The Highland Council

Committee: Corporate Resources

Date: 5 December 2024

Report Title: Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-2027

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Audit Committee on 26 September 2024 approved an external audit report 'Best Value Thematic Report 23-24 on workforce innovation'. The report recommended workforce planning strategies be reviewed to ensure they align with relevant supporting documents.

1.2 Over the last 18 months, Highland Council Services have completed service workforce planning reports and action plans. The service action plans have been analysed and the common themes collated to form a corporate workforce action plan. The action plan is aligned to the medium term budget plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 which is being delivered through the six portfolios in the delivery plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

    i. **Approve** the Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy 2025 – 2027 and priorities outlined in the corporate workforce action plan over the next 3 years, aligned to the council's medium term budget plan.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource:** A failure to manage workforce planning and change puts at risk the Council's capacity to make the most effective use of resources. The impact of failure of statutory service delivery will have a reputational impact, as well as financial implications from any relevant regulatory body. Limited budget will impact on what level of service is delivered, if it is not mandated, especially on the number of staff; training of the staff; plant and equipment available for staff to do their job effectively.

3.2 **Legal:** Care is required that large scale and complex workforce change be managed in line with current employment legislation and Highland Council policy. The delivery of core and statutory functions will be impacted if the Service is inadequately resourced, and staff do not have the necessary skills to deliver core functions.

3.3   **Risk:** Having a sustainable workforce is included as a risk in the Corporate Risk Register. There are also staffing resource challenges associated with budget constraints. This report mitigates the risk of an insufficient current and future workforce.

3.4   **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** Staff wellbeing is a priority in the People Strategy and the Service action plans, and this is reflected in the Corporate Workforce Plan.

3.5   **Gaelic:** No implications.

4.   Impacts

4.1   In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2   Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3   **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

4.3.1   An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 21.8.24. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2   The Screening process has concluded that there are impacts as the workforce planning strategy applies to all staff regardless of their protected characteristics, however these will be positive with no negative impacts identified. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision making process.

4.3.3

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
Equality	Age – positive impact
Socio-economic	Positive impact
Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Well-being	Positive impact
Island and Mainland Rural	No impact
Climate Change	Positive impact
Data Rights	No impact

5.   Workforce Planning

5.1   Workforce Planning is an instrument to support Services to ensure they have the right person at the right time in the right post and with the right skillset.

5.2   As part of the workforce planning exercise, all Extended Senior Service Management Teams undertook a focused workshop facilitated by HR Business Partners to analyse

the context and environment, the current and required workforce profile and actions required to ensure that the workforce can meet future demands.

5.3   The outcomes of these workshops were captured in the Service Workforce Plans which were approved in the relevant strategic committees.

5.4   HR Business Partners and the Talent Manager analysed the individual Service plans and collated he common themes into a Corporate Action plan for the period 2023 - 2027.

5.5   **Workforce Planning** is incorporated in the **People Strategy 2022**. The Workforce Planning Strategy first implemented in Highland Council in 2012, has been revised and builds on the previous strategy setting out key workforce planning issues we face over the next 3 years. The main changes to the approach has been inviting the extended management teams to the workshops with the Senior teams and including the Finance, Performance and Digital Transformation Business Partners in the process. The strategic committees are now receiving annual progress reports on the Service Workforce Planning Action Plans.

6.   Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities

6.1   The main priorities listed by all Services are:
1. Recruitment
2. Staff Retention;
3. Staff Wellbeing;
4. Training and Development
5. Council structure.

6.2   **Recruitment:** All Services experience difficult to recruit posts. Lack of candidates with the right skillset and experience is a national issue but exacerbated in the rural areas in the Highlands. Focus lies on branding the Highland Council as an Employer of Choice and working in partnership with other employers to attract workforce to the Highland. Growing our own by developing our current workforce and engaging the young workforce through Modern Apprenticeships is an essential component of workforce planning. Other measures are working closely with Secondary Education providers to ensure training courses meet our recruitment needs, and to increase the number of work experience placements.

6.3   **Staff retention**: Staff turnover results in loss of knowledge and experience and creates more difficult to recruit post. Although there will always be turnover, the organisation would like to prevent were possible. The improved Exit Interview Process provides valuable information on reasons why staff are leaving the organisation; lack of training and development opportunities and career paths has been a reason for staff to leave.
        The Employee Review and Development (ERD) process supports the job satisfaction, development potential and performance of all our staff. It is therefore important that all the process is well embedded, and the and forms are currently revised to make them more accessible.

