



Our People Strategy

October 2024



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Foreword



It is with great pride that I introduce Watford's People Strategy for 2024-28 - a bold and comprehensive plan that places our people at the very heart of everything we do. Our people are not just employees; they are the driving force behind our achievements, the catalysts for our innovation, and the embodiment of our values. It is their dedication, creativity, and unwavering commitment that have propelled Watford to its current success, and it is through them that we will continue to thrive in the future.

In a world that is constantly evolving, we recognise that the only way to remain at the forefront of excellence is by investing in our people. Our Council Plan 2022-26 has set the stage for a future that is ambitious and forward-looking, and this People Strategy is an essential part of that vision. It is designed to attract, develop, and retain the very best talent, ensuring that our workforce is equipped not only to meet the challenges of today but to lead us into the opportunities of tomorrow.

At Watford, our values – Bold, Integrity, Respect, Together, Agile and Trust – are the foundation upon which our success is built. These values are not mere words; they are the principles that guide every decision we make, every action we take, and every interaction we have. Our People Strategy ensures that these values are deeply embedded in our organisational culture, creating an environment where every individual is empowered to excel, innovate, and contribute to the greater good.

This strategy is not just a document; it is a dynamic, living blueprint for the future of Watford. It is designed to be agile and responsive, evolving with the needs of our workforce and the demands of our rapidly changing environment. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and adaptability, we are preparing our people to lead with confidence and to drive the kind of transformative change that will ensure Watford's continued success.

As we move forward, our commitment to our people remains steadfast. We will continue to build on our reputation as an employer of choice – one that values diversity, champions inclusion, and prioritises the health and wellbeing of every employee. This strategy is a testament to our belief that when our people succeed, Watford succeeds.

Together, we will navigate the complexities of our time with resilience and creativity, turning challenges into opportunities and ambitions into achievements. I am excited for the journey ahead and confident that with our People Strategy as our guide, the future of Watford is brighter than ever.

Thank you for your dedication, your passion, and your unwavering commitment to making Watford a beacon of excellence. Let's continue to make this a place where people not only work but thrive, where every contribution is valued, and where our collective efforts drive lasting positive impacts for our community.

A stylized signature of Donna Nolan in blue ink.

Donna Nolan

Chief Executive

Introduction

Our people will flourish, working in a dynamic and agile organisation where everyone is able to be their very best and their contribution is valued and celebrated

Our Council Plan 2022-26 sets out a clear ambition for Watford to be a different kind of council, championing bold values, free thinking and always striving for better ways to do things. We are a council that thrives on continually evolving, exploring innovation and bringing fresh ideas and ways of working to everything we do.

We recognise our success lies with our people. This strategy drives our people first approach, setting out how we attract, retain and inspire the very best. It will galvanise our aspiration to be known as an outstanding employer of choice, with a strong employee value proposition that appeals to the talent we need within the Council to deliver. Our people will feel supported, see their contribution valued and their achievements celebrated.

'An organisation underpinned by a culture of pride, ambition, and empowerment.'

*Watford BC Corporate Peer Challenge
2023 Final Report*

A rapidly changing environment

The dynamics and complexity of local government and wider public services are rapidly evolving. We know we need to respond to our challenges and opportunities by looking to engage and develop shared solutions and outcomes across our wider system. Our People Strategy 2024-2028 is forward looking and supports redefining the landscape of our workforce, committing to cultivating a resilient, adaptable and innovative 'team Watford'. It will help us navigate new and emerging requirements, ensuring our people have the skills they need and the opportunities to grow and develop.

'Amongst members and staff there is a formidable sense of pride, coupled with a can-do attitude with the council driven to step up to the challenge and be ambitious for the place and communities.'

*Watford BC Corporate Peer Challenge
2023 Final Report*



Aligning to deliver our common purpose

This strategy is rooted in a deep understanding of the transformative power of a well-supported and engaged workforce. By aligning our People Strategy with our overarching Council Plan priorities and commitments, we are setting a course for a future where our people are high-performing and deeply valued and supported. The alignment also makes sure every member of staff is working towards a shared goal, with clear expectations and the resources they need to succeed. It will also create a respectful, inclusive and healthy working environment, linking to our values, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy and our commitment to our staff's health and wellbeing.

By fostering a culture of innovation and creativity, we are laying the foundation for a workforce that is not only capable of adapting to change but also driving it. It's crucial to recognise that this strategy is more than a set of goals - it's a living document to guide us through the next few years and beyond.

Strategic Oversight and Governance

Whilst the delivery of the strategy will be led by Human Resources and Organisational Development and overseen by Corporate Management Team as well as reported regularly to Cabinet, we all have a role to play in its success. Meaningful and open engagement underpins our culture and collaborating with our Staff Ambassadors Group, Unison, key staff groups driving operational and strategic delivery as well as employees across the council will be integral to the ongoing development and delivery of the strategy.

