

# Milton Keynes Council

Workforce Development Strategy  
February 2010 – April 2014

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## **Focus**

**Plan, organise and develop an efficient and effective workforce to deliver services and support the achievement of the Council's priorities.**

## **Objectives (Audit Commission KLOE 3.3)**

- **Productive and skilled workforce**
- **Know in the medium to longer term what staff we will need, with what skills and have plans to achieve that.**
- **Engage and support staff in organisational change**
- **Policies which support diversity and good people management**

## **Council Leads**

**Cabinet Lead: The Council Leader, Sam Crooks**

**CLT Lead: Corporate Director, Strategy and Partnerships,  
Geoff Snelson**

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# 1. Foreword

- 1.1 Our ambition for Milton Keynes Council is that it should become as effective as possible, and be one of the **best run and most successful councils in the country**. The ultimate aim is to deliver improved outcomes for MK citizens and businesses, in line with members' aspirations. Our **Workforce Development Strategy** recognises the value and importance of **all employees**, and the part that they play in delivering the Council's strategic priorities. It will ensure that **good performance is recognised and celebrated** and that **poor performance is challenged and managed effectively**.
- 1.2 Our workforce will need to be equipped to operate **flexibly** and even more efficiently, able to **initiate new ways of working** with or through partners, and strengthen or develop new skills such as commissioning, negotiating, and influencing. In assessing our workforce development needs we will take account of external influences and as well as our own local context, and stay in control of the change and improvement agenda.
- 1.3 **Staff and their representatives, and managers** will be involved in shaping the detail of what is required, **and in delivering this comprehensive and ambitious agenda**.
- 1.4 As we move forward, we must all continuously ask ourselves whether **everything we do makes a difference to the people of Milton Keynes**, and equip leaders, managers and staff with the skills to deliver what is needed.

**The Corporate Leadership Team**

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This Workforce Development Strategy helps to deliver both the Council Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy and helps to drive the Council's Improvement Programme forward. It is linked to Directorate Service Planning and replaces the former People Management Strategy.
- 2.2 The strategy is a key governance process through which the threats and opportunities arising from the management of the workforce will be assessed and addressed to ensure that the Council's objectives are delivered effectively. The application of the strategy also seeks to ensure that the Council's Risk Management and Business Continuity policies are applied, including the identification and achievement of key opportunities, and that any threats arising are identified and mitigated wherever possible so that services are supported in the most effective way.
- 2.3 We need to maximise our people potential to ensure we are able to deliver customer focused, efficient and effective services, both now and in the future. The Workforce Development Strategy sets out what we know about our current workforce and, importantly, what will be required in the future and what we need to do to develop our future workforce.
- 2.4 The opportunity for longer term thinking about future service pressures and needs, and what we need to do now to put workable strategies in place, is important not only for people development, but also for financial and change management too.
- 2.5 In addition to the above, this council wide Workforce Development Strategy and action plan will over time:
- have a stronger relationship with the plans of key partners who support us in delivering our services
  - assist us to assess how effective workforce planning has been in developing transformational service change (both corporately and in services)
  - assist us to assess how well we have linked workforce planning to efficiency gain activities and also to plan further improvements
  - support the achievement of the Equalities Standard action plans and lead to full achievement of the new Equality Framework for Local Government
- 2.6 The ongoing development of the plan will be informed by involving both managers and staff and by further assessment of changes required to improve service delivery and become more efficient, including consultation with specific groups, and examination of the annual staff surveys.
- 2.7 For this Workforce Development Strategy and plan to be effective it needs to be supported by Members and senior management. Whilst it is important in providing a framework for our overall workforce requirements, it does not set out to prescribe the detailed and specific needs of each service area. Senior managers develop workforce plans for their services as an integrated element of the annual service planning process and issues and actions from their plans will increasingly be reflected in the council-wide plan, starting in April 2010 when the next round of service plans will be available.

### 3. The Council's Priorities and Improvement Programme

3.1 The **Sustainable Community Strategy** sets out a high level vision for Milton Keynes:

"Milton Keynes is a city that thinks differently, embraces evolution and champions change.

The unique quality that defines Milton Keynes today will endure as we plan for the future. The city will continue to change and develop, to look ahead and to challenge convention.

Our vision is to create a city that has soul, energy and dynamism.

Our towns, villages, neighbourhoods and spaces will be desirable, fun, affordable, safe and accessible. This will be a learning city, built and developed by a skilled and well-educated population. People will thrive financially and emotionally on the buzz of living or working in this international city of the future.

It will be a city where everyone has a say; where communities are actively involved in the workings of the city and help to manage change together.

The city will be the economic driving force and cultural heart of a prosperous rural region that is committed to bettering itself.

This will be an international city with a global reputation for innovation and talent. It will be respected and admired for its pioneering spirit and will show by example how cities will be run in the future.

In short, this will be a city that looks ahead and stays ahead."

