CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 November 2025

Present:
Councillor Catherine Rees (Chair)
Councillors Cookson, Begley, Fullam, Holland, Hussain, Payne, Pole, Snow and Wardle

Apologies:
Councillor Read

Also present:
Strategic Director for People and Communities, Head of Service - HR, Workforce Planning and Organisational Development, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer(JM)

In attendance as Portfolio Holder:
The Leader, Councillor Bialyk, Councillors Vizard and Wright

84   Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillor Read, who had sent Councillor Palmer as her substitute.

85   Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 25 September 2025 were taken as read and approved as correct, subject minor amendments as requested by the Chair.

86   Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

87   Questions from the Public under Standing Order No. 19

There were no questions from members of the public.

88   Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No. 20

There were no questions submitted in advance by Members.

89   Medium Term Financial Plan & Budget Timetable 2026/27

The Chair explained to Members that the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources was unable to attend this meeting and that this item would be deferred to the meeting in January.

90   Key People Activity Across the Council

The Chair advised Members that the report had not been published and allowed 10 minutes to read the report.

Councillor Palmer, under Standing Order 45, presented her Scrutiny Proforma and in doing so, made the following points:

- this was not a challenge and she hoped it would support the work being carried out;
- it would provide Members with a better understanding of the role of Human Resources(HR);
- she hoped that this would support Portfolio Holders and HR officers with their work; and
- she hoped this discussion would be supportive, and it could be agreed what might be useful to see in the future.

The Strategic Director for People and Community gave a presentation making the following points:
- there had been an independent HR review in 2024 to identify necessary structural, procedural and cultural changes;
- resources were focused on supporting the delivery of the Council's objectives;
- HR had previously been a reactive service;
- there had previously been little data on council employees and uncertainty around overall people function;
- HR had seen a transformational change of their service, and she was proud of the team and what had been delivered;
- a huge amount of work had been carried out on iTrent and it was still improving;
- there had been a culture shift for leadership and organisation;
- Power BI was an easy way to view staff insights and would be very useful for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests;
- an Employee Hub containing policies and information about staff benefits, as well as an interactive communication portal would be made available to staff soon;
- the Council's apprenticeship scheme had been reviewed, and apprenticeships in areas that would benefit the city were being prioritised;
- the Council were currently in a procurement process for a new occupational health provider,
- a new modernised approach to industrial relations had been agreed with unions and a reset JCNC was now in operation ;
- in areas where sickness absence was quite high HR was working with managers on specific areas;
- the vacancy rate was in line with comparators and the 'time to hire' was good and was likely to improve more following updates to iTrent; and
- the future priorities were to continue evolving work that had already started.

The Strategic Director for People and Community and the Head of Service – HR, Workforce Planning and Organisational Development responded to Members' questions in the following terms:
- there was a higher rate of long-term sickness in some service areas and the data allowed for a more in-depth view in these areas.;
- HR Business Partners were having discussions with managers regarding support for people off sick;
- the sickness and absence policy had been rewritten to be more proactive;
- HR had been meeting with managers to help manage sickness absence better and there had already been a decline in the level of sickness absence;
- the staff survey was 62 questions long, which may have contributed to the low level of participation for some worker groups;
- there was a framework for using agency staff that set out approved providers, standardised rates of pay, and terms and conditions;

- payment for agency staff outside of the framework needed to be agreed by Directors;
- the Council's biggest opportunity was its staff, and it was important to maintain morale through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR);
- AI was a complex issue: and was already making it more difficult to tackle employee relations cases;
- degree apprenticeships were changing at the end of the year; and
- job descriptions and equal pay for jobs would be covered as part of TUPE.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Director for People and Community for her work on this, and Councillor Palmer for bringing this proposal to the committee.

The Strategic Director for People and Community with permission of the Chair, left the meeting.

The Head of Service – HR, Workforce Planning & Organisational Development gave a presentation on the Staff Survey responses, making the following points:
- 51% of staff participated, which was an increase on 25% in 2023;
- it is possible that the staff that felt like nothing had been done as a result of previous surveys and therefore did not complete the survey this year;
- the strengths highlighted were:
  - health and safety;
  - managerial trust;
  - fair treatment; and
  - knowledge sharing
- areas for improvement were:
  - workplace progress;
  - follow up actions from the survey;
  - career development; and
  - cross-team collaboration
- these results had been shared with Heads of Service who would be meeting with HR Business Partners to develop action plans for their teams.

The Head of Service – HR, Workforce Planning & Organisational Development responded to a question from Councillor Holland, confirming that staff were able to complete the survey during work time.

Councillor Fullam felt it was positive that the survey enabled year on year changes to be seen, and that it was very refreshing and the council were making good progress.

In moving the recommendation to note the report, the Chair proposed, and Councillor Holland seconded that the committee appreciate the openness and transparency in order to meaningfully scrutinise now and in the future and note the transformation within the service. Following a vote, this was CARRIED.

91   **Scrutiny Work Plan and Proposals Received**

The Chair proposed, to the approval of the committee, that:
- the Medium Term Financial Plan would be moved to January;
- Councillor Moore's budget proforma would be moved to January; and
- the Leader's Portfolio Holder Update report would also be moved to January.

Following a vote, the draft Scrutiny Work Plan, as amended was AGREED.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.23 pm)

Chair

REPORT: Human Resources Operations at Exeter City Council

Pre and Post HR Review Assessment

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th November 2025

Report of: Jo Yelland, Strategic Director, People and Communities

Report prepared by: Lydia Wilson – Head of Service – Human Resources (HR), Workforce & Organisational Development (OD)

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   This report presents a comparative overview of HR operations and delivery at Exeter City Council before and after the independent HR review conducted in March 2024. It evaluates the structural, procedural, and cultural changes implemented to improve HR effectiveness, workforce planning, employee relations and service delivery. The report also identifies ongoing challenges and opportunities for continued development.
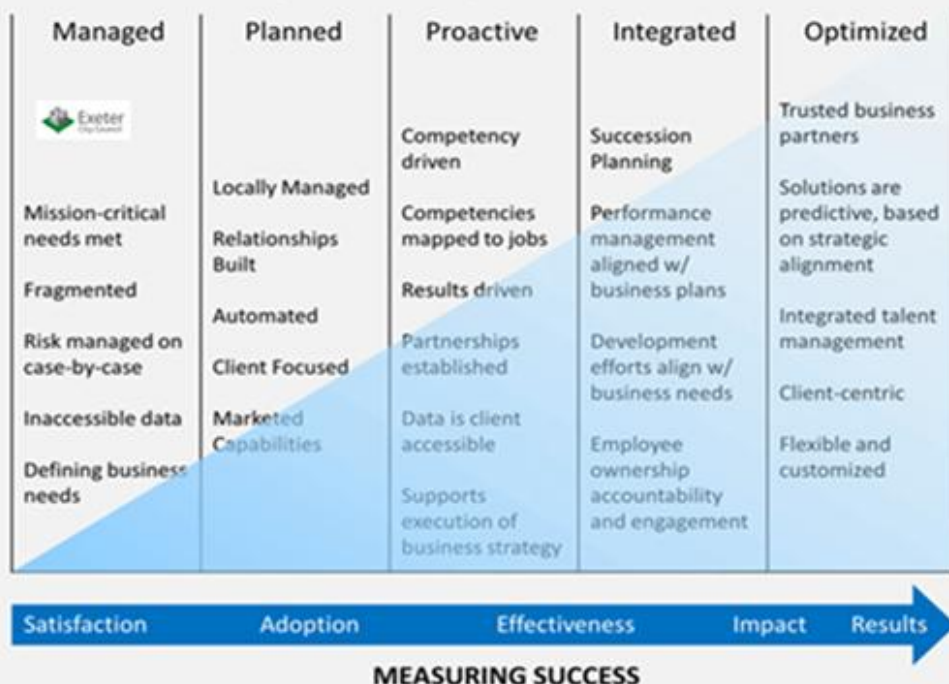
2.   Background and Context

