



Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

Date: 22 September 2022

Title: **Buckinghamshire Council (BC) Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition**

Relevant councillor(s): Cllr John Chilver and Cllr Tim Butcher

Author and /or contact officer: Sarah Murphy Brookman

Ward(s) affected: **None specific**

Recommendations:

To note: achievements against the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan deliverables for our first two years as a unitary organisation, put in place to meet our early workforce ambition and to support the employee experience for our new council

To note: the further deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan to meet our workforce ambition for 2023-2025 and further support our employee experience

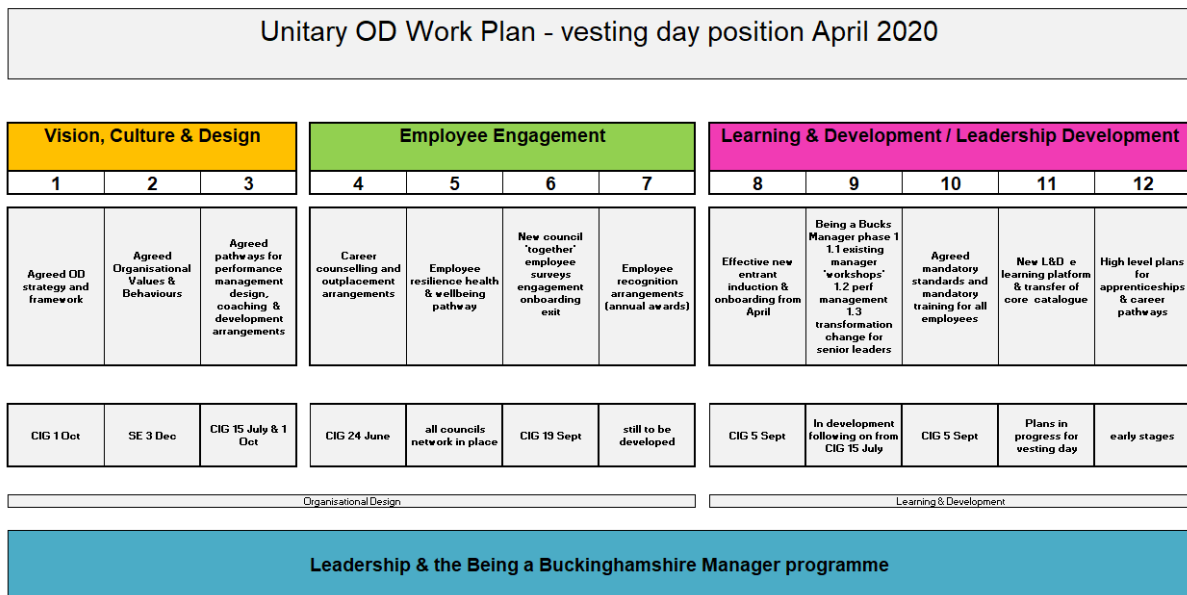
1 Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan, in place to support our employee experience and meet our workforce ambition. It provides an update on the work we have done in the last two years and covers the further plans we have in place for the next 3-5 years as part of our continuous improvement.

2. Part one - Introduction

2.1 **An overview of our Employee Experience & Workforce Ambition – as set out in our People Plan**

2.2 Employee experience and employee sentiment have been central to our thinking for Buckinghamshire Council. Through a unitary organisational development (OD) workstream we had clear deliverables for vesting day with a dedicated focus on employee engagement – see middle section of diagram below (a larger scale diagram can be found at appendix 1).



2.3 A strategic **People Plan** has been in place since 2020 setting out our initial five year workforce ambition for the new organisation. The OD workstream is built into this.


2.4 There are five themes in our People Plan with Employee Engagement at the centre (see diagram next page). The other themes also relate to engagement and together they build a comprehensive foundation for our people offer (for more detail on these themes and the plan see appendix 5 as an attachment)



2.5 The deliverables in our plan have recently been reviewed, updated, and signed off by CMT with a shift in focus from the 2020-2022 deliverables, which are on track, and towards our 2023-2025 deliverables. See highlights on next page and appendix 5 for full details.

Key deliverables for the first 2 years 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery



1. Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership
2. Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal and statutory and contractual obligations
3. Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council
4. Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices
5. Provide professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes
6. Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance
7. Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people
8. Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development
9. Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns with particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing

Key deliverables for years 3-5 (2023-2025)

Towards meeting our place based vision and Council of the year



1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing
2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with an emphasis on equality diversity, inclusion
3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand
4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working
5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions
6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment
7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce
8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement
9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.
10. Employer of choice/Council of the year

2.6 Our **People Plan** has KPIs to measure how well we're meeting employees' expectations. The following indicators are of particular interest:

- Recruitment and attraction
- Retention and turnover
- Health and attendance



- Levels of engagement in our employee survey

2.7 The table below shows the relevant KPIs relating to employee experience based on June 2022 or closest available data.

People Plan – Key Measures of Performance 1 April -30 June 2022				
People Plan Pillars	Performance Measure	Target	Q1	Commentary including external benchmarking comparators
Resourcing a skilled and flexible workforce	Voluntary turnover	12-16%	15.1%	Retention strategies planned and in place to help to mitigate turnover levels – People Plan 2020-2025 applies
	Mandatory training completion	90%	87.4%	May 22 data – very close to overall target. There will always be a margin nor non completion – long term absence, maternity leave etc
	Time to hire (vacancy approval to offer)	90 days	43 days	This figure is consistent through the year. Resourcing is working hard to keep this figure as low as possible in a tough recruitment marketplace.
	Turnover in first year of service	<2 %	4.2%	This is rising and needs to be watched (up from 3.6% last quarter) – engagement strategies and focus on growth and development opportunities apply
Engaging and motivating our people	Together Survey engagement index	70%	72%	May 22 data. We have an ambitious KPI and we perform well above the external benchmark for other private and public sector companies which is 65%
	Joiners positively engaged at 3 months' service	85%	75%	Relatively small sample sizes so % rates fluctuate (40 responders in last Q)
	Leavers who would recommend us as an employer	80%	77%	Relatively small sample sizes so % rates fluctuate (44 responders in last Q)
Inspirational leadership	Together Survey response rate	60%	53%	Based on May 22 data - up from 48% in last survey Nov 2021.
	Together Survey - positive relationship with line manager	85%	87%	Based on May 22 data – and consistent with November 21 External benchmark for other private and public sector companies is 79%
	C4P reviews complete for mid/end year deadline	90%	91%	Based on end of April deadline - full compliance was achieved for pay review purposes in July
Change management and HR consultancy	Together Survey change management index	65%	60%	Based on May 22 data - up from 57% last in the last survey. Management comms and training has been put in place and a new Change Management Charter has been developed External benchmark for other private and public sector companies is 64%
	Average sickness levels	9 days per FTE	9.7 days	Covid related absence has increased rates and is our highest reason for absence. Workshops to support performance and a new absence management training course is in place

