



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



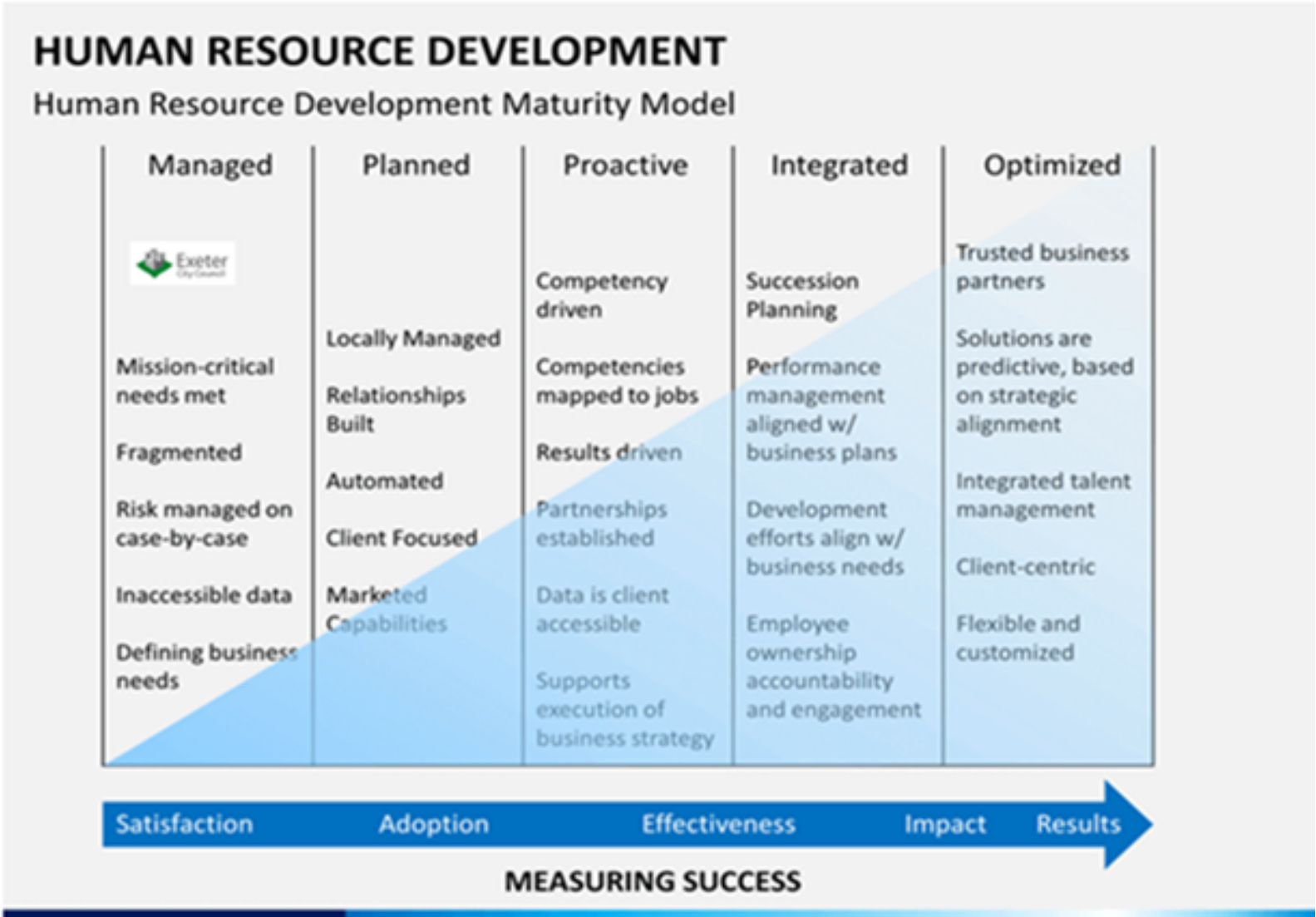
HR Maturity Assessment

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



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.