6.3.1   Policies to improve work/life balance, support flexible and hybrid working will also support staff retention.

6.3.2   An **Employee Engagement Strategy** was approved in September 2024 Corporate Resources Committee, which has the overall aim to motivate, engage and empower

the Council's workforce to achieve a working environment based on our values to improve motivation, ways of working and individual capability at all levels.

6.3.3   The **Talent Management Strategy** will provide the foundation to build an 'ambitious, sustainable and connected' culture within the organisation.

6.4   The Highland Council's age profile shows that we can expect a high number of staff to retire in the next 5 years. This can be mitigated by ensuring that remaining staff has the right skillsets and focussing on the development of our staff by creating secondment opportunities, career paths and succession planning. This is supported through a newly developed Succession Planning toolkit for managers. Succession planning identifies key positions, timelines and development needs of internal employees (successors) with the potential to fill these posts, to ensure future needs are met.

6.5   **Staff Wellbeing**: Our employee health and wellbeing is a main priority, and we will ensure there is a safe and secure working environment for our staff and legal compliance in all staffing matters.

6.5.1   Staff Wellbeing Surveys are held on a regular basis and outcomes are captured in an action plan.

6.5.2   To reduce sickness absence levels, early identification and intervention is key. Ensuring all managers undertake available Absence Management and Mentally Healthy Workplace training, use of ERDs to support staff wellbeing and proactively address any concerns with support of the Attendance Support Officers is a priority.

6.6   **Training and Development:** To achieve the Council's vision, and to meet the needs of busy staff we will provide a blended approach to learning with a more towards more learning interventions being delivered through digital solutions, while continuing with face-to-face interventions.

6.6.1   The previously referred to ERD Process is key in identifying training needs.

6.6.2   The **People Development Strategy** creates a framework that details vision, objectives, primary learning needs, employee groups, core delivery methods, measurement and governance.

6.7   All Services stressed the importance to have access to accurate and up to date management information and data. This forms a key aspect of the HR Payroll project, which will be reported to members separately. A management information dashboard including age profile, gender split, absence stats and agency cost is being developed and will be provided to services on a quarterly basis.

7.   Partnership

7.1   Workforce Planning is owned by the Service Management teams, facilitated by HR and supported by colleagues across the Council including ICT/Digital, Asset Management and Finance.

7.2   All Services underlined the importance to continue to work in partnership with our union representatives.

7.3   Collaboration with third parties like UHI and other training providers is also necessary to achieve the targets set in the Workforce Plans.

8.   Follow up

8.1   Annual updates on Workforce Planning will be provided and the Council's Performance and Risk Management system (PRMS) being used to monitor ongoing progress.

          Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate

          Date: 17 November 2024

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          Background Papers:
                          Workforce development & action plan (Redesign Board,23 March 2021)
                          People Strategy (Highland Council, 27 October 2022)
                          Service Workforce Plans (Strategic Committees, 2023 and 2024)

          Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Summary
                          Appendix 2 – Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-27
                          Appendix 3 – Corporate Workforce Action Plan 2025-27

Appendix 1: Integrated Impact Screening Summary

Protected characteristics impact details: Workforce planning is a pivotal component of organisational strategy that ensures the right number of people, with the right skills, are in the right place at the right time. It encompasses activities such as recruitment, training, and development. The UK Equality Act 2010 mandates that these processes be fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory, promoting equality across various protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The workforce planning strategy and action plan supports this objective and applies to all staff, regardless any protected characteristics and will therefore not have any negative impacts. Aging staff profile is frequently mentioned in the Service workforce plans, in relation to succession planning however also in respect of looking after our staff with the purpose of keeping them in employment as long as possible or as long as the member of staff wishes to be employed in the council. There are no negative impacts due to succession planning and retention mitigation activity.

Poverty and socio-economic details: To ensure that all staff have the right skills set, training and development opportunities will have to be provided. Services also recognise that hybrid and flexible working is part of the solution to fill difficult to recruit posts, especially in the rural areas or designing job roles which are attractive to individuals to suit their social needs.

Human rights: There are no impact.

Children's rights: Potential positive impact on young people due to the opportunities provided in the modern apprenticeships programme.

Data protection: No significant change to the current processing as personal data will be used for workforce analysis.

Island and mainland rural communities: No impact envisaged.