2.1   The independent review focused on defining the requirements of an HR/OD function that would be fit for purpose as the Council continues its transformation programme, to meet its strategic aims and objectives. The review aimed to identify what would be needed to better align HR operations with the council's strategic goals, enhance workforce capabilities, and modernise people management functions.

2.2   The findings of the independent review highlighted that HR within ECC continued to be a reactive service, resources were focused on transactional activity, and it was not providing the necessary level of expertise required within a consistently changing and evolving environment.

3.   HR Review – Issues

3.1   The reviewer used a HR maturity model matrix to assess current position of the service and the report concluded that it was in a 'managed state' **(Table1).**

3.2   Key issues identified:
- Focus was to meet the critical needs of operational demand
- Fragmented ownership, unclear accountability, joint working relationships not evident
- Risk managed on a case-by-case basis
- Inaccessible data for managers and employees to self-service
- HR not aligned to business needs and priorities

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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
Human Resource Development Maturity Model

Managed	Planned	Proactive	Integrated	Optimized
Exeter City Council				Trusted business partners
Mission-critical needs met	Locally Managed	Competency driven	Succession Planning	Solutions are predictive, based on strategic alignment
Fragmented	Relationships Built	Competencies mapped to jobs	Performance management aligned w/ business plans	
Risk managed on case-by-case	Automated	Results driven		Integrated talent management
Inaccessible data	Client Focused	Partnerships established	Development efforts align w/ business needs	Client-centric
Defining business needs	Marketed Capabilities	Data is client accessible	Employee ownership accountability and engagement	Flexible and customized
		Supports execution of business strategy		

| Satisfaction | Adoption | Effectiveness | Impact | Results |

MEASURING SUCCESS

HR Transactional support is an ongoing requirement, however volume reduces as technology becomes the enabler for self-service.
HR resources refocused on strategic HR delivery which drives business impact, delivery and return on investment.

Table 1: HR Maturity Model

4.   Independent HR Review – Recommendations

4.1 The report identified that ECC needs to focus on moving from a 'managed state' to a 'proactive state'. A managed state would encompass the following elements.

- Competency driven
- Results driven
- Partnerships established
- Data being client accessible
- Supporting the execution of business strategy

4.2   Recommendations

- **Automation:** Implementation of an HR Information System that is fit for purpose and drives self-service and management information (MI) insight and data.
- **Process Improvement:** Review HR administration processes, streamline and drive sustained improvements in terms of efficiency and automation.
- **Accessibility:** Introduce/update user friendly platform for Managers and Employees to access key information sources/guidance.
- **Policies & Practices:** Implementation plans for revised policies that ensure effective delivery to target audience, knowledge building and embedding ways of working.

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- **Values & Leadership:** Values review to ensure they meet with the strategic direction of ECC, and development of values framework and identification of Leadership Development Programme.
- **Operating Model:** Transition to a new HR operating model with an emphasis and focus on People & Culture.

5.   Independent HR Review – Progress Update

5.1   Following the independent HR review, a comprehensive HR Improvement Plan was set out with clear objectives, actions and timeframes established to address the issues and proceed with the recommendations identified within the report (section 4).

5.2   The plan was designed so that all actions are fully implemented by March 2026. Appendix A shows the detailed project plan and status of each activity. Below is a summary of the actions that have been completed or are in progress.

5.3   IT Systems

5.4   A full review of the **iTrent HR System** has been undertaken, leading to the formation of a dedicated project group and improvement plan. The aim is to optimise system usage by automating processes, enhancing self-service functionality, and reducing the transactional and administrative workload currently undertaken by the HR team.

This includes:

- Implementation of the onboarding module, significantly reducing administrative tasks and streamlining the new starter process
- Automated workflows and email notifications for new starters, leavers, and internal movers
- Employee self-service offboarding, enabling smoother transitions and clearer responsibilities
- Right to Work checks reporting and workflow alerts, including breach notifications to ensure compliance
- Digital checklists to support consistent and timely completion of onboarding, offboarding, and internal movement tasks

5.6   A new **Corporate HR Business Intelligence Dashboard** has been developed to track key metrics and drive strategic decision-making processes. Metrics currently tracked include:

- Absence rates and trends
- Turnover and retention figures
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) indicators
- Vacancies

5.7   A new **HR SharePoint site** is currently being developed, including a dedicated People Hub designed to streamline access to HR information, empower employees and managers, and enhance the overall employee experience at Exeter City Council.

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This site will replace the existing staff intranet and will serve as a central, user-friendly platform for:

- HR policies and procedures
- Guidance documents and toolkits
- Templates for common HR processes
- FAQs and self-service resources
- Links to key systems such as ITrent and the HR BI Dashboard

The People Hub will support a more agile and informed workforce by making essential HR resources easily accessible and aligned with organisational priorities.

5.8 A new **door access system at the Civic Centre** has been implemented to enhance the safety, security and operational efficiency with controlled and auditable access.

5.9 Talent Acquisition

5.10 Proposal to maximise the utilisation of **ECC apprenticeship levy** has been agreed with the aim of implementing a council-wide apprenticeship scheme to address critical skills shortages, provide career pathways for frontline staff and support vulnerable community members such as young people leaving care and people with lived experience of homelessness.

5.11 **Recruitment and Onboarding Process Improvement.** A project group and improvement plan have been established to streamline and enhance the recruitment and onboarding experience. The focus is on ensuring processes are inclusive, efficient, candidate-focused, and aligned with the Council's strategic workforce goals: attracting, selecting, and integrating the best talent to deliver on corporate objectives.

5.12 **Key initiatives being developed include:**

- **Creation of a new web site landing page** for job applications, designed to improve accessibility, showcase the Council's employer brand, and provide a more engaging candidate experience
- **Analysis of hard-to-fill roles**, with adaptations to recruitment strategies and processes to better address these challenges
- **Implementation of the iTrent onboarding module**, reducing administrative burden and improving the consistency and efficiency of the new starter journey
- **Automation of emails and workflows** for new starters, leavers, and internal movers, ensuring timely communication and task completion
- **Introduction of digital checklists** to support managers and HR in delivering a smooth and compliant onboarding and offboarding experience

5.13 Learning & Development

5.14 **A strategic leadership development programme** has been commissioned and is currently being delivered**,** with the aim of to creating a cohesive, high performance Extended Leadership Team that is aligned to the Councils strategic priorities and values.

