

## People Strategy Update

To: Staffing and Appeals Committee

Meeting Date: 7th November 2023

From: Service Director: HR Services

Outcome: To note updates in progress with implementation of the council's People Strategy, including work to inform the creation of an action plan that responds to various engagement routes with colleagues and internal stakeholders, as well as some early headlines from the IPSOS Employee Survey.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) note the progress made in engaging with colleagues to create an action plan that will support the delivery of the commitments we have made in our People Strategy.
- b) endorse the proposed timeline for presenting a final action plan to Staffing & Appeals Committee in February.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Our People Strategy was approved by Full Council on 16th May 2023. It outlines how we can all work together to achieve the ambitions of our Strategic Framework, describes the type of employer we want to be in 2028, and sets out, through a series of commitments, our strategic approach to the attraction, retention, reward, development, and engagement, of an inclusive, diverse, valued and supported workforce.
- 1.2 In this strategy, we committed that the action plans we develop to bring it to life will actively seek the insight, input and thoughts from colleagues across the council, including the IDEAL Network and our recognised trade unions because we can only achieve our ambitions for the county and for our council if we work well together.
- 1.3 This November update provides Staffing and Appeals Committee with details of the engagement that has taken place to date to inform a meaningful action plan and sets out the timeline to ensure this is an effective means by which to deliver the vision of our council as an employer in 2028.

## 2. Engagement with internal stakeholders

- 2.1 Colleagues from across the organisation were invited to take part in focus groups to seek their views and ideas on the People Strategy Action Plan. There were seven sessions in total with a mixed attendance from across the organisation.
- 2.2 Colleagues were asked to consider the 4 themes of the People Strategy (Attracting You, Supporting You, Appreciating You, Developing You) and to provide their input on what the council is doing well, and where they felt there are gaps that could be addressed by the action plan.
- 2.3 The ideas and insights from these sessions will be triangulated with the outcomes of our employee survey and then discussed in more detail with our Trade Unions and the IDEAL Network.
- 2.4 There are some points of feedback that have already been addressed. Examples of these include:
  - Two groups mentioned a desire for a volunteering policy. Our Time off for Volunteering Policy has since been launched, providing up to 37 paid hours in a year for colleagues to use to volunteer with organisations locally that support our vision and values.
  - One group suggested that more could be done to support the inclusion of neurodivergent colleagues. We have since created a working group focusing on improving awareness, removing barriers, and amplifying the voices of these colleagues. As part of this work, we are actively seeking feedback from the newly formed Neurodivergence Peer Support Group.
  - Colleagues highlighted that we need to make people feel welcome from the start by

contacting new starters before they join. Our new Recruitment Training for Managers now covers the importance of keeping in good contact with preferred candidates throughout the recruitment process. Our Recruitment Team now also carries out regular check in meetings with new starters in their first 6 months of joining, in a targeted selection of services.

- A car-sharing scheme was suggested for New Shire Hall and other offices. The Smart Journeys Team have recently launched a lift-sharing application for Alconbury Weald, which will be promoted to colleagues travelling to New Shire Hall.

- 2.5 We have collated themed feedback from the People Strategy Action Plan Focus Groups, outlining what people told us they appreciate already and where they feel there are gaps, as well as capturing suggestions for action that colleagues gave us. Our action plan will build on what is appreciated and propose ways to address areas of challenge.
- 2.6 Colleagues were also asked to consider the kind of council they would like to work for in 2-3 words, and from those created by the group, to choose three values they would want to see adopted by their employer. The resulting list was shared with the provider of our externally commissioned employee engagement survey (IPSOS Karian and Box) and the most popular words were included in one of the culture questions of that survey.
- 2.7 Feedback from a series of engagement sessions within Adults, Health & Commissioning (AHC) which finished in October, has been shared to aid the development of the People Strategy Action Plan. This considered themes of Recognition, Wellbeing, Engagement, and EDI and will also be used to inform the workforce elements of the EDI Strategy Action Plan.
- 2.8 In September 2023, our employee survey was live for 3 weeks, and sought to hear from as many colleagues as possible about their views of working for the council, with the aim of getting a baseline from which to make progress in our engagement levels in the coming years. The full report on this is being shared with Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on 13th November and the recommendations will be considered, shared with colleagues and trade union representatives, and will be used in the development of the People Strategy Action Plan.
- 2.9 We have some initial insights from IPSOS, including:
- We achieved a 54% response rate.
  - Recognition is more important than pay in driving engagement, particularly day to day recognition from managers.
  - Engagement is negatively affected by saying we will do something and then not doing it, so it will be important that our People Strategy Action Plan commits to those things we can resource and deliver, and be seen to do so.
  - Good alignment in the selection of preferred cultural descriptors and those selected in our focus groups, which will provide an indication of preferred values.
  - Perceptions of fair treatment differ according to some demographic splits and these will need to be considered in more detail to ensure that we respond to the varied experiences of colleagues in our intended action plan.
  - There are significant proportions of neutral respondents to some measures, which provides an opportunity to shift those colleagues to a more engaged perspective during the life of the People Strategy.

2.10 Another source of feedback that will be considered in the action plan is the qualitative data we have from our exit interviews and questionnaires. While relatively small in number (23 in person, 26 online in quarter 2 of this year), they offer, like focus groups, more detailed insights into colleagues' views, in this case when they are leaving the organisation. Positives noted by our leavers include good team morale, a comprehensive wellbeing offer, with 53% of those asked saying they would return to the Council. Areas for improvement include more time for various supporting elements of work, such as admin and time with team, and time to attend regular events such as Wellbeing Hours and Cambridgeshire Conversations; of the 23 people seen in person, 6 people stated they did not have time to attend due to workload. Other areas highlighted are changes to pay progression, upskilling of managers, and more transparency about organisational change.

### 3. Next steps

3.1 The timeline for the creation of this action plan is as follows:

- November 2023 – Report from IPSOS detailing the insights and recommendations from the Employee Survey. Consideration by CLT and sharing with internal networks including CJP and the IDEAL Committee. Chief Executive to brief Chairs and Vice Chairs
- December 2023 – Sharing outcomes with the wider workforce and seeking more detailed feedback on areas for priority attention to draft the action plan.
- January 2024 – Sharing of draft action plan with CLT, CJP and IDEAL Network.
- February 2024 – Presenting final action plan to Staffing and Appeals Committee

### 4. Source Documents

4.1 Cambridgeshire County Council's People Strategy 2023 – 2028 Plain Text Version  
[People Strategy 2023 - 2028 plain text version.docx](#)