

Cheshire East Council

People Strategy 2025 – 2029

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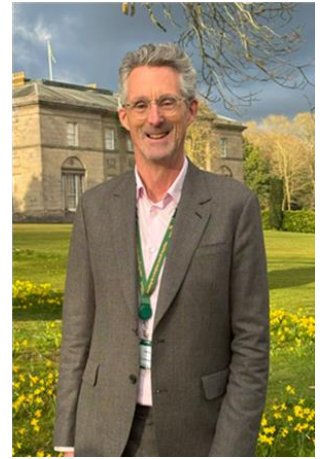
DRIVE | INTEGRITY | RESPECT | COLLABORATION

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Foreward - Chief Executive

The last few years have been a challenging time for many of us who work for Cheshire East Council. Like other Local Authorities we supported our residents through the most significant public health emergency in living memory. And although we live in a beautiful and prosperous region, we are facing significant and urgent financial pressures.



In the face of this unique set of challenges, all of you working for Cheshire East Council have shown amazing commitment and dedication to our residents, particularly those most vulnerable.

In response to our LGA Peer Review in 2024 we created an Assurance Panel to help us improve, and we created a council wide Transformation Programme that will deliver a new, sustainable operating model. We have also developed an Improvement and Transformation Delivery Plan 2025 – 2027.

A key component of delivering our plan commitments and the improvement and transformation we need is a strong People Strategy to support the well-being and development of everyone who works for the Council and enable them to perform to their highest potential. This will give us confidence in moving forward and create a new and positive culture where we can all aspire, thrive and flourish. Our People Strategy has been co-produced with colleagues from across our organisation. It addresses your priorities and starts to build the excellent organisation we need to be, to meet our current challenges and build a sustainable future.

You have said we need to do better in supporting professional and personal development; creating a better working environment in our offices and depots; delivering more modern, flexible and mobile working practices and recruiting and retaining the permanent workforce we need for the future.

We must deliver a stronger performance culture. We will hear the voices and ideas from all of our colleagues and take action in response. We need to be more diverse and inclusive, more closely connected to our neighbourhoods, our ward Councillors, and we will become more responsive to the needs of our different communities.

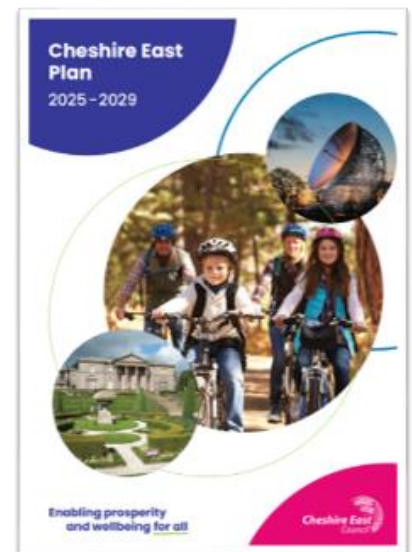
Our People Strategy sets out the key outcomes that will help us to reset, reimagine and reshape our organisation. And create opportunities for us all to play a part in the journey of becoming an employer which we are all proud to work for. We will be the best public servants we can be - serving the people of Cheshire East with commitment, pride and dedication; and meeting the commitments set out in the Cheshire East Plan.

Introduction – A strategy about you, for you

Our People Strategy is about everyone that works at Cheshire East Council, now and in the future. The strategy is written for you, is about you, and has been co-produced with you.

Our people underpin and enable everything we do and are key to the successful delivery of our council vision, *'Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East'* and the commitments set out in the **Cheshire East Plan 2025-29**.

The last few years in local government have been challenging and will continue to be challenging as change, transformation and improvement dominate our context. Our workforce is also critical to the success of our **Improvement and Transformation Delivery Plan 2025-27**.