3.2 The **2010/12 Council Plan** will be supported by the Council's medium term financial plan. The Council's six key strategic aims are:

1. **Improve educational attainment and safeguard children**
2. **Encourage all sections of our community to get along together and make a positive contribution**
3. **Create an environment in which we all feel safe**
4. **Develop an economy with a sustainable and long term future**
5. **Develop sustainable transport solutions**
6. **Improve health and ensure a high quality of life for all aspects of the community**

3.3. Our **Improvement Programme** (which includes the Workforce Development Strategy) has six key areas of focus. These have been identified in consultation with Members and staff, taking account of points made in the 2007/08 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and will deliver:

- an embedded culture of engaging proactively with stakeholders and communities, responding effectively to concerns raised by members, residents and partners, and delivering on their aspirations
- strong financial management arrangements, supporting a stable medium term financial position and excellent value for money

- a robust performance management culture, ensuring that objectives and targets are reliably and consistently achieved; and that poor performance ceases
- effective project management, so that projects fulfil their objectives and are delivered on time and to budget
- good governance arrangements and a sound system of internal control, giving confidence that corporate objectives and priorities are translated into effective action
- fit for purpose management and staffing structures, matched by effective performance appraisal in the context of a forward-looking workforce development strategy

3.3 The **Workforce Development Strategy** and underpinning plan help services deliver through the following key areas:

- Performance management (robust processes and outcomes)
- Leadership and management capacity
- Efficient structures
- Recruitment and retention
- Succession planning and talent management
- Learning and development (skills and competences)
- Staff engagement
- Equality and diversity
- Flexible working
- Pay and reward

## 4. The Local Context and Other Major Influences

- 4.1 The Council operates within an area of dynamic growth and change, where the population is rapidly becoming larger and more varied. Demand for services is increasing, and as a large employer the Council competes with other organisations for the talent and skills within the community. We need to understand the local community context and to take action as an employer (and to meet our economic development responsibilities) that will eliminate any barriers to the employment opportunities we provide and make us in the eyes of the community an employer of choice.
- 4.2 We know that there is a need to increase qualification levels in comparison with the rest of the South East region; that the overall age of the population of Milton Keynes will increase between 2001 and 2031, such that over 25% of the population will be aged 60 plus by 2031; that our population is becoming even more diverse, and that unemployment, particularly of those under 24 years of age in Milton Keynes, is a growing concern. Understanding and addressing issues such as these will help us to compete successfully in the local labour market. Through effective staff development we can also contribute to increasing skill levels across Milton Keynes.
- 4.3 The Council works closely with a number of key partners, and has an effective service integration agenda with the Primary Care Trust; our Children's Trust is in place encompassing all services provided for children and young people; and we have a Private/Public Partnership with Mouchel to provide key support services, including administration, HR and finance and some front line services also.
- 4.4 There are many other influences upon us, requiring continual re-assessment of what we are doing, how we are doing it and action to ensure we remain effective and continue to improve. Key themes are:

***Changing customer needs, choice and expectations*** leading to less direct service provision, increased commissioning, and services being delivered through partnership / multi-agency models, all of which requires new working arrangements, roles and skills development

***Developing a performance culture*** focused on efficiency and outcome based services and delivered through an effective and efficient workforce supported by effective new technologies

***National drivers*** in major service areas such as adult social care (Social Care Reforms -Transformation and Personalisation) and children's services (The Every Child Matters and Children's Trust agendas); the most recent Laming Report – impacting across Directorates and our partners

***Economic and demographic change*** heightening concern regarding unemployment and skills development; the implications of an ageing population and greater life expectancy on demand for our services; the recruitment and retention issues associated with an economic recession adding to the challenge of already known areas of national and regional skill shortages; and the associated implications of an ageing workforce

- 4.5 All of the issues addressed within this strategy are consistent with the National Workforce Development Strategy which focuses on pay and reward, recruitment and retention, skills development leadership development, efficiency and efficient structures.

## 5. The Council's Current Workforce

- 5.1 Our workforce is constantly changing; it is no longer only Council employees who deliver public services to the community – many of our services are delivered in partnership with others, e.g. through our private public partnership with Mouchel, via services integrated with the PCT, or through the private and voluntary sector.
- 5.2 At this stage workforce data is held only for Council employees, although a longer term aspiration is to have a better understanding of the wider workforce. Overall, our workforce needs to support delivery of the Council's strategic aims and its diversity should reflect the community it serves.
- 5.3 After a turbulent period of change and interim arrangements at first and second tier, a major recruitment programme delivered all the required senior appointments by September 2009 and there is now stability at this level. The more challenging economic environment did not particularly impact on our ability to recruit at this level, but there is increasing anecdotal evidence that people are more reluctant to relocate at a time of financial uncertainty, and certainly our turnover at all levels has significantly reduced this year.
- 5.4 The use of agency staff and other temporary resources is most prevalent in social care representing approximately 70% of the temporary staff resource. The current arrangements for the sourcing of temporary staff are via Human Resources to ensure best rates and also contribute to the achievement of procurement savings targets. Across the past year, the directly employed temporary staff pool has been grown as a means of increasing the availability of staff who have already been appropriately vetted, and in some cases trained.
- 5.5 Overall the Council remains an attractive employment option. Just over 50% of staff have worked for the Council for more than five years. With few areas reporting serious recruitment difficulties (other than those where the issues are national such as experienced Child Care Social Workers). Whilst stability can be regarded as an asset, given our reduced turnover rates, it also presents performance management challenges in providing opportunities for internal progression, and potentially limits opportunities for the local population to gain employment within the Council.
- 5.6 In this context, and in the context of our Improvement Programme, effective performance management, training and development, talent management and succession planning become particularly important.