2.8 Our People Plan is innovative and ambitious in our approach and includes piloting new projects and developing new processes. Examples of this include our 'try before you apply' and 'meet the expert' approaches to supporting recruitment activity, our work with the DWP on Kickstart as a route to supporting inclusion and helping young people into work, and the launch of our new 'my e-pay' app to provide an accessible overview of pay at any time over the year.

2.9 This report will focus on the employee engagement deliverables in our People Plan and provide an update on the work that has taken place in the last two years. It will also refer to the plans we have in place for the next 3-5 years as part of our continuous improvement.

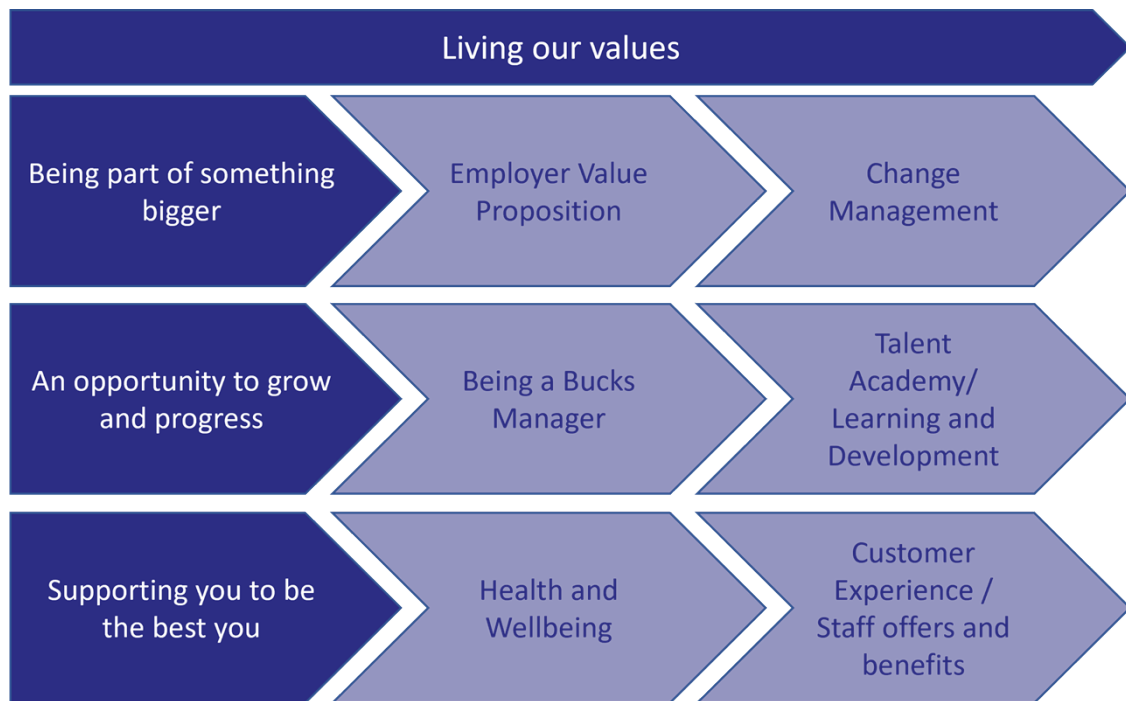
2.10 **Part two - Progress on our Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition**

2.11 Our employer brand is an important statement that sets out what is distinctive about us as an employer and reflects the employment experience colleagues receive when working for Buckinghamshire Council – helping to appeal to those people who will thrive and perform best in our culture. Our employer brand is aligned to our organisational values, and in practice means:

- **Meaningful work**
- **A positive induction and onboarding experience**
- **Inspirational leadership and management**
- **Opportunities for personal development and growth**
- **Support in place for health and wellbeing, and work life balance**
- **Feeling valued and with opportunity for recognition and reward**

2.12 To embed this vision and ensure the employee experience meets the expectations of our staff, we have devised a communication approach for our internal audience, bring this employer brand and vision to life as part of everything we do. The approach for the next twelve months is represented in the diagram on the next page, focusing on the key deliverables and initiatives imperative to the staff experience.





These themes will structure our update in the following sections of the report

2.13 Using our employer brand to support attraction and retention

2.14 To enhance attraction and retention, we have researched what our unique employer appeal is, through analysing joiner and leaver surveys and interviewing hundreds of colleagues who have taken part in campaigns for our careers-focused social media accounts ([Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)).

93% of new joiners say they are proud to work for the organisation and 91% would recommend Buckinghamshire Council as a place to work.

2.15 The top four attraction factors are:

- the nature of work
- opportunities for learning and development
- work life balance and flexible working
- its local to where I live

2.16 Out of our voluntary leavers, limited career progression has been the top reason for leaving followed by wellbeing and personal growth as the most common reasons driving resignations. However, two-thirds of leavers would work for Buckinghamshire Council again and 7 out of 10 would recommend the organisation as a good place to work. Explored later in this report is how the People Plan is addressing these top turnover factors.

- 2.17 From this research, we have distilled four key messages that are the essence of why people choose to join and stay and are motivated to do their best during their careers at Buckinghamshire Council.
- 2.18 These headline messages from our new employer brand and will be complemented by employee stories and professional photography to share with both external candidates and our internal workforce to highlight why Buckinghamshire Council is a great place to work.
- 2.19 People join us for career development. And we are building on our learning and development offer to ensure it's inclusive to all and that we're supporting younger people into entry roles and developing them to grow into our in-demand professions. We are known to be an employer with strong values and a supportive place to work that has good employee benefits, a growing set of staff networks, and an emphasis on wellbeing and equality and diversity. Flexible working hugely appeals to our workforce who value having a good work-life balance, and hybrid working has proved both effective and popular with staff.
- 2.20 The four key messages are set out below with more detail on these in appendix 2 (please note this work is still in final development so the images/words inserted are illustrative at this time).