Our principles underpinning our People Strategy

A future-focused workforce

Planning for our future	Attracting a modern workforce	Developing our workforce	People engagement
Workforce planning Agile mindset Partnerships	Pay and reward Attraction and retention Equality, diversity and inclusion	Learning and development Leadership Success	Organisational design Health and wellbeing People engagement
Understanding our context Outcome and customer focus Skills gap Assessing need or planning together	Pay and non pay benefits Accessible opportunities Employer value proposition People policies	Success management Career advancement Talent management Apprenticeships and graduates	Clear design principles Decision making Promoting health and wellbeing

Underpinned by our values: **Bold, Integrity, Respect, Together, Agile** and **Trust**.

The strategy is underpinned by our people principles:

1. We are driven by our values - everything we do to deliver this strategy is underpinned by our values.
2. We steadfastly uphold our agile principles in the way we work - which means this is a live document. The delivery plan allows for flexibility and will evolve as the requirements of the council changes over the next four years. Priorities will be identified to work on within the first year to build good foundations and work towards longer term goals to ensure we deliver against key actions.
3. We value each employee- the diverse and unique experience everyone brings to their work every day contributes towards the success of their team, service areas and the wider council. This plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining the best employees.
4. We are committed to the ongoing development of our people - the requirements of the workforce now may look and feel different in four years' time. Our staff need to acquire new skills, so they are equipped to meet future challenges and meet the changing needs of our community.

A future-focused workforce

We have identified four key themes that encompass Watford's people ambitions, setting our aspirations to be a future focused, outward looking, bold and agile council that inspires and motivates our workforce. Insight from our people, as part of the development of our values and behaviours, feedback from our staff surveys and national best practice from both the private and public sector have shaped and refined these themes.



Theme 1:

Planning our future



To sustain our success, we need to plan for the future today. We know our people must continually evolve to develop right skills that allow them to grasp opportunities, keeping an agile and adaptable mindset to flex to meet emerging needs. Our strategy will respond to our key strategic plans and commitments, set out in our Council Plan and other key elements in our strategic framework, underpinned by conversations and engagement with our people and anchored by our values of **Trust, Respect, Integrity, Together, Bold** and **Agile**.



Our actions	What we'll do
<p>Championing an effective, forward and outward looking organisation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and drive forward our current strategic and service workforce plans, forging a solid foundation to ensure we build effective workforce planning, including identifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changing service needs and demands and implications for knowledge and skills. current and anticipated recruitment challenges risks and opportunities related to the workforce age profile, incorporating robust succession planning development requirements and opportunities development requirements to support key internal initiatives including the Customer Experience Strategy, the EDI Policy, the Data and Insight Strategy, and the Community Engagement and Partnerships Strategy. Examine and assess the organisational operating model and design to ensure it reflects and supports our drive and ambition.
<p>Empowering a skilled and confident workforce</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a framework that supports our managers to work with their teams on skills audits to contribute to their development against our key strategic areas of focus and delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> our values and behaviours digital fluency EDI standards customer service standards and requirements data and insight knowledge community engagement and partnership knowledge service specific skills and knowledge.

Theme 2:

Attracting a modern workforce

With our ambition to become an employer of choice, our commitment will be an extension to the values and behaviours, setting out what employees can expect of the organisation and in return what the organisation can expect of our people. In order to translate our values and purpose of the council, our employee value proposition will be a promise built with our own people. Our employers value proposition will supercharge our brand outside and reflect the people experience within the council.

We will be building on nationally recognised approaches, such as best practice value propositions and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) concept of Good. This is work that:

- is fairly rewarded.
- gives people the means to securely make a living
- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- should be accessible to all
- is affected by a range of factors, including HR practices.



Our actions	What we'll do
<p>Forging an employer value proposition that positions the council as an employer of choice</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Watford's employer value proposition (EVP) and employer brand through engagement with our staff and embracing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • material offerings • opportunities to develop and grow • organisational culture • meaning and purpose • our environmental commitment and sustainable credentials.
<p>Appointing the best when we recruit, ensuring we employ people with the right experience and behaviours to be part of "team Watford"</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake a comprehensive review of recruitment and selection material, techniques, and practices.
<p>Inspiring our employees to achieve and lay the right foundations for how we work through our values and behaviours</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pivot our approach to embedding our new values, exploring ways to bring them to life and make the values meaningful to our people through examples of them in action.
<p>Providing employee benefits that are relevant and are valued by the workforce</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and refresh our employee benefits offer so that it reflects what is important to our people. 2. Explore benefits that reduce living costs, through consultation and dialogue with the workforce.
<p>Promoting a working environment that fosters dignity and respect where individual differences and the contributions are recognised and valued</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase equalities disclosure on recruitment and employee monitoring information to support our commitment for a diverse workforce that reflects our community. 2. Include an equality statement in all recruitment adverts. 3. Achieve next level of the government's Disability Confident accreditation status. 4. Provide appropriate and on-going equality training and support to enable employees and councillors to manage and/or work within a diverse workforce. 5. Provide training and support to enable staff to manage and/or work within a diverse and inclusive workforce; and deliver services that are inclusive, non-discriminatory and respond to the needs of local people.
<p>Strengthening our tools that support us to manage our people</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake a comprehensive review of our HR policy framework.