Climate change: Positive impact due to reduced travel from hybrid working.

No full impact assessments are required for equalities, poverty, human rights, children's right or data protection.

Human Resources
Goireasan Daonna

Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-27

Ro-innleachd Planadh Feachd-obrach 2025–2027

Ambitious   Sustainable   Connected

Contents
Clàr-innse

Section 1 - Introduction

Workforce planning is one of the key strands of our People Strategy 2022-27 (www.bit.ly/THC-People-Strategy). We recognise that the most important resource is our workforce and we seek to celebrate staff success and recognise staff accomplishments at all times. To achieve a sustainable and connected council and Highlands, we also need to be ambitious for our staff through: strong leadership; learning, development and training opportunities; and positive and supportive employee experience in the organisation.

This Strategy is designed to connect with Our Future Highland Programme corporate objectives, and links to the budget strategy as contained in the medium term financial plan, and activity required to support workforce planning undertaken by services in the council's delivery plan.

The council has service workforce plans in place which align to our strategies, finances and performance requirements, and which forms the basis of our workforce activity during 2024-27 and beyond. We are one of the largest employers in the Highlands delivering services to a population of 238,060 (census 2021) by a current workforce of circa 10,565 staff (8287.53 full time equivalent) [1*]. Our revenue budget is £775m and staff salary costs of over £400m. We have an average turnover of 13.8% [2*]. There is an increase in part time staff which reflects the varied working patterns offered to staff through flexible working arrangements.

[1*] as at Sept 2024.   [2*] as at 31.3.24.

Section 2 - Context

The workforce planning strategy will reflect 'Our Future Highland' (www.bit.ly/HC-Administration-Programme) programme of work. The commitment to being a resilient and sustainable council involves taking forward a flexible workforce planning approach to support sustainable and resilient communities, fairness, value for money, partnership and collaboration.

The Strategy will support our Medium Term Financial Plan (www.bit.ly/Item3-Medium-Term-Financial-Plan) by delivering the following key projects within the Council's Delivery Plan 2024-27 (www.bit.ly/THC-Delivery-Plan):

- **Workforce for the future portfolio** - Meeting our Council's Future Workforce Needs
- **Corporate solutions portfolio** – Future Operating Model, Hybrid Working and Data Foundations Project
- **Reconfiguring our Asset base portfolio** - Single Public Estate: New Area Community Hubs, incorporating schools, offices, depots and partners.

Creating an **integrated public sector operating model** through our planned, future hub operations, that deliver for all of our residents. The **future operating model** will reduce variation in service management and align management to geographical areas with a hub and spoke model for delivering local services. There will also be a link to the single public estate project under the reconfiguring our asset base portfolio, providing access to integrated facilities and services.

The aim of the hybrid working project is to strengthen our hybrid working approach for particular staff groups, with an emphasis on driving efficiency and reducing staffing costs to realise efficiencies. Hybrid working will support talent attraction and retention of our workforce across the Highlands.

The data foundations project will enable systems design, technology and processes to support the council's ability to make data led decisions. The People Strategy highlights the use of technology to modernise and transform the way services are delivered, this cannot be done without our people. Upskilling and developing our staff with digital skills is therefore an important component of workforce planning. Digital Transformation is recognised as an integral part of the council's organisational development and is consistently aligned with the corporate vision for the Highland Council and is supported by strong leadership. The Digital Strategy highlights 'for the council to now further progress digitally, it must become integrated into the way we approach service delivery, improvement and design … it cannot be a bolt on approach or driven solely by a small core team.' Digital must be embedded in the workforce planning process. It is critical this actively involves finance, performance, digital and HR business partners to ensure all key elements of workforce planning are being reviewed in a corporate way.

Section 3 – Aims and Objectives

Our ambition for the council is to support an engaged workforce where our employees are skilled both to meet present needs and equipped for the future. To do this we must be flexible, connected and motivated. Workforce planning is a core business process which supports changing organisation needs with the People Strategy.

The previous Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy (2017-2022) was underpinned by the following key principles:

- be an employer of choice
- a workforce aligned to Financial Strategy
- supporting the change agenda
- partnership working
- positive equalities and wellbeing culture
- attract, develop and retain talent
- skilled and valued staff aligned to key service outcomes
- transition and retraining as opportunities and alternatives to redundancy
- a flexible workforce with agile roles
- empowered employees at all grades
- create capacity for managers to manage.