## 6. Performance Management (Robust Processes and Outcomes)

- 6.1 The new Corporate Leadership has been open with the workforce about the need for improvement across the board and clear that every employee has a part to play. They, and the Leader of the Council, recognise the contribution made by staff and will seek to ensure that all are properly managed, supported and developed.
- 6.2 The Corporate Leadership Team has given equally clear messages about their intention to ensure that good performance is recognised and celebrated and that poor performers are challenged to improve or are managed out of the organisation.
- 6.3 Effective people management policies, and their rigorous application, will be critical to building a high performing culture. Whilst key policies are in place, management feedback indicates that reviews are needed to ensure that the policies are fit for purpose and support the achievement of business objectives. Key policies for review include capability, discipline and grievance.
- 6.4 Performance appraisal is a key component of effective performance management yet it appears that appraisal completion rates have dropped. Addressing this deficit is a current priority and being addressed within the Improvement Programme. We must move to a position where all managers and staff have at least an annual appraisal and mid-year review of their performance, that ensures they are clear about what is expected of them, and how they will be supported to achieve their targets.
- 6.5 Aligned with the current review of the competency framework and the performance appraisal scheme a talent management policy will also be developed. This will ensure that the potential of each employee is regularly considered and each is supported to achieve their full potential.
- 6.6 Attendance at work is an area where improvements have been made in recent times; reported sickness absence is 8.7 days compared to an average of 9.8 days for comparable authorities (CIPFA benchmarking survey 2009). However, there is considerable variation between divisions/directorates and therefore still potential for improvement in some areas of the Council. It is anticipated that the planned introduction of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in March 2010 will contribute to a further overall improvement through supporting employees with difficulties that may affect their attendance or performance to remain at work and maintain effective performance.

### Key objectives:

- a) all employees have an annual appraisal, an agreed set of targets and a development plan
- b) clear performance standards and expectations understood by all employees
- c) effective competency framework in place and integrated with all people management policies and processes
- d) attendance at work improved

e) staff motivated and performing well

*Action to take.....*

- We will maintain open and regular communication to engage the workforce with the implementation and further development of the Improvement Programme, update them on progress made, and areas where further attention is needed, through staff briefings (face to face), the staff portal, Tuesday Bulletin and the Chief Executive's blog.
- In the short term, we will eliminate any barriers to accessing and using the electronic appraisal system and streamline the existing competency framework.
- Through a Performance Management rollout, planned from March 2010, we will engage all managers and a cross section of the wider workforce in workshops to develop more meaningful performance indicators, strengthen performance appraisal and test the ongoing development of the competency framework.
- In the mid-term, we will complete the review and develop the competency framework so that performance standards and expectations are clear; and the performance appraisal system so that it is a user friendly tool that enables managers and their staff to have meaningful and productive conversations about performance, targets and training and development.
- We will review the key people management policies (that support effective performance management (including capability, discipline and grievance), underpin them with effective communication and training, and support and monitor their application.
- We will work with managers to ensure poor performers are challenged and addressed in a timely and appropriate way.
- We will ensure compliance with the requirements for Performance Appraisal and monitor this robustly.
- We will celebrate successes and outstanding achievements through re-invigoration of a council-wide Gems scheme.
- We will introduce the Employee Assistance Scheme and an associated Health Promotion Programme to develop a culture where people are positive about coming to work and supported to address any obstacles to their attendance and effective performance.

## 7. Leadership and Management Capacity

- 7.1 The Council has well-informed, articulate and passionate elected members. Their leadership development needs are addressed in part through participation in the IDeA's Leadership Academy; each political group has a peer member mentor, and is supported by the in-house programme of personal development planning, member briefings and workshops, and access to appropriate specialist training in the context of the resources available to support member development. The Member Development Strategy is being reviewed to ensure its continued relevance.
- 7.2 Local elections are by thirds, with no election one year in four. Induction programmes are planned to address the need of any new members and to provide existing members with a refresh opportunity.
- 7.3 2009 saw the completion of a top level restructuring and major senior recruitment programme, with a new Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team in post by the end of July, and all the required second tier appointments (Assistant Directors) made by the end of September. All interim appointments at this level have now ended and the senior management cohort is now in place. As new managers, and as a new team, this group will have development needs related to their individual roles and also to their organisational leadership roles.
- 7.4 The current competency framework was based on the national standards for managers and leaders. However, it is not embedded or used consistently for performance management or management development. Our intention is to review the framework (in two stages) and to establish a revised framework applicable to all managers, and on a prioritised basis to provide relevant development opportunities.
- 7.5 The Improvement Programme provides a focus for establishing a management forum which will lead and support improvement and the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities.

### **Key objectives:**

- a) sustainable member development strategy
- b) leadership and management development build the capacity to deliver on a day to day basis
- c) all managers meet the requirements of the performance management framework in full
- d) one organisation culture and a common language

### *Action to take.....*

- Elected Members will continue to be supported through the delivery of the Member Development Strategy and a flexible, annual, needs based programme which will include analysis of individual needs, mentoring support for political groups, and a range of appropriate development opportunities. In the context of tight finances, careful prioritisation will be needed in conjunction with Group Leaders or their nominated member development champions.