With a clear strategy and cultural vision for our workforce, a set of shared values and a shared sense of purpose, **together we will make Cheshire East Council a great place to work and be an employer others want to work for.**

We have listened, researched and considered what a workforce of the future needs to look like to thrive and flourish; and that is clearly influenced by what our council needs to offer to our residents, partners and other stakeholders. We have considered these factors alongside our current workforce profile to shape the plan for the next four years. Our People Services Offer developed as part of this strategy clearly sets out what you can expect from us at each stage of your employee experience at Cheshire East Council.

Everything we do is about how we improve, transform and secure our future.

Things you can expect from us include a great **induction for new and existing starters**, ongoing learning and **development** opportunities, support for your **health and wellbeing**, a great **recognition and reward** offer and support for you to **progress** or move on.

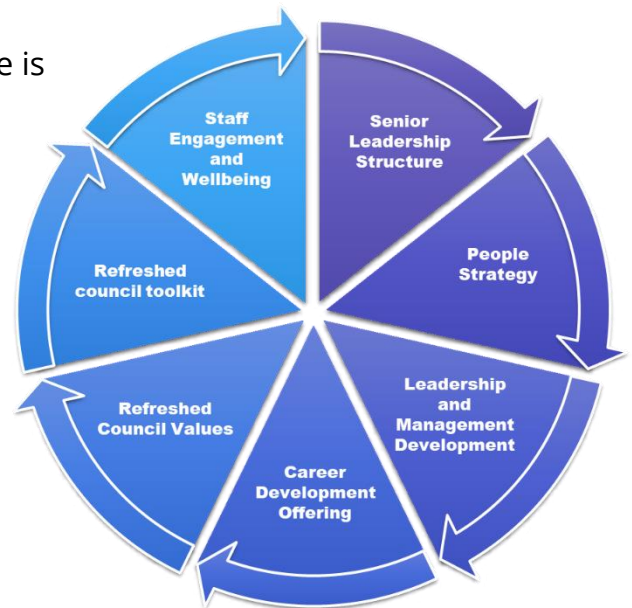
We place great value on engaging with our staff and listening to what you tell us. This is central to the delivery of this plan. We are committed to developing and supporting all of our staff to provide for the future and recruiting and retaining a workforce that reflects the community we serve. **Thank you for all you do.**

Our Context – Challenges and Opportunities

Our LGA Peer Review 2024 told us that there is significant work for us to address the challenges and opportunities we face.

Your voice contributed significantly to that learning and shapes all our workforce activity.

We have identified our main challenges and opportunities from a range of sources: data analysis, internal engagement and external research and benchmarking.



Our Staff Survey in 2023 and our staff events during 2024/25 have established mechanisms for regular feedback but we know there is significant work to do for employees to feel their voices are heard, to have trust in the Council. That will enable you to advocate for the council as a great place to work; and give you confidence in recommending us to other people. We are committed to undertaking further surveys and regular in-person staff events.

The visibility and transparency of senior leaders and cross-team collaboration also needs improvement.

We understand there are several areas in which to improve our work environment, including:

- enabling new ways of working that increase business performance
- creating a high-performing culture
- improving capacity and capability.

The Good Work Survey (CIPD, 2023) found that an increasingly poor work-life balance in the public sector is impacting on mental and physical health, so we aim to further enhance our existing wellbeing offer.

Our Workforce

Understanding the profile of our workforce helps us to plan for the future.

As an employer, we want to ensure our workforce is representative of the communities we serve and that we attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds and with diverse skills and experience.

At Cheshire East Council, we employ around 3,500 staff, who are our most important asset in delivering the outcomes we want to achieve for the people of Cheshire East. We also employ just over 2,300 staff in our maintained schools. Total headcount as of 1 October 2025 was 5836.



Our average days lost per FTE to sickness stands at 10.95 days.

Our turnover (rolling 12 months) stands at 15.95%.

We know we have an aging workforce, with the average age standing at over 47 years. Whilst that means we have great depth and breadth of experience, we do need to make sure we are able to support future needs.