These principles remain relevant, and we will re-enforce them to support the workforce for the future, with the following objectives:

- grow and retain our own talent
- work with the public and private sectors to co-ordinate employment opportunities to enable effective talent attraction to the council
- actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the council
- create secondment and improved development opportunities
- build career pathways for ease of staff movement through the organisation, including movement across teams/services
- change in practices and processes to drive efficiency and reduce costs
- increase modern apprenticeship provision in the council
- focus on building staff digital skills
- flexibility of post location across the organisation.

Section 4 – Workforce Planning Approach

The Workforce planning toolkit is well established in the council. Managers follow a six step process to assess the future workforce planning profile needs compared to current workforce profiles to produce workforce implications/gap analysis. This then forms a service workforce action plan which is reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis. Having the right staff in the right place at the right time with the right skillset is essential to meeting the current and future delivery needs of the council.

Access to up-to-date management information and data is key to developing plans. Management Information dashboards will be provided quarterly to services and information below illustrates the corporate workforce dashboard for Q1 2024/25 (Fig 1) with the exception of turnover which covers the period Jan-May 2024.

Figure 1 - Corporate Workforce Data Dashboard
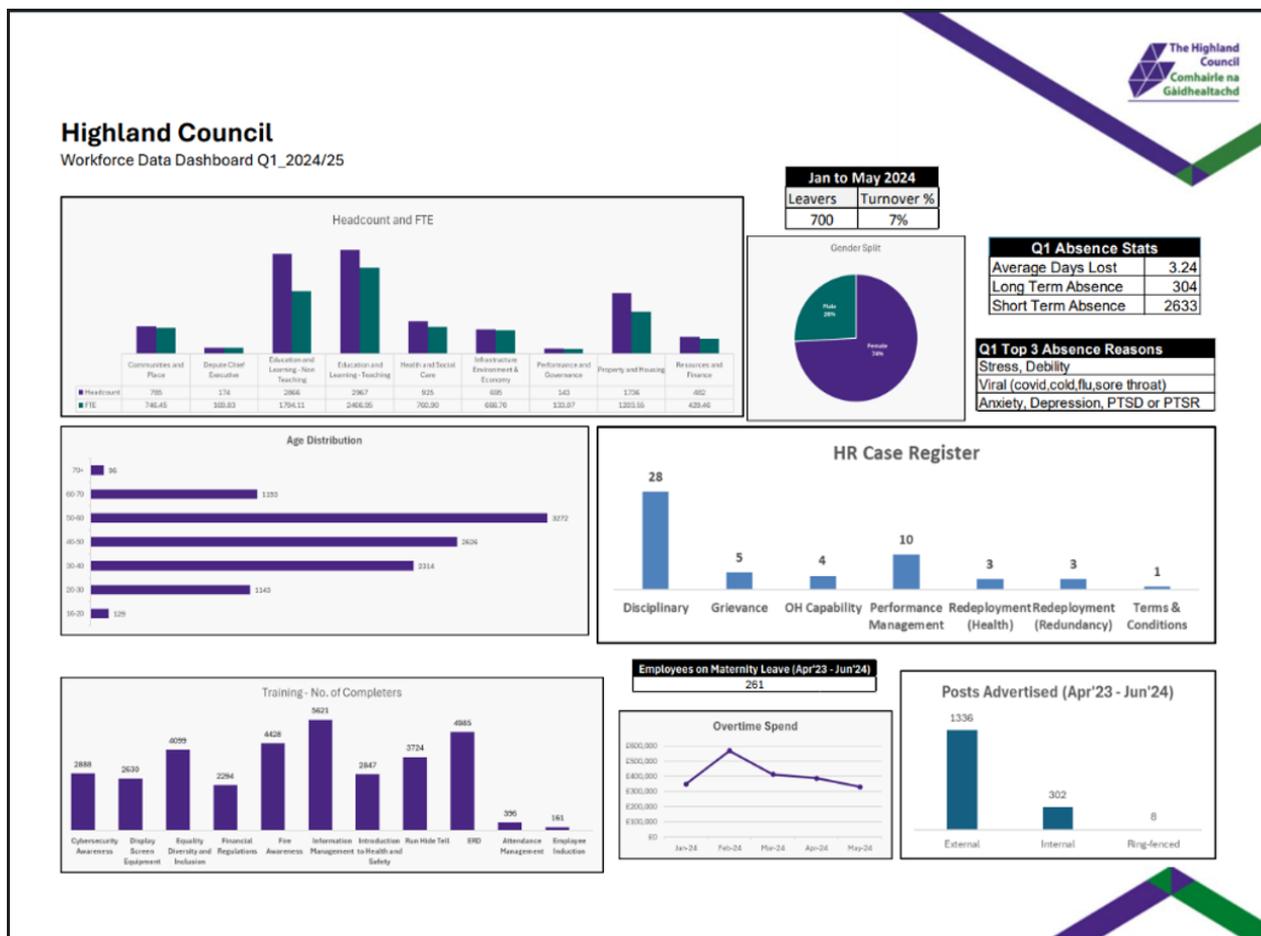
Provision of dashboard data shown in figure 1 will continue to be analysed and subject to continuous improvement through the HR and Payroll programme work to ensure the most accurate and appropriate data can be provided to support managers with workforce planning activity. This will involve the redesign of HR and Payroll processes and implementing an integrated business solution to improve data quality and end-to-end online processes for payroll and workforce management.