- Throughout the extensive senior recruitment programme particular attention was paid to appointing senior managers with good people skills, able to develop employees and manage performance. We need to ensure that managers at all levels have these skills, and will further develop our people management policies and our competency framework to support them in their performance management roles.
- New formal programmes of leadership or management development will support the development of a performance culture, also the development of a coherent leadership and management team in the broadest sense and support succession planning.
- Performance management, including effective performance appraisal is a key management responsibility. Whilst the performance management data system (Performance Plus) is further developed so also is the electronic performance appraisal system to eliminate any potential barriers to its effective use by managers and staff.

## 8. Efficient Structures

- 8.1 Restructuring at all levels ensures that services are configured in the most effective and efficient way to meet the needs of the community. Through the annual service planning process managers are asked to set out their service priorities and as an integrated part of this planning process to identify the associated workforce implications, both in terms of the size of the workforce and the skills it will need. As this approach is embedded it will become easier to assess issues and find solutions to the challenge of achieving an efficient workforce.
- 8.2 As a modern local authority Milton Keynes Council delivers services through a mix of direct provision and commissioned services. As with the pattern of services, the most appropriate balance between in-house and externalised provision will change over time and context. Whilst externalisation of services has been a strong trend in local government it may sometimes be appropriate to bring services back in-house. This flux in service delivery means that comparisons of staff numbers and other factors over time and between different authorities can be difficult.
- 8.3 Whilst the Council's ambition is to protect key services to the public, this does not mean the current pattern of services will remain unaltered into the future. In a fast changing locality such as Milton Keynes, resource flexibility is required to match changing service demands, including reduced spending where reductions in demand are evident and increased spending where the opposite is true.
- 8.4 The essence of an efficiency programme is to maximise productivity to achieve more/better outcomes whilst stabilising or reducing the inputs, including funding and staffing levels.
- 8.5 The Corporate Leadership Team recognises that intelligent service redesign can deliver both better services and reduced costs and also that setting inflexible and specific targets for workforce reductions can restrict creativity and innovation. Their strategy for achieving efficiencies is to allow managers flexibility on how they achieve overall optimised performance and efficiency savings targets within set parameters.
- 8.6 To ensure that the Medium Term Financial Plan budget build is robust, work has taken place with HR, Finance and Budget Managers, to validate and reconcile the Council's FTE establishment and current vacancy list. This work is ongoing, and has revealed data inaccuracies and inconsistencies, and inadequacies in the current version of HR SAP. Eliminating these problems and establishing a firm baseline is an imperative.
- 8.7 Ongoing service reviews and structural change, with reference to agreed principles of organisational design, will challenge current arrangements around spans of control and levels of management:
- Minimum and maximum spans of control: typically 1:1 reporting or less than 3 members of staff reporting to a manager is seen as divisive and not to be encouraged. Often this type of structure reflects a hierarchy of experience or status reward rather than distinctly different jobs. Ideally a good span of control is seen as around 6-8 but this may be larger where process operations are involved,

perhaps to a maximum of around 20. There are situations with certain professions, e.g. accountants and solicitors, where during periods of professional training 1:1 reporting can be a real advantage and is generally acceptable.

- Within our organisation there are currently varying reporting levels. Good progress towards a changed and empowered culture would be supported if the council aimed to reduce reporting levels to the minimum necessary between the Chief Executive and the lowest tier of employee (recognising that differences in services may require differences in the number of levels required for effective service provision).

8.8 Ongoing scrutiny of all aspects of workforce costs will deliver efficiencies, headcount reductions and other workforce savings. Becoming more efficient means we will have fewer employees and lower costs.

**Key objectives:**

- a) Deliver outcomes for the community whilst stabilising or reducing the inputs, including funding and staffing levels
- b) Flexible structures and workforce capable of responding to changing community needs
- c) Consistent application of agreed principles of organisational design across council services
- d) Accurate management data available to inform decision-making

*Action to take.....*

- Complete validation of the FTE establishment exercise by January 2010, maintain the data and ensure that control is in place on an ongoing basis. From February 2010, CLT will receive regular quarterly monitoring and management information reports to inform future decisions about the workforce.
- We will upgrade HR SAP; and deliver robust management information reports that support effective decision making and workforce management.
- Examine all aspects of workforce costs to deliver savings, in anticipation that in 2010/11 savings achieved will equal at least 2% of the pay bill. We will examine all service areas to identify where efficiencies, including looking for different ways of delivering the service, can achieve savings.
- Review the current Employment Stability Policy and how it contributes to the achievement of an efficient workforce in terms of redundancy compensation payments, maintaining continued employment for those who may face redundancy, and salary protection arrangements.