1. Part of something bigger



part of something
BIGGER

" One of the reasons I wanted to work for Buckinghamshire Council is because it's a big geographical area, meaning there are lots of projects and a variety of work "

Simon Oliver, Finance Manager

Our Work Matters

2. Do big things



do
BIG
things

" The council have been flexible with time to study for my degree, and I've had support to learn new skills "

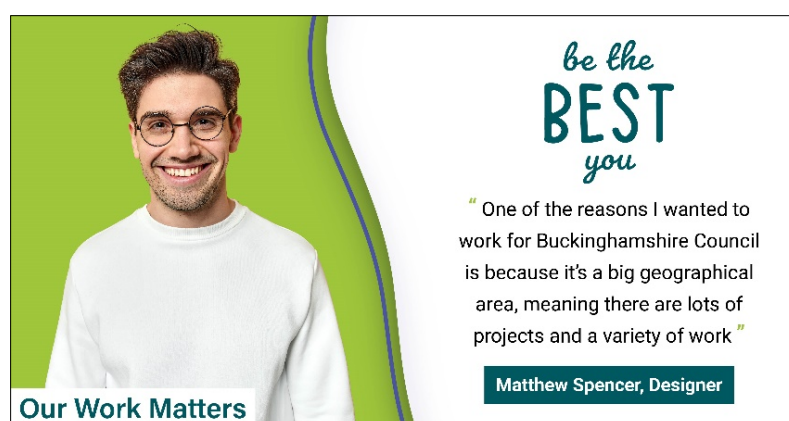
Mel Bird, Policy Officer

Our Work Matters

3. Our work matters



4. Be the best you



2.21 Onboarding and Induction

2.22 An effective induction reassures new starters that they have made the right career choice by matching the expectations set during the recruitment journey, and enables them to get up to speed faster, feel happier and more motivated, and stay longer.

2.23 **Corporate Induction**

2.24 A new corporate face to face induction was launched earlier this year to help new joiners settle in and learn about the organisation. We know that new starters benefit from meeting colleagues in person, so the induction package provides online resources for people before they start but also, importantly, an opportunity to meet face-to-face.

2.25 This package includes

2.26 [New Joiner Guide](#) - new starters receive a link to this guide before they join, and again on their first day. The guide covers a range of essential joining information as well as important need and nice-to-knows. It is available to hold onto and for easy reference to help answer questions and orientate. Please click on the link (left) to see this guide. An extract is provided as an illustration on the next page.

2.

Your induction overview

At Buckinghamshire Council, your induction is made up of five main parts:



Corporate induction elearning



'Welcome to Buckinghamshire Council' session (in person)



Your team and directorate induction



Your role-specific training



Ongoing onboarding

Here's what to expect during your six-month probationary period:

MONTH 1

Welcome and first steps



MONTH 4 & 5

Ongoing induction



MONTH 2

Settling in



MONTH 6

Final probationary meeting



MONTH 3

Probationary period half-way point



MONTH 7 & BEYOND

Your development beyond after your probation



- 2.27 [In-person Corporate Induction Session](#) - all new joiners are invited to attend a face to face Corporate Induction Session delivered by a Service Director or member of CMT. These sessions take place every month and we encourage all new starters to attend the next available session. 88 people have attended the first two sessions.
- 2.28 [Tips for managers and a new checklist](#) - updated guidance and a new checklist are available from the How We Recruit People page on The Source, making sure you cover all bases when inducting a new team member.
- 2.29 [Introduction to Being a Buckinghamshire Manager](#) - new joiners who are managers, as well as internal movers into management roles, are invited to attend a face to face introductory session led by CMT that introduces manager standards and expectations including all the manager essentials. These sessions will run every three months, or more often if necessary.
- 2.30 **Local induction**
- 2.31 To complement the corporate induction, directorates have also developed their own local face to face or on-line induction programmes to help familiarise new joiners with contextual information more specific to them. Communities and PGS have a directorate induction which is run face to face every quarter. Adults & Health have an induction programme for all new starters which usually takes place via Teams every month. DCE, Resources and Children's Services are launching their directorate inductions in the autumn.

2.32 **Opportunities to support people starting work for the first time**

- 2.33 We are aware that the pandemic and shift to hybrid working has presented challenges for people new to the workplace to make connections and socialise. We have used the Kickstart programme to pilot some new approaches for bringing young people together across services.
- 2.34 For young people who have never worked in an office environment before and may be unfamiliar with programmes used and office etiquette, we developed workshops homing in on these skills, offering hints and tips and sharing advice for best-practice. Throughout the year, we also worked with external training providers including Bucks Adult Learning, to provide face-to-face training sessions focussing on working styles and employability skills. These sessions helped new employees to understand the best ways to collaborate with their teams, create successful professional development plans and much more.
- 2.35 To help kickstart participants saying they didn't feel connected to the other employees in other directorates, we ran a networking session. Rachel Shimmin delivered a virtual welcome speech, followed up with talks from Service Directors, ice-breaker activities, and a presentation on how to create other networking opportunities whilst on placement.
- 2.36 Based on the success of this event, we ran another for a wider group of young people including our apprentices and graduate trainees, this time delivering more career and personal development focused content and invited other employees from within the council to talk about their own career journey's and things they had learnt along the way. The response to this was so positive that its format has already been used for an event in Children's services, and we hope to repeat it on a larger scale, open to an even wider range of Early Careers employees as part of our emerging work to support internal career progression.
- 2.37 **Early Careers Network** - Our National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) trainees have done their own thinking into what would make a good onboarding experience and they have initiated a project to establish a new Early Careers Network. This will be a support system for anyone early on in their career to tap into and will meet regularly to share ideas and introduce new members. As well as regular virtual meetings, the network will also encourage face-to-face networking activity and act as a forum for entry level staff to create connections across the Council. This project will be led by the graduates and HR&OD initially, with the plan to eventually elect new chairs on an annual basis as individuals move on from their programmes, hopefully into further permanent roles at the Council.

2.38 Other opportunities to support collaboration

- 2.39 Our staff survey has told us that although 77% of staff feel connected and in touch with their team, and 80% of staff find it easy to collaborate effectively with colleagues regardless of workstyle, not all employees find it easy to make connections across the council to get things done (only 56% agreed in the May 22 survey).