Age and sex demographics shown in figure 2 below indicates the council's workforce is predominately female (74% female and 26% male) which is reflective of the average national gender split in Scottish councils. The breakdown in the age demographics in the council indicate a significant ageing workforce with 0.7% of our workforce under 20 years of age, just over 10% under 30 years of age and just over 44% 50 years and above.

Figure 2 - Age and Sex Profile in the Council

| Age Range	Female	Male	Grand Total	% Total
Under 20	40	36	76	0.7
20-29	772	239	1011	9.6
30-39	1637	510	2147	20.3
40-49	2073	569	2642	25
50-59	2283	858	3141	29.7
60-69	916	523	1439	13.6
70+	71	38	109	1
Grand Total	**7792 (73.8%)**	**2773 (26.2%)**	**10565**	

Section 5 – Implementing Workforce Planning Priorities

The following Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities have been derived from analysis of service workforce planning reports and actions plans produced over the last 18 months taking:

- **Recruitment and staff retention**
- **Staff wellbeing**
- **Training and development**
- **Council structures.**

A corporate workforce action plan has been developed for 2025-27 (Appendix 3), with key outcomes and links to the agreed delivery plan work.

Recruitment

The council is experiencing recruitment issues across all services. There are a number of reasons for this such as skills shortage nationally, lack of training and further education providers delivering courses aligned to council needs, lack of housing in rural areas and affordable housing. More creative methods of promoting vacancies through the use of social media appealing to different candidates and promoting the council as an employer of choice with a range of employee benefits can differentiate the council from other employers and contribute to addressing these recruitment challenges. Branding the council in this way to appeal to individuals with transferable skills can help reduce staff shortages. This combined with greater focus on modern apprenticeships and graduate trainee routes can attract a younger workforce to address the age profile of the council. The breakdown in the age
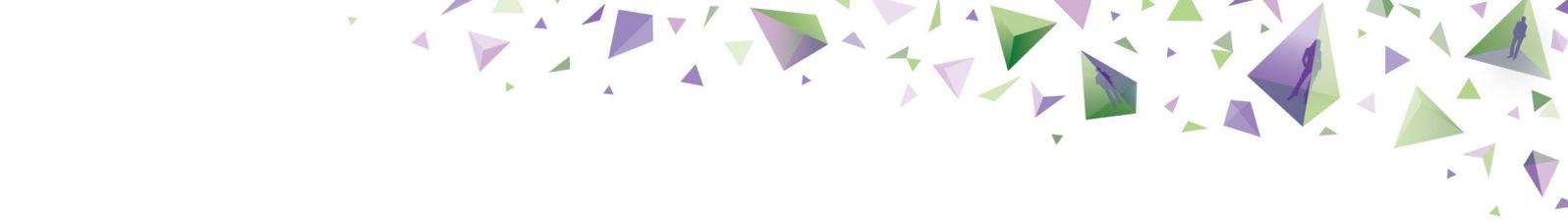
demographics also illustrate 0.7% of our workforce are under 20 years of age and just over 10% total under 30 years of age. The Workforce for the Future will focus on attracting school and further education leavers into the council as an employer of choice through provision of modern apprenticeships and other initiatives. The modern apprenticeships and graduate trainee schemes will not exclusively target young people, these schemes will also be available to upskill existing staff irrespective of age. The Talent Strategy recognises and explores opportunities where the provision of affordable housing for key positions would positively impacts on attracting, recruiting and retaining staff.