## 9. Recruitment and Retention

- 9.1 The Council makes good use of a range of opportunities to attract high calibre applicants into its workforce. We work with appointing managers to determine the strategy for managing each appointment process. We work with Tribal Resourcing regarding advertising strategies and media advice; make good use of the Council's job pages on MKWeb - [www.theplacetobe.info](http://www.theplacetobe.info); communicate with internal staff via our Vacancy Bulletin, and also advertise in the local press. In advance of advertising posts we consider whether the post may be a suitable redeployment opportunity for existing staff who may be at risk of redundancy.
- 9.2 Aware that an increasing number of candidates only look online for opportunities, we also make use, as appropriate, of other free to use recruitment sites and are considering use of the IDeA's jobs board, as it is another way of promoting our reputation and our work whilst potentially increasing our candidate pool.
- 9.3 We currently work with Jobcentre Plus and the Shaw Trust to identify and support specific candidate groups.
- 9.4 The Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and associated procedures have been in place since 2004, although there have been changes to processes since then – some internally driven and some due to external influences. The policy, procedures and roles and responsibilities of the corporate recruitment team and recruiting managers are being reviewed with the intention of creating a more responsive, and timely process from start to finish. Many factors affect the length of time it can take to get someone into post. As well as seeking to reduce the time factor, there is also a need to raise understanding of the processes and the rationale for them through both initial and refresher training for managers. Such training will ensure that managers understand all their responsibilities as appointing managers, equip them to make objective and evidenced decisions at each stage of the process, and help to ensure that the right person is appointed on each occasion.
- 9.5 Sourcing of temporary and agency staff is handled corporately through Human Resources. Two approaches are currently in operation; the temporary staff contract is managed by HR who source temporary staff through the most appropriate agency; the other route is to provide an appropriate resource from the growing pool of directly employed temporary staff. Those in the pool have already completed all the requisite pre-employment checks and in some cases have completed basic training in the areas they are most likely to be employed. The current temporary staff contract with Mouchel is due to end in March 2010. Future arrangements are yet to be determined; market testing will determine value for money and inform the decision regarding the preferred option. The outline business case being prepared by Mouchel will be an important consideration.
- 9.6 Specific recruitment strategies are in place to address key recruitment difficulties; these include:
- Development of an online recruitment service for schools staff

- A cost effective recruitment campaign for adults social care workers which led to the appointment of 6 qualified social workers from within the European Union

- 9.7 We know of a number of challenges in other key areas also, including recruitment to Children's Social Care where a revised recruitment strategy is about to be implemented and there is an ongoing campaign to appoint School Improvement Advisers which is delivering results. 'Traditional' areas of challenge remain including Planning, Civil Engineering, although the reduction in turnover may have reduced the scale of the challenge in areas such as Trading Standards and Environmental Health.
- 9.8 Our capacity to provide work experience for local pupils and older people has diminished, although work is underway to raise the profile of this important contribution to the lives of young people and others who may need access to work experience to support their re-entry to the world of work or initial access to it.
- 9.9 We are working to increase the numbers of young people employed as apprentices, by either the Council or its private partner Mouchel, on the delivery of services to the people Milton Keynes.

**Key objectives:**

- a) fit for purpose recruitment policy and processes
- b) recognised as a good employer locally, regionally and nationally
- c) flexible and value for money sourcing of temporary staff
- d) range of appropriate work experience opportunities provided for people referred by other agencies/establishments
- e) increased number of apprenticeships
- f) recruitment challenges solved

*Action to take.....*

- The review of the recruitment policy, procedure and guidance will be completed to ensure that:
  - The process meets the needs of service managers across the full range of their recruitment needs whether seasonal, temporary, or permanent
  - We introduce flexible cost-saving strategies to help managers employ and redeploy staff more effectively
  - All vacancies to be used as an opportunity to improve productivity and efficiency by considering options other than simply filling the post on a like for like basis, such as mini restructuring or reallocation of work
  - Tight timelines are in place for all stages of the process, including post offer follow-up and that there is absolute clarity of role for all involved - that posts are filled faster
  - Our policy does not unduly favour or discriminate against people

- We further develop existing good practice by working with representative organisations to make the Council a more approachable potential/actual employer
  - All appointing managers are appropriately trained
- We will investigate how the Council's reputation, and the potential applicant pool, could be enhanced through the use of new recruitment strategies and implement those that may benefit us, including enhancing our online application process.
  - We will let the temporary recruitment contract on a longer term basis to meet the Council's needs and to ensure best value.
  - All senior managers will ensure that their services are accessible to work experience candidates and that appropriately supervised and supported placement are made available; similarly all will act as corporate parents to our children in or leaving care who need access to work experience.
  - All external funding opportunities will be explored to support the appointment of an increased number of apprentices and managers will be supported to create appropriate opportunities.
  - We will continue to implement recruitment strategies to address the key areas of difficulty.
  - The outcome of each recruitment strategy will be evaluated and the learning used to adjust and improve approaches.

## 10. Succession Planning and Talent Management

- 10.1 In recent times our need to rely on a number of interim arrangements to bolster capacity throughout periods of change has highlighted the need to pay greater attention to having robust staffing arrangements at all levels of the organisation.
- 10.2 With turnover reducing producing a fairly stable workforce and with over 50% of staff now having five years or more experience, we will need to both develop existing staff and also ensure that once recruited we retain and develop new staff to their full potential.
- 10.3 Our current people management policies and procedures are not flexible enough to encourage a pro-active approach to either talent management or succession planning and we know that attention must be paid to both if we are to achieve our improvement goals through high performing staff and teams. Whilst informal arrangements exist within and across some teams, there is as yet no strategic framework that helps managers to address this need.

