



Workforce Strategy Statement 2022-2023

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1. Introduction

The Workforce Strategy sets out the Council's plans, ambitions, and commitment to employees across the Council and provides potential employees with an awareness of the culture of the organisation.

This Statement has been created to recognise that the previous Workforce Strategy required review and that vesting day for Westmorland and Furness Council will bring new organisational policies that time-limit sovereign council policies and strategies.

The Council values its workforce and recognises employee engagement and job satisfaction as critical outcomes to achieving our aspirational Council Plan and providing a quality service to our customers and partners.

A significant change is fast approaching with the Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria establishing vesting day as 1 April 2023. Developments and opportunities include what the design of the new Council will look like, how the transition will be managed, how the new Council will operate both in the short to mid-term, in the next five years and beyond. During this time Barrow Borough Council remain committed to keeping the focus on current workforce priorities.

Monitoring and analysing workforce data will be critical to successfully deliver the Council Plan, particularly reviewing the workforce age demographic, retention rate, competing for talent and ensuring the Council's offer is attractive, competitive and addresses retention.

This Strategy Statement reflects on the organisational changes in recent years, aims to set out the Council's vision for the workforce, current changes, and provides an indicative high-level overview of the journey for staff through the Local Government Reorganisation.

2. Ambition and Vision

The Council's ambition and vision is for the Borough to be a great place to live, work and visit. The Council's resources will be used in the best way that focuses upon achievement of the objectives and priorities established in the Council Plan. Service developments and projects will need to be innovative and creative to deliver the Council's vision and explore different ways to work to make the most of the resources available. The Council aims to be the employer of choice.

The Council considers its employees among the strongest ambassadors and advocates for the Borough.

The Council uses performance appraisals and service developments to identify skills gaps within the workforce. The Council supports professional training linked to current roles, managerial development programmes, and corporate training such as health and safety, risk management, and change management. Through the HR Department the Council is linked with education providers and training institutions to

enable development of any targeted programmes; other specialised training is sourced where needed.

An aspiration that will not be addressed in the short-term, that will be carried into Westmorland and Furness Council, is an apprenticeship programme. The Council has a good record of nurturing and developing officers into professional roles and managerial positions. A diverse workforce is considered essential to delivering the priorities and objectives set out in the Council Plan.

3. Recent Developments

The Council has achieved a great deal of organisational change in the last few years.

The Values and Behaviours Framework was adopted in December 2018. The framework was intentionally created by non-managerial staff to ensure that ownership and inclusion were prevalent. Senior Management welcomed the framework as an indication of the culture of the organisation, and an initial event with Heads of Services was organised to gauge the organisational fit.

During 2019 the Council recruited a new Chief Executive who embraced the Values and Behaviours Framework and engaged in a programme of events with Heads of Service designed to embed the values, demonstrate the behaviours and to identify the most effective methods to engage all staff in immersive sessions.

The organisational rollout of the Values and Behaviours Framework was interrupted by COVID-19, however changes in the activities enabled a hybrid of remote and in-person events to be held across 2020 and 2021.

The Council has incorporated several changes in response to the suggestions and proposals garnered from the staff sessions, including:

- Be Proud employee recognition awards – colleagues nominate those demonstrating the Council's values and behaviours, those going above and beyond in serving the Council and residents.
- Agile working – retaining the remote working and flexible working that was initially created as part of the response to COVID-19; the Council has invested in the equipment and infrastructure around agile working.
- Staff newsletter – an internal communications team made up from staff volunteers has been established and produces a quarterly update. The newsletter is internal to Barrow Borough Council – there is a separate Local Government Reorganisation newsletter.
- Health and Wellbeing – an internal group of volunteers came together during COVID-19 to identify ways in which those working in different ways could continue to be part of a team, to engage with colleagues, and the volunteers arranged activities online and in-person. The Council continues to sign-post health and wellbeing opportunities.
- The Council undertook a structural review through 2021-2022 leading to a restructure of the People and Place directorate – aligning services and

resources to the Council's priorities and objectives; the Resources directorate was also reviewed to ensure those resources were best structured to deliver statutory duties and support frontline services.

4. Future Opportunities

Retention and Recruitment is a challenge due to the uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation, market competition, and the demographic of the existing talent pool.

The opportunity that merging into Westmorland and Furness Council brings, is that of capacity and capability. Westmorland and Furness Council will consist of Barrow Borough Council, Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council, and a share of Cumbria County Council. Merging the staff together should provide greater capacity and hopefully an increase in capability as each authority currently has expertise and specialists which will multiply.

Local opportunities continue within Westmorland and Furness Council; the new Council has established the continuance of administrative centres across the new Council area; Barrow Town Hall for example, and other venues such as the Forum and Dock Museum continue.

The change in Council's is a significant event and the Council communicates with all staff as the journey progresses. It is recognised that there has been some uncertainty for staff since the initial decision to reorganise Cumbria, but once the Shadow Authority was elected and established, the transition arrangements for staffing has become clearer. Communication is vital and the Council supplements the regular newsletter with briefings and utilises the management cascade structure to deliver updates.

The Council hopes to retain all existing staff on the journey to Westmorland and Furness, and to recruit to vacancies to have a full establishment on vesting day. The career opportunities for staff in the future Council increase in breadth and scope.

Many officers are involved in the development and design of services within the new Council as workstreams established to manage the transition require those that carry out the duties and functions now, must ensure those continue for our residents and other customers.

The Shadow Westmorland and Furness Council has recruited the permanent Chief Executive and Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer); the remaining statutory officer (Monitoring Officer) is to be recruited by 31 December 2022. Plans to have recruited the senior management structure ahead of 1 April 2023 have progressed with the intention of those officers starting in the new roles from vesting day. An understanding of the current middle management and the future needs of the new structure will be developed by vesting day, but no recruitment or assimilation is expected to have taken place. All other staff will transfer in current roles and will be assimilated or recruited into new roles beyond vesting day.

Barrow Borough Council shall ensure that effective communication and support is provided to staff during this period of significant change.

The overall Local Government Reorganisation Programme provides the direction of travel, policy and expectations; the local management of staff-related processes lies with each Council as the current employers and those best placed to ensure an effective and engaging delivery is achieved.

5. Monitoring

Data will be monitored on employee turnover, reasons for leaving, recruitment drives, staff absence, engagement in wellbeing initiatives, management and staff development.

Data will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Senior Management Team. The aims and ambitions contained in this Strategy Statement shall be passed into the Westmorland and Furness Council policy formation process.