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5.15 A range of **people management skills** workshops have been designed and are currently being delivered across the council to upskill managers in areas of absence management, investigations and difficult conversations.

5.16 **Employee Experience**

5.17 A thorough **review of 24 HR policies** has been undertaken to ensure they are current, legally compliant and aligned with organisational values and best practice, to support effective people management and positive employee experience. Also 3 new policies have been introduced; Hybrid Working, Secondments and Neonatal Leave. A robust system for review has also been established.

5.18 A comprehensive review of the **Occupational Health Service** has been conducted and project plan and group established to improve the services effectiveness, accessibility, and alignment with organisational priorities, with the aim of enhancing employee wellbeing, reducing absence rates and supporting a healthy, productive workforce. As part of this improvement programme, a full tender exercise is being undertaken to procure a new Occupational Health provider. The aim is to secure a supplier that offers a modern, responsive, and evidence-based service aligned with the Council's strategic workforce priorities and commitment to employee wellbeing

5.19 **An enhanced staff survey** has been created and successfully rolled out to employees, designed to capture meaningful insights into employee engagement, satisfaction, and feedback. The results have been analysed through a newly developed Business Intelligence dashboard, enabling senior leadership and management to make data-informed decisions and shape targeted action plans that support workforce wellbeing and organisational improvement. (overview of results in Appendix D)

5.20 An improved **Industrial Relations (IR) framework has been** designed, in consultation with Trade Unions, and launched to provide an integrated and modernised approach to IR ensuring ECC offer a robust, transparent and inclusive approach to engaging staff and their Union representatives in policy and organisational changes.

5.21 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

5.22 **An invited EDI Local Government Association Mini Peer Review** has taken place which identified improvements to the councils EDI framework and provisions to ensure the council is effective, inclusive and aligned with current legislation, best practice and the council's strategic objective to tackle social exclusion in all its work. EDI task force established with EDI objectives and EDI policy agreed and published, development of an EDI training framework for employees and members and improved EDI data (Appendix B).

5.23 **Structural Changes**

- Appointment of a Strategic Director People and Communities in July 2024
- Appointment of a new Head of HR Workforce Planning and OD: commenced in post February 2025.
- A new HR model aligning HRBPs to service areas implemented providing strategic support to the Extended Leadership Team.

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- Independent review of Corporate Health & Safety commissioned resulting in transfer of Health and Safety and work function to HR (September 2025) . Recruitment of 2 new senior leadership health and safety roles is underway

6. Measurements and KPIs

6.1 Being able to produce meaningful data, to measure against KPIs are essential because they enable the transformation of the function from reactive and administrative to proactive and strategic. An overarching aim of the HR Improvement Plan is to be able to produce data to support HR decisions aligned to the organisational strategy. The following KPIs can now be measured and used as benchmarks by serving as a reference point overtime, across departments and against local government/public sector standards. These have been incorporated in the HR, Workforce and OD business plan.

	Baseline Information		Targets		
Description	2024/25	Comparator*	2025/6	2026/7	2027/8
Sickness absence rate (%)	5.40%*	2.9%	4%	3%	2.5%
Absence Cost	£892,260* (approx. £1140/per person)	£800-£1000 / employee/yr in local gov	>£800/ employee	>£800/ employee	>£800/ employee
% Turnover rate	13.70%*	25%	<10%	<10%	<10%
% Staff Survey Response rate	52%*	50-60%	60%	65%	70%
% Vacancy rate	9.56%	9.6%	7.5%	6.5%	5%
Time to hire (days)	30 days	42 days	<30 days	<30 days	<30 days
% apprenticeship levy spend	19%	44.5%	45%	60%	80%
% workforce over age 55	56.67% 41+ 34.74% 51+ (30% under the age of 30)*	66.9% 40-64 34.9% 55+	Increase under 30 workforce by 5%	+5%	+5%

Comparator figures obtained from ONS, CIPD, Infinistats, LGA

**ECCs BI Dashboard Data can be found in Appendix C*

7. Future Challenges and Next Steps

7.1 The workplace and workforce are constantly changing and for local government in particular, HR faces a unique and complex set of challenges including Local Government Review (LGR), budget constraints, evolving technology and workforce expectations. As such, ECC HR will continually evolve its approach and plans to meet the demands of a rapidly changing landscape. This includes:

- **Building leadership capacity to manage-reform** driven organisational change
- **Integrating AI tools into HR functions** such as, Chatbot on HR SharePoint for instant answers and resource guidance, Automated transcription of formal

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hearing notes, AI-supported job evaluations for consistency and efficiency, Recruitment shortlisting automation for faster, objective screening,

- **Conducting skills audits and targeted training initiatives to create a future-ready workforce** through the development of a strategic learning and development programme.
- **Strengthening the PDR (in full) and Supervision process** that focuses on accountability and continuous development
- **Strengthening and Prioritising Corporate Health and Safety at work leadership**
- **Prioritise diversity, equity and inclusion** addressing systemic gaps and supporting underrepresented groups
- **Focus on employee reward and recognition, wellbeing, engagement and mental health support**
- **Continue to drive digital transformation** and improve HR systems, such as the Learning Management System (My Compliance and Nexus) and Electronic Staff files (EDRM) and Assessment (Corporate Health and Safety Reporting).
- **To further review, streamline and digitalise HR processes** including sickness absence, leavers and movers
- **Foster a proactive health and safety culture** by implementing robust risk management strategies and systems, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and through digital innovation improve safety performance and data driven decision making.

8. Recommendations

The committee is asked to note the contents of this report and the considerable progress in delivering the HR Improvement Plan

9. Appendices

- **Appendix A:** HR Improvement Plan
- **Appendix B:** EDI Project Plan
- **Appendix C:** ECC BI Dashboard Data
- **Appendix D:** Staff Survey results

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Appendix A – HR Improvement Plan