How we'll deliver our vision

Our Operating Model

In February 2025, Full Council agreed the new Cheshire East Plan and our vision for the Council ***'Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East.'***

Everything we do within our People Strategy must be focused on delivering our broader council vision and the four Improvement Priorities set out in our Improvement and Transformation Delivery Plan.

To complement this, the purpose of our People Strategy is to 'reset, reimagine and reshape a high performing, inclusive, and committed workforce which is proud to work for the Council and serve the people of Cheshire East'.

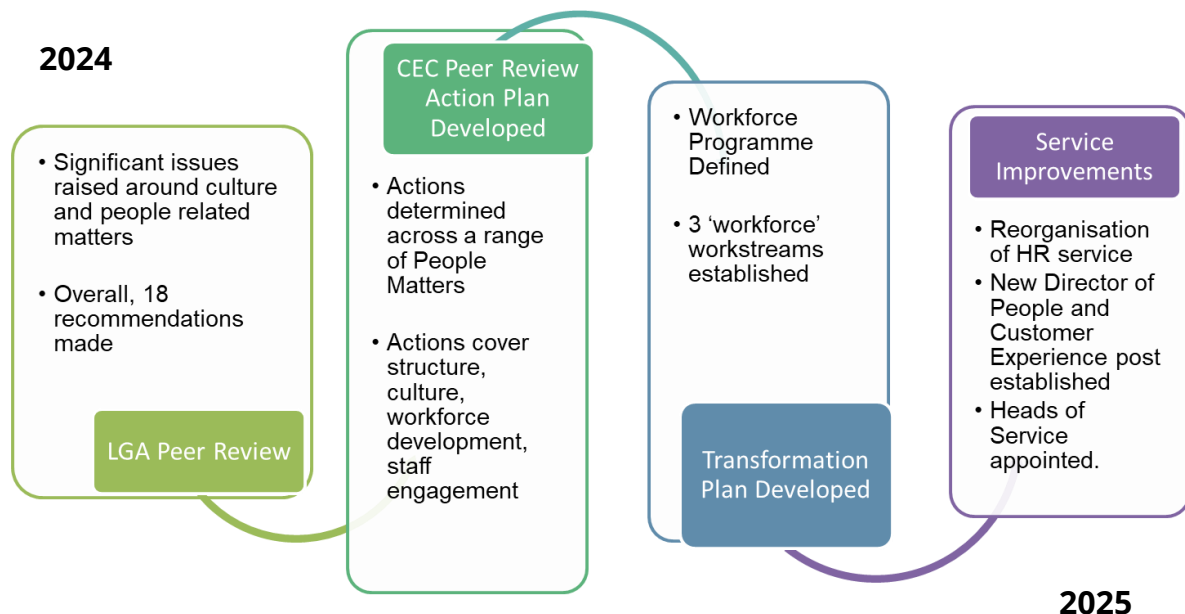
This strategy defines a series of outcomes, which will ensure we deliver our Cheshire East Plan vision. its three commitments and our four improvement priorities.



The design principles in our Operating Model have informed the People Strategy and our offering to you at each stage of your career. We are on the journey to deliver our operating model and our improvement priorities. But we have more to do to help us thrive through significant change and build the skills, capacity and capability to help us improve and transform.

Our journey so far

The launch of our People Strategy is not the start of our improvement and transformation journey. Work is already well underway to improve our People Services offering, our approach to employee engagement; and to ensure that we deliver a whole career development offer that is so critical to helping us transform our culture.



Several workforce transformation programmes have commenced and are progressing positively and work to improve People Services is concurrently being implemented. This work is critical to the success of not only the workforce programmes but all improvement and transformation activity, as we look to build a sustainable future.

In relation to improvement and transformation, we know that:

- Some jobs will change, particularly with the introduction and use of new technologies, automation and Artificial Intelligence. Our transformation plan will determine this through service redesign.
- Improved career development opportunities and clear development pathways will be required to support retention and to 'grow our own' talent, but also to support the delivery of change.
- Colleagues will want and need opportunities to actively participate and influence change and support this through our various 'champion' communities, our networks and development opportunities such as our service design mini-academy.