Staff Retention

Turnover is inevitable, and in some situations desirable. The council's annual turnover for 2023-24 was 13.8% which is slightly higher than the desirable level for an organisation. Turnover can be positive unavoidable reasons such as to undertake studies, change of career not offered by the council, move away from the area. However where staff leave the organisation for negative reasons, this is not desirable. Data collated from exit interviews helps to provide valuable insight on reasons for staff leaving the organisation which can be used to modify or develop policy to assist in retention. There is evidence emerging that a lack of training and development opportunities and career path is a reason for leaving. These are areas which the council can focus on as part of 'meeting our council's future workforce needs' and the 'future operating model' projects. Growing our own continues to be a key recruitment tool as highlighted in Our Future Highland programme. Talent is identified in our existing workforce to meet current and future needs with HR practices such as the staff annual Employee Review and Development (ERD), flexible and hybrid working also supporting staff retention.

The staff engagement strategy aims to motivate, engage and empower the council's workforce to achieve a positive work environment illustrated by the organisational commitment (supporting employees' psychological wellbeing), organisational identification (how employees psychologically associate themselves with the organisation) and work motivation (the factors that lead people to be interested and committed to their job).

The Talent Strategy is intended to provide staff with a positive journey through the entire employee life cycle, from the point of joining the council. It will generate opportunities for staff to develop multiple skills, including digital skills that are cross service to meet organisational needs particularly in areas of skills shortages. It will also identify new ways of working innovatively to sustain and maintain local communities through development of hybrid working across services roles, to distribute jobs locally and embrace partnership working.

We have an aging workforce profile in the council with 44% of staff employed aged 50 years and above. It is anticipated that a high number of staff will retire in the next 5 years. We need to transfer knowledge and experience to ensure the skills gaps identified by services are mitigated. Service redesign and job design can contribute to addressing the age demographics and succession planning making job roles more attractive to younger employees.
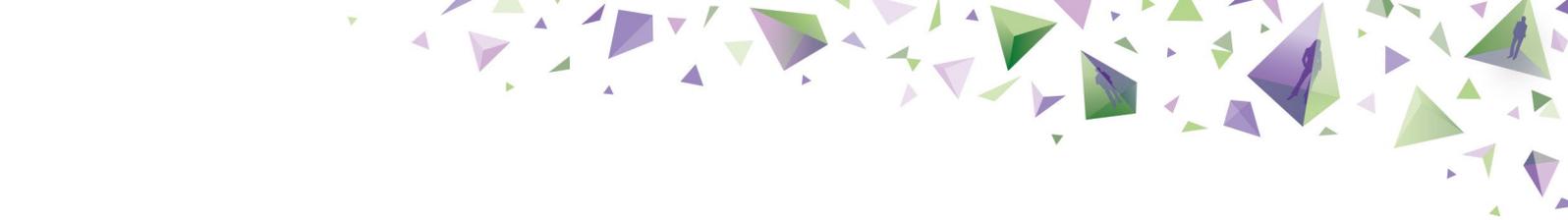
We recognise the value of secondment opportunities for both employee and organisational development. Secondments encourage growth and flexibility, enabling employees to gain skills and knowledge that may not be available in an employee's substantive post. These career opportunities develop skilled employees, complementing and linking into succession planning and the objectives of the Talent Strategy. The Succession Planning tool kit will assist managers to identify key positions, timelines and development needs of internal employees with the potential to fill these posts to ensure future needs are met.

Staff Wellbeing

Our employee health and wellbeing at work is a fundamental priority and embedded in everything we do to meet our statutory obligations in respect of the health, safety and welfare at work of our employees and all other individuals affected by our activities. Sickness absence levels are currently increasing which reflects national trends in Scottish local authorities. The national annual comparison for 2022/23 indicates Highland reported 8.58 average working days lost per FTE per year for all employees and which despite an increase from 7.4 days in 2021/22, compares favourably with the national average of 11.56 in 2022/23. Early intervention and effective absence management is likely to reduce time off needed by staff. Absence training is mandatory for managers with compliance monitored through the learning management system and is reported quarterly. There is ongoing work on the staff wellbeing survey, the result of which will be used to support staffs' wellbeing needs.

