinghamshire (Smarter Working Phase 2)
- Digital Strategy
- Hybrid Working Strategy
- Leadership Development Programme – existing, aspirant, qualification/on job/apprenticeships
- Employment Opportunities and Skills Development strategy
- Corporate and Departmental Equalities Action plans
- Disability Confident – Self Assessment
- Gender Pay Gap – Action Plan
- Workforce Resource Plan including departmental and service specific resourcing action plans
- Workforce Profile Data

Annual action plans and specific targeted plans and work will be developed and commissioned to deliver actions not already underway, working under the auspices of the high-level People Strategy. Targets and key milestones will be identified to monitor progress against the People Strategy and contribution towards meeting the longer-term ambitions set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan. In addition to cross-council planning, this will involve departmental leadership teams being fully engaged in the development of more detailed action plans to reflect specific service needs.