### **Key objectives:**

- a) employee potential identified, developed and fully utilised
- b) employees engaged, motivated and performing well
- c) key skills, experience and knowledge retained

### *Action to take.....*

- Alongside our improved appraisal process, and refreshed competency framework we will put in place a corporate framework for talent and succession planning, that ensures we create and fully develop our workforce, retain existing talent, and provide opportunities for developing high potential staff. This will require us to be more flexible in how we deploy staff, to introduce coaching and mentoring, and to be transparent and fair in applying the framework.

## 11. Learning and Development

- 11.1 We have a broad and diverse corporate learning and development programme, which provides a range of opportunities designed to support the workforce in continuously improving performance and developing capability. The full portfolio of learning opportunities is intended to reflect the needs of the Council, its services and its people. The programme is reviewed annually to respond to new and changing needs for both content and mode of delivery, and can be adjusted in-year should priorities change.
- 11.2 The programme has been strengthened this year to ensure that appropriate training is provided to support the development of skills in areas where we have previously identified organisational weaknesses, e.g. project management, risk management, and budget management. The development and application of these skills will underpin our improvement work. There are elements of mandatory provision, with the success of this approach to be evaluated shortly.
- 11.3 As we move forward into 2010, whilst maintaining our published corporate programme we will also rollout a series of Performance Management Workshops in support of the Improvement Programme.
- 11.4 We know from formal and informal feedback that the value of the performance appraisal process in identifying staff development needs is undermined by lower than required appraisal completion rates, suggesting that staff (outside of social care) are less likely to have clear and agreed personal development plans which can be used to further inform how we use our training and development resources.
- 11.5 The imminent staff survey results will give us new data about how employees perceive both performance appraisal, access to training and development, and its value to them.
- 11.6 The impact of the efficiency agenda, and new ways of working, will require the programme to be responsive to the need to equip staff with knowledge and skills beyond their current roles so that they can work more flexibly on service delivery priorities.
- 11.7 The corporate programme is complemented by two further specialist training and development programmes provided for the Children and Young People's Service and staff from the Community Wellbeing directorate, the PCT and the private, voluntary and third sectors. The specialist programmes are separately funded and underpinned by a comprehensive training needs analysis undertaken across all services working with children and young people and vulnerable adults. The sort of activities provided include: the two extensive in-house training programmes; a broad range of qualification training opportunities, including leadership and management development; mentoring and coaching; HR advice and support with workforce planning; and e-learning / blended learning.
- 11.8 Mindful of its place-shaping responsibility the Council also works closely with commissioners both to capacity build and improve the quality of services across the Council and PCT as well as the private and voluntary sector. We are also facilitating increased choice for service users by actively shaping both the internal and external social care markets via a range of service development and workforce development

activities – leading to the creation of new types of services and new ways of working supported by skills development.

**Key objectives:**

- a) Skilled and competent workforces, supported by relevant and complementary learning and development programmes
- b) Change and improvement agendas supported and required outcomes achieved

*Action to take.....*

- We will review our corporate training and development programme in the context of work on performance appraisal, competences, the overall improvement programme and with the additional benefit of the staff survey feedback.
- We will continue to target our provision at the areas of greatest importance, and increase consultation with managers and staff about what there should be.
- To facilitate integrated working processes within the Children's Trust, during 2010-2011 the three embedded training teams from CYPS plus Common Assessment Framework training will be brought together with the corporate learning and development team, currently located in HR, into a virtual, joined up CYPS training team. By 2012 the aim is for this to be converted into an actual team which will begin to co fund and co develop an increasing range of shared training programmes which eventually will be widened to include other partners within the Children's Trust.
- As the Transformation agenda evolves MKC's training will need to be extended to new members of the workforce. This will include individually employed personal assistants; members of new 'micro' organisations; members of entirely new services in the private and voluntary sector plus informal carers and volunteers. As the workforce increases three things will be of critical importance: ensuring that skills development can contribute to market development and service improvement; optimising resources by avoiding wasted training capacity; retaining the skills being developed within the workforce. To achieve this the Learning and Development team will need to work strategically and very closely with commissioners to identify new skills requirements and ensure that action is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- To support the implementation of a new national Qualifications Credit Framework in 2010 the Learning and Development team will need to begin work on accreditation of the in-house training programmes.

## 12. Staff Engagement

- 12.1 We use a number of different measures to ensure that our staff are provided with accurate and up to date information about what is happening within the organisation and the influences upon it. This is undertaken directly with employees through team meetings, day to day contact with their line manager, and also through the formal and informal mechanisms associated with our recognised trade unions.
- 12.2 The formal arrangements with the trade unions include directorate based meetings with Corporate Directors and their management teams, and bi-monthly corporate meetings with the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 12.3 Regular written communication is provided to all staff (soft and hard copy as appropriate) by way of the Tuesday Bulletin, the Chief Executive's weekly blog, and MK@Work. There is also a wealth of current information on the staff portal.
- 12.4 We conduct regular Staff Surveys to obtain views and to promote staff engagement. Previous staff surveys (bespoke and covering both Council and Mouchel employees) conducted up to and including in 2007, gave us valuable feedback on a range of issues related to how managers lead, manage and communicate with their staff, and confirmed management perceptions of some of the issues affecting staff morale, e.g.
- a) workplace cleanliness, hygiene and temperature
  - b) communications between the organisation and its staff
  - c) senior management profile
- 12.5 We now have cleaner accommodation and better facilities, a refreshed Tuesday Bulletin to keep staff up to date, a weekly Chief Executive's blog (David's Blog), and all of CLT have presented to large staff meetings with a commitment to continue this approach into to 2010.
- 12.6 Much has changed in our organisation since the last survey and a new one has just been completed. A new approach has been taken, with Mouchel taking part in the Sunday Times Best Companies Survey and the Council opting to use the 'Best Companies Best Places to Work in the Public Sector Survey'.

