

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee

## Agenda Item 66

**Subject:** Our People Strategy 2023 to 2027

**Date of meeting:** 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update on work that has been undertaken to develop a single people strategy for the Council and seek the Committee's endorsement of the strategy.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Committee agrees Our People Strategy as described in the report and set out at **Appendix 2**.

### **3. Context and background information**

3.1 Our People Promise (OPP) was established in 2017 to address a number of issues identified from the staff survey and other data. It was co-created with staff and other stakeholders and was an extensive programme of work to improve our employment offer and the experience of staff. Successive staff surveys have demonstrated sustained improvement and Our People Strategy will build on this success, ensuring we continue to attract the best talent to serve the city and, as one of the biggest employers in the City, further develop our offer as an employer of choice.

3.2 OPP is framed around five separate promises underpinned by a workstream which delivered on projects, initiatives and developments in our employment offer. The Council's workforce related actions in the Fair and Inclusive Action Plan are also a key part of OPP. A summary of what has been delivered under this programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.3 OPP has become an established brand that is recognised as the Council's employment offer.

3.4 Over the last 12 months or so there has been an increased drive to develop a single people strategy that formally articulates the Council's current and future workforce needs and challenges and how it will seek to address them.

- 3.5 These drivers are:
- Unprecedented levels of change in ways of working since the pandemic
  - Significant changes in the national labour market impacted by Brexit and the pandemic impacting on the ability to recruit.
  - A perfect storm of rising cost pressures from inflation and demand for services as well as the rising cost of living driving demand for higher pay, in the context of acute financial pressures facing local government.
  - A recommendation in the External Auditors Annual report for 2021/2022 that the Council consider developing a single workforce strategy.
- 3.6 It is also important to recognise the current financial and operational context of the Council with very significant budget pressures and rising demand for services and the impact of savings in the budget setting process. It is critical that despite these challenges the Council continues to look forward, considers its future needs and what it needs to do to address this but also to continue to support our workforce in these difficult times by continually developing our offer and practice as an employer to make the Council a great place to work.
- 3.7 The Council Plan was agreed by Full Council in July 2023 and states that at the heart of this council, and delivering the plan for 2023 to 2027, are our hard-working staff. We will keep Our People Promise to our staff and, as one of the largest employers in the region we will enable them to do their jobs well and work to recruit and retain the very best talent for council services.
- 3.8 Our People Strategy will serve as one of a number of key organisational pillars to support the delivery of the Council Plan and improve the council's effectiveness, and to modernise our ways of working. It sits alongside, amongst others, the:
- Medium Term Service & Financial Plan
  - Accommodation Strategy
  - Digital Data & Technology Strategy
  - Customer Experience Strategy
  - Health & Safety Strategy
  - Fair & Inclusive Action Plan

**Development of a new Strategy**

- 3.9 A review of the OPP programme commenced in Autumn 2021 to assess the plans and priorities in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic and other organisational challenges. This evolved into a plan to develop Our People Strategy for the period 2023 to 2027.
- 3.10 The Council engaged with a range of internal stakeholders throughout the last year to identify the workforce challenges and needs both now and looking forward to 2027. The engagement undertaken is detailed in section 5 of this report.

3.11 From this engagement five strategic priorities have been identified around which Our People Strategy is structured. The five promises under OPP have been reviewed in this context and aligned with the five strategic priorities as set out in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Strategic Priority</b>	<b>Strategic Aim</b>	<b>Our Promise to Each Other</b>
1. Recruiting and rewarding well, with flexible paths for progression	We will use effective workforce planning to attract and retain a diverse and skilled workforce that meets the Council's current and future needs and provide meaningful career paths and a modern package of rewards in return for the hard work, commitment and great performance of our staff.	We promise to appreciate, recognise and reward you for the great work you do.
2. Great performance supported by the right development	We will maximise organisational capacity and capability by continuously developing skills for the future, improving performance, the sense of belonging and engaging and motivating our staff to do their best work.	We promise you opportunities to do your best for the city and our residents
3. A fair and inclusive workplace, where everyone feels a sense of belonging	We will be reflective of the communities we serve and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of everything we do, with strong inclusive leadership to embed a positive culture where equity and inclusive behaviours are role modelled throughout the organisation.	We promise that we will be a fair and inclusive place to work and treat each other with dignity and respect.
4. A safe and healthy working environment that supports wellbeing	We will improve health, safety and wellbeing to demonstrate how we value and engage our people, keeping them healthy and safe so they can deliver to the city.	We promise to support each other's wellbeing at work.
5. A culture and ways of working together that provide a great place to work	We will build our reputation as an inspiring place to work and ensure that our culture and ways of working enable our staff do their best for residents, customers and the City.	We promise to create an environment for us to work together and do our best for the city

3.12 The full strategy document is attached at **Appendix 2**. Under each of the five priorities above there a number of strategic objectives which will provide the overarching framework for the development and delivery of our workforce plans in the coming years.