Theme 3:

Developing our workforce

We will encourage people to grow and develop at all levels of the organisation to promote effective leadership, skills development, succession planning and effective performance. To do this, we will make sure that an attractive, relevant and accessible learning and development offer is in place so leaders at all levels are supported to develop their approach, and that mechanisms are in place to promote positive performance.

Our actions	What we'll do
<p>Encouraging and actively developing our leadership and our aspiring leaders</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and refresh the leadership development offer to ensure it reflects and supports current and developing organisational priorities and addresses leaders' role in delivering those, reflecting best practice from the public and private sector. 2. Work with CMT and SDLs to visibly embed our values in their behaviours and decision making, through our behaviour framework, so that there is no gap between what leaders say and what they do. 3. Ensure leadership and management development programmes, are aligned with the values and expected behaviours. 4. Review the current management development offer to ensure it reflects and supports current and developing organisational priorities and addresses managers' roles in delivering those.
<p>Creating the environment where managers at all levels are clear about the organisation's expectations and are well supported in their leadership roles</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set and articulate the council's expectations of managers at different levels. This will include expectations of managers in ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an excellent customer service for everyone who engages with the council (aligned with the new Customer Experience Strategy) • the development of accessible and inclusive policies and services that meet the diverse needs of communities (aligned with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy) • effective partnership and collaborative working, including community engagement. • support for the council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030. • understanding and support for the values and behaviours framework • support for innovative thinking and the philosophy that everyone is a leader • readiness for change • a strong performance culture • effective manager and employee engagement • the effective development of agile working in their teams • improvements in how we use data and information to challenge our decisions.

Our actions	What we'll do
<p>Valuing and managing our talent to recruit and retain the best for Watford</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement an engaging employee onboarding and induction experience and supporting information, which sets clear expectations for culture and behaviours, customer service and inclusion. 2. Review the performance appraisal framework. 3. Assess and develop a corporate mentoring programme to help people achieve their potential, including looking to partner organisations to support and inspire our people. 4. Develop a coaching culture that supports staff to deliver and develop their full potential. 5. Develop and implement a framework for a talent pipeline of capable aspiring leaders and managers ready to assume positions when available. 6. Provide our people with the information they need when considering their own career aspirations and decisions 7. Explore the use of an "academy" approach, including with partner authorities, to growing our own talent for hard to fill roles.
<p>Developing future capacity by creating apprenticeship and graduate opportunities or other initiatives for local people at the beginning of their working lives, providing them with experience, skills, and knowledge from across the council to kick start their careers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider a comprehensive apprenticeship programme, with a target of 5% of the workforce, leveraging the apprenticeship levy. 2. Engage with local schools and colleges to promote a good understanding of opportunities within the council.

Theme 4:

Engaging our people

Our strategy will ensure we will continue to build on the council's reputation for putting people at the heart of everything we do. Fundamental to our strategy is our own people's insights - genuine engagement with our people will help us promote modern practices and shape our mindset to respond to current and emerging needs.



Our actions	What we'll do
Protecting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our people by developing their resilience and providing opportunities for genuine two-way engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work with the Staff Ambassadors' Group and the Health and Wellbeing Group to develop and implement an ongoing programme of health and wellbeing across the council.2. Raise the profile of our Employee Ambassador, Mental Health, Career Coaches, and Wellbeing groups, encouraging people to engage, and support their work.3. Develop training for managers to build understanding of how their attitudes, behaviours and leadership style can influence employees' confidence to raise both personal and work-related issues.
Ensuring our people provide timely, high quality and efficient services to customers and our community through a culture of trust, agile working and accountable freedom	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Harness new insights and ideas so that we innovate and continually evolve as an organisation, recognising and celebrating people's contributions.2. Encourage employees to participate in learning and support groups as part of their professional development and wellbeing.3. Celebrate our people's and team's successes.





Keeping on track

Our People Strategy will be translated into action through a detailed Delivery Plan (2024-2028). This will set out what we will be doing to make sure the commitments in the strategy are delivered. We will rigorously monitor our progress, measuring how well we are doing as part of our programme of organisational reporting.

**Watford together,
united by possibility.**





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