### The Sunday Times 'Best Places to Work in the Public Sector'

The survey was completed by 1200 staff (49%), excluding schools staff, in November/December 2009 and results will be available by March 2010. Feedback will be used to inform a review process involving communicating the results to Members and senior management, feedback to all staff and the use of staff focus groups where appropriate. The review will inform the development of an action plan underpinned by the views of staff and their representatives, which will be implemented and monitored across 2010/11. The results will also be relevant to the ongoing work of the Improvement Programme, and will be shared across the various strands.

#### **Key objectives:**

- a) efficient and effective internal communications that reach all employees

- b) staff engagement improved and their feedback used to support further improvement
- c) trade unions and their representatives continue to work in partnership with the council and are encouraged to do so

*Action to take.....*

The full range of actions will be determined once the staff survey results have been received and considered. At this stage the known next steps are:

- Initial data analysis
- Share results with the Corporate Leadership Team, Members, staff representatives and staff
- Test results with staff focus groups
- Outcomes from focus groups collated & action plan produced
- Actions agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team & implemented; ongoing monitoring
- Actions & completion communicated to staff
- Post survey evaluation & decision regarding the next survey (approach and timing)

## 13. Equality and Diversity

Equality, Diversity and Cohesion are key ingredients in building a diverse, competent workforce, excellent people-centred services and in promoting the general well-being of Milton Keynes's communities and its citizens. Our vision is to improve the way we think, plan and act to deliver equality and accessibility for everyone, every day.

- 13.1 The Council monitors the diversity of its workforce and publishes a workforce profile annually. Directorate managers are provided with more detailed workforce data, including the diversity of their employees, to consider when preparing the workforce planning element of their Service Plan. The data is for use on a strategic level by managers to consider how the workforce might need to change in the future to deliver the Council's aims and objectives and what actions need to be taken to address issues identified.
- 13.2 Our local equality performance indicators were derived from the Government's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI). The indicators are reported and reviewed at least twice yearly. The workforce equality mapping data that we collect will inform the ongoing development of our performance indicators. These indicators show that over the last 5 years performance has improved from 6.1% to 7.66% regarding overall ethnic minority representation in the workforce. However, the other performance indicators such as a) people with disabilities in the workforce and b) women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities in the top 5% of earners has only shown a little or no improvement.
- 13.3 The Council's current equality and diversity work is contained within five key strands, which are linked to the Council's newly established Equality and Diversity Framework; this framework sets out the Council's overall equality policy and vision.
- 13.4 The Equality Framework for Local Government was introduced by the IDeA in 2009 and builds on the principles contained in the Equality Standard it replaced, although it also contains a number of new elements.
- 13.5 In February 2009 the IDeA Peer Review confirmed Milton Keynes Council as one of only thirty local authorities in the country to achieve Level 3 for the Equalities Standard for Local Government, which is an "Achieving Authority" under the new Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 13.6 The next challenge for the Council will be to ensure that we consolidate at the 'achieving' level ensuring that all criteria are fully met and then build on that position to move forward and achieve the 'excellent' level.
- 13.7 The Council holds workforce equality data on HR SAP; this is updated on a regular basis to ensure its accuracy and that the requirements of the Data Protection Act are met. The data is used to map the diversity of the workforce and measure performance against local performance indicators. The new requirement to collect and monitor data on sexual orientation and religion and belief will be implemented early in 2010. We know that some of our data is incomplete and we are evaluating the potential benefits of Employee Self Service (an HR SAP module), a facility that allows staff to access and

update their employee data (with line management authorisation) as a potential service improvement and efficiency.

13.8 The completion of Equality Impact Assessments across the Council is a key corporate equalities aim and statutory responsibility, and will be taken forward on a prioritised basis as people management policies are reviewed. The action for HR in 2010 and beyond will be to complete EIAs on all new strategies and policies and to review other key people management policies and complete EIAs where relevant.

13.9 We provide equality and diversity training for staff e.g. induction e-learning, Disability Awareness, Diversity Awareness, Equality Impact Assessment and Racist Incident Reporting. The overall aim is to ensure that the workforce, including our partners, are fully aware of the issues and their responsibility for addressing them effectively.

**Key objectives:**

- a) Take action to remove barriers to employment
- b) Training and development programmes address equality issues effectively
- c) Effective action to address any potential equal pay issues
- d) A workplace culture in which staff are treated with dignity and respect

*Action to take.....*

- Data mapping of staff equalities data to take place early in 2010.
- With the new data obtained the performance indicators to be reviewed, seek opportunities for change and build relevant equality objectives into workforce strategies.
- Develop a better understanding of the local labour market and the barriers the community face so that appropriate action to improve access can be taken.
- All major employment policies to be equality impact assessed.
- Review training provided to ensure it covers the relevant equality and diversity issues effectively.
- Seek the views of staff, and potential staff, and use them to inform change.