- 2.40 The Council's communications programme to support 'The Year of Collaboration' was endorsed as our 'theme of the year' from September 21 – September 22, in recognition of the feedback in the Together Survey around how easy it is to collaborate with colleagues. The year-long programme has presented opportunities for people of all workstyles, to collaborate and meet (virtually and face to face) on topics of interest. The programme has included the launch of our successful ongoing Tea Break Talk series where internal experts knowledge share on a diverse range of topics, including mental health, our Covid response and even an online guided workout led by our Physical Health Network. The programme has also supported our staff networks to grow and develop with the formation of the new Mental Health and Physical Health networks (see more in health and wellbeing section). In addition, 'Collaboration Coffee Morning' Packs for teams to download have been provided, and the programme is rounding off this September with a 'Summer Social', giving teams the opportunity to have a longer lunch break to come together, and 'SLT on the Road' which will see directors visiting satellite and non-office based teams around the county, outside their own directorate, to help form new connections.



2.41 **Buckinghamshire Managers and Inspirational Leadership**

2.42 An impressive 87% of staff from our May survey state they have a positive working relationship with their manager and 78% say their manager regularly reviews their personal development and performance goals. Reassuringly, these high measures have been constant on our surveys, over time.

2.43 However only 58% of staff feel there is a clear sense of direction and although questions relating to managing change have gone up in May, they are still showing that staff want more opportunity to discuss changes affecting them and to feel that they will be listened to if they voice concerns about how things are done.

2.44 As part of our unitary planning, we designed resources to support managers and help them to know what is expected of them. These resources include:

- Our PACT Values and LEADER Framework behaviours to support the leadership culture
- A Leadership Charter to provide a clear understanding of the role of senior leaders in the organisation and the importance of role modelling and supporting personal development and growth
- A Managers Essential Handbook to define expectation of all managers at all levels in the organisation – the mandatory expectations, minimum requirements and 'need-to-knows'.
- Our Coaching for Performance arrangements - to set clear personal objectives aligned to our service plans and organisational goals; supported by a regular one to one conversation and coaching for development
- A wide range of management development resources, available at any time, though our Learning Hub including bookable workshops and webinars, recorded webinars; eLearning Mindtools and Skills Boosters videos.
- The roll out of a series of specific Management Skills Workshops that will be run face to face or on-line, covering a range of different management needs from

introduction to management for new managers through to managing hybrid teams, managing health and attendance, discipline and conduct etc

- Managers' Brief – delivered as an all manager communication for cascade, every two weeks
- Manager's Live – a live event hosted on teams every 8 weeks by the corporate management team providing managers with timely details and materials to brief their own staff easily, quickly and consistently.
- Senior Manager's Forum provides a quarterly face to face opportunity to bring all service directors and heads of service managers together and discuss key topics and is led by CMT.

2.45 Managing Change

2.46 Following staff feedback on managing change, there has been consultation with employee reps and trade unions about how we can make further improvements. As a result, a Change Management Charter has been co-designed. The [Change Management Charter](#) outlines what staff can expect when they go through change at work. A [supplementary range of tools and support](#) is available and will be promoted to colleagues going through change programmes, including new training for managers.

2.47 An overview of management courses run and being planned between 2021-2023

Course Name	FY 2021/22		FY 2022/23 to date		Total to date	Future courses planned to 31/3/23
	Courses	Attendees	Courses	Attendees		
Being a Buckinghamshire Manager	11	321	9	273	594	2
Building a Positive Culture	-	-	-	-	-	3
Conflict Resolution	-	-	-	-	-	3
Developing your Coaching Skills	5	60	-	-	60	2
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	4	64	2	17	81	2
Getting Performance back on Track	-	-	1	11	11	2
Highly Effective Manager	7	94	1	14	108	3
Managing Change for Managers	-	-	-	-	-	3
Managing Change Returning to the Workplace	-	21	1		21	-
Managing Discipline and Grievance	-	-	-	-	-	3
Managing Hybrid Teams	-	-	1	16	16	3
Managing Sickness Absence	-	-	1	12	12	2

Mental Health Awareness for Managers	-	-	-	-	-	3
Occupational Health for Managers	3	30	-	-	30	-
Supportive Conversations	1	19	-	16	35	3
Wellness Action Plans for Managers	9	96		-	96	-
Total	40	676	16	388	1064	30

2.48 Further management Training - case studies and highlights are provided at appendix 3.

2.49 **Personal Development and Opportunities for Growth**

2.50 Perceptions about limited career progression and opportunities for personal growth have been given as two of the most common reasons driving resignations. In addition, our Together Survey data shows that although staff feel motivated to do their best for BC (77% agree), only 63% feel they have opportunities to grow and develop their skills and only 56% feel they have a fair opportunity to grow and develop. These are areas we are focussing on as part of our Talent Academies and Career Development Pathways.

2.51 Opportunities for growth and development are integral to the employer branding work and these are as important to message to internal staff as to prospective candidates. New internal communications strategies are focusing on promoting and signposting career and personal development opportunities, starting with our mid-year performance review messages in September when all staff will be expected to have a personal development conversation leading to a personal development plan.

2.52 A new steering group has been set up to review internal talent and career development pathways especially in relation areas of skills shortage. The emphasis on skills shortages is not just about attracting new talent, but also, just as importantly on **retaining, and growing our own workforce** though succession planning, career development and talent management – see diagram appendix 4a.

2.53 Not all staff want a career that involves progression and upward movement, and our message is also about supporting employees with personal development opportunity in their existing role and according to their own personal motivations.