**Action Plans, Accountability and Governance**

3.13 A high level action plan has been developed for year 1 of the strategy which is attached at **Appendix 3**. The current financial year 2023/2024 is year 1 and while Our People Strategy has been in draft form until now this has not prevented the Council from developing and delivering plans identified throughout the process for developing the strategy.

3.14 Accountability for delivery of the strategy and the plans underneath it will be managed within the governance framework for corporate modernisation programmes. An Our People Promise Board led by the Director of HR & OD will oversee day to day management and accountability of the programme and feed into corporate governance arrangements as shown in the following diagram:



3.15 The impact of the work delivered under Our People Strategy will be measured by a range of key performance indicators and measures. In addition, the staff survey 2023 is underway which will set a benchmark for measuring our progress in delivering against the strategy over the coming years as well as informing the development of delivery plans for year 2 of the strategy.

#### 4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The Council could continue to operate without a formal people strategy and simply review and update the OPP programme and priorities. However this approach is less strategic and risks not addressing the key issues for the organisation.
- 4.2 A formal strategy provides a clear framework owned by the organisation that sets out the priorities and so guides the allocation of resources and capacity. It also provides a vehicle to communicate to all stakeholders what the Council is doing in relation to the workforce including prospective new employees.
- 4.3 Finally, a formal strategy enables the Council to demonstrate its understanding of its workforce needs and commitment to addressing those, and providing reassurance to internal and external stakeholders such as the

external auditors that the Council has grip and is taking steps to plan and achieve efficiency and value for money.

## **5. Community engagement and consultation**

5.1 In the development of Our People Strategy the Council has engaged with a variety of stakeholders including:

- Executive Leadership Team
- Directorate Management Teams
- Elected Members
- Leadership Network
- Trade Unions
- Employee networks
- HR & OD
- Communities & Equalities Team

5.2 The first phase took place in the Summer/Autumn of 2022 with meetings and discussions with stakeholders that were designed to assess the workforce challenges for the Council and services currently and looking forward to 2027.

5.3 This led to the development of the strategic priorities and their objectives and the initial action plans for delivering against the strategy.

5.4 The second phase has been ongoing since then and involved presenting the draft strategy and action plan back to stakeholders to seek further feedback on proposed actions.

5.5 Most recently we ensured that the draft strategy aligns with the new Council Plan and supports the delivery of the priorities set out within it.

5.6 The Council has also used the wealth of intelligence and data that it has related to the workforce to inform and evidence some of the challenges that we need to address. This included analysing a range of feedback direct from staff that has been obtained over recent years through various means including staff surveys, wellbeing surveys, Our People Promise focus groups and ways of working focus groups.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Our People Strategy provides clarity and direction on the priorities and actions required to ensure that the Council has a workforce that is skilled, diverse, motivated and high performing and will be able to support the delivery of the Council Plan.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 For 2023/24, £0.313m resources have been allocated to support Our People Promise activity. Future years funding requirements will be identified through

business cases and be included in budget projections, subject to approval as part of the overall budget package at Budget Council

Name of finance officer consulted: James Hengeveld Date consulted: 20/9/2023

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 Our People Strategy will support the Council to evidence compliance with its commitments and obligations to be a fair and inclusive employer, including its duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted: 15/09/23

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 As part of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, the council must seek to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 9.2 The council has developed Our People Strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders. It has clearly defined actions under the fair and inclusive promise and a long-term commitment to continue to engage with a wide range of individuals and assess the equalities impacts of actions across all promises.

- 9.3 The council has a role as civic leader, with legal duties to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. All communities in the city need to be confident that their voices are represented, know that services meet their needs fairly, and feel that the council is an employer of choice.

- 9.4 All staff must be confident that they can be themselves at work and feel valued and supported by an inclusive culture that enables them to deliver inclusive and accessible services for the city.

- 9.5 Our People Strategy will support these aims and bring benefits to our workforce as well as to the reputation of, and trust and confidence in the council across the city.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct implications arising from the adoption of Our People Strategy however sustainability considerations will be embedded in actions

that are taken to deliver the objectives in the strategy. For example factoring this in when we procure our staff benefits platform, the design and content of health and wellbeing initiatives or considering policies that impact on staff travel and working arrangements,

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Previous work delivered under Our People Promise Programme

Appendix 2 – Our People Strategy (DRAFT)

Appendix 3 – Year 1 (23/24) Action Plan for Our People Strategy