## 14. Flexible Working

14.1 There are a number of ways in which the workforce is enabled to work flexibly. These include:

- **Right to Request Flexible Working** - this policy mirrors the statutory provisions and at present is only open to parents (those with children under 17 or under 18 if disabled) or those with caring responsibilities for adults.
- **Flexible Retirement** - this policy flows from the recent changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme and is open to those over age 55.
- **Associate Contract** - staff on the council's pool of associate employees can be called in at short notice to cover during peaks of work.
- **Discretionary Leave** - this is special leave that can be granted paid or unpaid at the discretion of the Head of Service in consultation with HR.
- **Term Time Contracts** – this is where individuals have all or the majority of the school holidays off. The contracts can be offered on a full or part time basis and employees are generally paid for 48 weeks of the year (including holidays) rather than the standard 52.
- **Job Share** – another form of flexible working where most commonly two individuals share a full time job.
- **Part-time working** - prevalent throughout the council this form of working can mean being contracted to work less than 100% of the standard full time hours of 37 per week.
- **Annualised Hours** – this allows for individuals to be paid a standard salary throughout the year for a set number of yearly hours which can be worked in different patterns throughout the year.
- **Shift working** - this working arrangement is in place within a number of services within the council and is driven by the business need.
- **Flexi-time Scheme** – this allows most staff to work flexibly, subject to the needs of the service. There is no core time but a minimum of four hours must be worked in one day.

14.2 We know also that some staff are enabled to work from home, but that practical and performance management arrangements are not consistent.

14.3 A review of these provisions is already under way, initially triggered by the need to consolidate existing guidance for managers and staff, but the focus is shifting to examine the challenges and opportunities such arrangements present, specifically how they might support increased efficiency and workforce costs reductions.

### Key objectives:

- a) service re-design and efficient service delivery supported by effective policies
- b) flexible working arrangements attract and retain key skills and knowledge

### Action to take.....

- We will review all existing arrangements and establish a corporate framework that meets service delivery needs, and appropriately recognises the needs of employees to achieve a balance in their lives.

## 15. Pay and Reward

- 15.1 We are currently changing our job evaluation arrangements and working jointly with the trade unions towards the introduction of two nationally recognised JE schemes (Hay and NJC).
- 15.2 Our pay structure, which has been in place since Single Status was agreed in April 1998, will need to be reviewed to better reflect the outcomes of job evaluation and ensure it is fit for purpose. The scope of this review will become clearer as we move through the evaluation process. At this stage we anticipate that a major review will be required, and that one objective will be to deliver a pay scheme that allows us to compete effectively in the market place, and to recruit and retain the best people to deliver our services.
- 15.3 Having carried out equal pay audits we know there are some anomalies that will need to be addressed. It is intended that these are picked up as we move to new evaluation and pay schemes.
- 15.4 The Council's current position is to support national pay bargaining for all of its staff groups. In the current climate, consideration of whether or not to continue with this approach where appropriate is needed. Alongside this consideration needs to be given to ensuring the council's overall terms and conditions of service continue to be appropriate and relevant to its workforce and its financial context, and that the value of the whole remuneration package is easily understood by the existing and potential workforce.
- 15.5 In 2008 and 2009, to ensure robust appointments could be made to the most senior posts external advice was sought to determine appropriate salaries. This led to a different approach to pay at senior levels, e.g. first and second tier, which has now been implemented. The approach adopted is based on evaluated outcomes, contribution pay, and market levels for each post.
- 15.6 Achievement above and beyond what is generally required is recognised through our Gems Scheme and publicised in MK@Work. This applies to our own workforce and that of our private partner, Mouchel, with awards having been made to both front line and support staff.

### **Key objectives:**

- a) a fit for purpose job evaluation scheme
- b) a pay and reward structure that is consistent with the medium term financial plan
- c) a fit for purpose pay and reward structure that underpins the full range of people management policies

### *Action.....*

- We will implement the new JE schemes and manage this process in partnership with the trade unions.
- We will review and implement revised pay structures, eliminating all inconsistencies of approach, to ensure they are fair and fit for purpose.

- We will review and implement revised terms and conditions of service that are fair, flexible, and support recruitment and retention.
- We will monitor the impact of change on the existing workforce, turnover, recruitment and diversity, identify emerging issues and take action to address them.

## **16. Progress Review**

- 16.1 There is little point having plans if they are not acted upon. Senior managers need to be accountable for progress, and make sure resources are allocated to maintain momentum and ensure capacity.
- 16.2 This strategy and the underpinning action plan will both be live documents subject to regular review to ensure that the most important actions are addressed. Adjustments may be made in response to changing service delivery priorities and/or external pressures.
- 16.3 A Workforce Development Group will contribute to the development of each key component of the plan. It will ensure greater coordination and awareness of service specific initiatives and plans, and ensure expertise that is shared within the Council. Communication and consultation with other key groups or stakeholders will also inform policy development.
- 16.4 Governance of the pace of progress will be through the Improvement Delivery Board; if there is the risk of non-achievement then the Corporate Lead is responsible for bringing this to the attention of the Corporate Leadership Team.

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# Workforce Development Strategy February 2010 – April 2014

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