2.54 ‘Talent Academies’ already in place as career pipelines and pathways include

- Social Worker Academy Programmes in Children’s and Adult Social Care
- Arrangements for Planners and Building Services
- Legal Trainees
- Apprenticeships

- Traineeships – including Social Care Cadets and Supported internships
 - National Graduate Development Programme
 - Customer Services
 - Kickstart
- 2.55 Case Studies to show how we are developing talent pipelines and growing our own workforce are provided at appendix 4b.
- 2.56 **Support for Health and Wellbeing**
- 2.57 The latest staff survey in May 2022 showed that Wellbeing and Resilience is our most positive area with 75% of respondents agreeing that they feel supported, 3% ahead of the external benchmark. Almost 9 in 10 respondents said they have a positive working relationship with their manager, and 84% feel trusted and enabled to get on their job. However, underneath this, only 64% felt the pressures of their role are manageable and only 63% felt Buckinghamshire Council cares about employee wellbeing.
- 2.58 There is continued focus on mental health including upskilling managers; campaign work to destigmatise talking about mental health and the launch of a new Wellbeing app for staff (from our EAP provider).
- 2.59 More preventative approaches are being taken where there is high sickness absence including support to improve musculoskeletal health, such as funded physio for teams at Pembroke Road, and training for Adult Social Care managers.
- 2.60 Of current concern is the potential impact that rising inflation and cost of living pressures may have on our staff and their families. The Council carried out a recent financial staff survey in which 61% of respondents said that they were quite or very anxious about money, with 36% saying they were concerned about paying for household bills.
- 2.61 A Financial Hardship Task and Finish Group has been in operation since March 2022, monitoring the national economic climate and responding to the need for additional support and advice for colleagues. Working in partnership with HR and Communications colleagues, they have been cascading information on available financial support sign-posting support, including the Helping Hands Scheme, keeping the conversation going through promotion across corporate channels, as well as checking in with staff through a dedicated financial support staff survey. A financial support toolkit has been produced and this is regularly updated based on the evolving financial climate, responding to emerging issues and concerns [financial support and information](#)

2.62 Our Health and Wellbeing Framework sets out our key themes:

Resources and policies - A comprehensive and up-to-date pool of resources and supportive HR policies and processes

Mental health - Improve and raise awareness of mental health support for all employees

Active & Healthy Lifestyles - Promote and provide opportunities for colleagues to lead active and healthy lifestyles

Role of managers - Encourage and develop managers to take a proactive approach to their own and their team's health and wellbeing

2.63 Our framework is supported by a 12-month action plan that includes:

- Utilise data and workforce information to diversify, tailor and develop health and wellbeing interventions
- Introduce feedback loop for colleagues who access PAM services
- Sign the Champion the Change Employer Pledge
- Continue the mental health conversation, utilising partner networks and the network members
- Provide support for managers on managing attendance and their role in supporting the wellbeing of their teams as part of existing Buckinghamshire Manager Training plans
- Support the Physical and Mental Health staff networks to grow, be effective and deliver great awareness campaigns

2.64 **Reward, Recognition Terms and Conditions**

2.65 Despite employees feeling very positive about Buckinghamshire Council (75% from the May 2022 Together Survey are happy working for Buckinghamshire Council; and 93% of the new joiners in the last 12 months say they are proud to work for the organisation and 91% would recommend BC as a place to work); staff do not report feeling as highly valued for the work they do (only 65% feel valued for the work they do from our Together Survey compared to the external benchmark of 56%).

2.66 **Feeling valued**

2.67 Our Proud of You Staff awards is an annual celebration event that recognises outstanding contributions from colleagues over the preceding year. [Watch the highlights reel](#) from the 2021 event (delayed to March 2022 due to Covid-19). [Find out more](#) about the categories and last year's winner. The next awards event is being hosted at the Oculus on Monday 5 December.

2.68 In addition to annual awards, day to day recognition and appreciation of colleagues is vitally important; and our Buckinghamshire Manager values, and Leader framework set out to role model and bring this to life as part of our workplace

culture. Our coaching for performance appraisal process aims to bring colleagues together with their manager 'little and often' on a face to face basis as well as on-line and to provide regular feedback and opportunity to give praise and encouragement 'in the moment'.

2.69 **Work life balance and flexible working**

2.70 Exit and recruitment data highlights the need to understand the 'whole person' at work and their wider needs and responsibilities. Flexible working arrangements repeatedly stand out as being highly important and can be a significant differentiator in terms of the attraction and retention of talent. The opportunity to look at more flexible working arrangement such as part time roles, or different job rotas, especially in services that have fixed desk or mobile roles would support engagement in these areas and help to offer flexibility across all our workstyles to support attraction and retention.

2.71 Most services can cite examples of staff who are looking for more flexibility than a defined 40/60 split and some candidates have turned down job offers because of this. Examples of these declines include the following:

- *Public Health Principal (Adults & Health) - declined due to having to come into the office 60/40 whereas the candidate was looking to work from home full time*
- *Duty Manager (Culture, Sport & Leisure) - declined due to their current employer being prepared to let them work more flexibly for an improved work life balance than what was currently on offer with the service.*
- *Waste Project Manager (Neighbourhood Services) – declined as the service was not able to offer the flexible working that the candidate was looking for.*
- *Health Care Coordinator (Education) - declined as the candidate did not believe the service were willing to meet their working from home requirements.*
- *Customer Service Advisor (Business Operations) – declined as the candidate did not want to work in the office 2 days in the office.*

2.72 Young people are looking for this type of flexibility as well as older people. Information gathered from face to face exit interviews show that many people have readdressed their work life balance as a result of Covid and no longer wish to spend a significant amount of time commuting to work in roles where they are able to work flexibly. Insight from our graduate programme participants confirms this, and work life balance features as a top reason for leaving in exit surveys.

2.73 Flexible working also is an important component in supporting diversity and in attracting new talent and ties into our employer branding around equality, inclusion and work life balance. A recent recruitment campaign for customer advisers in our customer service contact centre attracted an exceptional number of high quality

candidates in a highly competitive market when we advertised that working could be done fully remotely. Originally advertised as being based in Aylesbury, 53 applications were submitted over 22 days. When the role was re-advertised as a fully remote role, 891 applications were submitted over 3 days.

- 2.74 Working arrangements offered by neighbouring employers is also an important factor, as workers will select employers who offer arrangements that best match their preferences (and external recruitment data suggests that flexible working will over-ride pay in many cases). The diagram below shows current information on arrangements offered by neighbouring local authorities and highlights how much flexible working is changing.