Category	Overall Objective	Activity	RAG Status	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
1.1 iTrent Organisation Structure Aligned	iTrent to be fully reflective of Council Structure to enable correct reporting at all levels, and data extract for People Dashboard	* New org structures created with Head of Srv	Complete	█												
		* All new structures updated on iTrent	Complete													
		* Reports run and checked with Head Of via BP	Complete													
		* Test with BI Dashboard	Complete													
		* Ownership of Org Charts BP process agreed	Complete													
1.2 Door Access	Implement new door access system for Civic Centre - ensure reporting funcationality is in place	* Run reports following providers system update (Car Access)	Complete		█											
1.3 Emergency Contact /EDI Data	Ensure iTrent is up to date with Emergency Contacts, and that this is reviewed regularly and owned by Ensure employees have had the opportunity to update	* Run report following completion of Org Structure reporting on iTrent	Complete		█											
		* EDI Report produced/linked with BI Dashboard - shared with EDI	Complete													
		* Decision on whether further comms is required/annual reminder	Complete													
1.4 iTrent short term fixes and health	Optimisation of 'back end' iTrent to support user experience, reduce system failures, manual work	* Agree on iTrent fixes to support user experience and with no visable 'knock' on for end user	Complete		█	█	█	█								
		*Decide on whether to commision MHR to complete Health Check	Complete		█	█	█									
1.5 Sharepoint Development & Launch	Create People HUB on Sharepoint for all to use - to replace Intranet in order to streamline access to HR information, empower employees and managers	* Kick off meeting scheduled 18/3 scheduled with DB	Complete	█												
		* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete		█											
		* Create/shape 'tiles' categories required	Complete		█											
		* Upksill, knowledge build and assign HR Owners	In progress			█										
		* Develop detailed plan/ownership of 'tiles'	In progress			█	█									
		* Develop/deliver/engage end user	In progress							█	█					
		* Execute and review	In progress								█	█				
1.6 EDRM Review	Review Personnel Records storing/classification in line with regulation/working practices Employment information | ICO	* Review Guidance/undertake review of EDRM	Not yet started									█				
		* Identify areas of improvement/strengths/actions required	Not yet started									█				
		* Implement changes and process improvements	Not yet started										█	█	█	
1.7 My Compliance/Nexus Review	Review both systems - ownership of My Compliance by H	* Full review of utilisation/reporting/link to iTrent	In progress									█	█			
		* Any suggested changes reviewed, agreed and actioned	In progress									█	█	█		

Work Area: 2. Talent Acquisition

Category	Overall Objective	Activity	RAG Status	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
2.1 Apprenticeship Approach/Levy	Understand how levy is received, ownership, spend and Levy utilised for harder to fill roles, succession planning, supporting care leavers and homelessness back into work	*Develop Strategic Paper for JY review *Develop detailed plan for delivery, considering partnerships/grants	Complete / In progress													
2.2 Recruitment End to End Process	Review full end to end process, and develop new Reduce 'touch points' define process and improve/promote ECC Brand/attraction strategy Review user experience for both Managers and Applicants Clear ownership of roles across full process, drafting placing adverts through to offer process	* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete													
		* Map out end to end process ' as is' then' to be'	Complete													
		* Build in automation functionalities/opportunities - See MHR Output Report	Complete													
		* Develop and deliver detailed project plan and assign owners/time frame	Complete													
		* Develop and deliver communication/engagement/trg plan for end users	In progress													
		* Execute and review	Not yet started													
2.3 Onboarding End to End Process	Review full end to end process from Offer Letter, Develop new streamlined approach replacing manual Reduce admininstration/manual tasks/touchpoints for Advisory Team	* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete													
		* Map out end to end process ' as is' then' to be' (several	Complete													
		* Build in automation functionalities/opportunities - See MHR Output Report	Complete													
		* Develop and deliver detailed project plan and assign owners/time frame	Complete													
		* Develop and deliver communication/engagement/trg plan for end users	In progress													
		* Execute and review	In progress													

Work Area: 3. Learning & Development

Category	Overall Objective	Activity	RAG Status	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
3.1 Leadership Development	Ensure effective delivery of Leadership Development	* Point of contact/oversee effective delivery of with Red	Complete													
		* Monitor Progress	Complete													
		* Evaluation and further actions	In progress													
3.2 Management Development	Upskill Managers in operational people practices Dev opportunities for those unsuccessful for DCN	* Range of short people-management courses rollout during 2025	Complete													
		* Bespoke prog leaders identifed as potential 'talent pipeline'	On hold													
		* Evaluation of interventions	In progress													
3.3 PDR and supervision Process	Review effectiveness of current process and automation Reporting functionality via iTrent	* Evaluation of current PDR Process	In progress													
		* Build in automation functionalities - See MHR Output Report	Not yet started													
		* Communicate process changes to end users and timeframe for uploading	Not yet started													

Work Area: 4. Employee Experience

Category	Overall Objective	Activity	RAG Status	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
4.1 Policies & Procedures	All People Policies introduced by 31/3/25	* Ensure all Policies are launched and rolled out via My Compl	Complete	�	▮											
	Policy ownership handed over to Lead for annual review cycle and ownership	* Identify clear HR ownership of Policies in line with framework	Complete		▮											
	Ownership of Whistleblowing Policy to incorporate into People Policies	* Determine review process and enact	Complete		▮	▮										
4.2 Occupational Health - Contract Management	Ensure effective contract management of OH provider	* Review OH Audit Report - *Final Report Feb 2025*	Complete		▮											
		* Engage OH Provider to address issues raised	Complete		▮	▮										
		* Develop joint delivery plan to address issues linked with 4.3	Complete			▮	▮									
		* Introduce regular contract reviews	Complete		▮											
4.3 Occupational Health - Referral Process/Systems	Introduce effective OH Referral process, invoicing and gateway to ensure OH provision is cost effective and meets demands	* Review OH Audit Report - *Final Report Feb 2025*	Complete		▮											
		* Identify key processes and changes (including Mgt referral and	Complete		▮	▮	▮									
		* Communicate/upskill Managers as required	Complete				▮	▮								
4.4 Sickness Absence Process	Review full end to end process Develop new streamlined user friendly approach to reporting/tracking abs	* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete				▮									
	Include effective system functionality and processes to support effective management	* Map out end to end process ' as is' then' to be' (several workshops)	In progress									▮				
		* Build in automation functionalities/opportunities - *See MHR Output Report*	In progress									▮				
		* Develop and deliver detailed project plan and assign owners/time frame	In progress										▮	▮		
		* Develop and deliver communication/engagement/trg plan for end users	In progress											▮	▮	
		* Execute and review	In progress												▮	
4.5 Movers Process	Review end to end process and automate to reduce error and duplication of effort	* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete			▮										
		* Map out end to end process ' as is' then' to be' (several workshops)	In progress									▮	▮			
		* Build in automation functionalities/opportunities - *See MHR Output Report*	In progress										▮	▮		

Work Area	Category	Overall Objective	Activity	RAG Status	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
4. Employee Experience	4.6 Leavers Process	Review end to end process and automate to reduce error and duplication of effort	* Assign Project Mgr/Business Analyst to support project	Complete			▓										
			* Map out end to end process ' as is' then 'to be' (several workshops)	In progress									▓	▓			
			* Build in automation functionalities/opportunities - *See MHR Output Report*	In progress									▓	▓	▓		
			* Upskill (as needed) and communicate changes	In progress									▓	▓	▓		
	4.7 Employee Survey	Review and Implement ECC Employee Survey for 2025	* Review previous employee surveys at ECC and results	Complete	▓												
			* Design survey questions and format for 2025 and get feedback from JY, LB and HR Team	Complete	▓	▓											
			* Paper for SMB inc draft survey for approval	Complete		▓											
			* Develop Comms plan and launch	Complete		▓	▓										
			* Execute and Review	Complete			▓	▓									
			* Analysis of results and next steps	Complete					▓	▓	▓						
5.1 EDI Task Force Plan	5.1 EDI Task Force Plan	Implementaion of the EDI Action plan developed from the EDI review in 2024	* Review the provision of EDI Training for staff and members	Complete					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
			* Review the governance of EQIAs	Complete				▓	▓	▓							
			* Consider the introduction of staff networks	Complete													
			* Publish an offer for care leavers	In progress									▓	▓	▓		