Your Voice

Our approach to employee engagement

You told us that you want to be engaged on our improvement and transformation journey.

To support that we developed a Staff Engagement Approach which sits alongside our commitment to work with our recognised Trades Union colleagues and staff networks.

We have developed a number of objectives and will utilise a range of activities to ensure your voice is heard.



Our employee engagement approach was co-developed with staff through staff conferences, our champions groups and discussions with key stakeholders. Our engagement will be regular and consistent.

Our Engagement Objectives

We engage to:

1. **Listen and hear you.**
2. **Act on your feedback and tell you how it contributes.**
3. **Encourage you to proactively seek out information** and contribute ideas.
4. **Develop a common language for describing the way we will do things.**
5. **Share our ideas openly, we are not afraid of challenge.**
6. **Develop our collective curiosity about how we can improve for each other and our residents.**
7. **Learn together, we don't blame individually.**
8. **Embed our values and behaviours in everything we do** – including engagement.

You can find more information on our approach to staff engagement in our Approach to Staff Engagement document on CEntranet.

Our Cheshire East Values

Working together we have reshaped our values

We have already set out that this strategy defines a series of outcomes that will ensure we deliver our Cheshire East Plan and improvement priorities.

To achieve this, we need to have a clear set of values (and behaviours) which all of us recognise and understand how they underpin the delivery of our strategy and plans.

Our values underpin the culture we create.

Our new Cheshire East Values were co-created with many of you through various engagement events and activities, including the quarterly all staff events and regular engagement sessions such as Manager Share and Support, In the Know and our People and Culture Champion meetings.

Drive illustrated by ...	Integrity which means ...	Respect shown by ...	Collaboration demonstrated by ...
• a desire for growth, innovation and high performance • striving for a culture of excellence • developing a sense of purpose and engagement • Working towards our objectives with focus and determination	• acting ethically and transparently • prioritising doing the right thing through your words, actions and beliefs • being accountable for our actions • fostering trust and building strong relationships	• treating everyone with dignity, kindness and empathy • showing genuine care and appreciation for others • acknowledging individuals' unique contributions • fostering a positive and inclusive environment	• promoting a culture of teamwork, shared knowledge and learning from each other • improved problem solving • working together to deliver better outcomes • Developing innovative solutions

Our values will be embedded into everything we do and ensures that work is not just what you do, but **how you do it**. You can find more information about our values and how to build them into your regular performance and development conversations on CEntranet.

Your career journey with us

Our Employee Lifecycle

We want you to have a positive employee experience and our Employee Lifecycle sets out how we will **deliver this..**

The lifecycle provides clarity about what Cheshire East Council offers you to ensure you can consistently deliver the very best for our residents.

Being clear about what is available to you during all stages in your career at Cheshire East will give you the opportunities and confidence you need to help us all maintain a high-performance culture. We know from feedback that this matters to you. You can view more of what's on offer at each stage in Appendix 1 to this strategy, and you can also see how we will measure our success, Appendix 2.



Focusing our offer around each stage of your career with us is an easy and established way of helping you understand how your People Services colleagues can support you. It also makes clear what we expect in terms of your contribution as well. CEntranet will be updated to set out our offer at each stage.