South East Councils Working in office


Council	Hybrid working approach to being in the office <i>Brackets shows days required in the office</i>
Bracknell Forest Council	Work is something you do, not where you go (1 day a week)
Central Bedfordshire Council	Hybrid contracts being offered to those able to work from home (1 day a month)
Essex County Council	Teams will define their hybrid working charters – assuming a balance of remote and office working. The specifics are defined by each team based on their business and customer need.
Hertfordshire County Council	Our new ways of working (WoW) prioritise outcomes over locations. Colleagues are trusted to make the right decisions about how to perform at their best, how to effectively collaborate with others and when to travel and use offices, taking what we've learnt throughout the pandemic and modernising how we work. (Nothing Mandatory)
Kent County Council	All office space around the county has been fully converted to hot-desking spaces with collaboration areas and meeting rooms. Teams no longer have their own spaces. (1 day a month)
Milton Keynes Council	1/3 of staff have become full time homeworkers – assessed/discussed with managers and only agreed in cases where it would work for their role. This is a formal contractual change. Homeworkers are required to work from the office one day a week. Site-based workers can work from home up to two days a week. Some teams have moved from satellite offices into the Civic Centre as a result
Oxfordshire County Council	Office working when required (Nothing Mandatory)
Slough Borough Council	Staff are being encouraged to come into the office at least once a week (Nothing Mandatory)

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

2.75 Pay and reward considering rising inflation

- 2.76 This years' pay award reflected the particularly challenging background the Council faces with different legacy pay schemes and terms and conditions, its response to the pandemic and the current economic climate with public sector pay restraint and rising inflation. Whilst pay is undoubtedly an important element of reward, particularly in the current climate, it needs to be understood in the context of our wider benefits including flexible working arrangements, pensions, holiday, and sick pay; and in the context of the employer brand – how we work the nature of our work and alongside the wider range of health, wellbeing, and financial hardship initiatives and options available to support and advise staff.

2.77 Staff engagement

- 2.78 The delivery of the employee engagement element of the People Plan is supported day-to-day by the Internal Communications Team and the corporate communications delivered to staff. The messaging is weaved through a variety of channels designed to support our diverse workforce and workstyles.
- 2.79 The communication approach embodies a top-down 'leading by example' cascade process through a monthly all staff briefing hosted by the Corporate Management Team, a fortnightly Managers' Brief email cascade and a live briefing session for managers every other month. The approach is centred on two-way communications, encouraging managers to ask questions and put themselves in the best position to be able to support their teams.
- 2.80 Also central to our communications delivery is peer-to-peer recognition and discussion, this is achieved through the monthly Proud of You e-card nominations, where colleagues can express their thanks and recognition to others, the annual Proud of You staff awards, for which colleagues nominate their peers in twelve award categories and our monthly staff blogs, where staff share both their personal and professional experience in the hopes of inspiring others.
- 2.81 Consistency is key, and this is also achieved by the weekly newsletter, delving into elements most relevant to staff and ensuring context is provided – with a name and face behind the messaging. We also welcome the imminent introduction of our new intranet which will explore new means of communicating with our colleagues through personalised and targeted delivery.
- 2.82 Our corporate communications are centred on three key themes, aligning with the People Plan; Health and Wellbeing; Leadership; and our culture. The team continue to respond to emerging issues and trends to focus on what staff need and want to know, and to exemplify our PACT values.
- 2.83 **Conclusion**
- 2.84 Deliverables to support employee engagement against our People Plan for our first two years are largely on track but we recognise there is always more to do. The areas covered in this report reflect the work done to support employee engagement by:
- Developing our new employer brand
 - Improving our induction and onboarding
 - Paying particular attention to supporting and socialising young people new to the workplace
 - Developing metrics to help us measure and understand our People Plan and performance
- 

- Developing our managers to provide coaching and development to help employees perform to their best and support the right culture
- Provide employees with the right health and wellbeing support and ensuring this meets circumstances that matter - whether it's support through the covid pandemic, or to reflect the current cost of living pressures
- Developing career pathways and opportunities for personal growth for internal staff to help grow our own workforce and retain talent
- Delivering a relevant and consistent programme of corporate communications
- Having policies, practices, and arrangements in place to support reward and recognition including flexible working arrangements to suit modern lifestyles and ways of working

2.85 These deliverables are illustrated in our high level workplan for 2020-2022

High level workplan 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery

Key Deliverables for 2020-2022	Resourcing	Engagement	Leadership	Change management	Service providers improvement	Status after first two years
1. Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership				x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓
2. Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal statutory and contractual obligations				x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓
3. Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
4. Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
5. Provide strategic and professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes		x	x	x		Completed as planned for first two years ✓
6. Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance		x	x	x	x	Completed as planned for first two years ✓
7. Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people	x	x			x	On track for delivery as part of new employer brand, talent programme & career pathways ✓
8. Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development		x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
9. Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns including a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓

2.86 There is more to do – particularly around career pathways and growth and development; but having invested in the foundations to underpin our People Plan over the last two years - by putting in place the right frameworks and by developing our leaders and managers to support colleagues and understand their role in employee engagement and retention; we feel confident that the deliverables set out in our 3-5 year in our People Plan will help us meet these new goals and further support continuous improvement for our employee experience and workforce ambition.

High level workplan 2023-2025

Towards meeting our place-based vision and Council of the year

Key Deliverables for 2023-2025	Resourcing	Engagement	Leadership	Change management	Service Improvement	Reporting Status (to commence from Autumn 2022)
1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing	x	x	x			
2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing	x	x	x	x		
3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand	x	x	x			
4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working	x	x	x	x		
5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions	x	x	x	x		
6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment	x	x	x	x		
7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce	x	x	x	x		
8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement		x	x	x	x	
9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.	x	x	x	x	x	
10. Employer of choice/Council of the year	x	x	x	x	x	

Associated detailed workplans

Resourcing workplan

OD and HRBP workplan

HR service improvement plan

Policy and Reward workplan

Convergence workplan

Work Smart and Work Styles workplan

HR Customer Experience workplan

EDI action plan

Skills and Workforce Board workplan

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Risks and potential impact of not addressing employee experience will impact on attraction and retention of talent, performance, and productivity.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Budget for this work is part of existing HR&OD operating costs. There are no other direct legal or financial implications

5. Corporate implications

- a) Property - none
- b) HR - none
- c) Climate change - none
- d) Sustainability - none
- e) Equality – an EQIA was completed as part of unitary planning on this topic
- f) Data – no DPIA required
- g) Value for money – this work will add value by improving employee attraction and retention and reducing turnover costs; also by improving health and wellbeing benefits – impacting on improved productivity/motivation and reduced absence

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Ongoing internal and external communications and employer branding plans are in place to support this work

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 The 3-5 year deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan are reviewed quarterly by CMT