Appendix B – EDI Project Plan

LGA Mini Peer Review Recommendation	Action Plan	Lead	By When	RAG
All staff in person marketplace event for chief executive to share EDI vision	EDI review findings and high-level action plan to be included in CEO all Staff briefings during Oct/Nov 2024	Executive Office Manager	May-25	
Develop a longer-term EDI Strategy supported by action plan	Consider developing a strategy which builds on the actions in this plan and proposes further activity for the medium and long term. A review of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to be done at the same time to ensure it reflects the organisation restructure, learning from the LGA review and complements any strategy and action plan.	Policy Officer – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding	Mar-25	
Review the provision of EDI training for officers	A revised suite of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training will be identified and piloted. The training will be a mixture of generic self-assessment sessions focussed on raising awareness of the legal context and minimum requirements of behaviour and values followed by in person behavioural change focussed workshops exploring themes such as unconscious bias, neurodiversity and gender identity.	Policy Officer – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding	Mar-25	
Review the provision of EDI training for Members	A revised suite of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training specifically for members will be identified and piloted	Policy Officer – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding Committee Services Manager	Mar-25	

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EDI dashboard: - Use Power BI to create workforce representation dashboard - Consider communications to staff highlighting who will have access to their data and create a specific plan to engage staff in manual roles - Publish workforce data to be PSED compliant	As part of the HR Improvement Plan a campaign to encourage staff to provide EDI data either directly into ITrent or via a form completed in conversation with a line manager	Head of Service HR & OD	31/3/25	
	The new Corporate Performance Framework will include a suite of "People" dashboard	Head of Service Digital and Data	Jan-25	
The governance of EqIAs is limited and the quality and understanding of how to complete them effectively varies	Review the governance of EQIAs and make proposals which include addressing the quality of assessments, that actions are followed up and assessments are published in a way that means they are easily accessible to residents	Policy Officer – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding	Mar-25	
Establish specific, achievable and measurable equality objectives in consultation with stakeholders and staff	In 2024 the Council undertook the LGA residents survey which highlighted some important differences by way of experiencing the city and of contact with the Council from our more diverse and priority communities. During 2025 the Council will engage residents in these communities through focus groups to get a better understanding of what residents feel the council could do better.	Consultation and Engagement Manager (under recruitment)	Mar-25	
Increase collaboration with established community groups to benefit service design and delivery	We will build on the links established by Wellbeing Exeter to a range of community groups representing people with protected characteristics and work with them to establish service redesign panels to input into service changes as we roll out the Digital	Head of Service Customers and Communities	Mar-25	

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Publish service user data to be PSED compliant	As we roll out customer accounts during 2024/25 we will be systematically collecting basic customer data which we will be able to analyse and share	Head of Service Customers and Communities	Ongoing	■
Introduce a page of EDI information in the regular staff newsletter All staff briefing once a quarter to update on EDI related activity e.g. menopause policy, EDI champions	As part of the HR Improvement Plan launched in October 2024, we will be reviewing all our internal staff communications and creating a new Share Point site for all people issues. We will ensure that EDI information and themes are incorporated fully into this work	Head of HR& OD	Mar-25	■
	Include an action within the Communications Plan that sets out how the council will engage with colleagues across the organisation about EDI priorities and initiatives	Executive Office Manager	Mar-25	■
Develop terms of reference for the Equality Champions group with a clear scope, objectives, outcomes and training	Terms of reference to be reviewed and updated	Policy Officer - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding	Feb-25	■
Develop a strategy for increasing the representation of employees with protected characteristics Implement Positive Action by focussing on talent, progression and succession Explore graduate programme and apprenticeships to address workforce shortages and underrepresentation	As we implement the HR Improvement Programme we will be reviewing our approach to succession planning, workforce development and recruitment and will ensure EDI issues are embedded in all the actions we take and the changes we make	Head of Service HR &OD	Sep-25	■
Consider introduction of staff networks	Through the staff survey we will ask staff which networks they would like to see developed and we will use the Menopause network as a model to develop others as requested.	Head of Service HR & OD	May-25	■
Publish and implement offer for care experienced young people	Work with Leisure and Live and Move to develop a wellbeing offer	Policy Officer - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding	Mar-25	■

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Appendix B – ECC BI Dashboard Data

Sickness Absence Rate

Days absent and Sickness rate (%) by Date

● Days absent ● Sickness rate (%)

767.5	769.4	893.8	1062.0	993.0	910.9	1074.7	916.0	945.6	986.7	759.7	834.7
4.585%	4.495%	5.912%	5.740%	6.158%	5.415%	5.542%	5.389%	6.108%	5.419%	4.629%	5.413%
2024/04	2024/05	2024/06	2024/07	2024/08	2024/09	2024/10	2024/11	2024/12	2025/01	2025/02	2025/03

5.402%

Sickness rate (%) in period
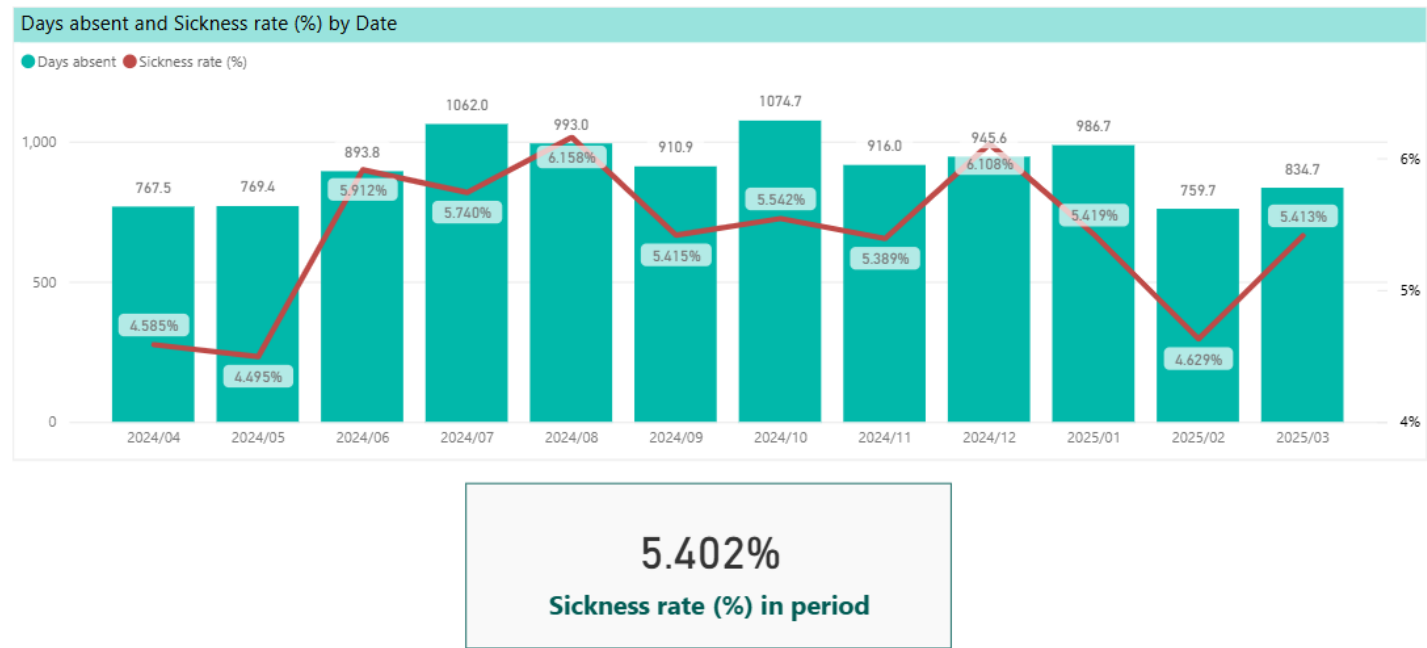
Sickness Absence Cost