Training and Development

The People Development Strategy will provide a framework for identifying best practice and to deliver opportunities that enable achievement of organisational goals. A blended approach to learning interventions will be delivered to ensure flexibility and a more inclusive approach to addressing skills gaps through digital solutions, face-to-face opportunities and qualifications. The ERD process is key to identifying training needs for our staff.

Council Structures

The council approved a new senior leadership structure in March 2024, which reconfigures the senior leadership team and brings Highland council in line with other benchmarked authorities. The Assistant Chief Executive first tier has been appointed and appointments have taken place to 8 Chief Officers with work progressing to recruit the remaining Chief Officer vacancies to provide leadership. The move to three service clusters, provides an opportunity to review management levels, design of teams and design of service as part of the future operating model and hybrid working projects.

Section 6 – Monitor and Review

Services will undertake annual reviews of workforce plans supported by corporate teams (Finance, Performance, Digital and HR). The reviewed plans will be reported to the service strategic committees to monitor. There will be regular updates reported through the performance and risk management system (PRMS) relating to workforce planning data which includes: information on absence rates; ERDs; mandatory training; establishment data; woman in management top 2% earners; accident injury rates.

HR and employee policies will be regularly reviewed with our staff partners and monitored through corporate management team/extended management team, HR sub group, Central Safety Committee, Staff Partnership Forum and Corporate Resources Committee.

Corporate Workforce Action Plan 2025 - 2027 (Current staff turnover across all services is 13.8% (1.4.23-31.3.24))

Workforce Challenges Priorities	Actions Required	Desired Outcomes	Delivery Plan	Target Date	Who
Recruitment and Retention					
Flexible Workforce	Identify suitable work space, liaising with Asset Rationalisation Team where required to provide staff with appropriate workspaces	Suitable work space that promotes collaboration, and wellbeing of staff	Reconfiguring our Asset Base Portfolio Corporate Solutions Portfolio (Future Operating Model/Hybrid Working Projects)	Mar-27	Managers, ART
	Regularly review and update Team Agreements for Hybrid Working	Better work/life balance for staff supporting a motivated workforce that delivers efficiencies and improve service delivery.	Corporate Solutions Portfolio (Future Operating Model/Hybrid Working) Reconfiguring our Asset Base Portfolio Person Centered Workforce Portfolio (Developing the Workforce)	Mar-27	All Managers
	Career hub and coach directing staff to opportunities for progression and also lateral learning	Flexible and motivated staff	Reconfiguring our Asset Base Portfolio Corporate Solutions Portfolio (Future Operating Model/Hybrid Working) Person Centered Workforce Portfolio (Developing the Workforce)	Mar-27	Managers, Career Coach, Projects
Increased competition for skilled & specialist employees	Build HC brand as being a fair and inclusive employer with excellent benefits that promotes staff progression and wellbeing.	Promote HC to be considered as an employer of choice in the Highlands.	Workforce for the Future Portfolio Person Centred Workforce Portfolio (Developing the Workforce Project)	Mar-27	All Managers, People Service, Projects
	Wider career development opportunities, career pathways within and cross service to encourage career development within Council	Increased staff demographic of skilled and specialist employees			Career Coach, Service Management, Talent Manager, Projects
	Increased number of trainee & MA posts, continue to explore new frameworks; good comms to managers to encourage use of placements, trainees, students, MAs etc	Increased skills within workforce			All managers, MA Team, Employability Team, Projects
Age Profile of Staff (44.3% of staff age 50 and over)	Implement succession planning. Services to identify staff that may potentially retire in next 4-5 years.	Knowledge and skills remain in Council (transferred from leaving to existing and new staff)	Workforce for the Future Portfolio Talent Strategy (implement succession planning) People Strategy Person Centred Workforce (Developing the Workforce) Data Foundations Project	Dec-26	Managers, Heads of Service, BPs, People Service, Career Coach, Talent Manager, Projects
	Services to identify key positions	List of key positions criteria and skills to mitigate single points of failure for each team/service			
	Potential successors identified for key positions	List of potential successors for key position ready to apply			
	People Development creating training to meet identified needs	Upskilled workforce			
	External quals or training identified, budgeted and sourced	Increased learning opportunities and potential progression for staff - reduction in hard to fill vacancies			
	Mentoring and coaching, through Career Hub or within services				
Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships	Raise manager awareness of the MA programme and potential posts that are supported on the MA Framework.	Increased number of MAs & GAs across the Council	Workforce for the Future (Meeting our Council's Future Workforce Needs) Person Centered Solutions (Developing the Workforce) Talent Strategy Data Foundations	Mar-26	MA Team, Projects
	Identify the percentage of new MA posts per year within Clusters and introduce a minimum cluster target of 5% of new roles to be MA/GA opportunities (if appropriate)				
Link to schools - work experience, MA's, Trainees, Graduate placements, work opportunites	Increase work experience/placement opportunities; Improve links with Council Secondary Education and UHI; Corporate video to showcase Council employment opportunities	Change age demographic, reduce hard to fill vacancies		Mar-26	Managers, Talent Manager, HRBPs, WFF Project Managers
Employability Placements	Raise manager awareness of Employability programme & benefits of employing from all areas of labour market.	Increased number of Employability Placements leading to permanent positions.		Mar-26	Employability Team
Recruitment Data	Review current data, determine what data is needed, how it will be gathered and analysed.	Services to have valuable data to make informed decisions. Evidence of improved recruitment and retention.		Mar-25	Meeting our Council Future Workforce Needs Project