9. Background papers

- 9.1 Buckinghamshire Council five year People Plan



Appendices

Appendix 1

Unitary OD Work Plan - vesting day position April 2020

Vision, Culture & Design			Employee Engagement				Learning & Development / Leadership Development				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Agreed OD strategy and framework	Agreed Organisational Values & Behaviours	Agreed pathways for performance management design, coaching & development arrangements	Career counselling and outplacement arrangements	Employee resilience health & wellbeing pathway	New council 'together' employee surveys engagement onboarding exit	Employee recognition arrangements (annual awards)	Effective new entrant induction & onboarding from April	Being a Bucks Manager phase 1 1.1 existing manager 'workshops' 1.2 perf management 1.3 transformation change for senior leaders	Agreed mandatory standards and mandatory training for all employees	New L&D e learning platform & transfer of core catalogue	High level plans for apprenticeships & career pathways
CIG 1 Oct	SE 3 Dec	CIG 15 July & 1 Oct	CIG 24 June	all councils network in place	CIG 19 Sept	still to be developed	CIG 5 Sept	In development following on from CIG 15 July	CIG 5 Sept	Plans in progress for vesting day	early stages
Organisational Design						Learning & Development					

Leadership & the Being a Buckinghamshire Manager programme



Appendix 2

Our Employer Brand

These headline messages from our new employer brand and will be complemented by employee stories and professional photography to share with both external candidates and our internal workforce to highlight why Buckinghamshire Council is a great place to work.

The four key messages are:

Part of something bigger



We're one of the largest unitary councils in the UK, covering the full range of public services to over 550,000 residents. We're also one of the largest local employers, and networked across public, private and the third sector. With scale comes lots of career opportunities.

Do big things



People get opportunity to be part of (directly or indirectly) projects and work that make tangible differences to our local communities. Supporting families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, settling Ukrainian refugees; meeting carbon-neutral ambitions; helping an

elderly resident stay independent in the home they love... just a few examples of the important work that inspires our brilliant colleagues to get out of the bed in the morning.

Our work matters



People get to contribute to a mission with meaning; we're helping to protect the vulnerable, protect our environment, and help our communities thrive. We appeal to the socially conscious, looking for more than a pay cheque. Many colleagues live locally so as well as having a good work-life balance from having shorter commutes, they live in the communities we serve, seeing the real-world impact of the work the council does.

Be the best you



People join us for career development. And we are building on our learning and development offer to ensure it's inclusive to all and that we're supporting younger people into entry roles and developing them to grow into our in-demand professions. We are known to be an employer with strong values and a supportive place to work that has good employee benefits, a growing set of staff networks, and an emphasis on wellbeing and equality and diversity. Flexible working hugely appeals to our workforce who value having a good work-life balance, and hybrid working has proved both effective and popular with staff.

Appendix 3

Management Training - case studies and highlights



Being a Buckinghamshire Manager events

- Delivered directly by CMT between March and June this year
- Over 20 face-to-face workshops and over 600 attendees
- Set expectations for the leadership culture and provide opportunity to network and share best practice
- Hugely positive feedback “Being led by directors is really powerful, and demonstrates CMT’s commitment to investing in leaders, and being clear on the expectations of all managers”
- These are now part of on-going face to face induction for newly recruited or internally promoted managers and will run quarterly and continue to be delivered by CMT or their Service Directors.

New Manager Training - The Highly Effective Manager

- 116 managers have already attended with 42 scheduled to attend later this year
- Aimed at new or aspiring managers or those who have been in a management role for a while but who have had no formal training or who require a refresher.
- Delivered over two days by an external provider with positive feedback
- Course Content
 - How to Excel as A Manager
 - How to Manage Your Time Better
 - How to Manage Performance

- How to Build a High Performing Team
- How to Manage Change
- How to Communicate Better

Managing Diversity and Inclusion

- 73 managers have attended with positive feedback from attendees and staff reps.
- The course explains managers responsibilities under the Equalities Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, raises awareness of the benefits of diversity within the workplace and explores how to promote equality and tackle discrimination.
- Delivered by external provider Equality and Diversity UK – face to face or on-line