Sickness cost by directorate and team

Directorate	Cost
⊞ Chief Executive	£5,534.80
⊞ Corporate Resources	£79,253.59
⊞ Operational Services	£463,184.24
⊞ People & Community	£167,090.30
⊞ Place	£177,198.01
Total	**£892,260.93**

Avg duration of sickness (days)	Avg days off per employee	Avg FTE over period
6.97	13.72	706

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Age Profile

All staff age brackets

Age Bracket	Headcount	As %
a) < 18	18	1.59%
b) 18 - 30	335	29.62%
c) 31 - 40	137	12.11%
d) 41 - 50	248	21.93%
e) 51 - 60	257	22.72%
f) > 60	136	12.02%
Total	**1131**	**100.00%**

Turnover Rate

Turnover for financial year and quarter

xFY	Average headcount	Leavers	Turnover
⊞ 2022/2023	801.67	-118	14.71%
⊞ 2023/2024	779.08	-114	14.61%
⊞ 2024/2025	781.50	-107	13.70%
⊞ 2025/2026	775.17	-46	5.93%
Total	**785.67**	**-385**	**48.95%**

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Staff Survey Completion Rate

Home | Staff Survey Responses

Filter by Directorate

All ⌄

Key Idicator of % Completed

	From	To
❌	0.00%	39.99%
⚠️	40.00%	59.99%
✅	60.00%	100.00%

By Directorate

Directorate	Surveys Completed		% Completed Survey	# of Employees
Corporate Resources	65	✅	63.1%	103
Operational Services	90	❌	32.3%	279
People & Communities	112	✅	77.8%	144
Place	132	⚠️	54.5%	242
Total	**399**		**52%**	**768**

By Service Area (Exc. SMB and Executive Office)

Service Area	Surveys Completed		% Completed Survey	#of Employees
Asset Maintenance	27	⚠️	58.7%	46
City Centre, Community Safety and Net Zero	15	✅	60%	25
City Development	26	✅	70.3%	37
Commercial Assets (incl. Matford Centre & Car Parks)	13	⚠️	52%	25
Culture, Communications & Tourism (incl. RAMM)	57	✅	70.4%	81
Customers & Communities	36	✅	128.6%	28
Digital & Data	4	✅	100%	4
Engineering, Harbour & Tree Management	14	✅	63.6%	22
Environmental Health	17	✅	73.9%	23
Finance, Revenues & Benefits	32	⚠️	58.2%	55
Housing	60	✅	60%	100
HR, Workforce Planning & OD	12	✅	100%	12
Legal, Procurement, Elections & Democratic Services	20	✅	87%	23
Leisure	34	❌	34.3%	99
Public & Green Space	28	❌	32.6%	86
Waste Management & Fleet	4	❌	3.9%	102
Total	**399**		**52%**	**768**

Staff Survey 2025

Exeter City Council

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Transforming HR Operations at Exeter City Council

A comprehensive review and improvement journey from reactive operations to strategic partnership

Executive Summary

In March 2024, an independent HR review was conducted at Exeter City Council to identify the structural, procedural and cultural changes needed to enhance HR effectiveness, workforce planning and employee relations.

The transformation program that followed, aimed to shift HR from a reactive, transactional service to a proactive, strategic partner supporting the Council's evolving objectives.

The Challenge: A Reactive Service

Reactive Operations

Resources focused on transactional activity rather than strategic support

Fragmented Ownership

Unclear accountability and limited joint working relationships

Inaccessible Data

Managers and employees unable to self-service information

Misalignment

HR not aligned to business needs and strategic priorities

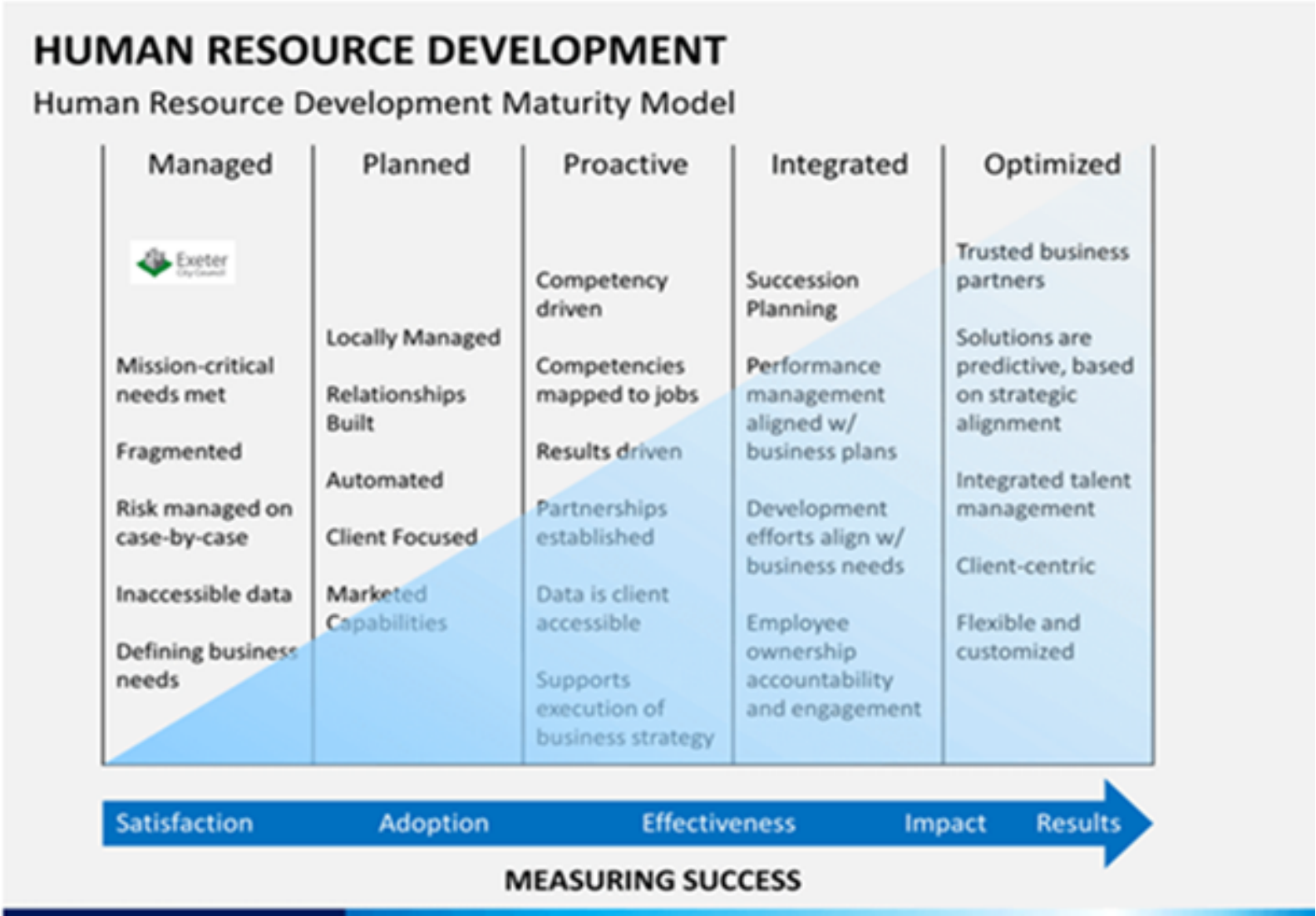**ONE EXETER**
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HR Maturity Assessment