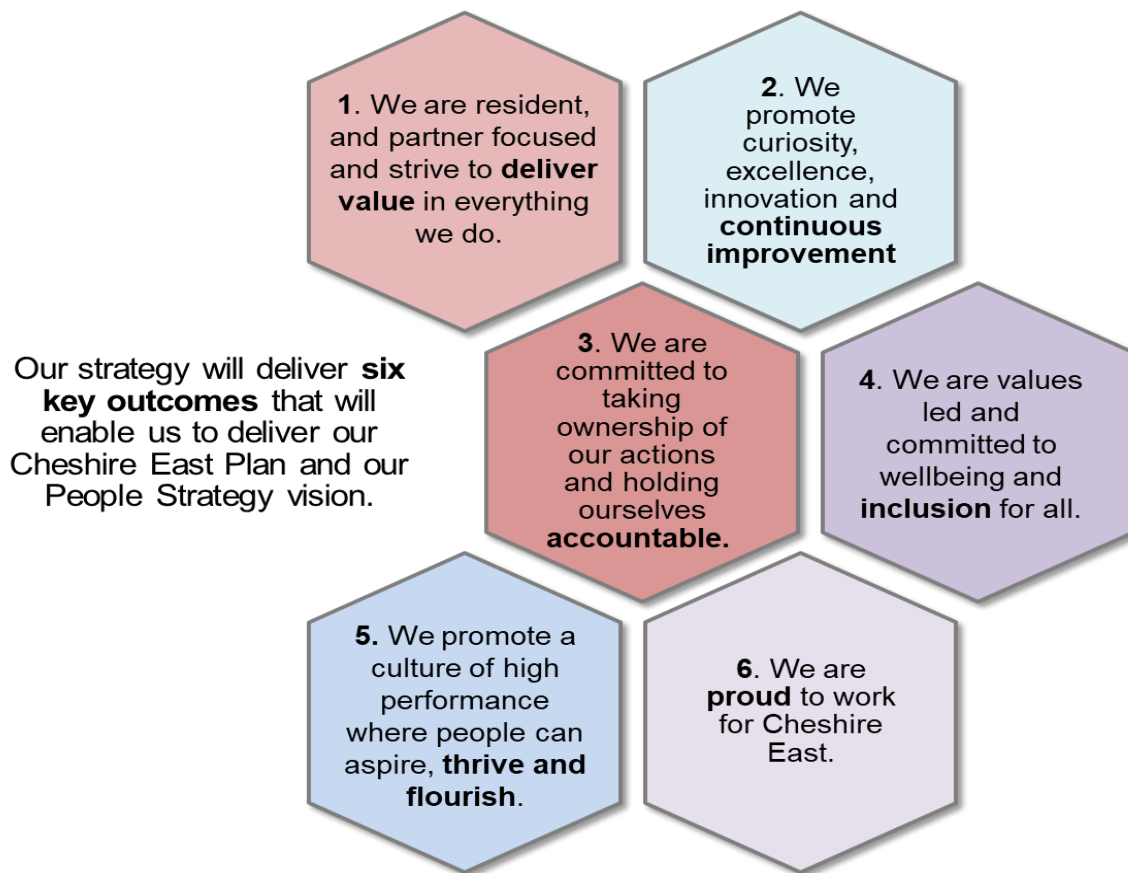
Understanding our lifecycle will also help us be really clear about what we need to measure, and how often, to ensure that we maintain high performance and great services to our residents, partners and businesses. We have developed a set of 'measures' aligned to each stage to ensure of success (see Appendix 2).

We expect to keep these under review as we continue on our journey of improvement and transformation. We will use regular feedback, insight and intelligence to ensure that we are doing the right things at the right time to ensure we continue to deliver the best services.

Our People Strategy Outcomes

Our strategy sets out 6 key outcomes

Along with our values, these outcomes will ensure the strategy delivers for you and provides impact to all of our residents, but particularly those most vulnerable. We know from you that this really matters to you.



Outcome One

We are resident and partner focused and strive to deliver value in everything we do.

Outcome 1 will be enabled by **attracting, recruiting and retaining colleagues** who share our values, are resident and partner focused and strive to deliver best value services.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Co-design services with residents through consultations, surveys, and workshops. ✓ Run innovative and inclusive recruitment campaigns to attract the best people. ✓ Deliver meaningful 'Welcome to Cheshire East' induction activities. ✓ Use data and feedback to improve resident experience and share data appropriately to achieve joint outcomes. ✓ Invest in staff development and digital transformation.	✓ Increase in resident engagement in consultations and community events. ✓ Increase in resident satisfaction scores and reduction in complaints. ✓ Increase in number of joint initiatives with partners and reduction in duplication of services. ✓ Improved performance metrics (e.g., turnaround times, productivity). ✓ Demonstrable impact of innovation projects.