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

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





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

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



Employee Survey Results

June 2025

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



Survey Participation

51%

Overall Participation Rate

Employees across the council
shared their views

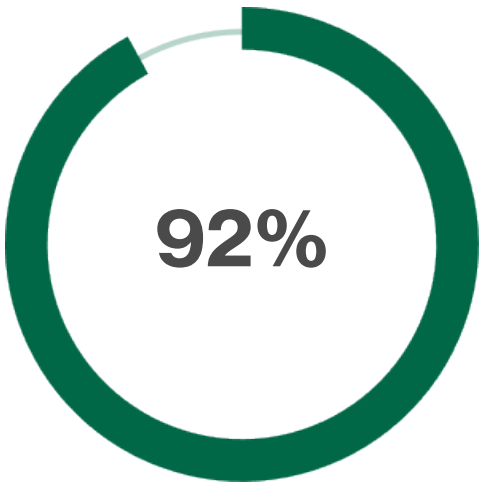
Corporate Resources
63%

Operational Services
32%

People & Communities
75%

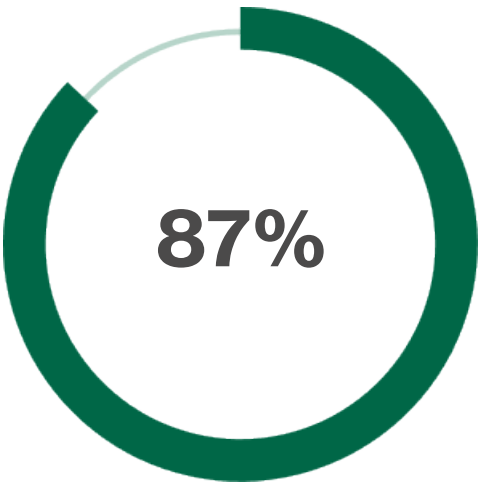
Place
54%

Strengths – What's Going Well?



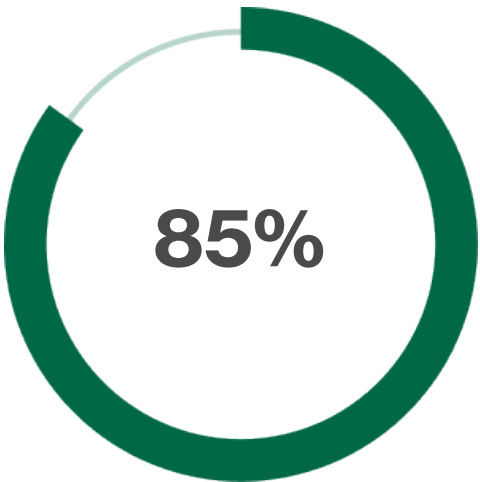
Health & Safety Awareness

Employees understand their responsibilities



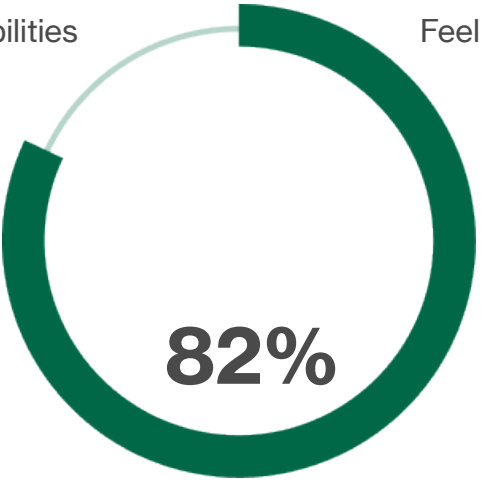
Managerial Trust

Feel trusted by their manager to do their job



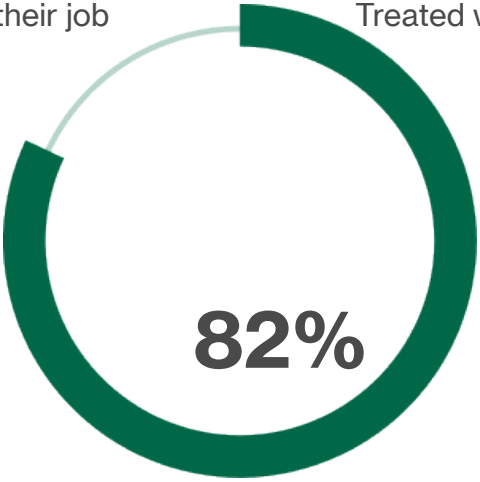
Fair Treatment

Treated with fairness, respect, and without discrimination



Knowledge Sharing

Team members actively share their knowledge and experience



Job Purpose

Understand their team contribution to achieving council priorities

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.



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

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

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

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





Next Steps.....

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