Current State: Managed

- Meeting critical operational demands
- Case-by-case risk management
- Limited strategic contribution

Target State: Proactive

- Competency and results driven
- Strategic partnerships established
- Client-accessible data
- Supporting business strategy execution

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
Human Resource Development Maturity Model

Managed	Planned	Proactive	Integrated	Optimized
Mission-critical needs met	Locally Managed	Competency driven	Succession Planning	Trusted business partners
Fragmented	Relationships Built	Competencies mapped to jobs	Performance management aligned w/ business plans	Solutions are predictive, based on strategic alignment
Risk managed on case-by-case	Automated	Results driven	Development efforts align w/ business needs	Integrated talent management
Inaccessible data	Client Focused	Partnerships established	Employee ownership accountability and engagement	Client-centric
Defining business needs	Marketed Capabilities	Data is client accessible		Flexible and customized
		Supports execution of business strategy		

Satisfaction — Adoption — Effectiveness — Impact — Results

MEASURING SUCCESS

HR Transactional support is an ongoing requirement, however volume reduces as technology becomes the enabler for self-service. HR resources refocused on strategic HR delivery which drives business impact, delivery and return on investment.

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Six Strategic Recommendations

1

Automation

Implement fit-for-purpose HR Information System driving self-service and management insights

2

Process Improvement

Review and streamline HR administration for sustained efficiency gains

3

Accessibility

Create user-friendly platforms for managers and employees to access guidance

4

Policies & Practices

Implement revised policies with effective delivery and knowledge building

5

Values & Leadership

Review values and develop leadership framework aligned to strategic direction

6

Operating Model

Transition to new HR model emphasising People & Culture

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Digital Transformation in Action

iTrent System Optimisation

Dedicated project group formed to automate processes, enhance self-service and reduce administrative workload

BI Dashboard

New Corporate HR Business Intelligence Dashboard tracking key metrics for strategic decision-making

HR SharePoint Site

People Hub developed to streamline access, empower employees and enhance experience

Access Control

New door access system at Civic Centre enhancing safety, security and operational efficiency

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Building Capability and Culture

Apprenticeship Scheme

Maximising levy to address skills shortages and provide career pathways for frontline staff and vulnerable community members

Recruitment & Onboarding

Streamlined processes ensuring inclusive, efficient, candidate-focused experience aligned to strategic workforce goals

Leadership & Management Development

Strategic programme creating cohesive, high-performance Extended Leadership Team aligned to priorities and values and people management skills workshops upskilling managers

Employee Experience

Policy Modernisation

24 HR policies reviewed, 3 new policies introduced (Hybrid Working, Secondments, Neonatal Leave)

Occupational Health

Comprehensive service review and tender exercise for new provider aligned to wellbeing priorities

Staff Survey

Enhanced survey with BI dashboard enabling data-informed decisions and targeted action plans

Industrial Relations

Improved framework designed with Trade Unions providing robust, transparent engagement approach

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Progress

LGA Mini Peer Review

Independent assessment identifying improvements to EDI framework and provisions

EDI Task Force

Established with clear objectives and published EDI policy aligned to tackling social exclusion

Training Framework

EDI training developed for employees and members ensuring inclusive practices

Improved Data

Enhanced EDI data collection supporting evidence-based decision-making

Strategic Objective: Ensure the Council is effective, inclusive and aligned with current legislation and best practice

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Key Performance Indicators Overview

Producing meaningful data to support HR decisions aligned with organisational strategy.

Description	2024/25 Baseline	Comparator	2025/6	2026/7	2027/8
Sickness absence rate (%)	5.40%	2.9%	4%	3%	2.5%
Absence Cost	£892,260	£800-£1000/employee	>£800/employee	>£800/employee	>£800/employee
Turnover rate (%)	13.70%	25%	<10%	<10%	<10%
Staff Survey Response rate (%)	52%	50-60%	60%	65%	70%
Vacancy rate (%)	9.56%	9.6%	7.5%	6.5%	5%
Time to hire (days)	30 days	42 days	<30 days	<30 days	<30 days
Apprenticeship levy spend (%)	19%	44.5%	45%	60%	80%
Workforce over age 55 (%)	56.67% (41+) 34.74% (51+)	66.9% (40-64) 34.9% (55+)	+5% under 30	+5% under 30	—

Comparator figures obtained from ONS, CIPD, Infinistats, LGA

Looking Ahead: Future Priorities

The transformation journey continues as HR evolves to meet the demands of Local Government Review, budget constraints and changing workforce expectations.

AI Integration

Chatbots, automated transcription, job evaluations and recruitment screening for efficiency

Health & Safety

Strengthening corporate health and safety through robust risk management and digital innovation

Wellbeing Focus

Employee reward, recognition, engagement and mental health support prioritised

Strategic Learning

Skills audits and targeted training creating future-ready workforce through development programme

EDI Priority

Addressing systemic gaps and supporting underrepresented groups across the organisation

Digital Evolution

Continued system improvements including Learning Management and Electronic Staff Files

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Employee Survey Results

June 2025

Understanding our workforce: insights from across the council to drive meaningful change and improvement.