Outcome Two

We promote curiosity, excellence, innovation and continuous improvement.

Outcome 2 is about **working together to consistently improve our services**. It's about the way we work, look to proactively develop and continuously improve.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Collaborate, network and learn both within the Council and across partners and a diverse range of stakeholders. ✓ Create real-time insights for directorates and automate processes so that more time can be spent adding value for staff. ✓ Host learning events, knowledge-sharing sessions, and promote cross-team collaboration. ✓ Create safe spaces for trying new approaches without fear of failure. ✓ We are committed to working together to improve services.	✓ Increased participation in learning and development activities. ✓ Improvement in performance metrics post learning and development. ✓ Improved staff survey results relating to learning, change and innovation. ✓ Increased number of ideas submitted through innovation platforms or suggestion schemes. ✓ Evidence of impact from innovative practices (e.g., cost savings, improved outcomes).

Outcome Three

We are committed to taking ownership of our actions and holding ourselves accountable.

Outcome 3 **underpins our organisational culture** and our ways of working.

It's about being accountable, being unafraid to learn from failure, ensure lessons are learned and applied; and constantly improving through values driven, ethical practice.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Promote a culture of high support and high challenge so that our staff can be proud of what they achieve. ✓ Ensure our workforce is empowered to do the best job they can and shape our future. ✓ Create clear role definitions and expectations in service delivery. ✓ Have regular 121 and team reflection sessions to review decisions and outcomes, using data and KPIs to track progress. ✓ Develop an open culture where mistakes are acknowledged and used as learning opportunities, with best practice shared proactively.	✓ Improved frequency and quality of performance reviews. ✓ Evidence of effective leadership and management demonstrated through improved performance against the Cheshire East Plan. ✓ Clear senior-level accountability for rectifying issues and preventing their recurrence. ✓ Staff view of leadership improves as measured through Staff Survey.

Outcome Four

We are values led and committed to wellbeing and inclusion for all.

Outcome 4 is about creating the conditions for all to **thrive and succeed**.

It's about increasing engagement through protecting wellbeing, building resilience, recognising success and rewarding performance. It's about recognising that all of us have a role to play and having the confidence to celebrate and harness difference.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Support our workforce to be healthy, safe and well, through embedding our organisational values. ✓ Ensure our managers and leaders work in partnership and encourage new ideas, suggestions and creativity. ✓ Create a fully inclusive workplace through our EDI strategy; and promote diverse representation in leadership, decision making and a culture where people feel safe to bring their authentic selves to work. ✓ Enable our managers and leaders to take a coaching approach to enable our employees to be at their best. ✓ Recognise and reward our workforce through existing and new initiatives.	✓ Improved diversity metrics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability). ✓ Improved staff survey and specific 'inclusion' survey results, including pulse surveys. ✓ High participation in diversity initiatives. ✓ Reduction in discrimination-related incidents and disparity of outcomes. ✓ Increased engagement, retention and satisfaction, particularly among underrepresented groups.

Outcome Five

We promote a culture of high performance where people can aspire, thrive and flourish.

Outcome 5 is focused on our people **aspiring , thriving and flourishing**.

It's about creating a workplace where people can be at their best, able to change, adapt and succeed.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Ensure there is clear objective-setting aligned with strategic priorities and plans. ✓ Reinvigorate our approach to regular performance and development conversations and recorded individual reviews. ✓ Cultivate talent and manage succession through our career pathways and learning opportunities. ✓ Provide access to learning and development programmes and interventions – developing a learning culture. ✓ Through a range of recognition and reward initiatives, ensure our workforce feels valued, appreciated.	✓ Increase in interest and applications to join Cheshire East Council. ✓ Improvements in time-to-hire. ✓ Increase in employee satisfaction scores. ✓ Increase in internal promotions and progression. ✓ Reduction in sickness absence and turnover. ✓ Better use of our Apprentice Levy.