National skill shortages in some sectors	Affected Team's senior management to work with Corporate Comms to produce recruitment videos, promoting working in Highland Council in their sector	Increased success at external recruitment from first time advertisements		Mar-26	Services, Corporate Comms
	Increase development of 'grow your own' trainee schemes, working with services that identify opportunities to implement - at any level of qualification HNC, SVQ 3, degree etc	Better skilled workforce and services using succession planning to fill trainee roles. Improved retention of staff through more accessible progression opportunities. Reduction in agency spend (H&SC).		Dec-25	Services, HR, Meeting our Council Future Workforce Needs Project
Workforce Challenges Priorities	**Actions Required**	**Desired Outcomes**		**Target Date**	**Who**
Staff Wellbeing					
Sickness Absence levels	Early identification and intervention at Team Manager level; ensure all managers undertake mandatory Absence Management and Mentally Healthy Workplace training; Use of ERDs to support staff wellbeing and proactively address any concerns. Make staff aware of the support available through the Employee Assistance Programme.	10% Reduction in number of days lost due to absence caused by stress or other controllable factors; Improved quality of absence data reporting (managers to keep MyPeople up to date)	Corporate Solutions Portfolio	Mar-26	Managers; Attendance Support Officers, HS&WB
Staff Wellbeing Survey	Collate and analyse the data from the 2023 survey and translate into improvement actions. Distribute another staff wellbeing survey in 2025.	Action plan to improve staff wellbeing. Data available by 2025 that evidences improved staff wellbeing.		Mar-25	Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team, Services
Workforce Challenges Priorities	**Actions Required**	**Desired Outcomes**		**Target Date**	**Who**
Training and Development					
Identifying skills gaps and training needs	CMT to ensure appropriate resources allocated to invest in developing our staff. Managers to identify training needs through ERDS, succession planning and workforce planning.	Appropriately skilled & flexible workforce. Team learning and development plans.	Workforce for the Future (Meeting our Council future workforce needs) Talent Strategy	Mar-26	CMT, Teams, Learning & Development Team
Career Pathways	Design career pathways structure	Improved career progression and retention of staff. Reduction of hard to fill posts.		Dec-25	Career Coach, project lead, Learning & Development
Staff Development	Staff should proactively manage their career development through ERD's. Managers to raise awareness of opportunties and support accordingly	Improved staff retention, morale and engagement; upskilled staff		Mar-26	Managers, staff, Learning & Development Team
Workforce Challenges Priorities	**Actions Required**	**Desired Outcomes**		**Target Date**	**Who**
Council Structure					
Structure of Workforce and Teams	Review current approaches to service delivery and team structures/working patterns - considering best use of resources (staff, fleet, overtime). Redesign service delivery to be more efficient.	More efficient working delivering improved services. Reduced overtime & agency spend.	**Corporate Solutions Portfolio** - Future Operating Model project - Hybrid working project	Mar-26	Heads of Service & Managers, project leads
Flexibility around employment contract terms and conditions	Introduce some generic posts within job families based on competencies. Consultation to take place with the Trade Unions.	Flexible & agile workforce able to adapt duties, work patterns & work locations and increased development opportunities for staff supported by Trade Unions.	**Corporate Solutions Portfolio** - Future Operating Model project - Hybrid working project **Workforce for the future Portfolio** - Meeting our council's future workforce needs	Mar-27	Trade Unions; Services; HR, project leads