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Survey Participation

51%

Overall Participation Rate

Employees across the council shared their views

Corporate Resources
63%

Operational Services
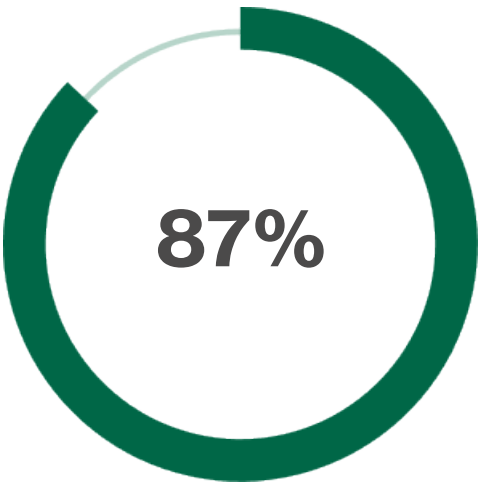**32%**

People & Communities
75%

Place
54%

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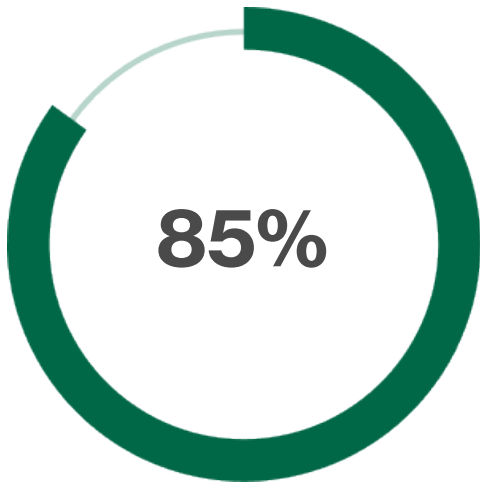City Council

Strengths – What's Going Well?

92%
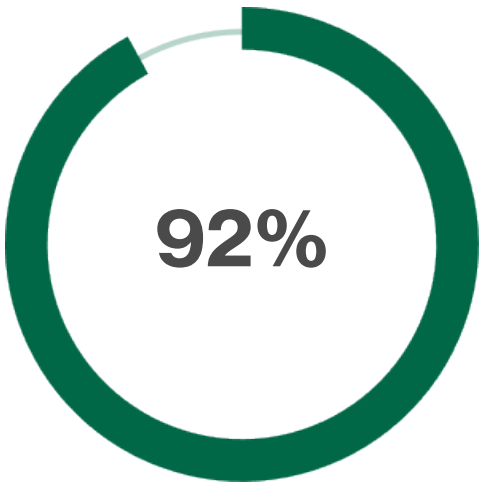
Health & Safety Awareness

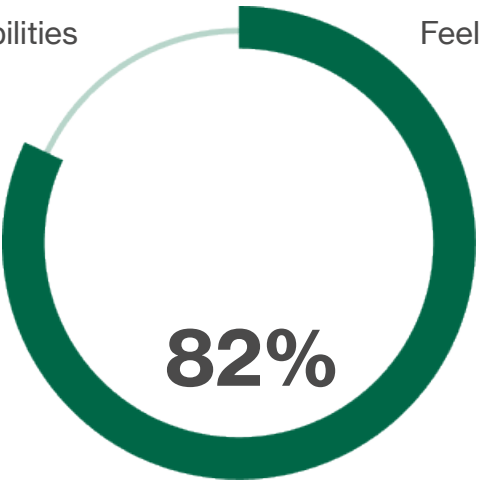Employees understand their responsibilities

87%

Managerial Trust

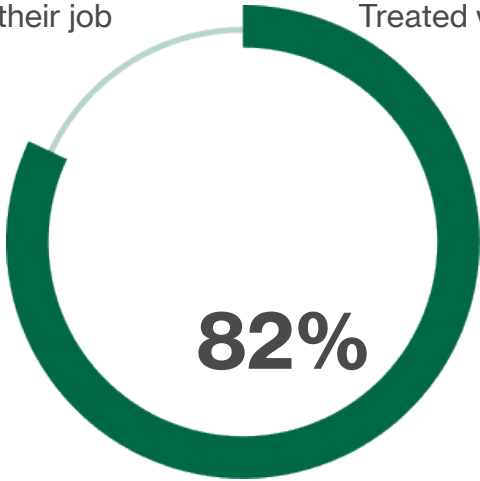Feel trusted by their manager to do their job

85%

Fair Treatment

Treated with fairness, respect, and without discrimination

82%

Knowledge Sharing

Team members actively share their knowledge and experience

82%

Job Purpose

Understand their team contribution to achieving council priorities

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Opportunities for Improvement

Workplace Progress

Only **21%** believe the council is a better place to work than 12 months ago.

Survey Follow-Up Actions

Just **27%** feel meaningful action will be taken following this survey.

Career Development

Only **32%** believe there are opportunities to progress their career at the council.

Cross-Team Collaboration

Only **34%** think communication between services/directorates is good.

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Corporate Resources

63%

Participation

0.69

Satisfaction Score

Top 5 Areas for Improvement

1. Council is a better place to work than 12 months ago

2. PDR completed within last 12 months

3. Meaningful action will be taken following survey

4. Senior leadership provides clear vision

5. Opportunities to progress career at council

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Operational Services

32%
Participation

0.61
Satisfaction Score

Top 5 Areas for Improvement

1. Opportunities to progress career at council
2. Meaningful action following survey
3. PDR completed within last 12 months
4. Communication between services/directorates
5. Council is a better place to work than 12 months ago

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People & Communities

75%

Participation

0.94

Satisfaction Score

Highest across directorates

Top 5 Areas for Improvement

1. Council is a better place to work than 12 months ago
2. Communication between services/directorates
3. Opportunities to progress career at council
4. Meaningful action following survey
5. PDR completed within last 12 months

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Place

55%

Participation

0.92

Satisfaction Score

Top 5 Areas for Improvement

1. Opportunities to progress career at council

2. Council is a better place to work than 12 months ago

3. Meaningful action following survey

4. Communication between services/directorates

5. PDR completed within last 12 months

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Next Steps........

Next Steps: HOS to work with HRBPs to develop -specific action plans for their Teams and submit to SMB by December 2025.

WORK PLAN FOR CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY ITEMS 2025/26

Working Draft for January 2026

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
22 January 2026	Portfolio Holder Update – The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bialyk	Chief Executive	Leader, Cllr Bialyk		
22 January 2026	Medium Term Financial Plan	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources	Corporate Services & City Centre (Deputy Leader, Cllr Wright)		
22 January 2026	Quarter 2 Budget Scrutiny	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	Scrutiny proposal – Cllr Parkhouse	
5 February 2026	Portfolio Holder's Report *(Cllr Asvachin)*	Strategic Director for People and Communities	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Support Services		
5 February 2026	Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson	

1

5 February 2026	Six-monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	
19 March 2026	Portfolio Holder's Report *(Cllr R Williams)*	Strategic Director for Operations (AP)	Portfolio Holder for City Management		
13 November 2025	Portfolio Holder's Report *(Cllr Foale)*	Strategic Director for Place (IC)	Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Tourism		
19 March 2026	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection	Head of Operations (CC)	City Management (Cllr R Williams)	Yearly report	
19 March 2026	Eton Walk Refuse bin – Petition	Strategic Director for Operations (AP)	City Management (Cllr R Williams)	Petition	Deferred from September 2025

To be scoped on 22 January 2026 subject to Scrutiny Programme Board allocation:
- **Budget proposal from Cllr Moore (Commercial Strategy)**
- **Empty Homes from Cllrs Moore & Read**