Outcome Six

We are proud to work for Cheshire East Council.

Outcome 6 is simple, it's about being **proud to work for Cheshire East Council**, whether you stay or leave, return, or recommend us to others.

We will:	What success will look like:
✓ Attract and recruit the best people who are proud to work for the Cheshire East Council. ✓ Ensure our employee offer is competitive and appealing and our policies and practices are innovative, inclusive and easy to follow. ✓ Retain staff through recognising and celebrate the achievements and contribution of all our staff. ✓ Embed the Cheshire East values in everyday behaviours and leadership. ✓ Support, develop and invest in our people so they are willing to return if they leave and they advocate our council to others.	✓ Attract, recruit and retain talented individuals – reducing turnover rates. ✓ High employee engagement scores, increased productivity and participation. ✓ Employees who would be willing to return in the future and who recommend the council to others – from exit interviews and staff survey. ✓ Values embedded into practice and measured through performance and development conversations. ✓ An employer of choice locally and nationally.

Measuring Success

We have developed a People Measurement Framework which supports the delivery of our strategy and ensures it is having the desired impact.

We have a set of measures aligned to each stage of your career journey with us – our Employee Lifecycle, which can be found on page 11 and is summarised below.

It is crucial that we track, monitor, measure and report on our performance and progress so you know we are delivering on our Cheshire East Plan commitments, and the areas you have told us we need to improve on. We have identified measures that align with our employee lifecycle and you can read these in Appendix 2. We have more work to do on identifying targets and we will do this with staff.

We recognise that whilst some of our measures will be quantifiable, it is the subjective measures that define our culture. We have defined what success looks like in terms of our values in Appendix 3.



Our plan and high-level milestones

We have a lot to do. It is going to take time, but together we know we can deliver our vision. We are clear what we need to do by when and what is realistic and achievable. Our high level milestone plan is supported by more detailed plans which will be shared through our Wider Leadership Community, existing Champion networks, CEntranet and ongoing staff events.



To achieve these key milestones, we will need to:

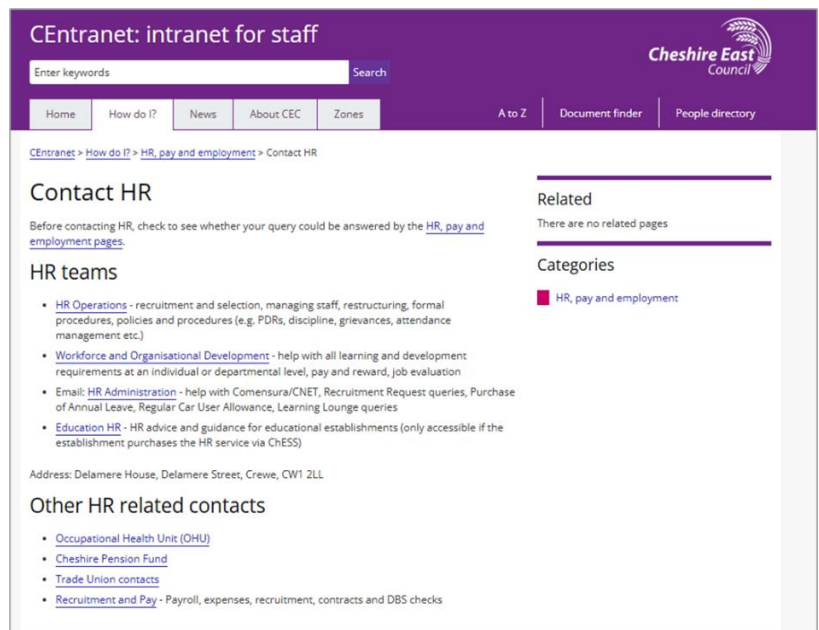
- Reset and reimagine what good looks like for People Services and our workforce more broadly
- Reimagine what we will look like across our services to ensure we are delivering on our statutory obligations as well as what our residents need
- Deliver a broad range leadership and development interventions
- **Manage individual and team performance** at all levels
- Recognise that workforce is a **shared** responsibility across the council
- Regularly engage with you, listen, learn and adapt.