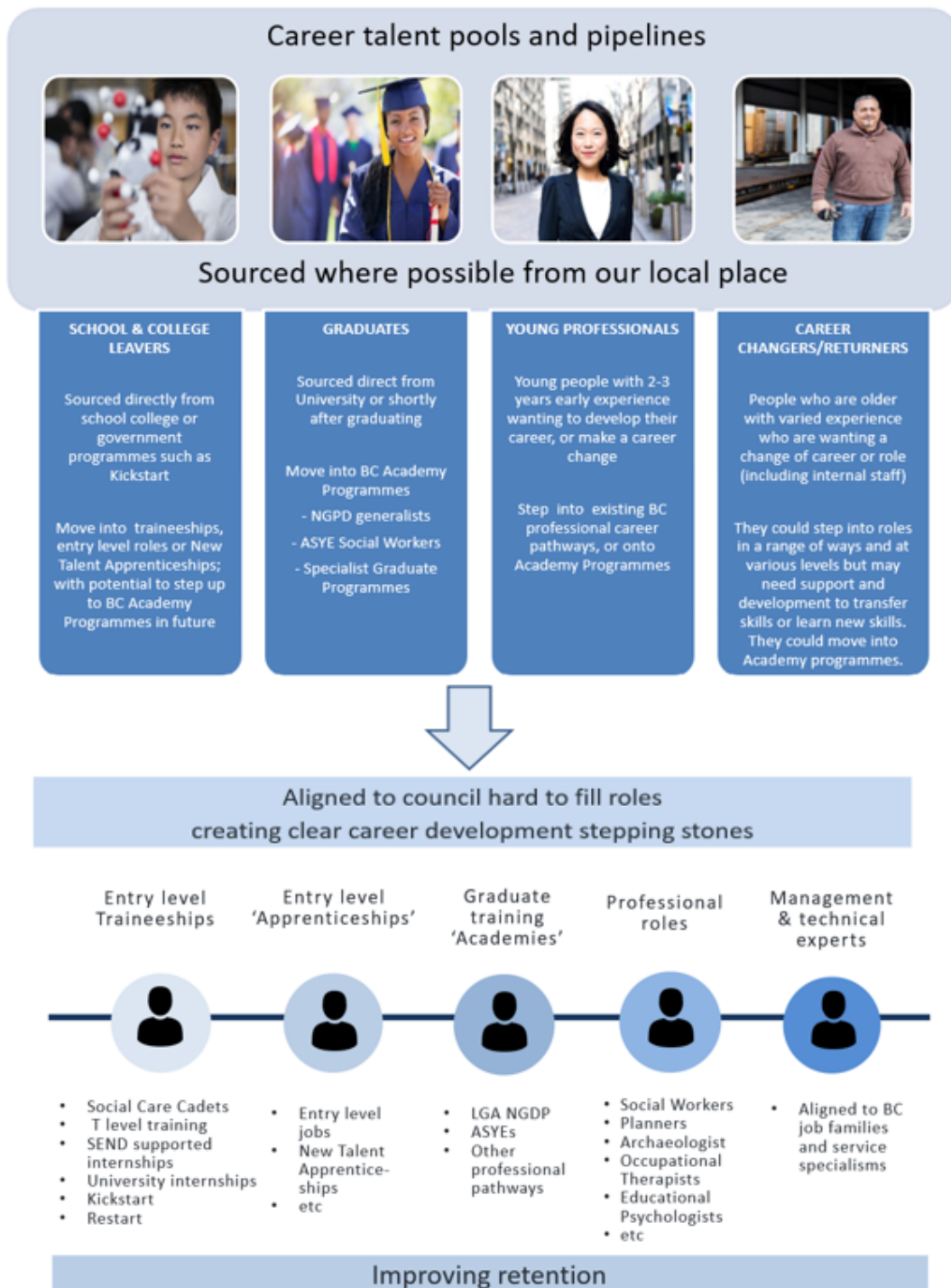
Developing Coaching Skills

- 108 managers have attended
- Helps managers develop coaching techniques to motivate and support their team to develop confidence, improve performance and manage change
- Led by an external provider - delivered face to face or on-line

Further skills workshops in development/at pilot stage

- Workshops to raise skill and confidence in core areas of people management including managing performance, discipline, grievance, and conduct and managing sickness absence. All 10 people who attended the pilot on Managing Sickness Absence training gave an overall assessment of “Excellent”.
- A Managing Hybrid Working pilot as part of the Worksmart programme. These workshops will focus on equipping managers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead hybrid teams effectively.
- Health & Wellbeing Leadership programme delivered by our Employee Assistance Programme Provider in October/November. This consists of 4 modules on Mental Health Awareness; Having Supportive Conversations; Building a Positive Culture and Conflict Resolution
- Plans to introduce “ideas exchange” workshops for informal management networking and collaboration. Managers will have the opportunity to meet and discuss a topic of interest such as health & wellbeing; and with support from a facilitator, explore how this is being applied back in the workplace and share challenges and best practice.

Appendix 4a



Appendix 4 b

Case Studies to show how we are developing talent pipelines and growing our own workforce

Kickstart programme

Following success with the DWP's Kickstart scheme, we are planning to develop our own internal version of the scheme to support new career opportunities for a variety of people (school leavers, more mature career returners or new starters and local people at risk of long term unemployment). Details are currently in design and discussions being held with partner organisations on how we can look at funding options.

Conversion rates from the total of 45 placements we offered on the Government backed DWP programme that we ran between 2021 and 2022 are as follows:

Conversion type/employee status	Number of employees	As a Percentage (%)
Internal conversion (still at BC in Perm, FTC or apprenticeship role)	15 of 37	40%
External conversion (has found a job with another employer or gone into further education)	11 of 37	30%
No conversion – placement ended	11 of 37	30%

Note: we have offered 45 placements in total. 8 individuals are still on placement, and we do not yet know what their employment status will be upon completion, so these have not been included in the above statistics.

The Social Worker Talent Academy model used in both Adult's and Children's Services supports professional practice for social workers in their first year of employment. The 'Academy' status is a hallmark of good practice and helps attract young professional into the workplace with a strong learning and development offer. Once social work students have completed their assisted year, they can move into social worker vacancies and on through the social worker career pathway.

These programmes target graduates who are already studying for a degree in social work. Established relationships with Buckinghamshire New University, University of Bedfordshire and through the local Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy has created a powerful hub to build our profile and help pipeline social worker recruits. Students become

aware of the training offer available from Buckinghamshire Council well ahead of their graduation date helping our recruitment process.

There are several career pathways in **Planning Growth and Sustainability** including dedicated graduate recruitment programmes for five graduates in Planning DM, two graduates in Building Control, two graduates in Strategic Flood Management, three graduates Highways DM and one graduate in Ecology. Three team members in Highways are currently undertaking an MSc in Transport Planning and Management (University of Westminster), with two staff members having already successfully achieved an MSc. Highways DM also has two team members working towards their Transport Planning Apprenticeships and two further team members progressing their Civil Engineering Apprenticeship. In addition, entry level career pathways have been designed (for school or college leaver or career re-starters) to grow and retain talent in Planning Enforcement Environmental Health and Strategic Transport and Infrastructure.

Adults & Health have created an entry level apprenticeship with a planned programme of rotation across 3 different roles, to diversify skills and experiences in different settings help successful retention at the end of the training. They have also taken on Social Care Cadets through the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy as an accredited training programme offering students aged 16-24, one day a week work experience as part of a level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care. This qualification develops knowledge and skills to support progression into a wide range of job roles in the Health and Social Care sector. Occupational Therapy have taken on their first OT Degree apprentice this year in collaboration with University of Hertfordshire. The OT Team have also linked up with Oxford Brookes University to offer their OT undergraduate students' placements during year 1, 2 and 3 of their degree.

Legal Services have introduced career graded structures to allow progression opportunities for staff as they gain experience, without having to wait for a vacancy to arise. They have also developed several training routes into qualified positions, using the apprenticeship levy where possible. They currently have three staff members training to be chartered legal executives through apprenticeships and one staff member training to be a solicitor through an apprenticeship.

Customer Services and Business Support have 330 colleagues and work with every service within the council. Much work is generic, and colleagues easily become aware of not just their service area but other services. This has resulted in the function developing themselves as a foundation level training ground, acting as a steppingstone for careers throughout Buckinghamshire Council. Individuals are recruited into the team following requests from the services for admin/ Customer Services roles to work within their specific service. There is then a natural progression for these individuals to move directly into future roles in the service or other services. This creates a natural progression route and early career pathway. This model works very well and is something we wish to promote and

maximise through developing colleagues even further at the early stages of their career to ensure we maximise this natural resource pipeline.