In addition to our People deliverables, you will need to understand our Improvement and Transformation Delivery Plan 2025 – 2027, which you can find on CEntranet.

How to access our services

You'll find details of our People Services offer and a range of support and advice options on CEntranet.

We expect to deliver improvements in policy, process and technology to improve our employee experience. This is an ongoing effort and you will see changes to CEntranet over a period of months.



The majority of your questions can be answered by visiting HR CEntranet where you will find extensive HR policies and information - [HR, pay and employment](#).

For other enquiries or HR support, in the first instance please email: HREnquiries@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 – Our People Services offering

We have created a People Services offer aligned to each stage of the employee lifecycle, below is a sample of the offer (not exhaustive) which will be reorganised and reshaped on CEntranet for our people to access. The offer includes a range of services that will help you deliver the People Strategy outcomes.

Career Stage	People Services Offer
Joining Cheshire East	○ Employer Brand and Value Proposition ○ Recruitment Policy, Guidance and Support ○ Job Evaluation and Design ○ Pay and Reward ○ Induction and Probation
Working at Cheshire East	○ People Management Handbook ○ Health, Safety and Wellbeing ○ Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health ○ Reorganisation, Restructure, TUPE and Change ○ Flexible Working and Ways of Working
Learning and Developing at Cheshire East	○ Work Experience and Volunteering ○ Apprenticeships and Graduates ○ Learning and Development offer ○ Buddies, Mentoring and Coaching ○ Workforce Planning and Succession Plans ○ Performance Appraisals and Progression
Recognition and Reward at Cheshire East	○ Pay, Grading and Job Evaluation ○ Annual Leave ○ Pension and VIVUP ○ Long Service ○ Made my Day and New Year Honours
Leaving Cheshire East	○ Resignation and Retirement Support ○ Ill Health and Death in Service ○ Voluntary Redundancy and Redundancy ○ Career Breaks and Moves ○ Dismissal ○ Exit Interviews and Support
Organisational Development and Change at Cheshire East	○ Operating Model, Vision, Values and Design ○ People Strategy and Culture ○ Employee Engagement ○ Change Management ○ Continuous Improvement

Appendix 2 – People Measurement Framework

We have created a People Measurement Framework aligned to each stage of the employee lifecycle; below is a sample of the measures and indicators used (not exhaustive) and will ensure the strategy is having the desired impact.

Career Stage	People Measures
Joining Cheshire East	○ Time to Hire ○ Agency Usage ○ Starters/Leavers and Turnover ○ EDI Recruitment Data ○ Induction and Mandatory Training completes ○ Probation and new Starter experience
Working at Cheshire East	○ HR Casework Data ○ Sickness Absence and OH Referrals ○ EAP and Wellbeing Take up ○ Performance Appraisals compliance and quality ○ Progression and movement changes
Learning and Developing at Cheshire East	○ Mandatory Training completion rates ○ Apprenticeship Levy Usage ○ No. Apprentices' completion/ drop out ○ Developmental Training and Coaching ○ Leadership and Management training completions and impact
Recognition and Reward at Cheshire East	○ Number of Made My Day nominations ○ Length of Service figures ○ VIVUP take up and usage ○ Additional Annual Leave purchases ○ Volunteering Days completed
Leaving Cheshire East	○ Leavers and Turnover ○ Retirements and Ill Health Retirements ○ Secondments and TUPE ○ Redundancies and Conversions ○ Exit Process, Reasons and Conversations
Organisational Development and Change at Cheshire East	○ Employee Engagement Score ○ Staff Survey findings and follow up ○ OD interventions delivered and accessed ○ Engagement and participation in Champion Communities, Networks and engagement events/activities ○ Experience of change and change readiness

Appendix 3 – Values in Practice

We have created a suite of slides to help you understand what our values look and feel like in practice.

See attached document.

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